



Sunday, June 15, 2025

Genesis 3:8-24

Over the past few weeks, we've been exploring Genesis 3 as it relates to the origin of evil in the world, and the nature of sin and temptation. Specifically, last week we focused on the tools of the enemy and how he used temptation through the twisting and manipulation of God's Word to sow seeds of doubt. Unfortunately, as we learned, both Adam and Eve fell prey to the serpent's temptation which launched our world neck-deep in the throngs of sin and death. God's great love, however, responded in great grace by covering their guilt and shame as only He could. That was the beginning of Chapter 3 and verse 21. Today I'd like to look at the rest of Chapter 3 as we see God's immediate response to their sin.

Genesis 3:8-24

'8 And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.

9 Then the Lord God called to Adam and said to him, "Where are you?"

10 So he said, "I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself."

11 And He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?"

12 Then the man said, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate."

13 And the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?"

The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

14 So the Lord God said to the serpent:

*“Because you have done this,
You are cursed more than all cattle,
And more than every beast of the field;
On your belly you shall go,
And you shall eat dust
All the days of your life.
15 And I will put enmity
Between you and the woman,
And between your seed and her Seed;
He shall bruise your head,
And you shall bruise His heel.”
16 To the woman He said:*

*“I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception;
In pain you shall bring forth children;
Your desire shall be for your husband,
And he shall rule over you.”*

17 Then to Adam He said, “Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, ‘You shall not eat of it’:

*“Cursed is the ground for your sake;
In toil you shall eat of it
All the days of your life.*

*18 Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you,
And you shall eat the herb of the field.*

*19 In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread
Till you return to the ground,
For out of it you were taken;
For dust you are,
And to dust you shall return.”*

20 And Adam called his wife’s name Eve, because she was the mother of all living.

21 Also for Adam and his wife the Lord God made tunics of skin, and clothed them.

22 Then the Lord God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever” - 23 therefore the Lord

God sent him out of the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken. 24 So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.

In the first part of our reading today, we see the immediate result of sin: separation from God. And the imagery that we are given is of Adam and Eve now both recognizing their nakedness and their new need to be covered.

Last week we learned that the word 'naked' isn't just a physical reference though - it's a picture of their new spiritual condition. One that now instinctively needed to be covered. Hence the fig leaves.

Something had shifted. A massive gap had opened between humanity and God.

But the question that many people get stuck on is the direction of that shift. Who pulled away first - was it God, or was it us?

We actually get the answer in verse 8 when Adam and Eve heard God coming - and they hid. It wasn't God who retreated. It was humanity.

God is still operating as He always has. In the cool of the evening, He was making His rounds throughout the garden of His creation as He would normally do. Yes, He knows what has just happened because He is all-knowing but notice that He is not stomping around the Garden in judgment, He's peacefully walking through as He always has. For Adam and Eve, this was a very familiar daily event. One that they would likely have embraced with great joy and anticipation.

But now they're hiding. Why? Because something has changed - not in God's posture, but in theirs. They disobeyed the one good command. They stepped outside the posture of the creation trusting their Creator. And now, the sound of the Living God - once a source of pure joy - now makes them feel afraid instead of safe.

This is what sin does.

It bends our hearts away from God. It convinces us to hide from the very One who loves us most.

[my story] I remember when I was a kid, I did something I knew was wrong. I didn't really know what it was back then, but I knew that I had wronged them and since I simply don't know how to hide my

emotions and I didn't want them to find out, I would play the avoidance game...you know the whole comment, 'the eyes are the window to the soul...?'

We've all had seasons in our lives where we've been so steeped in sin that the weight of guilt and shame drives us to avoid God, to stop praying, to stop showing up to church, to stop hoping....etc.

But we need to understand, that if this picture of God walking in the Garden shows us anything, it shows us that even in our sin, God is still walking toward us. Even in our hiding, He's still calling your name. The question He asked Adam - 'Where are you?' - is not just a question that rang out in the Garden, but it's a question that is still being sounded today.

And the questions that God was asking of Adam and Eve were not meant to be accusatory questions. They were meant to be questions of care. Where are you? What have you done? Not, Where are you! What have you done!

You see, even in the midst of their sin, God's love was so great. And if we fast-forward to verse 21, we see that love expressed in a powerful way, as God Himself makes the first blood sacrifice and covers them with garments of skin.

It's the first act of atonement. The very first sacrifice.

All ultimately pointing to a greater day - when God would once again provide a covering. This time not with garments, but with the blood of His Son, Jesus Christ.

And so the very first sacrifice anticipates the very last sacrifice.

But in between, we see that - yes there is Grace and Mercy - but there is also consequence.

Admittedly, verses 14-22 are not easy to read but necessary to hold in tension with God's justice and His grace.

Just before we get to verse 14, we see Adam blaming Eve for offering him the forbidden fruit and then Eve blames the serpent. Immediately after that, God pronounces his judgment upon the serpent.

And in the judgment upon the serpent we see three things:

Confined to life on its belly: Some have suggested that this means the serpent at one point had arms and legs, or feet, similar to a lizard or a dragon, but it's important to understand that the text does not specifically say this. It may have, or it may not have, but to me, that's besides the point. More likely, this is figurative language, drawing from Ancient Near Eastern imagery where crawling on one's belly was a picture of utter humiliation and defeat. In that cultural context, to be 'on your belly' was to be as low as one could possibly go.

It is a massive cosmic demotion. Satan, once high and exalted, is now brought low. It's a visual picture of his ultimate disgrace and defeat.

Eating Dust: Snakes don't literally eat dust, so again, this is metaphorical. In the prophetic books, 'eating dust' is often a sign of humiliation and judgment:

Isaiah 49:23 speaks of kings bowing and licking the dust off the feet of God's people.

Micah 7:17 describes the wicked slithering from their holes, like snakes, licking the dust as a sign of fear and defeat.

But there's possibly a deeper layer. The word dust here is the same word that is used to describe the 'dust' from which Adam was made - and to which he will return. Some scholars suggest this imagery points to the serpent's nature: always set against God's good creation, with an appetite for destruction.

In this light, the term 'eating dust' would refer to the serpent symbolically feeding on what God formed in His image - dragging humanity back into death, into dust. It's kind of poetic when you think about it:

The creature formed from dust becomes the target of the creature condemned to the dust.

Lastly, we read that the Seed of the woman will crush the head of the serpent: This is perhaps the clearest pronouncement of ultimate defeat upon Satan. Notice the progression from humiliation now to defeat. The Seed of the woman is Jesus and He is the One that will crush the serpent's head, even as the serpent strikes His heel. It's more poetic language but it's also prophetic.

It's the first picture of the Gospel - that Jesus would defeat Satan, but it would come at great cost. On the cross, His heel would be bruised.

Just as Isaiah of old prophesied, He was bruised for our iniquities. But in that bruising, the serpent's head is crushed.

And though the final blow won't come until Revelation 20, here in Genesis 3, we can clearly see that it's already being set in motion. The heel has already been lifted and is making its way down with crushing force.

Yet, even as judgment is being pronounced, redemption is being prophesied.

Now when it comes to both Adam and Eve, the consequence for their sin isn't judgment like it is for the serpent. We know this because of verse 21 - where God clothes them with garments of skin. There's grace in that act. God is still moving toward them, not away.

However, the consequence for both of them is still significant, painful, and hard to embrace.

I'm going to switch the order just a little bit and start with the consequence of sin for man because I want you to see something here. Now, God's message to Adam was very straightforward. I like how the Message paraphrase puts it:

Genesis 3:17b-19 (MSG)

*'The very ground is cursed because of you;
getting food from the ground
Will be as painful as having babies is for your wife;
you'll be working in pain all your life long.
The ground will sprout thorns and weeds,
you'll get your food the hard way,
Planting and tilling and harvesting,
sweating in the fields from dawn to dusk,
Until you return to that ground yourself, dead and buried;
you started out as dirt, you'll end up dirt.*

Let that sink in for a moment: The ground is now cursed. Work is hard. Life becomes toil. And it all ends in death.

This isn't just about farming though - it's about the reordering of Adam's purpose. Whereas Adam was originally created to tend the garden in joy and partnership with God, now the very ground he came from is resisting him. His work is marked by frustration, futility, and sweat - and in the end, he just dies and returns to the dust he was made from.

This is what sin does.

It breaks what we were made to build. It turns purpose into pain. It turns creation against itself. And it reminds us - we are dust, and to dust we return.

I've done a number of funerals, and almost always, the funeral director at the graveside will utter the

words, ashes to ashes, dust to dust. It's a sobering reminder of this moment - of the deep loss introduced by sin.

Now, when it comes to Eve, God tells her in verse 16 that:

'I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception;
In pain you shall bring forth children;
Your desire shall be for your husband,
And he shall rule over you.'

Now, before we even get into this, we need to understand that although this sounds very similar to Paul's instruction to husbands and wives in Ephesians, this is very different because what is being described here in Genesis 3 is a consequence - a result of sin. This is not how it was meant to be. What Paul is describing in Ephesians about the husband as the head and the wife as the body cannot be viewed as an extension of the curse in Genesis 3, but rather, in stark contrast to it. Genesis 3 describes a relationship that has been distorted by sin. But Ephesians 5 describes a relationship redeemed by Christ - marked by love, respect, and mutual submission.

So with that in mind, let's dig in to what seems to be the hardest part of this consequence for womankind - the fractured relationship with her husband. 'Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.'

This can be a hard statement to wrap our minds around but basically, what God is saying here is that because of sin, the harmony between man and woman is now broken. The words 'desire' and 'rule' are especially significant because they appear together again just one chapter later, in Genesis 4:7, in God's warning to Cain.

Genesis 4:7 says:

'...sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it.'

In Chapter 4, Abel had just given a pleasing sacrifice to God but Cain's offering was not accepted. God warns Cain that if he isn't careful, sin will overtake him. In this case, sin's desire is to control Cain, to master him - but God tells him not to let it rule him, but to resist it.

So when we go back to Genesis 3 and hear those same words, 'your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you,' we can begin to gain a clearer picture of what is being described here.

So you see, this isn't about affection or healthy desire at all. The text is showing us that part of the consequence of sin is that the woman will now desire to control or dominate her husband - just as sin desired to control and dominate Cain - and instead of responding with sacrificial love and servant leadership, the man will respond with the same kind of domination and control that we ought to have over our sin - not each other! This is not how it was meant to be - neither man, nor woman was meant to 'rule' over each other. Don't you see now, why this verse is contrasted with Cain's response to sin in Chapter 4? That kind of struggle - that kind of 'rule' - was meant for our relationship with sin, not our relationship with one another. So, what was once a relationship of mutual trust and unity is now marked by tension and this struggle for control.

And this is exactly why Ephesians 5 feels like such a breath of fresh air.

Paul understands what sin did to the relationship between husband and wife - and he also knows what needs to happen to restore it.

Mutual submission. Think about it, if both parties are mutually submitted to each other and Christ, then how can there be room to control or dominate?

This is why Paul opens up his whole talk on husbands and wives with this simple yet powerful statement:

Ephesians 5:21

'...submitting to one another in the fear of God.'

But not fear in the sense of dread or punishment, but holy awe or reverence. A deep awe of who God is, and a willingness to surrender to His design. Because if Christ is at the center - if we are submitted to Him - then everything else begins to realign. And how we operate in our functions then as husbands and wives won't be about power or control - but about honour and respect.

Everything Paul is doing here is about dismantling the grip of sin that has been on marriage since Genesis 3. And he speaks to both parties as equals:

He says, 'Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord.' And then he speaks directly to husbands: 'Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her.'

Again, Paul is taking on the very ethos of Genesis 3 and 4 - the false idea that we are meant to rule over each other. But again, the truth is: the only thing we were ever meant to rule over is sin.

Sin would have you believe that power and control define marriage.

But Paul points us back to God's original design: Submitting to one another in the fear of the Lord. And what a beautiful thing that is when husbands and wives live this out together.

Now, the last thing we see in chapter 3 is essentially God closing the door on the garden. It's a sad and sobering image as Adam and Eve walk away into the unknown, learning to forge ahead through struggle and temptation.

But I want you to see something here. It's verse 21 again. God's great grace. Adam and Eve tried to cover their shame and separation with fig leaves, but that did not work. Instead, God stepped in and covered their shame and separation with the skin of an animal, symbolizing the very first blood sacrifice, and ultimately pointing the way forward to Jesus Christ.

So yes, the flaming sword at the entrance of the garden, forbidding their access is sad and sobering, but perhaps it's also something else. Perhaps it's a reminder that they were not meant to go back. For dressed in grace, they were called now to move forward. Not back into shame, but onward towards redemption.

And I can't help but wonder if that's exactly what some of us need to hear this morning - on Father's Day, no less. (And don't worry, fellas - I told you I wasn't going to target you. I did that three weeks ago.)

But maybe, just maybe, this flaming sword is for us too.

That just like Adam and Eve, we too have been covered in his grace, and we are not to go back. We are forbidden to return to a world of sin and shame, but are called to move forward into the glorious redemption that Christ has in store for us.

Pastor Josh Hageman

Lead Pastor

Kingsview Community Church

Stoney Creek, ON

www.kingsviewchurch.com

<https://www.facebook.com/KingsviewCommunityChurch/>