

PARADISE LOST

GENESIS 3

It was one of those warm and beautiful spring days in Germany just outside the town of Gotha, April 4th, 1945. Bruce Nichols and his 89th Infantry Division platoon were on an Intelligence and Reconnaissance patrol on the outskirts of the city when they stumbled upon what appeared to be a compound of some type. The enclosure was surrounded by a high barbed wire fence and on the gate was a sign that read "Arbeit Macht Frei," (*archt-bite mact frly*) *work makes you free*.

The gate was off its hinges and open and a young SS guard lay dead across the entrance. As the platoon entered the compound Nichols was overwhelmed by the stench. An overpowering odor of lime, feces and urine filled his nostrils. In the center of the compound lay a pile of seventy dead bodies clad in striped clothing. What Nichols platoon discovered was the Orhruf (or-dwuf) concentration camp - the first Nazi internment camp liberated by the American army during World War 2.

As word got out to America and the world of the atrocities the Nazi's had committed, the overwhelming question in the minds of the soldiers, officers, politicians and ordinary Americans was: *How did we get here?* How did this happen?

Every one of us has asked that question either about the world around us, or about our own lives. We've all wondered, or we'll be in a situation some day where we look around at our circumstances and we wonder, how did this happen? How did we get here? It's the question asked when we hear of a man walking into an elementary school guns down an entire kindergarten class. It's the question we ask when another pastor is disqualified from the ministry because of a moral failure. It's the question asked by the husband whose wife has just walked out on him for another man. It's the question asks by parent whose anger has left their relationship with their child in shambles. It's the question asked by the employee who shows up to work everyday hating their job. What is wrong with the world? Why is the world so broken?

In the early 20th century, even before the events of World War 2, the Times of London asked several well known British intellectuals to write essays answering this exact question - What is wrong with the world? G.K. Chesterton, who was well known for his humility and wit submitted this short answer: "Dear Sirs, I am. Sincerely, G.K. Chesterton.

Deep down we all know there is something wrong with the world. Life is broken. Things aren't as there are supposed to be. Gen. 3 was written to explain for us the origins of that brokenness. Gen. 3 says that the starting point of the world's brokenness is our own brokenness. But what I ultimately want you to see is that there hope for life in this broken world. That one day everything will be set right. Everything will be the way it's supposed to be.

Pray

If you have your Bibles, grab them and keep them open with me to our story in Genesis 3. We're going to follow this story through three chapters, three acts: Paradise in Crisis, Paradise Lost, and Paradise Promised.

Now at the end of Genesis 2, Adam and Eve it says were naked and unashamed. Now this is not like being down in Portland for the World's Naked Bike Ride in June, that's a different type of naked and unashamed. Adam and Eve are in fact living the perfect life. They are living in intimacy with God and one another. They are experiencing perfect harmony. The banner that we could put over all of Genesis 2 is the Hebrew word, "Shalom". Shalom of course, means peace, but the reality of what it actually is goes way beyond that. Cornelius Plantinga says that shalom is, "The webbing together of God, humans, and all creation in justice, fulfillment, and delight." Shalom expresses the goodness of the way the things are supposed to be.

Being naked and unashamed means that Adam and Eve were completely transparent before God and each other. In the garden there were no secrets, nothing to hide, nothing to protect or be afraid of. Their experience of life with God and with one another was that of being completely known and completely loved. And the best part about Eden was that God was there. The garden was where God dwelled with his people. What ultimately made the garden good was God, his presence. This was Paradise. And this paradise is about to come into crisis.

As soon as we turn the corner into the next chapter, right from naked and unashamed we get Genesis 3:1 - *"Now the serpent was more craft than any other beast of the field that the Lord had made."*

Now in the story that is in front of us, the devil is not actually mentioned by name. But we know if we work our way back from the book of Revelation that this serpent is actually Satan. Well, most likely Satan manipulating, or inhabiting this actual physical snake that is a part of God's creation.

And here is what he says to Eve, "*Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?'*"

What the snake says is going to start a downward tailspin that literally affects the rest of human history. You can imagine - the text doesn't indicate exactly how long Adam and Eve were in the garden before the serpent shows up, but I'm guessing the reason Eve isn't all that shocked by a talking snake is that it hasn't been long. She has yet to explore all that God has created here.

And the picture we usually have in our heads of this scene is that Eve is in the midst of this garden, and this evil, hissing, slithery, tempter comes and speaks with her. But I don't think that would have ever worked on Eve. That would have been far too obvious. I'm sure to Eve the temptation was much more subtle than that. Here is this creature that seems to know what he is talking about, seems to have wisdom, seems to have wisdom and insight into her situation and is offering a different perspective, a different angle, a different truth.

Then the road to sin begins with this question. Did God really say?

Every sin that we follow begins with this question. Did God really say what he said? "*Did God really mean what I'm told he meant by what he said?*" Are I sure I heard God right? Am I certain that is what God meant for me to understand?

It may not be something that we even consciously recognize, but this is the heart question that gets asked.

And something we need to notice is that throughout all of this account in Genesis 3 the name used of God is the name Yahweh. Yahweh is LORD in your Bibles. Yahweh is this personal name for God. It's the name God has given to his own people to call him. It's the "we're on a first name basis" name for God. But here in this exchange between the serpent and Eve, it's not the name Yahweh used, but Elohim, not the personal name for God but the proper word meaning God.

Satan begins this discussion, and Eve follows suit, taking what should be a relational question, obedience to God, and turning it into a philosophical, theoretical question. And this is what happens with sin. It is much more comfortable, much more convenient to enter into a dialogue with sin when we keep God at a distance, at arms length, than when we think about him as our Father.

So Satan is saying - did this, let's call him "god", really say you shouldn't eat from any tree in the garden?"

But that that isn't what God said and Eve knows it.

v.2 And then *the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden, but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'"*

Eve has almost got it right. She has the general idea. But if you look back at Gen. 2:16-17 you'll see that God doesn't say they couldn't touch the tree. Eve may have inferred that, she may have taken that away as God's meaning, but that's not what he actually said. She has already added to God's word in how she has remembered it.

What we see here is that sin isn't just the territory of those pagans who deny God's commands and requirements, but is just as much a problem for the religious, the legalists who add to the list of what God has commanded.

Even though Eve has the basic sense of what God has said, she is already starting to follow the road, the trajectory that Satan intends. She is starting to follow this train of thought to think maybe God is not quite as generous as she thought he was. Maybe God actually wants to keep something from me. She's buying into this notion that God rules are there to restrain her and steal her joy. Hold onto that thought, we're going to see it again in a moment.

v.4 *"But the serpent said to the woman, 'You will not surely die!' For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."*

God knows... Satan says. God knows what's going to happen when you eat this. Life will be better. You'll be happier. Satan adds to this thought already rolling around in Eve's mind. God is not really good. God is trying to steal my joy. God wants you down. You can't trust him. Take things into your own hands because he doesn't have your best interest in mind. He's against you.

This process, this series of questions and thoughts, is actually what is going on in your heart every time you are faced with temptation. You probably feel like it. I'm sure you don't consciously go through this. When you face temptation and sin you don't have a checklist of questions in front of you, there is no logical process, no flow chart of temptation, you're not even aware of it, but this is what's happening in your heart.

Men, as you are tempted to look at pornography, in some way in your heart you're saying, "Did God actually say not to do these things?" Because I have these pent up appetites, and this sometimes just feels so comforting, and this isn't really affecting anyone else, did God actually say this is forbidden?" God must not care about my happiness, God must not care about my good. Did he actually say this sin will kill me? That this act will bring death? And then when you engage in that sin you are believing the lie saying, "No, I will not surely die."

Young mothers as you are tempted to anger at your children for being the little sinners that they are, in your heart you are saying, "Did God actually say not to do this?" Because I feel so justified in yelling at my children right now. They've offended me and they need to know the gravity of that offense. Did God actually say this is forbidden? God must not care about my joy, my good. Did he actually say by engaging in this sin would die? And then by acting out that anger that is already erupting inside you are saying, "No, I will not surely die."

What we are seeing here brothers and sisters is the anatomy of sin. This is what initially put Paradise in crisis and eventually lost it. This is the blueprint of our own brokenness.

v. 6 *"So 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 to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate."*

I know we're hitting a lot on sin here...

What Eve sees in the fruit tells us the very heart of what sin is. Verse 6 is like somebody took sin, put it under a microscope, and recorded this genetic code. So what is that code? 3 things: It looks good for food, it is a delight to the eyes, and it promises to make her wise. And these three things latch onto her heart. Sin holds out these promises - It will satisfy, it's pretty, it's enlightening,it will make be better, take me higher.

In the NT John breaks the DNA of sin down in this exact same three prong hook.

1 Jn 2:16 - *"For all that is in the world - the desires of the flesh, the desires of the eyes, and the pride of life - is not from the Father but from the world."*

John breaks down the appeal of sin in the same way. He's saying that sin is all about our appetites. Makes connections - desires of the flesh — good for food. Pride of life — to make one wise. Very promises we believe when we give into temptation. Your heart makes these connections. When we disobey God its because we believe the lie that something will satisfy more than he does. We're believe there is something more beautiful in this sin than God himself is. We're believing there is something in this sin that will make us better than God will.

Root of every sinful choice we ever make. Every sin is idolatry b/c every sin is a worship of sth. other than God. When we look at sth. and we say that it is good and satisfying and beautiful and to be desired, that's called worship, and that thing we are worshipping we are calling god. This is idol worship.

So sin isn't ultimately a behavior problem but a worship problem.

So how do we stop this downward spiral of sin and temptation in our own lives? I love what Jared Wilson says, he says “we worshipped our way into this problem, we need to worship our way out.” We get into sin because our heart is directed toward something other than God, so to get out of sin our heart needs to be directed at God. Sin is finding satisfaction and beauty and wisdom in things other than God. So we’ll only find the power to overcome temptation when we turn our eyes to see that God is more satisfying than anything, that God is more beautiful than anything, and that God is more wise than anything.

This is what it means to see and savor the gospel. As we see the satisfaction and beauty and wisdom of Jesus’ work on the cross in God’s word and that becomes real in our hearts, we can’t talk about “god” at arms length. We want to love him and obey him.

But in this moment Adam and Eve worshipped their own appetites and so they disobeyed God. Let’s see what happens next.

v.7 “Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.”

Paradise has been lost. Here was this promise that Adam and Eve would be like God and suddenly instead of feeling powerful and authoritative they feel incredibly vulnerable. They don’t feel secure or enlightened but ashamed and exposed.

Sin always brings this sense of shame. Imagine for a moment that one Sunday morning we had a video made of every action, every thought of your entire life and we played it in HD up on the screen in front of everyone you knew. What would you feel? Why do you think one of the most common reoccurring dreams for people is going out of their house either in their underwear or naked? We’re not just afraid of people finding out our most embarrassing moment. There are things we’ve done with our hands and thought with our minds that we bury in deep places desperately hoping no one will ever find out.

And shame doesn’t just come from our own sin. Living in a sinful and broken world we’re affected deeply by the sin of others. Violation and abuse and rejection can all leave us feeling naked, exposed, contaminated. There is the sense that if you were completely known you could never be completely loved.

This is what Adam and Eve are feeling. But their response is not to turn to God but to turn to themselves. They sew together fig leaves and make for themselves loincloths.

I mean, honestly - is this the most ridiculous thing you have ever heard? How long are these clothes going to last? How often are they going to have to be replaced? And yet this is what all of us do. We feel this sense of shame and we try to use whatever we can cover up the brokenness inside of us. We're at church every week doing the right things. We put on a happy face. We walk with a swagger, but we're never honest, never actually transparent. We would never let someone actually know what's going on in our heart, in our family, in our marriage, in our life.

So sin brings this shame before each other, but it also results in guilt before God.

v.8 *"And 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.*

Where there was this relationship of intimacy and friendship and harmony with God, there is now fear and hiding. Isn't this just sad? That Adam and Eve would go from this experience of walking with God in the garden in the cool of the day, to actually hiding from his voice.

But all of us have experienced this. I'm sure there are some of you here this morning that are right here in this verse 8. You can't remember the last time you prayed, the last time you picked up his word, the last time anything personal happened between you and God. This experience of guilt has caused you to hide from him.

So sin cause shame and guilt...

v.9-13 - A seminary professor called this the inevitable disease that follows sin - BTS - Blame Transference Syndrome. And isn't it true? We will sometimes say anything to excuse ourselves. Not factually incorrect. This is why our relationships are so messed up.

Well after this in verses 14-19 God pronounces his curse. We're not going to read through all of it, but because sin has broken this relationship between humans and God, humans relationship with every other level of God's created order is broken. Humans' relationship is broken with one other - the woman is going to try and displace her husband as God's appointed leader and men are going to exercise power and authority in selfish and prideful ways. Humans' relationship is broken with creation - work is going to hard and fruit will only come with sweat. Everything is broken, and so this is why I am saying that the root cause of why the holocaust happened, and why someone shoots up an elementary school, and why mudslides happen in

Oso, and why there is tension in my marriage, the root cause for all of this is sin. And in the end humans will die.

Then v. 23 says that *"the Lord God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. v.24 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."* Paradise has been lost.

Well, things at this point seem pretty bleak. We know why the world is broken but I can't help but cry out with Paul in Romans 7 - "Who will rescue us from this body of death?" The answer is not ourselves - it's Jesus. But I want to end with three ways he does this.

1. He covers our nakedness.

Look at v. 21. After all this. After all that has happened. Look at God's grace toward Adam and Eve. *"And the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them."*

God refuses to leave Adam and Eve to their pitiful substitutes for covering their shame. He won't leave them exposed to the elements in the hostile world they're about to enter. Fig leaves just aren't going to cut it, so he clothes them.

2. He destroys our enemy.

v. 14-15

That word offspring is singular. And so who is that offspring? Jesus. And because of time I'm not going to go into the details of how I know that's Jesus, but if you need to you can talk to me after about it.

Theologians call these verses the proto-evangelion - the first gospel. Because right here in this verse is a picture of the cross. Do you see it? It's a picture of the cross because Christ is being bruised, he is being afflicted by the serpent at the same time that he is bruising or crushing the serpent. In what seems like defeat is actually victory.

And the the promise of the gospel is that in the cross Jesus defeats Satan and the words God gives to the snake in v. 14 essentially become a promise to us of Satan's demise - that ultimately Satan, that great serpent, will bite the dust.

So Jesus clothes our nakedness, he destroys our enemy, and finally...

3. He restores Paradise.

Luke records that the the day Jesus died, it was about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour, then, just before Jesus breathed his last, the curtain of the temple was torn in two. From the time God had commanded his people in the wilderness to build the tabernacle that curtain had been the divider between what was called the Holy of Holies and the rest of the temple. It was what separated sinful man from the presence of God that was in that most holy place. The Holy of Holies was the dwelling place of God on earth, and only the high priest was permitted to enter through that curtain.

And here were God's instructions in making that curtain - Ex. 26:31 - *"And you shall make a veil of blue and purple and scarlet yarns and fine twined linen. It shall be made with cherubim skillfully worked into it."* On that veil were cherubim, representing the divide between a holy God and sinful man that had existed since Adam and Eve were driven out of the garden.

When that curtain was torn it was more than a simple expression that man could again commune with God, as great as that is. The torn curtain is a declaration that through the cross God has removed the cherubim and the flaming sword that guards the way to Paradise. It is a promise that right now God has made a way to fellowship with his people and one day God will dwell with his people again as he did in Eden.

The Bible starts in a garden, and ends in a city. In that city there will be no secrets, nothing to hide, nothing to protect or be afraid of. We will be completely known and yet completely loved. And God will dwell with his people. What ultimately makes heaven good is God. his presence. Paradise was once⁹ lost, but it hasn't been lost forever. One day paradise will be restored. Let me read you how it ends.

Rev. 21:1-7, 22-27