

# Rebellion that demands a response

3-Year Bible Reading Plan

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You know, collectively this morning we've made some pretty emphatic statements that the Father's arms are open wide, that forgiveness is only found through Jesus Christ and his shed blood, that this treasure in him we should share with the whole world, but as we made those statements together as a family of faith, I would hate if you missed the strategic question that was asked at the beginning of that song together. It asked us: have you come to the end of yourself? You realize all those statements can't be made until you come to that point. We have got to come to the end of ourselves and today as we open up and as we study the word of God, it is going to challenge us of what can be when we come to the end of ourselves and it's going to show us what happens if we decide to listen to self.

Let us pray in preparation for the challenge.

*Heavenly Father, as we continue our time of worship, we confess that at our core in our flesh, we are carnal, self-absorbed people. Lord, we do not naturally gravitate toward you, your righteousness and your goodness, Lord. We confess when left to ourselves, we fall into the temptations and the trappings of this world and of sin so, God, we pray, help us, O God. Help us as we are challenged by your word, as we're convicted by your word. Help us, O God, that all of the competing voices would be silenced; that all of the dissenting opinions, all of the ways of this world would somehow not even be on the forefront or even in the back of our minds. And Lord, as we open your word, may your words and may your voice be the only one we listen to today. Help us, O God, to come to the end of ourselves. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.*

This morning, I want to encourage you to open your Bibles to the book of Genesis 3. As you're turning to Genesis 3, you may not realize it but you are here today in a very strategic time in the life of our family of faith. If you were not with us last week, maybe you're here as a first-time guest or visitor, or maybe just in the course of life you were not able to join us, we began a journey together last week that is going to take us some almost three years. It is a journey where we as a family of faith systematically, and shall I say simply, are just going to walk through the Scriptures at a very strategic pace.

You know, oftentimes we read through the Bible in a year or maybe there's an intensive study here or there, but over this course of time, it is our challenge as a family of faith to just walk through the Scriptures one chapter at a time, and there will be some occasions where it may be two chapters a day, and as we walk through the reading schedules or not only in the worship guides and online, but we've also got journals that walk alongside of them because here's why: we want you to interact with, we want you to be involved with what the Scriptures say, not just read for the purpose of checking off a box and saying, "I accomplished the task." Just this week, I cannot tell you how many conversations, emails, phone calls I've had from folks reading through the Scripture at a very different pace than normal and saying, "I've never seen that before. I never realized that was there. Or I never realized that was not there."

So today as we come to Genesis 3, just as we go through the course of this journey, there will be times as we gather up on Sunday morning, as we study that which we have read throughout the week, there are times we may select a certain passage, there are times we may focus on a specific character or story, but today as we begin the public proclamation of this journey, I think it is fitting in the first some chapters of Genesis that we look at kind of a summary, shall we say, of the story. Today I want to begin our journey with addressing creation's rebellion and God, or the Creator's response. What we see in these first chapters of Genesis is the rebellion of the creation but the Creator who comes in and interjects his response in the midst of rebellion.

I want to encourage you to turn to Genesis 3:1. It says, "Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made." Now I'm going to stop right there. Now don't worry, we're going to come back to Genesis 3, but you and I have to realize that as we know the fall of man, as we know the rebellion of Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden, we typically think of that as the first act of rebellion but what we see in Scripture is that a rebellion has already taken place. In fact, by the time we get to the garden of Eden in chapter 3, it says that the serpent is present. When you go to the last book of your Bible in the book of Revelation 12, it describes that character whom we know as Satan or the devil as that "old serpent." So by the time we get to the garden of Eden and the eventual fall of man, we have to acknowledge that a cosmic rebellion has already taken place.

In fact, the book of Ezekiel 28 alludes to this rebellion where it says the one whom we originally knew as Lucifer, the lighted one who had a very strategic position, he is called the cherubim over the throne of God. It says he was perfect in his beauty. It says he was perfect in his voice and in his declarations, but it said that over the course of time, iniquity was found in him. More explicitly in the book of Isaiah 14, it gives us a little more detail, that there came a point in his existence, he who used to be over the throne of God, the cherubim over the throne of God, decided as John Milton who wrote "Paradise Lost," that he would rather reign in hell than serve in heaven. In Isaiah 14, five times this statement is made, "I will. I will exalt my throne above the heavens. I will exalt myself above God. I will place myself above the clouds. I will put myself in authority." And what we see in the rebellion of Satan is the mantra of all rebellion, "I will." It is the declaration that we know infinitely more, so we believe, than our Creator does. It is the

belief that we think we know how to better live this life than the Creator does, and thus the first rebellion.

By the time we come to Genesis 3, sin has entered the cosmos. Sin has entered the creation and the result that we see there are two things. The first thing is this: as you walk through Genesis 1, what we know as the creation narrative, you're going to see a very specific word show up four times that you may not have expected, it's the word "darkness." Over and over it says that there was darkness that was present. You say, "Well, why is that important?" Because in 1 John 1:5 it says, "God is light and in him is no darkness." So the result of sin entering the creation is that darkness was now present; darkness was now encompassing; darkness was here.

But there was a second thing or a second result. Not just the presence of darkness but the presence of death. Now, as you read through Genesis 1 and 2 on your way to the garden of Eden, you'll never see a statement or a phrase that somebody or something has died, however, when you go to the book of Romans 8, it says that when sin entered the universe, that because of that all creation groans. That's one of those verses that, you know, typically we apply it to Adam and Eve. We apply it to you and I when we say that when we rebelled, when we sinned, when we fell away, that our sin was so grave and so dramatic that it didn't just affect Adam and Eve, it didn't just affect the human race, it affected everything around us. Albeit as that may be, sin entered before the garden. Darkness was present, Satan had fallen and death had taken place.

So even though he rebelled, even though he said, "I would rather reign in hell than serve in heaven," darkness and death were the byproducts thereof. So how did God respond? What did God do? Think about verse 3, one of those famous verses in the Bible, "Let there be light." In the midst of darkness, what does God say? He says, "In the midst of all this happening, I will issue, I will bring forth my light," and what we discover is this, that no matter how dark it may get, God's light is always brighter. So his response in the midst of darkness, his response in the midst of a cosmic rebellion was to institute his light to diminish and take out the darkness. This is why later in 2 Corinthians 4, it's very important, it says that the message of Jesus Christ, the Gospel, is hidden to those who have been deceived by the devil lest the glorious light of Jesus Christ shine forth.

So not only did God bring forth light but he also brought forth life. Another famous passage in Genesis 1:26, God says, "Let Us make man in Our own image, after Our own likeness. He made them male and female." He made them. Why is that so important? Because in the beginning of that passage it says he created, he brought forth from nothing that which would be of substance. So even though there was darkness and there was death, the Lord interjects and in that creation narrative he brings forth light and he brings forth life.

It's the story of the first rebellion. It's the story of that which took place even before humanity had their opportunity. Let's continue the story in Genesis 3, beginning about midway through. It says that, "And he," the old serpent, "said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the

serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat. And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons."

Now we enter into the second rebellion in this context of the book of Genesis. We have the rebellion of Lucifer becoming Satan or the devil, now we have the rebellion of humanity, and when you look at our rebellion, there are a couple of things I want you to take note of. The first one is this: that the best lies are 90% true. In Genesis 2:16, the Lord gave the commission or the commandment to humanity of how we were to do this experiment in the garden. He said, "You may eat freely of every tree of the garden except this one." Notice that he used in your English translation, he used 10 words and the devil used 9. Do you know the only word the devil left out? "Freely." Isn't that the thing about sin? We believe that sin will give us freedom, we believe that sin will allow us to experience everything we hope to experience, but what does it ultimately give us? Bondage. They were desiring to go beyond what God had said and they ended up in a place they never desired to be.

The second thing I want you to notice about man's rebellion is that when Satan and Eve are having this conversation, he says, "Oh, surely you're not going to die." Notice what she says, "God said we can't eat it and we can't touch it." Do you notice something erroneous there? The Lord never said they couldn't touch it, he said they couldn't eat it. Isn't it amazing how when we get in a position where we think we know better than God and say, "I will," all of a sudden we start saying that God said things God never said and making him out to be some cosmic dictator that he never was. They put him in a position, they attributed words to him that are not recorded as ever being spoken by him.

And the third thing, it says they thought it was good for food, it was pleasant to the eyes, and they would have wisdom like the gods. You go into 1 John 2 and it says that we should not care for the things of this world, for it is the lust of the eyes, it is the lust of the flesh, and it is the pride of life that will get us every single time. Not only do we struggle with those today, that was our initial struggle. It looked good to the eyes, it was going to be good to taste and it would give us an ability to be something greater than we were, it was pride.

So, therefore, what we see is humanity falls into rebellion. So the story prior to Genesis 3 is the story of his rebellion, this is the story of humanity's rebellion. So what were the results? Well, back in Genesis 2:16, here's what the Lord said, "In the day that you eat thereof, you will surely die." Now did any of you find that humorous? Can you like surely be dead? I mean, isn't dead dead? I mean, seriously? God says, "You're like really going to be dead." It reminds me of John 11 when Lazarus has been dead for four days

and Jesus says, "Hey, I'm about to bring him out of the grave," and Lazarus' sister says, "Whoa! Behold, he stinketh, God. I mean, this is serious. I mean, he's like really really dead." You know that dead is dead so why does the Bible say you will surely die? It's almost as if the Bible is saying this: that in the day that humanity does this, they will die twice.

You know, when you get to the book of Revelation 20, that final great judgment, it says that those that are brought forth before the Lord when they're cast into what the Bible calls the Lake of Fire for rejection in Jesus Christ, what does it say? "This is the second death." That's why the old time preachers used to say this, that if you're born once, you're going to die twice, but if you're born again, you only die once.

So the Lord says in the day that you rebel, there's going to be two results: you're going to die physically and you're going to die spiritually. Now I want you to think about that because today as a family of faith, we celebrated new life, did we not? We celebrated these babies, we celebrated these parents, we celebrated these families and we're grateful for it, but can we be very theologically objective this morning? As cute and as wonderful as these new families are, every one of us must recognize and acknowledge we're all born to die and that may be a sobering thought on a day of celebration but we realize that because of the garden of Eden, death is the standard course for humanity. Death is what will take place. Death is what will happen to each and every one of us.

But it wasn't just physical death that was ensured, it was also spiritual death, for in this story if you continue to read in Genesis 3, it says not only did they sew the fig leaves and they made aprons, they hid themselves from the presence of the Lord, God shows up and I find humor in this story, maybe you don't, God shows up and goes, "Hey, where are you?" Now I know what some of you are thinking: well, if God's all-knowing and he's everywhere, does he not know where they are? Oh, he knew where they were. What God wanted to know is, "Do you, Adam and Eve, do you know where you are?" They had to confess, "We're hiding ourselves." They had to confess, "We ate of the forbidden fruit." They had to confess, "We tried to fix it ourselves." And what do we discover? That there is now a break in fellowship, there is now a chasm, and in times past the Lord walked with them in the cool of the day, now they're hiding themselves from his presence. They are ashamed for their eyes have been opened and sin has taken place.

It's not only the rebellion of Adam and Eve and the result thereof, I want us to notice in Genesis 3 the response of God because God could have left them "to their own devices" and the story would be much differently written. Let's see what God's response physically first. In fact, when you begin to read the rest of Genesis 3, he first talks to the serpent, then to the man, to the woman, and he begins to lay out the consequences or I hate to use this word, but even the punishment thereof of for everybody in rebellion. And to the woman, here's what he says, "You will experience pain in childbirth and the desire of your husband." To the man he says, "You will by the sweat of your brow and amidst the thorns you will bring forth the fruit and the food of the earth." And that's actually God's provision.

You say, "Well, how is that provision? Isn't that really punishment?" No, because when he said, "You will surely die," you realize he could have ended it right then and there. He could have said, "That's it. I'm done. It's over. Experiment cease. You're done." But when God said and we celebrated today new families, when God said there would be pain in childbirth, do you know what he was saying? He was providing them – hear me out – he was providing a future. He was saying, "I'm not done with you yet. There will be successive generations. There will be more that come along. I'm not done." He provided us a future.

When it says that her desire should be of her husband, that there would be struggles and strains within the home, here's what the Lord was saying, "I'm going to provide for you meaningful relationships." Sometimes they may be a struggle, sometimes there may be difficulty but whether it be a spousal relationship or children or best friends, whatever it may be, that because there's a future of humanity, there's also the provision of the interaction and the involvement of humanity.

You say, "Well, what about the statement to the guy that says by the sweat of your brow you'll bring forth food? This is going to be miserable." He said, "Yes," he said, "but I will provide for you nourishment along the way." Can you imagine if the Lord had said, "Okay, here's the deal: we're just going to let you starve this thing out. Have fun." Three, four, five weeks later, the agony, the pain, the misery that would have ensued, but God was providing for them physical provision because they would now experience a physical death.

But let's talk about the spiritual provision for just a moment. Still in Genesis 3, I want you to look at verse 15. This is the statement that God makes to the serpent. He said, "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his foot." You know, oftentimes in the theological realm we call this the very first Gospel. If you want the fancy term, we call it the proto-evangelium. In other words, when we talk about what was God going to provide for them for this spiritual chasm, this spiritual death that ensued, he was promising them – and hear me out, this is a big word but I'm going to unpeel the layers here – he was promising what we call propitiation. Now that'll get you a lot of points in Scrabble but let me unpack it for a moment. Propitiation is mentioned later in the New Testament, particularly 1 John 2, which means that he will provide one who will take the punishment for us. When he says that there will come one of the woman, that though his foot is bruised, he will take the head of the serpent, this is the first Gospel; that the Messiah will come whom we know as Jesus Christ, will one day come from a woman and he will allow himself to be sacrificed for our sins.

More explicitly, if you're still in Genesis 3, go a few verses over and it says there in verse 21 that as they are exiting the garden of Eden, the Lord made animal skins for them. Do you realize what the Lord was doing? He was picturing for us the very first blood sacrifice, the blood of one whose life was taken for the provision and the protection of another.

You know, Hebrews 9:22 says without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins, and so before we even get out of what we know as the garden of Eden, the Lord has not only said that though the days may be long and they may be a struggle, I'm going to give you physical nourishment, but more importantly, I'm going to provide a means to solve your spiritual death. A Savior is going to come who will shed his blood and take our place.

You know, when you look at the Genesis account, you see his, being Satan's rebellion; you see theirs, as in Adam and Eve's rebellion; but as we draw to a close today, let's make it personal, let's talk about our rebellion. I want you to turn to Genesis 6, a very famous story of what we know as Noah's flood typically. We look back at Satan's fall and we say, "Yeah, that was his doing." We look back at the garden of Eden and typically we get very prideful and we say, "Well, that was Adam and Eve. That wasn't you and me." But I've got news: if they hadn't done it, you would have. But in Genesis 6, I know it's about a big boat, I know it's about a big flood, but let's look at it from the perspective of our rebellion collectively.

It says, "And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, That the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose. And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years. There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown." Look at verse 5, "And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." You do realize that's our story, right? Romans 3:23 says, "For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." The Bible says that all of our works are as filthy rags.

Verse 6, "6 And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them." Look at verse 8, "But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD." This is the story of our rebellion; that you and I today irrespectively of the garden of Eden, irrespectively of the initial fall of Satan, every thought of our heart is wicked continually. We are the filthy rags. We are those who have fallen short of the glory of God.

So what's the result? What did God do in this story that he does in our lives today? The first thing he does is this: he gives them a warning. He says, "Okay, humanity, I know things aren't going real well here," but notice he says to Noah, "I need you to build this boat for 120 years." By the way, next time you begin to complain about how difficult it is to study for finals or to prepare for a presentation, can you imagine building a boat for 120 years and you're 500 years old? I mean, that's some tough stuff. But he says, "Okay, I'm going to give humanity 120 year warning." But there's a second result: once that warning was over, after 120 years, the boat was closed up, the waters came down, and

only according to Scripture eight souls were saved, Noah, his wife, his three sons and their three wives.

So what was God's response not just to Noah but what's his response to us? I want you to think about that warning for just a moment and when God says, "I'm going to give you 120 years to get this together. You've got all the chance you want." Do you know what he's extending? It's called mercy. Let me define for you mercy: mercy is not getting what you rightfully deserve. What did humanity deserve? Instant death. What did humanity deserve? Not a second chance, much less 120 years worth of chances. Did you know that the very fact that you're listening to my voice right now, you are a testimony to mercy? You are a testimony to mercy. God could have already taken you out but he said, "Do you know what? I'm going to give you some time. I'm going to give you a window of life for you to get right with me."

That's mercy, but look at verse 8, "But Noah found grace." I've read the last chapters of the Bible and judgment will come. The Bible says that all of us, humanity, will stand before God one day. "It's appointed unto men all once to die and then the judgment." But according to Ephesians 4:7, it says that we all, every one of us, have been given the gift of grace according to the measure of Jesus Christ much like the ark that was built in Genesis 6, like the little boat that Moses rode in in the book of Exodus or the picture of the cross and the empty tomb. Grace by definition is receiving that which you do not deserve. You and I don't deserve forgiveness. We don't deserve grace. We don't deserve heaven. We don't deserve what the Lord is talking about. By the way if you think, "Well, maybe Noah did." No, he didn't. Read chapter 9 and look what happened when he got off the boat. It's called grace. He received provision when he did not deserve it.

You see, as we roll out of this first section of the book of Genesis, we can see the rebellion of Satan, we see the rebellion of Adam and Eve, but then we have to look at our own rebellion and realize that every day of our life both physically and spiritually, God is extending a hand of mercy and saying, "Hey, I'm not yet allowing you to suffer the consequences permanently of your rebellion. Please, oh please, would you take advantage of the grace that I've offered through the person of Jesus Christ."

You see, we have all rebelled, God has responded. The question is: have we responded to his response?

Let's pray with our heads bowed and our eyes closed. You know, maybe you're that individual today who maybe the proverbial light bulb came on, maybe for the very first time you realized that all of your best endeavors, all of your best intentions are headed down a dead-end path, and maybe today you realize the importance not just of the mercy that God has given you for today but the grace that he's offered you for the rest of your days. If you're that individual today, you know the Bible says whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved and maybe you're that person and so today can I just encourage you to have a conversation with God? I know technically we call it prayer but just a conversation, not out loud and not necessarily using the same words that I might use, but maybe your conversation with God would go a little something like this. "God, today I'm



coming to the end of myself. Lord, I realize that all of my best endeavors and intentions ultimately and eternally, they're going to get me nowhere and I believe that Jesus Christ is the only answer to my sin problem and my rebellion. God, today I believe. I believe that Jesus Christ loved me so much that he was willing to be born on my behalf. I believe that Jesus Christ loved me so much that he was willing to live a sinless on my behalf. I believe that Jesus Christ loved me so much he was willing to pay the price for my sin on the cross. And I believe he loved me so much that three days later he rose from the grave so I could be forgiven and I could be saved. God, today I don't have all the answers to the world's problems, I don't even have all the answers to my problems, but I do know that Jesus Christ is the only answer to my sin problem. So the best way I know how, I'm asking you to forgive me, I'm asking you to save me. I just want to turn my life over to you."

With our heads still bowed and our eyes still closed. In just a moment, we'd just like the opportunity to have a conversation with you. Maybe that's the conversation you had with the Lord today or maybe you're here today desiring to become a part of this incredible family of faith, or maybe you've never displayed your faith through what we know as baptism on the outside regarding the truth that is on the inside. Maybe those are the next steps for you. Maybe it's something else. We'd just love to have a conversation with you about it.

*Lord, as we come to this time, Lord, thank you that you're a God of mercy and a God of grace; that you don't only give second and third chances but, Lord, in some of our situations we look back on life and say, "I've lost count of how many opportunities you've given." So God, I pray today that whatever the decision, whatever the next step in our life in regards to you, we would simply ignore the other voices, we would ignore the leans and the desires of the flesh, and we would simply respond to your Spirit and your Spirit alone. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.*

At this time, I'm going to ask you to stand with me as our team leads us. Any and all decisions, I'll be right here at the front.