

## ***The Drama of Scripture***

### ***Fall (Part 1)***



This morning we are continuing our sermon series on The Drama of Scripture. We are spending two weeks each on the four “acts” of the biblical story: creation, fall, redemption, restoration. We could also use the words *ought, is, can, will*. Creation describes God’s design and the way things **ought** to be. Fallen describes how the world actually **is** due to sin. Redemption describes the way things **can** be because of the death, resurrection, and exaltation of Christ. Restoration describes the way things **will** be when God restores all things.

The past two weeks we’ve discussed creation in Genesis 1 and 2. There we saw that God created all things good. God made humanity (male and female) in His image and gave them the assignment of cultivating and keeping the Garden of Eden. The only limitation God gave them involved not eating from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. As Creator, He had the right to give commands and limit their freedoms.

Today we consider the second “act” of the drama of Scripture, the “fall” as described in Genesis 3. It’s called “the fall” because when Adam and Eve disobeyed God they “fell” from a place of perfection and brought sin and its devastating consequences into the world. Next week Brian will talk about the consequences of the fall as described in the rest of Scripture.

The fall explains why life in this world is so difficult and so heartbreaking: why relationships are so difficult, why we find it so hard to do what’s right, why people hate and kill each other, why countries go to war, and why work is a four-letter word to many people. If we don’t understand this “act” in the drama of Scripture, we will experience all sorts of confusion about the evil in the world and in our own hearts. If we don’t understand what’s been lost through the fall, we won’t value the redemption that is available through Jesus. We have to understand the diagnosis before we appreciate the remedy.

In Genesis 3 we see a world unlike anything we’ve experienced: a talking serpent, a tree whose fruit opens your eyes in unexpected ways, and people hearing God walking in the cool of the evening. What is written here describes **some fundamental realities of the world as we experience it**. We will consider the first half of the chapter in some detail, but due to time constraints I’ll summarize the second half.

***The adversary of God and His people. (Genesis 3:1)***

Genesis 3 doesn't address/explain the ultimate origin of evil. Evil is already present in the world through the serpent.

1 Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden'?"

We aren't told as much as we'd like to know about "the serpent." Later passages will identify the serpent as "Satan," the adversary (Revelation 20:2 will refer to "the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan"). Our best understanding from a number of Scriptures is that Satan is an angel who rebelled against God sometime before the creation of this world. He is powerful, but he's not omnipotent like God; he is a created being who is under God's authority (see Job 1 & 2).

But here the serpent is described in terms that immediately suggest an inversion of the proper order of creation. The serpent is here designated as a "beast of the field" (e.g., 2:19), the category of "living creatures" which Adam named and over which humanity was to "rule" (1:26). And yet this serpent is essentially trying to deceive and rule over the woman.<sup>1</sup>

If we are going to find our place in the biblical story, we need to understand that this world is a battleground. God has an adversary/enemy who wants to lure us away from simple trust in the Lord God, the Creator of everything and everyone. If we are ignorant or naive about this spiritual battle we will reenact daily (or hourly) the deception we see here in Genesis 3. The good news is that the redemption through Jesus addresses this issue. We are told in 1 John 3:8 this:

8 . . . the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil.

When we put our faith in Christ, we should anticipate that He will undo what Satan has done in our lives. Of course, we're not passive in this process. To the contrary, we are to be on high alert in this spiritual battle. 1 Peter 5:8 tells us this:

8 Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. 9 But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world.

If we want to participate in the biblical story, we need be aware that we have an unseen spiritual enemy (Satan, the serpent of old) who wants to take us down. God and His people have an adversary.

***The nature of temptation and sin.*** (Genesis 3:1-6) Notice the question that the serpent asked the woman:

1 Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden'?"

Here the serpent seems to be intentionally distorting God's command. God had told Adam that he **could** eat from any tree of the garden . . . except one (2:16-17). The serpent asks whether God had indeed said that they **couldn't** eat from any tree of the garden.

2 The woman said to the serpent, "From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; 3 but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.'"

Everything she said jives with God's command except the statement that "You shall not eat from it **or touch it**. . ." It's true that since they weren't supposed to **eat** from the tree in the middle of the garden, they probably shouldn't be **touching** it either. But her statement suggests that her mind is moving away from the permission to eat from **all the trees of garden** except one; she's beginning to focus on the one forbidden tree. She will soon become blind to God's lavish generosity and become fixated on God's one restriction.

The serpent picks up on the last statement, ". . . or you will die":

4 The serpent said to the woman, "You surely will not die!

This is a frontal assault on God's word(s). Notice how he continues:

5 "For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

"You will be like God. . . ." If you've read Genesis 1 and 2, you immediately think, "Wait a minute, the woman is already 'like God' because she (along with the man) has been created in His image." The insinuation is that being created in His image isn't enough. The serpent says, "There's another, deeper way in which you can be 'like God': eat from the tree and your eyes will be opened and – like God – you will know good and evil."

So far, the woman only "knew" good. Everything in the Garden was good. She had neither experiential nor intellectual knowledge of evil (as Paul urges in Romans 16:9). The serpent tells her that God was keeping back His best by prohibiting her from eating the fruit from that tree.

As we'll see in verse 7, the serpent was telling her a partial truth; when they ate, their eyes **were** open and they did have knowledge of good and evil. What he didn't tell them was that they would ultimately be **less** like God after they ate (the image of God

would be marred) and he didn't tell them the terrible suffering they would introduce into the world. He was lying when he said, "You will surely not die."

In the first line of verse 6 we have a verbal connection to chapter 1. Just as "God saw that it was good. . ." (1:4, 12, 18, etc.), here the woman "saw that the tree was good for food . . .":

6 When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.

Her evaluation is in stark contrast with God's in 2:9. There we read that God gave ***all the other trees*** as a delight to the eyes and good for food, but not the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. But at the serpent's suggestion, she saw "that the tree was desirable to make one wise." This is exactly where the serpent wanted to lead her. The woman was no longer satisfied with the wisdom that God had given her; she wanted to attain "wisdom" apart from God.

Her actions are described quickly and decisively: ". . . she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate." We've been told the woman's thought processes, but the man seems strangely passive. He took the fruit from her hand and he ate. This is all the more significant since he/Adam was the one to whom the prohibition had been given in the first place. (2:16-17).

As Brian will discuss next week, this original sin has polluted all of humanity. David will say that he was born in sin (Psalm 51:5). Paul will say that "we are dead in our trespasses and sins" (Ephesians 2:1). Now we sin by nature (it's as easy as falling off a log) and by choice (we decide to do things God prohibits and not do things he commands). When we do, we are basically following the thought processes of the first woman. We are convinced that we know better than God what is good for us.

Our redemption (the third act of the drama of Scripture) will initially involve God forgiving our sin and releasing us from the guilt and power of sin. And then it will involve progressively being transformed by the renewing of our minds until we get to the place where we really do agree with God about what is good and evil; we have the mind of Christ. On a heart level we don't want to sin. Restoration (the final act of the drama of Scripture) will involve the completion of this process.

### ***The consequences and curses of the fall. (Genesis 3:7-21)***

***Shame and blame. (Genesis 3:7-13)*** Beginning in verse 7 we see the consequences of the fall in the lives of Adam and Eve.

7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings.

Just as the serpent had told them, when they ate from the tree, their eyes were opened. But instead of becoming “like God” in some super-human sense, they experienced shame. They “knew that they were naked” and immediately covered themselves up with clothes made from fig leaves. Instead of filling the earth with God’s glory, they would fill the earth with sin and violence.

As we look briefly at verses 8 through 13, notice a couple of things: 1) how God pursued them, and 2) how guarded and self-centered **all** of their relationships became after “their eyes were opened.”

8 They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.

Imagine being able to hear “the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden” and running toward Him in anticipation. You might tell him how amazed you are with His creation; you might ask Him questions and listen to His answers; or you might just watch and notice what He does. Adam and Eve had that freedom before the fall. But after they sinned, instead of running toward Him, they hid themselves among the trees. This is one of the most pervasive effects of sin/shame – hiding from God.

In the following verses God interviews the man and the woman to draw out their thoughts. Instead of straightforward answers, we find self-justification and blame-shifting.

9 Then the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?" 10 He said, "I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself."

This is the first mention of “fear” in the Bible. Before sin there was no fear; now they were afraid of God.

11 And He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" 12 The man said, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate."

Not only did he blame his disobedience on the woman; he insinuated that God was responsible by saying, “The woman whom **You** gave to be with me . . .” So much for “This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh . . .” Instead of saying, “Yes, Lord, I ate from the tree,” he said, “It was her fault!”

13 Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" And the woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

At least Eve admitted that she had been persuaded by the serpent and therefore ate from the tree. (See 2 Corinthians 11:3)

In verses 14-21 we have God's comments to the serpent, to the woman, and to Adam. Some of these are pronouncements of judgment (especially those upon the serpent); others are basically statements of consequences (due to your sin, this is what you will experience).

*The defeat of the Serpent (Genesis 3:14-15)*

In light of the serpent's role in tempting the woman, God pronounces this judgment on the serpent. Verse 15 makes clear that something much more profound than the experience of snakes is being described here. This verse speaks of the ongoing hostility between the offspring of the serpent and the offspring of the woman.

15 And I will put enmity  
Between you and the woman,  
And between your seed and her seed;  
He shall bruise you on the head,  
And you shall bruise him on the heel."

The serpent and the woman are now representatives of their "kind" - evil spiritual beings and humanity. The "spiritual battle" in which we all find ourselves is evidence of this ongoing enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent.

God promises that ultimately the descendant of the woman would defeat the serpent. The serpent will receive a fatal blow, but the seed of the woman will suffer a relatively minor wound. Even though the serpent "won the battle" in the Garden, he would eventually lose the war.

The rest of the plot line of the Bible is wrapped up with the identity of the "seed of the woman" who would defeat the seed of the serpent. When we discuss redemption we see that Abraham was promised a seed/offspring through whom all the families of the earth will be blessed (language very much reminiscent of 1:26-28). The New Testament announces that Jesus is the "son of Abraham" through whom God would bless the world; Jesus has defeated Satan through His crucifixion and resurrection (1 John 3:8; Revelation 12:9; see also Romans 16:20).

*The consequences for the woman (v. 16)* The consequences for the woman involve the two aspects of God's original blessing: "be fruitful and multiply" and "the two become one flesh." First, there will be multiplied pain in childbearing. Second, both Eve and Adam would have the desire to dominate and rule over each other. Through redemption in Jesus' blood, marriage can be restored to its original design which we discussed last week in Genesis 2.<sup>2</sup>

*The consequences for the man (Genesis 3:17-19)* As the woman experienced multiplied pain in childbirth, the man would experience hardship in cultivating the ground. Before the fall, co-laboring with God was pure delight (Eden=delight), but from this point forward, work would be difficult. We'll see in coming weeks that redemption restores a sense of calling in our lives - even to the point where we do our work (as difficult as it

may be) unto the Lord: "it is the Lord Christ whom we serve" through our work (Colossians 3:23-24).<sup>3</sup>

***The human condition: living in exile.*** (Genesis 3:22-24) As both an act of judgment and an act of mercy, we read in verses 22 through 24 that God banished Adam and Eve from the Garden.

22 Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever "--

God acknowledges that the man had become like Himself, knowing good and evil. But in his **fallen** condition, the man needed to be protected from eating of the tree of life. The implication here is that if he had eaten from the tree of life, he would live forever in his fallen condition.<sup>4</sup> In His mercy, God protects the man from the tree of life by banishing him from the Garden and placing a guard at its entrance.

23 therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden, to cultivate the ground from which he was taken. 24 So He drove the man out; and at the east of the garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim and the flaming sword which turned every direction to guard the way to the tree of life.

In the NIV verse 23 reads "The Lord God banished him from the Garden of Eden." This means that Adam and Eve are now living "in exile"; they have been cast out of their homeland due to their sin. Originally, God "took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate and keep it." Now God drove him out of the garden "to cultivate the ground from which he was taken." Life would be incredibly difficult outside of the protective environment of the Garden.<sup>5</sup>

**Conclusion.** Ought/Is/Can/Will. The creation account describes the way things ought to be by God's design. As we've seen today in Genesis 3, the fall describes creation as it actually is due to sin:

- shame over who we are and what we've become
- hiding from God; not wanting to make eye contact for fear of what He might say/do
- blaming everybody but ourselves for the sins we commit
- living in exile, away from the presence of God

Lament and mourn what was lost through the fall. But remember that the fall is only "act 2" of the drama of Scripture. As we continue reading the Scriptures, we see that God doesn't abandon humanity and the rest of creation because of the fall. God is the offended one in the fall, but because He is "slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness," He puts into motion a plan of redemption at great cost to Himself. He brings people like you and me back from exile; He invites us back into His very presence as sons and daughters. Guess what we find in the last chapter of the Bible, Revelation 22? There we find "the tree of life" that brings healing to the nations; and those who are righteous through Jesus "have the right to the tree of life" and may enter into the very presence of God for eternity.

### Endnotes:

- <sup>1</sup> The term translated “crafty” doesn’t usually have a negative connotation in the OT. It can be translated “crafty” or “shrewd” or “prudent” depending upon whether the person is using knowledge and insight in godly ways. Its eight occurrences in the book of Proverbs are positive (e.g., 13:16 “Every **prudent** man acts with knowledge, But a fool displays folly.”). Here the serpent is using knowledge in a devious way. The serpent uses his knowledge to convince the woman that God isn’t as good as He appears. The serpent will use a twisted logic to convince the woman that the way to experience true wisdom is by eating the forbidden fruit. (The book of Proverbs will label such “wisdom” foolishness.)
- <sup>2</sup> The blessing of marriage and children would now be dramatically affected by sin. The multiplied pain of childbirth would be a reminder of her defection in the Garden.

In relation to marriage, God says: “Yet your desire will be for your husband, And he will rule over you.” This word “desire” is found only two other places in the OT, one of them being in Genesis 4:7. There we read that sin was “crouching at the door” of Cain’s life and that “its desire” was for him: sin wanted to dominate/master him. We are probably intended to read this sense in 3:16; the woman would want to dominate/master her husband.

In a similar way, the husband would have the tendency to “rule over” his wife. Instead of seeing her as a “suitable helper,” he would now seek to be her master. This is a very different picture of marriage than the one we saw at the end of chapter 2 in which the man and wife became one flesh so that together they could pursue God’s will. If you get married, you will need to watch out for these tendencies.

This is a clear example where the effects of the Fall are supposed to be reversed in Christ. In Christ, husbands and wives are supposed to adopt the original paradigm for marriage set out in Genesis 2. In Christ husbands and wives can replace their tendency to dominate and rule over each other with love and respect. (See 1 Peter 3:1-7 and Ephesians 5:21-33.)

- <sup>3</sup> In the Garden, God had abundantly supplied food to eat; it was simply there for the taking! In the Garden, the ground was blessed to produce good fruit (1:11, 2:9). But now the ground would only grudgingly yield food. As the woman experienced toil in childbirth, the man would experience toil in cultivating the ground. Thorns and thistles would frustrate him as a gardener. Producing food/bread would be a hard, sweaty process until the day he died. And then he would return to the ground from which he was created.

“Making a living” (as it is sometimes called) is hard, exhausting work. The vast majority of people I know have to work **hard** in their careers. That’s the reality. This doesn’t mean that it’s always a depressing endeavor; Ecclesiastes tells us that it is a gift of God to be able to work hard and enjoy the fruits of our labors (Eccl. 5:18-20). Again, redemption reverses the fall.



Returning to dust was only appropriate since Adam's very name meant "ground." On the other hand, Adam gave the woman a name that looked beyond their mortality:

20 Now the man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all the living.

We've already discussed how the woman's offspring/seed – Jesus – would be the source of life to all who want it. We read in verse 21 that God graciously provided better clothes for Adam and Eve.

21 The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them.

Some have seen here a hint of the sacrificial system that would be put into place in the Old Covenant. Certainly animals had to be killed to provide the skins used for clothes. At the very least we see that after the Fall the human race would need God to provide for our needs. Even though God's work was finished on the sixth day, God would continue to make/provide what is needed for our redemption.

<sup>4</sup> From the NT we understand that immortality is a gift that God will give to all who experience life in Christ (1 Corinthians 15:50-58).

<sup>5</sup> The fact that the cherubim were stationed at the **east** of the Garden is probably significant. Later in the Pentateuch, when people went (or were sent) east, something negative was happening: the tower of Babel (Babylon) was toward the east (11:2); Lot journeyed eastward to Sodom and Gomorrah (13:11). During the exile, Judah will be carried off to the east (to Babylon). The Promised Land was entered from the east.