

HUMANITY DISOBEYED GOD

CORE PASSAGE: GENESIS 3:1-7,15,21-24

Context: God created everything good: the sky, the land, the sea, the animals, and so forth. Then the writer of Genesis continued to recount in greater detail the creation of humanity. God formed Adam out of dust and placed him in the perfect garden of Eden. Adam was free to eat any fruit except from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Then God introduced into His creation Eve, who would help Adam fulfill God's purposes. Blameless, they were naked without shame. However, this changed after Satan came on the scene in the form of a serpent to deceive and manipulate.

Key Concept: Sin results in shame, separation, and death.

DAILY READINGS

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| ☐ Day 1: Genesis 3:1-7 | ☐ Day 4: Genesis 3:17-19 |
| ☐ Day 2: Genesis 3:8-13 | ☐ Day 5: Genesis 3:20-24 |
| ☐ Day 3: Genesis 3:14-16 | ☐ Day 6: Psalm 6 |

Sin results in shame (Genesis 3:1-7).

¹ Now the serpent was the most cunning of all the wild animals that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You can’t eat from any tree in the garden?’” ² The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat the fruit from the trees in the garden. ³ But about the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden, God said, ‘You must not eat it or touch it, or you will die.’” ⁴ “No! You will certainly not die,” the serpent said to the woman. ⁵ “In fact, God knows that when you eat it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” ⁶ The woman saw that the tree was good for food and delightful to look at, and that it was desirable for obtaining wisdom. So she took some of its fruit and ate it; she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. ⁷ Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

Sin Questions Our Knowledge

In Genesis 1, God created everything good, everything needed for a thriving life. In Genesis 2, He created man and woman to live in the world He created. He gave them a purpose, to sustain the created order in multiplying and being caretakers of the new creation as He placed them in the garden of Eden. All seemed to be well, but then Genesis 3 began and there was something not good, something that would want to bring chaos to the order that God created.

The serpent came onto the scene, and Moses described him as the most cunning of all the wild animals (v. 1). We can assume the devil was speaking

THEOLOGY
Connection

MAN: In the beginning, man was innocent of sin and was endowed by his Creator with freedom of choice. By his free choice man sinned against God and brought sin into the human race. Through the temptation of Satan, man transgressed the command of God and fell from his original innocence, whereby his posterity inherit a nature and an environment inclined toward sin.

through a serpent in this moment as the devil is known as the tempter in Matthew 4:3 and is referenced as the “ancient serpent” in Revelation 20:2. The serpent itself was one of God’s created animals, but here the devil was using the creature, so Moses was making the point that the devil is cunning and shrewd. But being cunning and shrewd is not always a bad thing. Cunning is a neutral word, as Jesus also told His disciples to be shrewd, or cunning, as serpents in Matthew 10:16—it could be positive or negative. In Hebrew, the word *arum* for cunning will be used as a play on words later. But this is how the devil tempts us—he uses cunning and strategy.

In this instance, the serpent was cunning in distracting the woman by not being direct. It didn’t initially ask about the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. It simply asked, “Did God really say, ‘You can’t eat from any tree in the garden?’” This initiated the conversation with the woman. This lured the woman to start thinking about the tree that was forbidden. The devil is cunning in this way. He lures us toward things we might not have been thinking of. He lures us toward things that are attractive yet forbidden. He makes us start asking, “Did God really say . . . ?” The devil questions us and our knowledge, which makes us question and doubt ourselves and our understanding. He tries to give us a good excuse to be disobedient to God.

Yet though it was the serpent that started the temptation, in Eve’s reply, she was the one who misconstrued God’s words, saying that God said they shouldn’t eat it “or touch it,” lest they die. God said the former about not eating it but didn’t say anything about just touching it. Also, God said that they would

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“certainly” (2:17) die, yet Eve left out the “certainly” when she spoke to the serpent. She did not repeat back the same words that God had said about the tree.

Sometimes we try to blame sin on Satan and evil forces, but sin and disobedience always result from our own wrongful choices. Those choices always start with a disconnect in our knowledge and understanding of God’s Word and what He is trying to tell us. If we do not have a good understanding of His Word, we will more easily doubt it or misconstrue it, which will lead us on a path toward sin. Knowing what God says is necessary to protect us from the devil’s entrapment and our own misunderstandings about who God is and what He asks of us. When we add to or take away from God’s words, we can find ourselves going down the wrong path.

What lies might Satan use today to make us question God and His goodness?

Sin Questions God’s Character

At this point, the devil was able to insert his manipulative lies and half-truths. A direct translation of the Hebrew has the serpent say, “Not certainly, you will die”—with the idea that yes, *probably* you will die, but certainty is an abstract; there are no absolutes. The devil tempts us and our world not to believe in absolutes. He tempts us to believe that what God says may not actually be true with certainty. The serpent continued to tempt the woman by saying that God knew that if they ate of it, they would be like God, knowing good and evil. The serpent was enticing the woman with knowledge and power. At the same time, he implied that something was wrong with God’s character in



Voices from CHURCH HISTORY

“Pride is the worst viper that is in the heart, the greatest disturber of the soul’s peace and sweet communion with Christ; it was the first sin that ever was, and lies lowest in the foundation of Satan’s whole building, and is the most difficultly rooted out, and is the most hidden, secret and deceitful of all lusts, and often creeps in, insensibly, into the midst of religion and sometimes under the disguise of humility.”¹

—Jonathan Edwards
(1703–1758)

depriving them of that fruit, as if God were power-hungry or a maleficent tyrant wanting all the power and knowledge to Himself. This is a common lie humanity tells itself: that God is not as good as He says He is, and He is not always looking out for our good. When we believe that, we end up choosing our will over God’s will, believing falsely that we know better than God. And if we know better than God, then we should act on our own knowledge and desires to make things happen for our good since God can’t or won’t do so. The lies we listen to will lead down a path of guilt and shame.

The woman, at this point, conceded to the serpent’s temptations, especially seeing that the fruit was “good for food,” “delightful to look at,” and “desirable for obtaining wisdom” (3:6). So she took it and ate. How Moses described this fruit is similar to what John said in one of his letters, “For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride in one’s possessions—is not from the Father, but is from the world” (1 John 2:16).

The temptations of the original sin are the same temptations we face today: lusts of the flesh, which include gluttony and sexual immorality; lusts of the eyes, which include covetousness and idolatry; and pride, which is the beginning of all sin and foolishness. We would think that knowing about these triggers that might tempt us to sin would help us recognize them and be more careful when they appear before us. Yet the enticement of it all, lust of the flesh and lust of the eyes and pride, is sometimes greater than we can handle. Clearly, we need to rely on spiritual protection and spiritual defenses from God’s Word and the Holy Spirit. We cannot fight temptation on our own.

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Sin Costs Us Our Innocence and Leads to Shame

So the woman ate and gave some to Adam, who also ate. Some wonder where Adam was during this encounter. We can assume that he was with her the whole time as the serpent used a plural “you”—a “you all”—in verses 4 and 5 when it spoke, and we know Adam “was with her” (Gen. 3:6). Even though the serpent addressed Eve, Adam was there and could have spoken up but didn’t. Both Adam and Eve in eating of the fruit were guilty of disobedience and sin. And in so doing, their eyes were opened, as the serpent said. But in being enlightened, they then knew they were naked.

The word *naked* in Hebrew is *arummim*, and we can see the word play with the word for *cunning*, *arum*. The serpent was cunning (*arum*) and tempted humanity with being smart and cunning, but in the end, all they found was their own nakedness (*arummim*). The serpent was clever in enticing the man and woman with the knowledge of good and evil. Their eyes were opened, but the first thing they saw, the first piece of knowledge of good and evil that entered their minds, was their nakedness. What a shameful experience! Truth came to light as they had hoped for, but not as they expected. Thus, they sewed fig leaves to cover themselves in their best efforts to conceal their shame—the drudging task of sewing, not for creativity’s sake, but for a cover-up. What a contrast to earlier when they were naked “yet felt no shame” (2:25).

In knowing that the tree had good fruit and gave knowledge of good and evil, some may question why God would forbid it. John Walton’s commentary states:

Rather than God's putting the tree there simply to test Adam and Eve, it is more in keeping with his character to understand that the tree would have use in the future. When the time was right, the first couple would be able to eat from it. One can compare this to the temptation of Christ, when Satan offered him all the kingdoms of the world if Jesus would bow down to him (Luke 4:5-7). There was nothing wrong with Christ's ruling all the kingdoms of the world—it was his destiny. The temptation involved bypassing appropriate process and timing, seizing them through deviant means.²

Because God created everything good, the tree was also good. But obedience to God was more important than acquiring the good of the tree at that moment. Adam and Eve were not yet ready to partake of the tree. And like a child who watches something obscene when they are told not to, they thus experienced shame.

Adam and Eve chose disobedience because they distrusted God and His character. "Why would He hold out on us? He must not truly love us and have our good in mind." They trusted in the lust of their flesh, the lust of their eyes, and in their own pride. And that led them to be aware of their shame. That's what sin does. Sin tempts us with something enticing but never fully satisfying. And when we disobey God, we realize that God was right all along. He is good and wants to give us good things. He knows us better than we know ourselves and protects us from things we need protection from. When we trust Him, we can feel the comfort of His love, care, and protection. But when we don't trust Him, we find ourselves down the path of destruction because of our own sin, guilt, and shame.

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What protections might a person put in place to withstand temptations?

Sin results in separation and death
(Genesis 3:15,21-24).

¹⁵ **I will put hostility between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring. He will strike your head, and you will strike his heel. . . .** ²¹ **The LORD God made clothing from skins for the man and his wife, and he clothed them.** ²² **The LORD God said, "Since the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil, he must not reach out, take from the tree of life, eat, and live forever."** ²³ **So the LORD God sent him away from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken.** ²⁴ **He drove the man out and stationed the cherubim and the flaming, whirling sword east of the garden of Eden to guard the way to the tree of life.**

Sin Results in Suffering

Adam and Eve's sin brought brokenness and a curse upon the world. But the serpent was punished first. It was cursed above all animals, to move on its belly and eat dust (v. 14). In one sense, since man was made from dust (2:7) and would return to dust (3:19), we would continue to be the serpent's prey—it would want to eat and devour us.

God also put hostility between the serpent and the woman, between its seed and her seed. The Hebrew word for *hostility* can also mean enmity or hatred, as in an existing relational state, not just a passing feeling.³ In ancient Middle Eastern culture, during the time of Moses, the idea of the seed belonged to the man. In writing about the hostility between the seed

of the serpent and the seed of the woman, something unique was written. Although Moses’s audience may not have been aware of it yet, God inspired Moses to write of the future victory that Christ, the seed of the woman, being of virgin birth, would have over the serpent, Satan, and evil. All that belonged to evil, as symbolized in the serpent’s offspring, would be in a constant battle and hostile relationship to Christ. But ultimately, Jesus would strike the serpent’s head, giving it a fatal blow, even as it would strike His heel, making Him suffer through sorrow, betrayal, torture, crucifixion, and ultimately death. However, in the end, Jesus would have the victory through His resurrection and the ultimate victory when He returns a second time at the end of the age.

God, in His all-knowing, all-powerful, all-wise way, even before Adam and Eve sinned, had planned a way for humanity to be redeemed and restored. In His love, mercy, and grace, the plan was already in place for us to be back in communion, fellowship, and relationship with Him. He was going to bring us back to paradise through the sacrifice of His Son.

How would you describe a God who already had a plan in place for redeeming His creation?

Sin Results in Death

We are insufficient in trying to hide and atone for our shame and guilt. Adam and Eve’s effort in sewing fig leaves (v. 7) missed the mark, so God had to clothe them from the skins of animals—the first mention of the killing of something because of humanity’s sin. In a very loose way, we might even say that this was the first blood sacrifice. And notice that God provided

**GOSPEL
Connection**

Sin and death entered the world through the action of one man, Adam, but the grace of God resulting in righteousness and life for all who believe came through the one man, Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:12-21).

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that. God, in His grace, still cared for His people and provided a way for them to cover their shame in a way that they were unable to do themselves. Animal skins are also reminiscent of the priests who offered the guilt offering, a burnt offering, for Israel—the priests were given the animal skins (Lev. 7:8), perhaps a reminder of the skins that God provided for the first man and woman.

In saying man had “become like one of us” as the triune God, “knowing good and evil,” the Lord God sent them out of the garden of Eden that they might not live forever (Gen. 3:22). Man would experience death as well. Yet this was an act of both God’s justice and His grace. Justice because humanity needed to be expelled from, sent away from, driven out of, the garden and from God’s presence. They no longer could eat of the tree of life. Physical death was now a new reality. But this death, this sending humanity out of the garden where they could no longer eat of the tree of life was also grace on God’s part. Because of Adam and Eve’s disobedience, the curse of pain and shame and sorrow was now their reality. To live eternally in that curse with the pain and evil that surrounded them would be devastating. The taking away of eternal life was thus gracious in one respect. An eternal life of sin and sorrow would have been an overwhelming burden for humanity.

Sin Results in Separation

Humanity’s relationship with God had been broken and severed. God’s people would no longer be able to dwell with Him and walk with Him in the way God intended (at least not until the arrival of Christ for a little while, and then ultimately when He returns).

This is spiritual death—separation from God, a dire consequence to man’s first sin. God is holy, and we are sinful humanity. Because of that, we are forever separated from God, unless something or Someone could restore that relationship. And thus, we find ourselves in need of a Savior, in need of a Rescuer and Redeemer.

Humanity was sent away from the garden to work the ground, to start a new garden with hard labor and sweat (vv. 17-19). This toil would remind them of what they missed out on. Work would no longer be easy. We would feel the cost of being separated from God. We would no longer have God with us and by our side, helping us co-rule over creation. Our efforts alone would be laborious and difficult. Life would no longer be easy. And God placed the cherubim with a sword to guard the way to the tree of life. A physical guard, barrier, and threat were now a clear indication of the separation between God and humanity on account of the latter’s sin.

Paradise was no longer in humanity’s reach by our own effects. And so, the beginning of the gospel story unfolds. The problem and crisis have been explained. Humanity sinned and is now separated from God. How are we to return to the fellowship and the relationship with God that humanity once had? Who will help mend that brokenness of man and of the world? As the Bible continues, we’ll find that answer is in the Hero of the story, the Rescuer and Redeemer who will change our standing, our outcome, our end. He is Jesus Christ, who restores us back into relationship with the Father and back to paradise.

How does our view of God impact our approach to repentance of sin?

 HEAD

What factors influence your view of sin and its results? How can you adjust your view of sin based on Genesis 3?

 HEART

What keeps you from grieving sin in our world? How does grieving over sin reflect our love for others?

 HANDS

How can you encourage others in your group to resist and flee temptation? How can you hold out the gospel to any person who falls into sin?

References

- Jonathan Edwards, quoted in Henry Rogers, Sereno Edwards Dwight, Edward Hickman, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 1 (London: W. Ball, 1839), xcvi.
- John H. Walton, *Genesis*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 205–206.
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