

## THE HORROR OF PARADISE LOST (SUNDAY, MARCH 30, 2014)

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**SCRIPTURE: GENESIS 2:25-3:13; ROM. 6:1-13**

### INTRODUCTION

There is no surprise why the opening chapters of Genesis are especially under attack today.

It is not that we seek to rank which parts of God's Word are more important than others, but there are doctrines that Satan especially seeks to undermine and attack.

Obviously creation is one of the doctrines under attack.

As we turn the page in our Bible to Genesis 3 we see other key doctrines presented and so it is not a surprise to see the attacks on Genesis 3.

The account of Genesis 3 is not simply an interesting story that we have heard many times.

We don't turn to Genesis 3 simply to learn valuable lessons about life and some tips for becoming better people.

No, it is in Genesis 3 where we learn how Adam our covenant representative directly rebelled against God's command, an act which has affected every single person that has followed.

In Genesis 3 we see then the horror of sin and how it brings about separation from a Holy God and the deserved curse and judgment of a Holy God.

It is Genesis 3 that first announces the bad news for sinners and gives the first declaration of the good news of how God would bring true justice and salvation for sinners He determined to save.

Our main focus will be on Genesis 2:25-3:13, which we will consider in three parts.

Consider the horror of sin and separation from a holy and righteous God.

### **GENESIS 2:25-3:5**

**Gen. 2:25** And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.

Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?"

And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; **3** but of the fruit of the tree which *is* in the midst of the garden, God has said, "You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.' "

Then the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. **5** For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

The book of Genesis is beautifully written. Each word has been carefully chosen.

Each verse is carefully constructed.

Each section supports the main idea of the story.

In this text, the last verse of chapter 2 connects the account of creation with chapter 3.

What an incredible contrast there is between Genesis 2 and 3.

It is the contrast between a holy God, a good and beautiful creation and the horror of man’s sin and rebellion against God.

Genesis 2:25 tell us that Adam and Eve were both naked in perfect innocence and purity.

Importantly also, the word naked in Hebrew as used in verse 25 has the *same sound* as the word crafty, used in 3:1 to describe the serpent.

The words are not identical – they sound similar.

Now the word crafty doesn't always have a negative meaning in Scripture, especially as it is used in the book of Proverbs, but here we can clearly see that the serpent's crafty nature was perverted through Satan's use of it.

A speaking serpent should cause you to pause and consider what is going on.

In Genesis 3 there is nothing directly that explains that the serpent was being controlled or used by Satan.

How do we know that the serpent was being directed or controlled by Satan?

This is something that we learn from other Scripture passages.

For example Jesus in John 8 rebukes the unbelieving Jews saying that the devil was their father and that devil is the father of lies, which is a reference to Genesis 3.

In understanding the serpent speaking we can also consider the example of Balaam's donkey and in the gospels the power of demons to seize control of another creature's mind and speak through it.

We are not told what Eve thought of a speaking serpent, so this doesn't need to be our focus or worry.

We can rest assured that this is not some mythical story but a faithful account of the fall of Adam and Eve.

Do you notice that the serpent never directly states that Eve should eat of the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil?

Satan or the serpent never tells Adam or Eve, eat it. Rather the serpent focuses on deceiving Eve that there won't be any consequence for eating of the forbidden fruit and that God is being unreasonable and unfair.

It is also worth observing that the serpent (Satan) only speaks two times. It is not a long, detailed conversation.

Satan worked through deception and the encouragement to question God and to think that the consequences of disobeying God are not all that serious.

And Satan continues to work this way in temptation. He encourages you to think that the consequences of sin won't be so bad or won't be felt at all.

Children, do you see how Satan wants you to think that what your parents ask you to do or tell you not to do is not fair?

The words of the serpent in verse 1 are a bit difficult to translate.

It is possible that the serpent's question in verse 1 should instead be taken as a statement that it never finishes before being interrupted by Eve.

The end of verse 1 could read, "Even though God has said, you shall not eat of every tree of the garden..."

All the major versions, however, read this as a question.

What is clear is that the serpent was seeking to introduce confusion and questioning into Eve's thinking.

We can also notice that the serpent uses the name God rather than the more personal and covenantal name YHWH or LORD.

I think it is best to understand that Adam was directly with Eve as this conversation was taking place.

This is what verse 6 seems to indicate.

**Rather than respond to the serpent's temptation he let Eve respond.**

In looking at Eve's response, we see that from the beginning she has already moved away from God toward the serpent's view of things.

Note her words in verses 2-3. She states, we may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden.

This statement is true but it does not do full justice to the LORD's generosity for Adam and Eve. They were given permission to eat from every tree but one.

See also that Eve does not use the name YHWH or LORD but also uses the name God.

She also then adds to the instruction that was given to Adam saying that not only was the fruit from the forbidden tree not to be eaten but it was not even to be touched.

And then look at her closing words in verse 3, lest you die. The LORD told Adam in Genesis 2:17, “but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”

Listen to the comments of Gordon Wenham here.

“What she actually seems to have done was to 'interpret' God's clear prohibition as only the warning of another expert - who might indeed be wrong... It is as if she were saying, 'He recommended that we not eat only because he was concerned for our well-being.'”<sup>1</sup>

The serpent then responded, wanting Eve not to think of God's command as merely a recommendation but an unreasonable and hollow threat.

No - you shall not surely die. That is just a threat.

God's real motive is selfishness.

He is threatened by the possibility of you eating the fruit and becoming like him, knowers of good and evil.

We should pause for a moment and consider again the tree of the knowledge of good and evil that was forbidden to Adam and Eve in Genesis 2:15.

What does it mean that the fruit of this tree offered the knowledge of good and evil?

This is a difficult question because we are not given many details. We should realize that the tree was given as something good, and yet Adam and Eve when they were first created were not ready to partake of its fruit.

The fruit of this tree offered wisdom or moral experience, something that Adam and Eve first had to learn by obeying the LORD.

Proverbs speaks of true wisdom as beginning with the fear of the LORD. The placing of this forbidden tree in the garden was a test for Adam and Eve.

And yet considering the fact that they could eat of every other tree, it was not an unfair test.

Satan wanted Eve and Adam to think that God was being unfair and keeping something from them that they deserved.

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<sup>1</sup> Wenham, 73.

I think you will find Satan often employing this strategy today. You deserve it.

Why not take it, get it, use it, buy it, enjoy it.

### **GENESIS 3:6-8**

**Gen. 3:6** So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. **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 coverings. **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.

Gordon Wenham in his commentary on Genesis observes that Genesis 2:5-3:24 can be divided into seven parts.

And this is a likely division based on the noting the presence of sections where there is conversation and sections where there is just the telling of the story.

The center of these seven sections is 3:6-8.

Notice in these verses that there is no conversation.

There are eleven main verbs used to quickly tell this part of the story.

Look also in these verses at the different actions and use of the senses.

You see sight, touch, taste, sight again, and finally hearing.

At the center of this section is the action of Adam. **And he ate.**

See also that Eve gave no response to the serpent's final words.

Rather she instead focused on the forbidden fruit.

Notice the three descriptions of desire. The fruit was good for food. It was attractive looking fruit. And it was desirable in order to become wise.

And so she took some of the fruit. She ate it.

She gave some of it to her husband, who was with her.

Here I think is strong evidence that Adam was with Eve this whole time.

Then verses 7-8 record the consequences of their actions. They wanted to be wise. They wanted forbidden knowledge.

And they got what they wanted, but it wasn't what they expected.

Their eyes were opened but it was not a blessing but something awful.

They now knew they were naked. They needed to cover themselves.

**And worst of all they needed to hide from the presence of the LORD.**

In some translations verse 8 is the beginning of a new paragraph, but it is best to see verse 8 with verses 6 and 7.

Verse 8 shows the full extent of Adam and Eve's rebellion against the LORD.

Rather than seeking the presence of the LORD they now feared to be in His presence and in this case deservedly so.

Verse 8 speaks of Adam and Eve hearing the sound or the voice of the LORD God walking or moving in the garden in the cool of the day.

Here is a question that maybe can't be fully answered.

Did Adam and Eve hear some quiet sound which they realized was the presence of God which then scared them, kind of like when you hear something scratching on your front door at night?

Or was the voice of the LORD an ear-deafening sound, like the roar of a low-flying jet passing over your house?

One commentator in particular has argued that the expression cool of the day should be better translated as in the wind of the storm.

Instead of picturing the LORD coming to the garden for a late afternoon stroll, the picture is of the LORD coming in a powerful windstorm to confront Adam and Eve of their rebellion.

I favor this second interpretation but purposely the story doesn't give us all the details we might like.

But what we can see is a very pathetic picture at the end of verse 8. Adam and Eve know they have sinned. They try to cover their nakedness with fig leaves.

They most foolishly attempt to hide from the LORD.

Here then we see so powerfully presented the horror of sin, the reality of God's judgment, and how futile it is for you to try to cover yourself.

Who could ever hide from the God who has created all things, who knows all things, and who demands absolute perfection?

Never forget the horror of sin. Never forget that you cannot cover your sin or restore on your own any relationship with God.

### **GENESIS 3:9-13**

**Gen. 3:9** 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.”

Friedrich Hebbel has stated, “**He who wants to know people should study their excuses.**”

There is in these verses one of the greatest illustrations of sinful human nature and how we so often excuse sin by blaming others.

As children of Adam and Eve it is the sad reality we also will seek to shift blame rather than confessing our sin honestly before God.

Children, isn't it true that you will often blame your brother or sister for something wrong you have done?

As sinners we become masters as excusers.

The LORD's question to Adam, “Where are you,” has the force of, why are you hiding?

Notice that this is the question that Adam finally answers, but only after offering an excuse and blame and after the LORD asked Him specifically about eating from the forbidden tree.

And note that Adam not only blames Eve but also blames the LORD.

Look at verse 12. The Hebrew stresses the phrase, **whom you gave to be with me.**

It is your fault, LORD, because you gave the woman to me.

She then gave me the fruit. Only at the end does he admit his sin. **And I ate.**

And Eve only after blaming the serpent admits her sin with the same words as Adam. **And I ate.**

Now Genesis here is not just presenting us with something that we often see in ourselves.

Adam we see in this account is addressed first and then cursed last.

Eve was the first to eat of the tree, but it is Adam's sin and rebellion that has led to the judgment of all creation and the entrance of death into the world.

Adam was our covenant representative in the garden.

**Rom. 5:12** Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned-

**Rom. 5:18** Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life. 19 For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous.

**Tim. 2:14** And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.

Before we close, let's look again at what the serpent-Satan told to Eve.

You will not certainly die when you eat of the tree. Your eyes will be opened. You will become like God.

Did Adam and Eve die when they ate the fruit?

Physically, they did not die right away.

Were the eyes of Adam and Eve opened? Verse 7 says that their eyes were opened.

Did they become like God? Verse 22 says, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil..."

In a most literal sense, all that Satan said to Adam and Eve was true.

And yet the reality of what Satan promised was certainly not delivered. The way this account is written encourages us to consider the reality of what Adam and Eve received.

Yes, they did not die physically right after eating the fruit. Adam would live 930 years. And yet spiritually they did die that very day.

Adam and Eve were both expelled from the garden which is a sign of death.

Yes, their eyes were opened, but they were opened now to see their shame and the reality of what they had done.

They had to be clothed by the LORD, an act of grace and also a reminder of their sin.

Both Adam and Eve did have a knowledge of good and evil, a type of wisdom, that they did not have before but this was hardly a blessing.



## CONCLUSION:

John Calvin in his commentary quoted the words of Augustine, “O wretched freewill, which, while yet entire, had so little stability.”

He also quoted the words of Bernard “Since we read that a fall so dreadful took place in Paradise, what shall we do on the dunghill?”

The unbeliever has no real struggle against sin.

Because of Adam's sin all those born from Adam and Eve have inherited a sinful nature that is completely unwilling, unable, and opposed to all that is good and wholly inclined to all that is evil.

And so for the man, woman, or child, who is outside of Christ there is no battle against sin and certainly no desire to please God.

Unbelievers may certainly do good things externally but there is no desire to please God and so these works have no real value in the eyes of God.

Yet for the believer there is a very real battle and struggle against sin.

We read in the Westminster Confession of Faith,

“When God converts a sinner and brings him into the state of grace, he frees him from his natural bondage to sin, and by his grace alone he enables him freely to will and to do what is spiritually good. Yet, because of his remaining corruption, he does not perfectly nor only will what is good, but also wills what is evil.”

The believer is in a position very similar to that of Adam and Eve before they fell in the garden.

While the unbeliever has no choice but to sin and do that which is self-pleasing, the believer does face a choice each day and each moment.

### **Will you submit to God's authority or follow your own desires and ideas?**

Let us then never forget the horror of sin and its consequences.

Let us also consider that we have no power in ourselves to fight against sin and sinful desires.

It is the power of God in the resurrection of Jesus Christ and in the working of the Holy Spirit that you can turn from sin and live truly for God.

**Rom. 6:9** knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. **10** For *the death* that He died, He died to sin once for all; but *the life* that He lives, He lives to God. **11** Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

## **Prayer**

### **Hymn 402**

#### **BENEDICTION – 1 THESS. 5:23-24**

Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it.