



## Sermon Transcript January 19, 2020

### God's One Story of Redemption What Went Wrong? Genesis 3:1-24

This message from the Bible was addressed originally to the people of Wethersfield Evangelical Free Church on January 19, 2020 at 511 Maple Street, Wethersfield, CT, 06109 by Dr. Scott W. Solberg. This is a transcription that bears the strength and weaknesses of oral delivery. It is not meant to be a polished essay. An audio and video version of this sermon may also be found on the church website at [www.wethefc.com](http://www.wethefc.com)

**Sermon Text**  
**Genesis 3:1-24**

<sup>1</sup> Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, “You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?” <sup>2</sup> And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden,” <sup>3</sup> 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.” <sup>4</sup> But the serpent said to the woman, “You shall not surely die. <sup>5</sup> For God knows that when you eat of it, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil. <sup>6</sup> 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. <sup>7</sup> Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.

<sup>8</sup> 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. <sup>9</sup> But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?” <sup>10</sup> And he said, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself. <sup>11</sup> He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I command you not to eat?” <sup>12</sup> The man said, “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate. <sup>13</sup> Then the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this that you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”

<sup>14</sup> 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. <sup>15</sup> I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.” <sup>16</sup> To the woman he said, “I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you. <sup>17</sup> 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; <sup>18</sup> thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the plants of the field. <sup>19</sup> By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, til you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken, for you are dust and to dust you shall return.”

<sup>20</sup> The man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living. <sup>21</sup> And the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.

<sup>22</sup> 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—<sup>23</sup> therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. <sup>24</sup> 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.

## Introduction

Last week we began walking through the story of the Bible and we began where you begin most stories—in the beginning. "*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*" As you read through the first two chapters of Genesis, you can't help but notice how all that God had made was brimming with life and it was all good. In fact, the delight of God in all that he has made is heard in the constant refrain after each day of creation, "*and it was good.*" This refrain comes to a crescendo when on the final day of creation the deep satisfaction of God is joyfully proclaimed "*and it was very good.*"

It was on this sixth day—the day when God said *it was very good*—that God's crowning achievement of creation took place. It was on this day he created man. The unique feature that separates man from all of creation is that man was created in the image of God. In other words, when you look at man you get a glimpse or a picture of what God is like. This was brought home to me after I preached my sermon last week and someone gave me further insight to what David was saying in Psalm 8 when he looked up into the heavens and saw the stars and the moon and said, "*What is man that you are mindful of him and the son of man that you care for him. Yet you made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor.*" It was suggested to me that David was not so much expressing how small he felt in comparison to the universe. It was quite the opposite. Instead, he was marveling at the wonder of being the crowning jewel of what God created. While being captivated by the majesty of God on display in the heavens, David was saying, "you would think that would be the crowning achievement of God's creation." Look at it! But it is not! It is man, created in the image of God. It is with man that God finds his greatest delight. And actually, when David says "*you made him a little lower than the heavenly beings*" the Hebrew word for "*heavenly beings*" is "*elohim*" which is almost always translated as "God." And so here we are, made a little lower than God—the crowning jewel of God's creation—which

causes David to sing, “O LORD our Lord how majestic is your name in all the earth!”

Then we hear God say to his image bearers—to man—in Genesis 1:28, “*Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.*” Tim Keller says of this, “When it comes to human beings he instructs them to continue to cultivate and draw out the vast resources of creation like a gardener does in a garden; as if he is saying—“Go keep this thing going!” And, while you are at it, “Have a ball!”<sup>1</sup> And so when you come to the end of Genesis 2 it is truly *paradise*. It is all very good.

But is that the way it is now? Is it all “very good”? Are we still living in “*Paradise?*” Whenever I ask that question, the answer is always the same. And it doesn’t matter who it is I am talking with or what they believe about God or religion. That question is always met with a resounding, “No!” You can’t take an honest look at life and the world we live in and say what God said at the end of creating it all. You can’t possibly look at it all and say, “all is good.” One of the most self-authenticating truths about life is that our world is a mess—life is a mess—society is a mess—government is a mess—work is a mess—relationships are a mess—family is mess—and honestly, “I’m a mess.” As we move into Genesis 3, we discover why this is so. It is in Genesis 3 that we discover how the Bible explains why life is such a mess.

We are on this six-month journey through the story of the Bible. We want to put the whole story—the Old Testament and the New Testament—together. But, if you don’t get the point of Genesis 3, the rest of the story won’t make sense to you. D. A. Carson puts it this way. “You cannot make sense of the Bible until you come to agreement with what the Bible says our problem is.” Why is that? He goes onto say, “If you do not see what the Bible’s analysis of the problem is, you cannot come to grips with the Bible’s analysis of the solution.”<sup>2</sup> In other words, if you don’t know what the problem is then you won’t know what the solution is or how to fix it.

Do you know what is true about a good story? All good stories have a problem. There is something going on, a tension that needs to be overcome. It just so happens that the story of the Bible contains the biggest problem of all. It is the source of all problems found in every kind of story. So we want to look at the problem found in Genesis 3, the problem that sits over all of our individual and collective stories, and take time to ask “What went wrong with what God had called very good?” I want to answer this question by telling the story of Genesis 3 and in doing so, I want to answer three “Why” questions. Why the command? Why the consequence? Why the story?

## Why the Command?

You can't understand the story that unfolds in Genesis 3 without first looking at the command God gives to Adam in Genesis 2:16-17. Here God says to Adam, "*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.*" Why this command? Why is that tree there in the first place? What does it tell us about God? What does that tree tell us about man? What does it tell us about life and how we are to live and enjoy the life that God has given to us?

For starters, both Genesis 2:9 and 3:3 locates this forbidden tree in *the midst of the garden*. To put it more clearly, this tree is not off in some obscure corner of the garden where it is hardly ever noticed. Quite the contrary. It is "smack dab" in the middle of the garden, at the major intersection where Adam and Eve frequent. It is no accident that this tree is at the very center of the garden. This highlights the first reason why God gave Adam this command. As the tree occupies the center of the garden, central to living and enjoying the life that God has given to Adam and Eve is to recognize that God's Word is reliable and can be trusted and therefore is to be followed and obeyed. Why? Because there is life in God's Word and in what he commands. And so even more pointedly, we learn here that life is to be lived by faith in God and not by sight.

This is a theme central to both the Old and New Testament. Leviticus 18:5 tells us to keep God's commandments and he adds, "*if a person does them, he shall live by them.*" Psalm 1 tells us that the one who is blessed in life is the one who "*delights in the law of the LORD and on his law he meditates day and night.*" Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount that the difference between the life that stands and the life that falls is that the one who stands is the one who "*hears these words of mine and does them.*" On the contrary, the life that does not withstand the storms of life is the one who "*hears these words of mine and does not do them.*" And so, in the beginning of the story we find the beginning of this central theme for how we are designed to live our life. In giving us this command, God wants good for us. But that good is found in living by faith in God's Word and it underscores that God's command is central to really finding life.

This helps us understand what we find the serpent—Satan—doing at the beginning of Genesis 3. Without any introduction or any warning, the tempter comes and what does he do? He approaches Eve and seeks to get her to doubt the goodness of God and the truth of God's Word. He first tries to get her to doubt God's goodness by giving the impression that God is some kind of "party pooper" a "cosmic killjoy" who is stingy and

is keeping “good” from her. “*Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’*” Well God didn’t say anything like that. In fact, God said almost the opposite of that. In his goodness he offered to Adam and Eve all the trees of the garden—as far as the eye could see—except just that one, right there in the middle of the garden. It is as if the serpent was saying, “Can you really believe God would say that to you?” But Eve replied to this false accusation by saying, that God didn’t say anything like that at all. He actually said “*We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden,*” but God said, “*You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden.*” But then she added something to what God said, perhaps because the words the serpent said to her got under her skin and caused her to question the goodness of God and why God would deny her this tree. She claimed God said, “*neither shall you touch it, lest you die.*”

I like what D. A. Carson suggests she should have said in response to this temptation. She should have said something like this, “Are you out of your skull? Look around! This is Eden, this is paradise! God knows exactly what he is doing. He made everything; he even made me. My husband loves me and I love him—and we are both intoxicated with the joy and holiness of our beloved Maker . . . How could I possibly question his wisdom and love? He knows, in a way I never can, exactly what is best—and I trust him absolutely. And you want me to doubt him and the purity of his motives and character? Besides, what possible good can come of a mere creature defying his Creator and Sovereign? Are you out of your skull?”<sup>3</sup> But she didn’t say that, did she?

And so the serpent comes back and this time denies the truth of what God said. He actually counters the truth of what God said, “*You shall not surely die.*” God said that if you eat of this tree you will die. The tempter came and said that was not true at all, “*You shall not surely die.*” Actually, instead, “*your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.*” And again, he attacks the goodness of God by saying God knows this to be true, implying that he is withholding something good from you. He suggests to Eve that she can be like God.

This leads us to the second reason why this commandment was given. It helps us to understand what we mean when we talk about sin. I think most people think sin is just the breaking of a rule God has given us. If that were the case, it would be hard to understand how the punishment fits the crime here in Genesis 3. I can remember back to when I was a boy and one day my mom came home from being out and she was laughing at something that had just happened as she was driving home. She happened to be driving by an apple orchard and she saw my best friend sneaking into the orchard to “poach” an apple for himself. As my mom drove by, she yelled out the window,

“Baker get out of that tree!” She said, “you should have seen him scurry from that orchard!” He had no clue where that voice was coming from, but like Peter Rabbit trying to escape Farmer McGregor, my friend was hightailing it out of there. Now my mom didn’t come home and say, “that friend of yours needs to be locked up!” On the scale of infractions, stealing an apple is a minor infraction. And yet here, in Genesis 3, the eating of this forbidden fruit has dire consequences. This one act of taking and eating plunges the entire human race—and all of creation, for that matter—under the curse that we all know and feel. So sin has to be more than just the breaking of a rule.

Last week we mentioned that one of the most important principles of life is maintaining the distinction between the Creator and the creature. In other words, don’t forget that God is God and we are not. That is exactly why *the tree of the knowledge of good and evil* was there in the middle of the garden. It was there to remind them that God is the one who knows and declares what is good. It was there to remind them that life is to be lived dependent upon God and his Word. So the tree reminds them that God is wise. God knows and declares what is good. God is to be trusted. The temptation posed to Eve was that she could be like God and she could declare for herself what is good. And so sin is not just the breaking of a rule. It is out and out rebellion against God. It is the rejection of God. It is the de-god-ing of God.

I have longed loved the way James Boice captures the essence of our rebellion against God our Maker. He said Adam looked at that one tree and said in effect, “I don’t care if I am allowed to eat all the trees north of here, east of here, south of here and west of here. So long as that one tree stands in the garden as a symbol of my creaturehood, so long as it is there to remind me that I am not God, that I am not perfectly autonomous—so long as it is there, I hate it! So I will eat of it and die, whatever that means.”<sup>4</sup> That is what makes sin so heinous. It is man raising his puny fist to God and declaring our independence from the very one who gave us life.

This is why the first of the Ten Commandments is “*You shall have no other gods before me.*” It captures the essence of sin. It is not the mere breaking of a rule. Instead it is declaring something other than God to be ultimate. That is why Proverbs tells us that wisdom begins with the *fear of the LORD*. God is the one who knows what is good and evil. But the woman was deceived and listened to the creature instead of the Creator. She took it and ate it and gave it to Adam who also ate of it. And now that sin has entered the world we know evil. We experience evil. We commit acts of evil. We ourselves are evil. What a tragic picture. The very ones who were created to reflect the image of God in this world are now found standing over against God.

## Why the Consequence?

The consequence of Adam's sin is death, in every sense of the word and meaning. If you believe that God is the author of life, then it should not surprise you that death is the consequence of rejecting God. Carson says, "If God is the Creator and gives life, then if you detach yourself from this God, if you defy this God, what is there but death?"<sup>5</sup> We have no life apart from God. So if we choose to part from God, all we have left is death. This death—this consequence and curse of sin—touches every aspect of life.

First of all, it is a death that brings about shame. Starting in verse 8 we read, *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. But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?" And he said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself."* They hid themselves. They felt exposed and vulnerable. Prior to this, they were naked and unashamed. Now they try to cover themselves. They try to hide themselves from God and each other. Lost to them is the sense of feeling safe. What if the real me is discovered? How will others use that to judge me or take advantage of me? That is what it is like to live in a world filled with shame.

Rodney Clapp says this about a world that lives under the shadow of shame: "In shame's train comes a preoccupation with appearance. Adam and Eve must now calculate and control how they present themselves . . . Shame also brings terrifying self-doubt. Adam and Eve are no longer sure they are worthy as they are, unadorned and naked. Hiding from each other and from God is a way of hiding from themselves, guarding their nakedness from another who might speak honestly about what he or she sees. And notice how quickly man and woman, now doubting their own worth, try to direct attention away from themselves by pointing the finger at someone else. Eve blames the serpent and Adam blames Eve. The irony of shame is that hiding and covering our vulnerability only increases it."<sup>6</sup> And so with shame as our fuel, life is nothing more than pecking orders and status symbols and trying to stay ahead of the next person and afraid of really being found out. There is no rest in this endless quest to hide who we are.

And so, one of the main consequences of sin is that it destroys us personally. Tim Keller says that the reason for this is because when we try to find our identity apart from God it is inherently unstable.<sup>7</sup> For example, Thomas Oden said, "Suppose my god is sex or my physical health or my political party. If I experience any of these under genuine threat, then I feel myself shaken to the depths."<sup>8</sup> I am reading a book right now on Pastoral



ministry called *The Care of Souls* and the author, who is a pastor, confesses the constant struggle of looking for his worth in ministry in his own popularity. He said, “that has been a persistent temptation throughout my years in ministry.” He went on to say from experience, “That attitude is a killer. It can deplete and deflate your ministry overnight.”<sup>9</sup> But that is our plight in this fallen world. We have removed God from being the ultimate and so we live in an anxious world that is paralyzed with fear. Kierkegaard said “Only if your identity is built on God can you have a self that can venture anything, face anything.”<sup>10</sup> Or as St. Augustine put it, “Our hearts are restless until they find their rest in Thee!”<sup>11</sup> But as a result of the Fall, our problem is that we have made other things the ultimate in our lives and this leads to emptiness—death.

The entire created order is caught up in the curse and consequence of sin. Life is a constant struggle. There is a persistent spiritual battle—an unseen enemy is on the prowl—and his desire is to destroy the seed of the woman. The husband and wife, who were created to reflect the image of God, now find this relationship filled with challenge and hardship. The giving of birth and the raising of children is filled with pain. Work is now filled with toil. Everything in this world has been subject to the fall of man. Keller said that “Human beings are so integral to the fabric of things that when human beings turned from God the entire warp and woof of the world unraveled. Disease, genetic disorders, famine, natural disasters, aging, and death itself are as much a result of sin as are oppression, war, crime and violence . . . Things now fall apart.”<sup>12</sup>

And after it is all said and done, God says to Adam, who wanted to be like God, “*for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.*” And then comes the final judgment. Isn’t it interesting that the first doctrine that is challenged in the Bible is the doctrine of judgment. The serpent said to Eve, “*You shall not surely die.*” If there is any doctrine that is more scoffed at or considered more offensive in our culture it is the doctrine of judgment. A loving God would not condemn someone to hell. In fact, it is abhorrent to think that such a place even exists in our day and age. But at the end of the day, what is missed in all of this is the perversity of our sin. You cannot cut yourself off from the God of the Bible without real consequence. And this is the problem that plagues the human race. The end of Genesis 3 is worlds apart from what we find at the end of Genesis 2. We live in a broken and fallen world because of sin.

### **Why the Story?**

This brings me to my final question this morning. Why the story? Well if for no other reason, this story sets up the rest of the story of the Bible. First of all, it explains what is

wrong with this world. The introduction to the Bible is Genesis 1-11. The rest of the introduction gives testimony to the increase of sin and death in the world. In the next chapter we find the son of Adam and Eve murdering his brother. Then the world becomes so filled with sin that God destroys it with a flood. But even after the flood, nothing changed. God gives this basic assessment of man in Genesis 8:21, “*the intention of man’s heart is evil from his youth.*” This introduction to the Bible ends with the tower of Babel and the quest of man to once again make a name for himself. It is no different than the world we live in today.

In the movie *Rocky*, the title character’s girlfriend asks him why it is so important for him to “go the distance” in the boxing match. “Then I’ll know I’m not a bum,” he replies. In the movie *Chariots of Fire* one of the main characters explains why he works so hard at running the one-hundred-yard dash for the Olympics. He says that when each race begins, “I have ten lonely seconds to justify my existence.” Both of these men looked to athletic achievement as the defining force that gave meaning to their lives.<sup>13</sup> This quest for significance and worth apart from God is an empty pursuit. The condition of man is of such that everyone is looking for significance apart from God. It is the same thing that Eve was enticed with—*you will be like God.*

So Genesis 1-11 leaves us asking what will God do to fix this problem? We will start looking at that next week in Genesis 12. But we get whispers of what God will do in our passage this morning. We get whispers of God’s goodness displayed to rebels like us. I like how D, A, Carson titles his chapter on the Fall of Man: *The God Who Does Not Wipe Out Rebels.*<sup>14</sup>

For starters, once Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden fruit and hid themselves from God, God came after them. Carol Kaminski suggest, “If God had walked in the other direction—if he had not pursued human beings—the human story would have ended.”<sup>15</sup> That is a theme you will find all throughout the Bible. Man does not seek God. It is God who is persistent and who seeks rebels like us.

We also see God cover the shame of Adam and Eve by making garments of skin and clothing them. But something had to die for them to be covered. It was the first in a long line of blood sacrifices that reaches all the way to the cross of Jesus who dies on the cross so that our sins would be covered. We can’t cover our shame on our own. We can’t justify ourselves. But can and does through the sending of his Son.

And we find hints of that one who is to come right here in Genesis 3:15. It is called the

*protoevangelium*—the first announcement of the gospel. It is the first hint of Jesus. In addressing the serpent, God says, “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.” Many of us remember the dramatic scene in Mel Gibson’s movie *The Passion of the Christ* when in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus is wrestling with having to go to the cross. The serpent is there, the tempter, trying to keep Jesus from the cross. And at a moment of resolve—*not my will but your will be done*—Jesus crushes the head of the serpent! The offspring of the woman—the son of the Virgin Mary—has come to free us from our shame and guilt and restore us to God and he has overcome sin and death. I know. . . . We are getting ahead of the story—but whispers of what is to come—whispers of hope are found in Genesis 3.

## Conclusion

**Why the command?** It tells us that living by God’s Word is central to life and that we are not God—we are meant to live dependent upon God. **Why the consequence?** Because when you detach yourself from God, you detach yourself from life—what else is their but death? **Why the story?** It shows us what is wrong with the world and it sets us up for the rest of the story—with whispers of hope. So stay tuned for next week when we ask the question of this broken world, “What is God going to do about it?”

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<sup>1</sup>Tim Keller *The Reason for God* (New York: Dutton Press, 2008) 170

<sup>2</sup>D. A. Carson *The God Who Is There* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2010) 41

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, 32

<sup>4</sup>James Boice *Foundations of the Christian Faith* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1986 (195-196)

<sup>5</sup>Carson, 34

<sup>6</sup>Rodney Clapp *Shame Crucified* [www.christianitytoday.com](http://www.christianitytoday.com) March 11, 1991

<sup>7</sup>Keller 164

<sup>8</sup>Thomas Oden *Two Worlds: Notes on the Death of Modernity in America and Russia* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1992) Chapter 6

<sup>9</sup>Harold L Senkbeil *The Care of Souls* (Lexham Press, 2019) Kindle Reader Location 589

<sup>10</sup>Soren Kierkegaard *The Sickness Unto Death* (Penguin 1989) 111, 113

<sup>11</sup>Quoted in Keller, 165

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, 170

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, 162

<sup>14</sup>Carson, 27-42

<sup>15</sup>Carol Kaminski *CASKET EMPTY Old Testament Guide* (Casket Empty Media 2012) 17

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## Getting To Know Me Questions

1. Share a highlight and a struggle from the week and use this as an opportunity to pray for each other.

## Diving Into The Word

Read Genesis 3 together as a group

2. How is the LORD revealed in this portion of Scripture. Who is He and What is He like?
3. What does this portion of Scripture teach us about man? What is so appealing about the words of the serpent and what does this teach you about human nature?
4. What does this passage teach you about the people of God? What does the LORD require of us from this passage?
5. Read Romans 5:12-21. How does Paul describe the sin of Adam in this passage? What is the solution to sin and death? Compare and contrast “the first Adam” to “the second Adam.” What do you notice?
6. Where do you see hints of Jesus in Genesis 3:1-24?

## Taking It Home

7. What is one thing you are taking from this passage?
8. Who can you tell?