

Curse

Genesis 3

This is week two of *Open - a one year journey through the Bible!* Last week we studied LIFE - seeing how God created everything by the Word of His power and how Jesus is the light of life. Today we turn from Genesis 1 and 2 to Genesis 3.

- God's original creation was perfectly good - harmonious, peaceful and overflowing with life.
- Then something happened that changed everything. Suddenly God's perfect creation was corrupted with pain, suffering and death.
- LIFE in Genesis 1 and 2 gives way to the CURSE of Genesis 3. This is the second of 50 words we will study this year that summarize the whole Bible story.

Why is the world the way it is? Why is there so much evil and suffering in the world? Why do we all struggle to do the right thing? The answer is right in front of us in Genesis 3. There was no evil or suffering in the world God made. A serpent named Satan slithered in, deceived Adam and Eve and introduced the virus of sin that has been passed on to every person ever since. At the moment of their rebellion the fabric of the world was torn. Listen to Romans 5:

"Sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned... death reigned from Adam to Moses." Romans 5:12,14

The answer to the reason "why?" is sin. **One word: sin.** God placed Adam and Eve in a perfect paradise with every conceivable blessing. They had every fruit and vegetable to eat. They had every animal to interact with, without any fear. They had work to do in ruling over the land and creatures God had made.

But there was one rule. **One clear and simple rule.**

"The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, 'You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, 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.'" Genesis 2:15-17

God says: "Eat from all these other trees. But this one - don't eat from this one. ***You don't want the knowledge of good and evil.*** If you get that knowledge you will surely die. I don't want that for you. I don't want you to experience that pain. So enjoy everything else I've given you and trust me on this one thing."

Adam and Eve had everything. But then the serpent slithered in. Genesis 3:1 -

1. Question God's Word

Now the serpent... said to the woman, "**Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?**" Genesis 3:1

Notice how the first thing the devil does is to **QUESTION GOD'S WORD**. "Did God actually say...?" The devil's playbook is very thin. He has a few plays and he runs them exceedingly well. Here he questions God's Word and he **CONFUSES** God's Will. Notice the subtlety of his words – you shall not eat of ANY tree in the garden. Look back at what God actually told Adam in Gen. 2 -

And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "**You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, 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.**" Genesis 2:16-17

2. Confuse God's Will

Now the serpent... said to the woman, "**Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?**" Genesis 3:1

When we see these two things thousands of years later in the light of history, it seems so obvious and ridiculous that Adam and Eve fell for it. But the devil successfully questioned God's Word and confused God's will. He then **downplayed the danger** saying "you won't surely die" and got Eve to **focus on her desires** – "look what you'll get!"

"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." Genesis 3:6

A lot more could be said about the serpent's tactics – read more on the church blog and at openthe bible.org. He uses **the same strategies today**:

The devil's Playbook

1. Question God's Word – "Did God actually say..."
2. Confuse God's Will – "Is that rule reasonable?"
3. Downplay the Dangers – "No one will get hurt..."
4. Focus on Desires – "Look what you could have!"

Notice that Eve picked the fruit but Adam was right there with her and did not speak up. **The silence of Adam was his original sin**. Eve acted and sinned. **Adam failed to act and sinned**. Then he went on to join his wife in her sin. The same pattern happens to all of us to this day. Men stand by and do nothing. Women, struggling without strong, sacrificial, loving male leadership are vulnerable to temptation. And the devil gets another win.

The devil still prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. We are not unaware of his schemes so **SUIT UP!** Dress in the full armor of God! Today we will take up the **SHIELD OF FAITH** so we can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the enemy when he attacks us.

The battle, brothers and sisters, is to BELIEVE. That is the center of the fight. We give in to temptation because we do not believe God's Word – we don't trust Him as our good and loving Creator. **When our faith is low, our danger is high.**

So let's strengthen our faith today by studying Genesis 3. Here is our central message for the morning. God ALWAYS KEEPS HIS WORD. He made **two promises** in Genesis 3 – and he has already kept them.

God Always Keeps His Word:

- God Promised to Punish Sin – “You shall surely die.” (2:17)
- God Promised to Provide a Savior – “he will crush your head” (3:15, NIV)

Let's study these two promises in detail and ***reinforce our faith*** – our confidence – in the fact that God always keeps His Word. He is always faithful. He cannot go back on His promises but always fulfills them.

First – God promised to punish sin.

God Promised to Punish Sin

And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, 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.***” Genesis 2:16-17

Here we see ***the generosity of God*** – placing Adam into a perfect garden, rich with variety and abundant blessing. ***We see the wisdom of God*** in warning Adam about the one tree in the whole garden that poses a danger to him. ***And we see the justice of God*** - clearly spelling out the consequences for breaking this ONE LAW – “in the day you eat of it YOU SHALL SURELY DIE.”

Notice God does not say “you shall IMMEDIATELY die.” Some people question God's Word on silly details like that and don't see the beauty of God's whole plan and the subtlety of God's language. Surely does not mean immediately. But it does mean that before eating from the forbidden tree, Adam and Eve would not have died. ***They were created to live forever.*** They had perfect, immortal bodies that didn't get sick, wouldn't have experienced pain - even in childbirth – and would have stayed young and energetic indefinitely. That is what ETERNITY will be like – can I get an Amen, Hallelujah!?!?

Now look at what happened. Adam and Eve ate the fruit and –

“Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths. 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.” Genesis 3:7-8

They didn't die immediately, but **they did CHANGE immediately**. Their eyes were opened to a new reality – they suddenly KNEW both good and evil. Before this moment they had only heard the word EVIL – they did not know it. But as soon as they broke God's Law that knowledge was not just in their heads, like information they had discovered, it was INSIDE THEM. **They HAD the knowledge of good and evil inside them** – in their hearts – in their FLESH.

That was when the world broke. That was when the virus of sin entered the human race and it has not left us. Sin is STILL IN US – and that is our central problem. You may think there are problems outside of you – and this world is certainly a mess, we'll get to that in a few minutes. But the main problem is not your circumstances or this world – your main problem is INSIDE OF YOU. It is SIN that dwells in your MEMBERS.

Like Adam and Eve **we all HAVE the knowledge of Good and Evil INSIDE of us**. We know there is a good. We know there is an evil. We consistently fail to do the good. And we consistently choose to do the evil. Then, just like that first couple, we SCRAMBLE to cover our tracks.

- We cover ourselves. As if God can't see through our petty excuses and self-justification...
- We hide. How absurd is that? To hide from God!
- We blame.

God pursued Adam and Eve in their silly hiding place, asked what had happened and then God heard this from the crown jewels of his perfectly good creation:

The man said,

"The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate."

The woman said,

"The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

Genesis 3:12-13

Isn't this brilliant? Adam tried not just to blame Eve but **to blame GOD** for the woman YOU GAVE TO BE WITH ME! Eve doesn't do any better, passing the blame right on to the snake you tricked her.

As in every marriage or other relational conflict – both Adam and Eve are a little bit right. **But they are also both terribly, tragically wrong.** Here was their opportunity to fall down before their loving Creator and confess their sin and failing and beg for His mercy. Instead they miss that opportunity and add a new sin to their ever-growing pile – they become BLAME-SHIFTERS.

The devil's playbook is thin – but honestly, isn't ours as well?

Our Playbook:

- We cover up our sins
- We hide from God and others
- We blame others (and God)

We cover up our mistakes with our little loin cloths of excuses. **We hide** from the consequences and delay coming to the Lord – as if He doesn't see it all and know it all already. **And we blame other people** instead of taking responsibility for our own sins.

But God calls us out of that hiding and away from that crazy scrambling to come back to Him – for **He is faithful and just** and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness! But we have to CONFESS our sins to receive that grace.

Let's study the faithfulness of God. First, it is clear in Genesis three that God promised to punish sin.

God Promised to Punish Sin

And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, 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.**" Genesis 2:16-17

Once God called Adam and Eve out of hiding, He followed through on that promise.

God Promised to Punish Sin

- **He Cursed the Serpent**

"The LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, **cursed are you above all livestock** and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life." Genesis 3:14

As Pastor Colin Smith points out on openthebible.org, **a curse** is the "**utterance of a deity, consigning a person or thing to destruction**" (Oxford Dictionary). The devil was the first being in all of creation to rebel against God and therefore was the first being to come under God's curse. These pronouncements of crawling on the belly and eating dust surely mean more than that snakes at one time had legs and were condemned to just slither around.

This is God's curse on THE DEVIL. My read is that these are the short term, immediate consequences for Satan. He was a glorious angel – the most glorious and powerful of all. But he fell from that position of prominence because he wanted to be God. So God cursed him to not only live on the earth instead of in heaven but to crawl on his belly – to eat only dust. The devil has already been banished by God to the dark corners of this world. He roams around, hungry, angry and frustrated. He can destroy people but in the end he will only eat their dust, for their spirits live on. Then listen to the eternal consequences for satan in v. 15:

God Promised to Punish Sin

- ***He Cursed the Serpent*** – a deceitful, dangerous and defeated enemy

“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; **he will crush your head**, and you will strike his heel.” Genesis 3:15 (NIV)

The devil is deceitful – the most powerful and clever being you will ever face. He is ***dangerous*** – not to be underestimated. **But he is a DEFEATED enemy**. This prophecy that he would be CRUSHED by Jesus, the distant offspring of Eve, led the devil to provoke intense violence like when Herod ordered the destruction of every child under 2 years old in Galilee.

The devil's back has already been broken through Jesus death and resurrection. He is already a defeated enemy. But the final blow to eternally crush the head of the devil is coming when Jesus comes back. The devil will gather a great army for one last attack on God's people but here is how that will work out:

“They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God's people, the city he loves. **But fire came down from heaven and devoured them**. And **the devil**, who deceived them, **was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur**, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night forever and ever.” Revelation 20:9-10

That is the eternal destiny for the enemy of our souls. ***He is under God's curse***. God has consigned him to total, eternal destruction. As the child of a friend once put it – in hell you burn and burn but you don't die. That is the fate of the devil. God promised to punish sin. He dealt a crippling blow to the devil in Jesus first coming. And the final skull crushing strike will come very soon when Jesus returns. Praise the Lord for His faithfulness to keep His promises!

After hearing God pronounce this terrifying curse on the serpent Adam and Eve must have cringed when the Lord turned back to them. Genesis 3:16

To the woman he said, “I will surely **multiply your pain** in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you.” Genesis 3:16

In His mercy, God did not say to Eve, “Cursed are you.” Instead he said He would multiply the pain of childbirth and complicate her relationships. These two items represent broader realities. Because of sin, there were consequences.

God Promised to Punish Sin

- ***He gave Consequences to People*** – disease, pain, conflict, sadness...

To the woman he said, “I will surely **multiply your pain** in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. **Your desire shall be contrary** to your husband, but he shall rule over you.” Genesis 3:16

In perfect justice, ***God could have struck Adam and Eve dead right then and there***. It was an act of mercy that God did not curse them to destruction but instead gave them consequences. It

was because of this event – the fall of man – that disease, pain, conflict and sadness entered God’s perfect creation. You can see the consequences God described for Eve – and every woman in the room can attest that God has faithfully kept His Word in those areas. Then God turned to Adam.

And to Adam he said, “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, ‘You shall not eat of it,’ **cursed is the ground** because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life... Genesis 3:17

Here again we see both the faithfulness of God to keep His word to punish sin and the mercy of God not to carry out the death sentence right away. God was in His rights to CURSE ADAM – but notice He did not curse Adam but redirected His curse to the GROUND. This is why the world is broken – because God cursed the ground. Every time you pull a weed, think of that curse.

God Promised to Punish Sin

- ***He gave Consequences to People*** – disease, pain, conflict, sadness... **and death** “Thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and **to dust you shall return.**” Genesis 3:18-19

Here is the fulfillment of God’s promise in Genesis 2 – “In the day you eat of it you shall surely die” (2:17). “You are dust and to dust you shall return” (3:19). God’s word to Adam was very clear – eat from this tree and you will die. Adam ate from the tree – and he started to die immediately, and physically died several hundred years later. The man who was made from the dust of the earth by the hands of God returned to that very same dust.

The consequence for sin is DEATH. Romans 6:23 makes it clear this is still true today – “the wages of sin is death.” The paycheck we earn when we do something wrong is God’s judgment which comes to all people in the form of death. When you stand in front of anyone’s lifeless body as they lie in a casket it is the final proof – that person was a SINNER. Have no doubt, unless Jesus comes back some of you will stand in front of my casket – and if it wasn’t clear before then, at that point you’ll know for sure that I was a sinner.

The fact that everyone dies is a proof of God’s faithfulness. God always keeps his word. Always. If you sin then you die. Death is the consequence of sin – but look at verse 22.

Then the LORD God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever” - therefore the LORD God... 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 3:22-23

Since Adam and Eve now had the knowledge of good and evil IN THEM **it was God’s mercy that drove them out of the garden lest they live on forever in that condition.** Still today death is

both a consequence for sin and a gift of God's mercy. If you've ever sat with a believer who is, as the Bible says, "old and full of years," **the time comes when they are ready to go home**. They know this world is not all there is. They know Jesus has a place ready for them. They feel their body breaking down, breaking down. And when the time comes, they are ready. They close their eyes in this world and open them in the next. Jesus takes them by the hand and leads them directly to God the Father in heaven.

But for those who do not know Jesus, death is the entrance into eternal misery. Their suffering on earth is just a sizzle of your finger on a pot next to the blazing agony they plunge into in hell. Because make no mistake – **the God who promised heaven for believers also promised hell to non-believers**. And God always keeps His promises. He is faithful and just. He is the good judge of all people.

Brothers, sisters, friends. Hear the Word of the Lord:

[Please place each verse on its own slide]

"The wages of sin is death." Rom. 6:23

"Whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but **the wrath of God remains on him.**" John 3:36

"Behold, the day of the Lord comes, cruel, with wrath and fierce anger, to make the land a desolation and **to destroy its sinners from it.**" Isaiah 13:9

"For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you." Matt. 7:2

"He will render to each one according to his works... for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, **there will be wrath and fury.**" Rom. 2:6,8

"For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things **the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.**" Eph. 5:5-6

"If anyone worships the beast and its image... **he also will drink the wine of God's wrath...** and he will be tormented with fire and sulfur... **And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever,** and they have no rest, day or night, these worshipers of the beast and its image." Rev. 14:9-11

Here is the summary: **God always keeps His Word**. And God has promised to punish sin. There is no way around it. The punishment for sin is death in this world and eternal, spiritual death in the next. "The smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever." Yes, this is figurative language

and hell might not actually be a place of literal flames. But the pain and agony of it will be just like that - worse than any of us can possibly imagine.

God will punish sin. That is wonderfully GOOD NEWS for it means God is GOOD and JUST and FAITHFUL. But God is also faithful to keep His other promise. Look again at Genesis 3:15 as God spoke to the serpent.

God Promised to Provide a Savior

- ***To Crush the Serpent***

“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; *he will crush your head*, and you will strike his heel.” Genesis 3:15 (NIV)

Right there, still in the garden, just moments after the rebellion that broke the world, **God pronounces a word of HOPE – a PROMISE OF SALVATION**. A Savior would come – the offspring of Eve! Right there in the third chapter of the Bible we see a prophecy of the incarnation. A descendant from Eve would somehow be able to crush the head of the devil himself. And he would do it by having his own heel struck.

You get the picture – there is **a venomous snake**, threatening the whole family. The dad, for some reason extra vulnerable in bare feet, jumps in front of his wife and kids and stomps the life out of that snake. But in the process, his heel gets bitten and the poison goes in. The wife and kids are safe – the danger is removed. But the hero is badly hurt.

Jesus went to the cross to crush the devil. He was extra vulnerable because he was fully human. But as the fully human descendant of Eve, Jesus became a second Adam. Unlike the first Adam, Jesus did not stand by and let his family die. Jesus stepped in front and took the punishment – the darting bite of the serpent – upon himself.

The devil is the ACCUSER. He can only accuse those who are guilty. Jesus took all the guilt of all the sin onto Himself – so Jesus became the only one the devil could accuse. If Jesus took YOUR guilt, then there is nothing left for the devil to accuse you of! You see how the devil’s head has already been crushed? How he is a defeated foe? **“There is NO CONDEMNATION for those who are IN CHRIST JESUS!”**

But there is more good news in Genesis 3!

God Promised to Provide a Savior

- ***To Cover our Sin***

“And the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.” Genesis 3:21

Adam and Eve did not die the day they sinned – but something did. **An animal or two died to cover them**. God made the first sacrifice that day – killing an animal in place of the people who should have died.

That is what Jesus did for us. He is the sacrifice for sins. He died so you and I don’t have to. His blood is **the only thing that can COVER your guilt and shame**. Adam and Eve tried to hide and cover up with leaves. That’s what it’s like when we defend ourselves, justify our behavior or

blame other people – it’s like trying to cover yourself up with a few maple leaves. Both terribly embarrassing and very futile.

God promised a Savior who would crush the serpent, cover our sin and third – open the way...

God Promised to Provide a Savior

- ***To Open the Way back into God’s Presence and Blessing***

“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

I first heard this illustration from Pastor Colin Smith, but I’m pretty sure he stole it from Charles Spurgeon. Picture that glorious angel guarding the garden of Eden. In his hand is ***a sword blazing with the righteous power of God*** that separates condemned sinners from the Holy God. Adam and Eve were cast out of the garden of God’s blessing, cast out of His presence with no way back in.

But now picture a man – a descendant of Adam and Eve – walking toward this angel. He steps right into that flaming sword and the sword does its work – it strikes the man down and kills him – for that is what the righteousness of God does when it meets the sinfulness of man. But in that moment of striking the man down, **the flaming sword of justice is BROKEN**. Justice was satisfied in the death of Jesus. The flaming sword no longer blocks the way back into God’s presence and blessing. The way back into the garden stands open – because Jesus, the Savior, was struck down!

We don’t have time today, but God has promised not just to reconcile all people but ***to RESTORE ALL THINGS in Christ***.

God Promised to Provide a Savior

- ***To Crush the Serpent***
- ***To Cover our Sin***
- ***To Open the Way back to God***
- ***To Restore the World***

Jesus will not just crush the serpent, cover our sin and open the way back to God. ***He will restore the whole world to the peace***, blessing and goodness of the original creation. He will set the world free from its “bondage to decay,” and fill it with the light of His glory again!

I hope our faith has been strengthened today. God always keeps His word. He promised to punish sin. He did punish sin. He will punish sin. Only a fool would ignore or downplay the Biblical doctrine of the wrath of God. Come back next week to hear the story of the flood – when God’s judgment was poured out on the whole world. God is faithful, just and good – He will punish sin – and that is tremendously GOOD NEWS for those who know that Jesus has already been punished on their behalf. The sword of God’s justice fell on Jesus so it doesn’t have to fall on you.

For God promised to provide a Savior – and He did just that by sending Jesus. Be strong in the Lord and trust in His faithfulness this week!

Let's pray.