

When our church started, Mr. and Mrs. Gray attended every Sunday.

And I wondered why... They were a traditional couple – straight-laced and conservatively dressed - somewhat legalistic in their appearance. In contrast I was a 22 year old pastor - had a beard and wore flip-flops. But I soon discovered why the Grays came to Calvary. They saw we were reaching young folks, and they hoped we might help their son...

Donald had been to Vietnam - *the war we tried not to lose, but never had the will to win*. It was an unpopular war, and Don grew jaded. He returned to the States and became a Hippie. And it wasn't just the LSD and marijuana - he read philosophers like Nietzsche, and bought into the "God is Dead" movement. Donald Gray was 35 years old, and angry. He was anti-establishment – a true philosophical drop-out.

I'll never forget visiting him one night. His mom slipped a note under his bedroom door, letting him know I was there. Don refused to exit his room.

And Donald Gray's funeral was the first funeral I ever officiated...

His parents were asleep when he came home and set his mattress on fire. He intended to burn down the house and murder his parents. After starting the blaze Don walked into the living room, sat in a rocking chair, put a revolver to his head, and blew his brains out. The gunshot woke up his dad. Mr. Gray saw the fire and quickly snuffed it out. He didn't see his son until he came into the living room to sit down.

What do you say in the aftermath of such evil, and brokenness, and grief? How do you comfort parents who live through that nightmare?

A dubious war – a corrupt and incompetent government - a disillusioned generation – the lure, then disappointment of unbridled drugs and sex – an atheistic philosophy that leads to despair and ultimately suicide... And Christian parents who loved their son and tried their best - yet their efforts were negated by a lost generation and a decade of confusion.

I talked a lot at the funeral about living in a fallen world. *There is something wrong – life is not the way God meant it to be*. And no one in the church argued my point. No one suggested man is innately good – or there's no such thing as sin – or evil is just an arbitrary construct to keep society in line... *No, evil was very, very real that day*. You could feel the evil. I'm sure you've felt that same evil...

War, hypocrisy, injustice, despair, hatred, violence, abuse, pride, greed, bigotry, exploitation... the world in which we live is poisoned with evil...

For the last two weeks we've discussed God's creation of the heavens and earth - and His creation of man. And following everything He created God said that it was "good." In fact, after the completion of creation, God looked back over His creative work, and said that it was all "very good." But something happened that threw a wrench in the gears. God's creation became scarred and marred - His masterpiece defaced.

God didn't create evil – but it permeates our world. And the Bible tells us *how, when, and why* - it records the fateful day we call "The Fall."

Realize the madness in the world, and in your life, will never make a bit of sense, until you understand the fall of mankind – and its ramifications. In fact, *your sanity AND your salvation* depend on your agreement with today's statement of faith.

Here it is... "We believe God created all things good. Creation was poisoned with evil when man sinned. His choice to live apart from God affects nature, family, and work. When born, all humans inherit the sin of Adam. If born again they inherit the purity of Jesus."

Genesis 3 records the worst day in history – what the theologians call “the original sin.” *You think you’ve had bad days... this was worse!*

To grasp how far man fell, understand Adam’s pre-fallen situation... *Here’s life for Adam... he lives in a tropical paradise – work for this guy is picking and eating fruit (a tough job). He hangs out all day with a naked woman – the world’s most gorgeous girl – God even tells them to multiply. Life can’t get any better for Adam. Think about it, Adam could even tell a joke, and nobody would say, “Ah, I’ve heard that one before.”*

Most importantly, Adam lived in perfect, unbroken fellowship with God... He was made in God’s image... he lived in a garden God planted just for him and his wife... he was surrounded by a world filled with God’s provision... Adam even walked with God in the cool of the day.

But by the time this day is over, life will change dramatically for Adam. He is evicted from his home. Eve learns about clothes. They blame and argue. Rather than walk in the cool of the day, he works and sweats in the heat. And that’s the tip of the iceberg. *Never was so much lost in one day.*

Today, we’re going to just walk through chapter 3 and let the Bible tell the story. Here the wheels come off - *and look who loosens the lug nuts...* Verse 1 “**Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made.**” This serpent was the embodiment of Satan. Revelation 20:2 calls Satan, “**the dragon, the serpent of old.**”

“And (Satan) said to the woman, ‘Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?’” And the woman said to the serpent...”

Here’s a conversation Eve should’ve avoided. Men can also engage in unprofitable talk, but women are more verbal and prone to conversational sin. Ladies, just because someone wants to talk doesn’t mean you should. If someone speaks gossip, or lies, or slander – don’t even talk to them.

Twice the NT states, “**Eve was deceived.**” Creation’s first lady became confused. She listened to conflicting voices and forgot what God said. Eve engaged in the wrong conversations with the wrong people. Satan is a skilled tempter and if he can get you talking to him, or someone manipulated by him, he can trap you and deceive you.

Eve tells the serpent in verse 2, **“We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die. Then the serpent said to the woman...**”

First, **he tempts Eve to doubt God’s Word...** “**You will not surely die.**” God gave thousands of trees to Adam and Eve – they could eat from all but one. Only one, solitary tree was off-limits as a way for man to prove His love and loyalty to God. But Satan puts a seed of doubt in Eve’s mind... *why obey God?*

Satan then tempts Eve to doubt God’s love. He casts doubt on God’s motive, “**For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.**”

This is the satanic deception. The devil tells you, “**God just wants to hem you in – hold you back - restrict your freedom – stunt your growth!**” Satan tries to make God out to be the kill-joy – the party-pooper.

Here’s the great divide... As we learned last week, God made man – both male and female – to bear His image, to be “**like God.**” But Satan offers a choice... Eve can be like God *apart from Him, or under Him.* She can be like God as *a reflection of His glory* – or like Him, as *a rival to His glory.* The original sin wasn’t Eve’s desire to get drunk, and sleep around, and party all night. She was tempted by a promise of wisdom. But she desired to be wise apart from God. She

wanted autonomy.

Independence from God is at the heart of my sin, and your sin, and all sin. We want to be our own authority - to be *like God*, but *without Him*.

And Satan makes it look so good. Verse 6, “So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise...”

Satan is the master marketer. He presents this autonomous lifestyle as the key to enlightenment. According to Satan, freedom from God, shedding His restriction, is the pathway to pleasure, and here’s some good-looking fruit to prove it...

So “she took of its fruit and ate...” You probably thought it was an apple. The Bible just says “fruit.” What kind? *It doesn’t matter...* It’s been said, “The problem wasn’t the apple on the tree, but the pair on the ground.”

“She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate...” And from the instant Adam’s teeth pierced the skin of that fruit the universe was never the same. In Genesis 2:17, God told Adam if he ate the forbidden fruit they’d “surely die.” And die they did. Death entered the human sphere.

Spiritually, the man and woman died instantly. Sin caused a breach between them and the God of life. Something died inside Adam. The warmth of God’s Spirit was suddenly replaced by a coldness, and alienation, and emptiness, and selfishness. They died spiritually that day.

But physically they also began to die. It culminates under a tombstone, but death began when Adam sinned. At that moment his body started to slowly deteriorate. “Entropy” or decay began to take a toll on mankind.

And not only did entropy take hold of humanity. It impacted the whole universe. Romans 8:20 puts it, “the creation was subjected to futility.” Randomness invaded God’s order. Sin marred God’s perfect world. Malfunctions became commonplace. Nature spun out of control.

The Hebrews have a word to describe the perfect state of God’s original creation, “Shalom” or “peace.” When Jesus returns He’ll restore creation to perfection. And Jesus will be called the “Prince of Shalom” – or peace. But the fall of man *shattered Shalom*.

Before the fall, nature was synced up with God. Sin is now the bug that keeps us out-of-sync. *Mother Nature* no longer cooperates with *God the Father*. After the fall, nature began acting independently of God’s will.

The gentle rain that waters your yard – can sometimes flood a city. The light breeze that raises a kite - can rip the roof and siding off your house. *Mother Nature* has developed a severe case of PMS. Sin has defiled God’s perfect world. The world we live in is no longer as God intended.

The effects of sin showed up first in the man and woman. As soon as they bit the fruit, “The eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked...”

Until this point Adam and Eve were oblivious to themselves. Even to the point of being unaware of their nakedness. Apparently, sin brings self-awareness. Prior to sin Adam and Eve were *God-centered* and *others-centered*. Now they become *self-centered*. Sin makes life all about me. It’s no accident, the middle letter in “sin” is “i.”

Eve gained enlightenment – her eyes were opened. But the knowledge shattered her innocence. Independent from God she felt inadequate and shameful. Ultimately all sin is about selfishness, and pride, and ego.

I’ve heard it said, “After she sinned Eve became the only woman in history to say, “I haven’t got a thing to wear - and it actually be true.”

In verse 7 she tries to remedy the problem. “And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings...”

Adam and Eve's immediate response to sin is to *hide*. It's the first "cover up." They sew together fig leaves and make green Speedos. *It's the original fruit of the looms.*

Adam and Eve try to rid themselves of their selfishness, but their plan backfires. A friend tells me fig leaves are real itchy - which means fig leaf Speedos would've made them more self-obsessed, rather than less.

Verse 8 is so sad, "And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden."

This would be funny if it were not so tragic... the President and the First Lady of Creation are hiding in the bushes - scratching like crazy.

I like this cartoon... It's an autumn day. Leaves are falling to the ground. And Eve is scolding Adam, "Will you please pick up your clothes?" Wow how life changed for Adam... He's gone from hanging out with a naked babe to being nagged by the same woman to pick up his clothes.

"Then the LORD God called to Adam and said to him, "Where are you?"

Please understand this isn't the voice of an angry mobster banging on your door, seeking revenge, "Where are ya! I'm going getcha..." This isn't the Godfather. This is God the Father.

To read God's question accurately you have to read it like heartbroken dad seeking his lost and wayward child... "Where are you? I love you! Please come home!"

God calls lovingly... But men, you need to notice who God calls out. Though Eve sinned first, God wants to talk to the man, "Adam... where are you?" God holds Adam responsible. *The buck stops with the buck.* Every man wants to be the head of his house – the king of his castle – but men, a serious responsibility comes with that authority and honor.

Too many men are like Adam. Notice, *where is Adam when Eve bites the fruit?* Verse 6 tells us, "Her husband was with her..." While Eve was being deceived, Adam was the apathetic bystander. He does nothing! Adam fails to lead – to even protect his wife. He never intervenes in the conversation between Eve and Satan – *and we're still paying for it today.*

This is the sin of scores of "so-called men" – even Christian men. Here is our generation's chief tragedy. Men are failing their families. They pay a mortgage and buy groceries, but leave spiritual leadership to their wives. *This was Adam's error...* and guys, if it brought down the entire human family, it'll have a negative affect on your family – especially your son.

When a dad leaves the spiritual issues of life to his wife his son gets the impression that God, and prayer, and Bible study, and church are feminine activities. Since a son wants to be a man, he'll see no need to follow God.

Some men think just because they don't do anything wrong – *they don't get drunk, or use drugs, or cheat on their wives* – they must be pleasing to God - not hardly. A husband and dad need to be aware of what's going on spiritually in their family. Be a spiritual leader, not an apathetic Adam.

And notice Adam's excuses. "So he said, "I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself." And He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?"

Adam's first response to sin was to *hide*, but now he *hurls*. He plays the blame game. Adam says to God, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate."

Adam is so arrogant he not only blames Eve, but he also blames God for his sin. He says to God, "the woman whom You gave me..." It's your fault God for giving me this woman.

I'm ashamed to say it, but there have been times when *I've lost my cool* with my wife and blamed her for my sin, "She makes me so mad!" Hey, what a wife does is no excuse for a

husband's sin. God holds the man responsible for his actions and reactions.

"And the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

Eve blames the snake. Eve uses the old Flip Wilson line that use to get so many laughs, "The devil made me do it..." *But God doesn't laugh at Eve or us...*

We've all sinned, and the first step to overcoming sin is to stop blaming it on our spouse, or kids, or boss, or church, or the economy, or the devil... God in His grace wants to forgive us, but first we have to come out of the bushes - *stop hiding* and *stop hurling* - and own what we've done.

Notice what happens next... "The man blames the woman, the woman blames the snake, and the snake doesn't have a leg to stand on..."

Verse 14, "So the LORD God said to the serpent: "Because you have done this, you are cursed more than all cattle, and more than every beast of the field; on your belly you shall go, and you shall eat dust all the days of your life. And I will put enmity between you and the woman..."

This is the part of the verse that's easy to interpret... *Most women are afraid of most snakes.* There's hostility between snakes and women.

But God continues... He will also put enmity, or hostility, "between (the serpent's) seed and (the woman's) Seed..." The "seed (or sperm) of the woman" is bizarre terminology. Nowhere does the seed belong to the woman. This verse speaks of a unique birth – a supernatural birth.

Notice the next line, "He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel."

Genesis 3:15 is one of the most important verses in the Bible. It's known as the *protoevangelicum*. It's the first mention of the Gospel.

The seed of the woman speaks of Jesus' virgin birth. On the cross Satan bruised Jesus' heel – a non-fatal blow. But Jesus crushed Satan's head, and stripped him of his authority. The devil has no power over the believer in Jesus. Like the serpent, the devil *bit the dust*.

It's intriguing why Jesus had to be born of "the seed of the woman."

Romans 5:12 tells us, "Through one man sin entered the world..." The Bible teaches that everyone born of Adam inherits Adam's sin. Psalm 51:5 puts it, "I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me." We're all born with a sinful, Adamic nature. Our natural tendency is to rebel. We have an internal compass that points toward "I" – not God.

There's a rock 'n roll song that plays at the South Gwinnett baseball games. "On the day I was born, the nurses all gathered 'round - and they gazed in wide wonder, at the joy they had found. The head nurse spoke up, and she said leave this one alone. She could tell right away, that I was bad to the bone." Every human being born to Adam is bad to the bone.

Here's the point, through Adam, sin is passed down. Sin is a trait that's inherited from the dad not the mom. This is why Jesus is called "the seed of the woman." Because He was virgin born He was born sinless – thus, Jesus could die in *our place* for *our sin*. *Jesus was good to the bone*.

In fact, Romans 5:19 states, "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous." We inherit *sin* from Adam. We inherit *sinlessness* from Jesus. In Adam we're born into sin. In Jesus we're born again to righteousness.

I've talked to people who resent the idea of original sin. *Why should I suffer for Adam's sin? Why can't I decide my own fate?* Be careful what you wish for... I doubt if you'd do any better than Adam and Eve. You also would've sinned. And here's the catch – if your own sin

condemns you - your own righteousness has to save you. God in His wisdom condemned us in Adam, so He could save us in Jesus.

In verse 16 the consequences of sin start to reach deep into our lives.

First, God judges the woman and her roll in the revolt. He assigns her punishment. "I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; in pain you shall bring forth children..."

Mom, imagine what could've been... God intended "pain-free contractions." "No pain, all gain." That ended though with the first delivery. Sin brought labor pains. A wrench was thrown into the gears of family and human reproduction. Here's the source of infertility, and miscarriages, and C-sections.

But the woman's sentence was two-fold. God also tells Eve, "Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you."

The woman was sentenced to *labor pains*, and *laboring with a pain*. Her husband was now a sinner. She was suddenly saddled with a tough task of submitting to an imperfect authority – a mistake-prone leader.

In verse 17 God judges Adam, "Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it': "Cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field."

Adam's work changes... Before the fall when he's hungry he picks a globe of fruit. Now he has to grow food in the fields. Prior to the curse, food and work were unrelated. Food had nothing to do with a paycheck. God provided all the man and woman needed. Adam worked for fun. This changed at the fall...

Since Adam chose independence from God, he could start by growing his own food – earning his own living... And while he's tilling the ground he's going to encounter constant obstacles... "thorns and thistles." Suddenly, work becomes *work*. It goes from a *breeze* to a *burden*.

Verse 19, "In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return."

Before man sinned, work was *no sweat*, but *no more*. From now on man will never get out of his job a reward equal to what he puts into his work. He's taken from the dirt and he works himself back into the ground. Every time a man clocks in he leaves a little something of himself on the job, until he's literally worked himself to death. And this is the plight of every man.

Some guys I know bounce from job to job. They never settle down. They're always looking for the perfect job... *that just doesn't exist!* Every *occupation* - every *corporation* - has thorns and thistles. All careers have obstacles that irritate and aggravate.

God sees to it that women have *pain in labor* and men *labor in pain*.

It's interesting, that God places the curse on the man and woman at the point of their greatest fulfillment... Go to a party and listen to the conversations... *Men talk about work. Women talk about family.* God embeds a natural barrier that keeps men and women from getting too caught up in the part of life that could cause them to neglect Him.

One type of sin is to *exalt the good above the ultimate*. A man can put his work before God – or a woman can put her kids before God... Yet, it seems God punished us in a way that protects us from further sin.

The curse God placed on man's original sin taught universal lessons...

All men are called to take charge, but everything under their domain is bucking their authority – *the wife, the kids, the job...* Just about the time, life starts coming together something else breaks or unravels.

Why are we always fixing stuff? I believe God wants us to realize what it's like to have His job. God has dominion over us, but do we always cooperate with His plans? Too often we act like thorns and thistles.

And God wants to birth spiritual life in our hearts, but is it easy for Him? Do we resist, and kick, and contract? Yes, ladies we do. God wants us to feel a little of the pain He's endured to birth new life in us.

Verse 20 "And Adam called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living." The name "Eve" means "life-giver." "Also for Adam and his wife the LORD God made tunics of skin, and clothed them."

God didn't like Adam and Eve's fruit of the looms, so He dressed them in leather. Animal skins necessitated the death of an animal – *a sacrifice*. Fig leaves are an attempt to make up for sin with human effort. And folks do this today. They sew together charitable deeds, religious rituals, and good works to cover their sin. Yet God insists on a sacrifice.

God told Adam, "You shall surely die". The wages of sin have always been death. For sin to be forgiven a sacrifice is required. This is why there's no other salvation apart from the cross of Jesus Christ.

Life Alert had a commercial with a famous punch line, "I've fallen and I can't get up!" This should be the motto of the whole human race. We can do nothing to save ourselves, but repent of our sin and trust in Jesus.

"Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever" - therefore the LORD God sent him out of the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken. So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life."

Here are the first cops patrolling the beat. God forecloses on Adam, and angels guard the tree of life.

Yet behind this seemingly harsh treatment there is mercy. If sinners ate of the tree of life they'd live forever in a fallen state. From here on – God intends to bring people home – and restore the damage caused by sin. Once we're fully redeemed, we can munch again off the tree of life.

Next week we'll study "God's Covenants" - plans to repair a fallen world.

Let's recite together this morning's statement of belief, "We believe God created all things good. Creation was poisoned with evil when man sinned. His choice to live apart from God affects nature, family, and work. When born, all humans inherit the sin of Adam. If born again, they inherit the purity of Jesus."

BONUS MATERIAL

Often I get asked, “If God foreknew the devastating effects of man’s sin why did He create man in the first place?” And that’s a good question.

But think it through... Why does any parent choose to have kids?

This world is not a people-friendly place. It’s full of war, and evil, and potential danger - yet life still holds intriguing possibilities...

Parents risk the potential dangers, for the opportunities of love and joy and knowing God – and that’s just temporal life. God also factored in eternal life, and knew the blessings far outweighed the risk.

The possibility of man’s rebellion was necessitated by the quality of relationship God desires with man. He wants a relationship based on love.

But for love to be meaningful there has to be a choice. If I forced Kathy to marry me at gunpoint, I’d never quite be sure of her love for me. For her love to be meaningful it had to be voluntary, and for it to be voluntary she had to have the option to walk away.

This was also true of the type of relationship God wanted with the man.

GK Chesterton once said, “Whatever is or is not true about men, this one thing is certain – man is not what he was meant to be.”