



Lesson 4 / March 5, 2017

THE FALL

Genesis 3

Key Verse

“He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.”

Genesis 3:24

Discussion Questions

1. Where do you suppose the serpent comes from, and how does he get into the garden?
2. How does the serpent deceive the woman? How do they distort God's word?
3. How should the woman have responded to the serpent?
4. How do guilt and shame affect them? How do guilt and shame effect you?
5. In what ways is our world today the way God intended it to be? In what ways is it not?
6. Where do you see God's goodness and hope in Genesis 3?
7. How does Genesis 3 set the stage for the rest of the Bible's story of redemption?
8. Do you have hope today?

Question 7: What is sin?

Short Answer: *Sin is our disobedience to God and his word.*

Full Answer: *Sin is our disobedience to God and his word, whether by transgression or failure to obey, arising from our unbelieving and rebellious hearts.*

Question 8: What is the consequence of sin?

Short Answer: *Because of sin, God casts us out of his presence.*

Full Answer: *Because of sin, God casts us out of his presence, banishes us from the tree of life, and curses us to live under the misery of death until we return to dust.*

Summary

If Genesis 2 led us to ask, “What could possibly go wrong?” then Genesis 3 leads us to ask, “How could it go so horribly wrong, and so quickly?” It takes only one brief conversation for human resolve to crumble, and one small bite for the woman becomes one large leap for all mankind into the abyss of death.

In the opening verse of Genesis 3, we discover the first humans were not actually alone in the garden. A crafty serpent now enters the scene, and later Scripture will reveal this serpent to be Satan, the spiritual being opposed to God and his people (e.g. Rev 12:9). The serpent initiates a seemingly innocent conversation with the woman, but if we follow his words closely, we can see his slippery deception at work. First, the serpent turns God’s command into the question, “Did God *really* say?” (3:2). He invites the humans to enter into judgment over God’s word, as if God could be unreasonable. The woman responds (3:2-3) by recalling God’s command from Genesis 2:16, but she exaggerates the prohibition to include *touching* in addition to *eating* from the tree, and she forgets the *surely* in “you shall *surely* die.” The serpent seizes upon her sloppy recollection and now flatly contradicts God’s word. “You will *not* surely die,” the serpent says (3:4). Further, the serpent even suggests God is withholding from humans the truth about this tree’s potential to make them like God (3:5). Oh, the irony that the serpent should accuse God of deception even as the serpent deceives humans with the lie and the sin that continue to tempt us all! The lie tells us that we (creatures) are capable of becoming like God (Creator) and the sin of our covetous pride compels us to try.

The deception works. The woman determines in Genesis 3:6 that the fruit looks and presumably tastes like any other fruit (see Gen 2:9) and that it even has the potential to make her wise. Both she and the man with her take and eat. The act itself may seem rather trivial, but it exposes the rebellion by which they believe the serpent’s word over God’s word, they trust their own judgment over God’s judgment, and they reject God’s authority over them. Their sin is absolute mutiny against God and the consequences are utterly devastating. They immediately feel the shame of a guilty conscience and this shame separates them from one another (they clothe themselves) and from God (they hide

themselves). When God speaks to them, they answer with half-truths and they play the blame game. The man directly blames the woman for his sin and indirectly blames God for giving the woman to him (“the woman *you* gave me;” 3:12), and the woman blames the serpent who deceived her (3:13).

God plays his own version of the blame game by blaming and cursing them all. He curses the serpent to slither on his belly and to ultimately be destroyed by the woman’s seed (3:14-15). He curses the woman with pain in childbearing and conflict in marriage (3:16) that will frustrate their work in filling the earth with life. He curses the ground because of the man (3:17-18) and frustrates their work in ruling over the earth and producing food. And finally, God makes good on his promise of death, cursing them to return to the dust of the earth (3:19) and banishing them from the Garden of Eden to ensure they will not eat from the tree of life and live forever (3:22-23).

How quickly things have unraveled. Cursed and banished, all hope seems lost as rebellious humans are to live in misery and to die. If sinless humans failed so spectacularly in the perfect paradise of Eden, what hope exists for us today who live so far from Eden? Well, thanks be to God that Genesis 3 is not the end, but the beginning, of the Bible’s story. We are still in the first pages of a thousand-page book, and the rest of the story brings to full expression the immense goodness of our God as he continues to do good for us *despite* our rebellion. Indeed, he displays his goodness already within Genesis 3. God seeks out rebellious humans rather than annihilating them (3:9). He places enmity between the woman and the serpent (3:16), thereby enabling humans to resist the serpent until the promised day when the serpent will be crushed by the woman’s seed. God provides clothing of skins to cover their shame by the bloodshed of another (3:21). God banishes them from the tree of life lest they should eat and forever live under the curse of death (3:22). All of this sets the stage for the rescue operation God will unfold in history, a rescue that will culminate in Christ our hero, who conquers death by death, crushes the serpent, covers our shame by his bloodshed, and leads us back to the tree of life to dwell forever with him (Rev 22:2). God’s goodness is even bigger than our sin and rebellion, and that is reason for hope.