

Genesis 3 – The Fall

Good morning! Hope you all have had a good week, and it's very good to see you here this morning. We've just finished the series on Nehemiah, and for the next four weeks, we're having a series based on advent. Now, for those of you who have a background in the Anglican church, you will be familiar with the nine lessons and carols services that happen in the days before Christmas, which has nine readings about Jesus' coming and carols based around those, all in one service. Now, if you didn't already know, GSM is not part of the official Anglican Church of England. Despite this, we still celebrate Christmas! And at Christmas, as a preaching team, we are aware that a lot of people will go to visit family or go on holiday at Christmas, so if we were to do a similar service at Christmas, there might not be many people around to attend and benefit. With this in mind, we're going to do a four week series, starting this week, based on some of the readings that aren't always explained in advent. And we'll also be looking at some passages that maybe should be included! The usual nine lessons and carols service, according to Kings College Cambridge, would have readings from Genesis 3, Genesis 22, Isaiah 9, Isaiah 11, Luke 1, Luke 2 (two readings), Matthew 2 and John 1. So, this series is four weeks rather than 9, but they are all based on readings that look forward to or describe Jesus' coming. So this week I'll be talking on Genesis 3, with the other sermons being the following: Vincent will speak on Isaiah 9, Simon will speak on Revelation 12, and will Tim speak on Malachi 4.

So, let's look at Genesis 3. Now, I'm sure some of you will be wondering why on earth we are looking at the entrance of sin into the world when I've just told you that this series is based on looking forward to Jesus' birth. I'd just like to reassure you that the two are inextricably linked together. As a result of sin, we, as fallen humans, need a way by which we can have our relationship with God restored. Being sinful, there is no possible way that we can do this ourselves. So, God, in His great mercy, sent Jesus, in human form, to live the perfect life and to present Himself as the perfect sacrifice to atone for our sins. That is, to take the punishment we deserved in order that our relationship with God might be restored. So, in light of this, today, I'm going to show you two things from Genesis 3. **Firstly, sin** and its consequences, then, secondly, the hope that we have through Jesus.

To understand the consequences of sin, we need to first understand what sin is and how it came into the world. To do this, I'm going to split this passage into two sections. **Firstly**, in verses 1-13, there are two conversations that are had in the Garden of Eden, and sin enters the world. Then, in verses 14-24, the consequences of sin are revealed. So, we'll look at these before I move onto the hope that we have through Jesus. So, let's read verses 1-13.

Read vv1-13

1 Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?" 2 The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, 3 but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'" 4 "You will not certainly die," the serpent said to the woman. 5 "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." 6 When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some 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 realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. 8 Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. 9 But the Lord God called to the man, "Where are you?" 10 He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid." 11 And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?" 12 The man said, "The woman you put here with me — she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it." 13 Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

In verses 1-7, there is the conversation between Eve and the serpent. The serpent is the Devil, as we see later on in this chapter. So, today, if I talk about the serpent, or the Devil, then they are one and the same. And, in v1, what is his first point of attack? He causes Eve to doubt. Did God *really* tell you not to eat from any tree? And he says 'any tree'. He twists the question to ask if God prevents them from eating any fruit from any tree. Eve, to her credit, responds with God's exact instructions, which we can see back in chapter 2:17. Next, in chapter 3 v4-5, the Devil introduces a blatant lie but mixes it with some truth. God has told Adam and Eve that they will die if they

even touch the fruit from the tree of knowledge, but the Devil says that they won't. The truth comes after to say that they will become like God in knowing good and evil. The Devil implies that God can't handle having any rivals and that is why He has ordered them not to eat from the tree. He accuses God of being selfish and keeping the good things for Himself and not sharing them with Adam and Eve. When, in fact, God has instructed Adam and Eve in very specific terms, in order that they might prosper and remain in His presence.

As a result of this conversation, they are persuaded to go and eat from the tree of knowledge. Sin, which is disobedience against God and His will, has entered the world. Mankind now has the knowledge of good and evil. Both Adam and Eve gave in to temptation. Now, when I say both, I mean both of them. The blame sometimes gets put onto Eve for giving in, yet at the end of v6, it is explicit that Adam is right there with her, all the way through this conversation. Adam was passive. He didn't step in and support his wife against the serpent, and he didn't stop her from taking fruit from the tree of knowledge. Let this be a challenge to men – we need to be strong and to stand up for what we know is true and right, not to be passive and inactive. The Devil attacks our weaknesses; in this case, he went for Eve. Adam did nothing to prevent that. So, they both saw that the fruit was desirable. And that desire led to sin. It led to both Adam and Eve eating from the tree of knowledge. It was edible, it was good to look at, and it gave wisdom, where's the downside? When senses and emotions come up against reason and logic, more often than not, the emotions win. This happens here. They know that God forbade them from eating of the tree, yet their stomachs, their eyes and their desires won against that knowledge. In the NT, James 1:15 explains this perfectly – “after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.” We see something similar with King David and Bathsheba in the OT book of 2 Samuel – David saw that she was beautiful, his mind wandered and he committed murder and adultery to fulfil those desires. Again, he did this despite the knowledge that he had of God's commandments given through Moses. Our knowledge of God should never be compromised, for anything, no matter how attractive or pleasing it might seem. And the cornerstone of this knowledge is His Word to us, the Bible.

In verses 8-13, we have the second conversation between God and Adam and Eve. They hear God walking in the garden and decide to hide from God. Their guilt and shame is immediate. God calls out to Adam in v9, who replies in a way that shows that he has sinned. Only someone who has knowledge of good and evil would know that they were naked. And God gets to the root of the problem immediately in v11. Who told Adam that he was naked? Why did you eat from the tree of knowledge? He also gives Adam a chance to respond; God is not quick to hand out punishment. What's Adam's response to this questioning? He goes passive again and passes the blame onto Eve. He copies the Devil. He lies and accuses Eve of fully being to blame. Eve then blames the Devil in v13. Note this too: their conversation occurs when Adam and Eve are still hiding among the trees. That barrier between man and God has already been established.

So, now, the consequences of sin.

Read vv14-24

14 So the Lord God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, “Cursed are you above all livestock and all wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life. 15 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.” 16 To the woman he said, “I will make your pains in childbearing very severe; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.” 17 To Adam he said, “Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, ‘You must not eat of it,’ “Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. 18 It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. 19 By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return.” 20 Adam named his wife Eve, because she would become the mother of all the living. 21 The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them. 22 And the Lord God said, “The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever.” 23 So the Lord God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. 24 After he drove them out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.

Now, understanding the consequences of sin is vital for us to have a faith that is complete. I find that because we have the knowledge of Jesus dying on the cross for us, making the perfect sacrifice, once for all, the gravity of sin can sometimes be lost. We acknowledge that we sin, but we use the cross as a leaning post instead of falling to our knees in front of it. True appreciation of the depths to which we have fallen, as a result of sin, is the only way

we can truly appreciate the heights to which we have been raised with Christ. I'll repeat that again: True appreciation of the depths to which we have fallen, as a result of sin, is the only way we can truly appreciate the heights to which we have been raised with Christ. v14-24 help us to understand the consequences of sin and should enable you to glorify God all the more for the salvation that He has freely given to us through His son Jesus Christ.

Looking back at v14-24, there were consequences for all three guilty parties involved – the serpent, Eve and Adam. The serpent's curse is in v14-15 – the serpent is cursed above all else. He is below all of creation, crawling on his belly and eating the dust of the earth. The lowest of the low. The stewardship Adam has over the serpent is now broken, reversed into animosity and war. The woman's offspring will crush the serpent's head and the serpent will strike at the heel of mankind. I'll explain this later. There will be a struggle between mankind and the serpent. In v16, Eve's consequences are to suffer in childbirth, and to desire to rule over her husband, while he rules over her. The loving and sacrificial marriage which Paul calls married couples to in the NT letter to the Ephesians is not always going to be the case. There will be a struggle between man and woman. In Genesis 3 v17-19, the consequences for Adam are that the ground is cursed because of him, and he will have to toil in order to survive. There will be a struggle between man and the earth he is supposed to be a guardian of. And Adam is also chastised for listening to his wife. Now, this is not to say that husbands shouldn't ever listen to their wives! I know it can be tempting sometimes! No, this is Adam listening to Eve instead of listening to God's commands. As a result, instead of life with God in the Garden of Eden, Adam will now return to the dust. Nothing of his body will survive – he will return to the dust from which he came. Ashes to ashes, dust to dust. Eternity lost, paradise lost.

And there are other consequences to sin – let's look now at v20-24 – v21 God makes clothes for Adam and Eve that are made from skin. How does he get skin? – something has to die. A sacrifice has been made to cover over the nakedness of Adam and Eve. As a result of sin, death enters the world – as Paul says in Romans, the wages of sin is death. We also see that man will now be prevented from living forever – eternal life in God's paradise has been removed, and Adam and Eve were banished from the Garden of Eden. God cannot have sinful mankind in his presence in the Garden of Eden, and so they are evicted.

So, just to summarise the consequences of sin. Mankind knows good and evil. Evil and sin have entered the world. Relationships between creation, man, woman and God are broken. Women will have pain in childbirth, man will toil in working the land in order to survive. Death has entered the world – man will die and return to the dust; God has killed a creature to create clothes for Adam and Eve. Eternal life in God's presence is now out of reach, and mankind is thrown out of Eden.

So that's what happened in the time of Genesis 3. What are the consequences for us? They are the same today as they were then. But, the main one we need to focus on is a broken relationship with God. Before sin entered the world, the relationship between God and man was complete and perfect. God spoke; Adam and Eve believed, trusted and obeyed. After Adam and Eve sinned, this was broken. They doubted God's commands, decided their advancement was more important than their relationship with God, and they disobeyed His word. The intended order of the world was reversed. In creation, God breathed life into Adam, and Eve came from Adam. Adam and Eve were then placed over all of creation to rule and master it by being stewards of God's creation. In Genesis 3, we see how part of God's creation, the serpent, caused Eve to doubt, which led to her eating some of the forbidden fruit and giving it to Adam, who then hid from God. And today, this reversal is still the same. As Christians, we know that our relationship has been restored with God through the work of Jesus on the cross. But, as I said earlier, true appreciation of the depths to which we have fallen, as a result of sin, is the only way we can truly appreciate the heights to which we have been raised with Christ. So let's look at this from the point of view of not being a Christian, or before becoming a Christian. In the NT, in Romans 3 v9-11 and v18, it says the following: "9 What shall we conclude then? Do we have any advantage? Not at all! We have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under the power of sin. 10 As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one; 11 there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God... 18 "There is no fear of God before their eyes." Everyone is equal in God's eyes, in that, before people are turned to follow Christ, nobody seeks God. And as long as that stays the case, the relationship with God will never be restored. So, before we turn to Christ, everything we do is self-centred and aimed at our own self-preservation and promotion. We reject God. Instead of being born into a relationship with God, as Adam was, we are born rejecting Him. In Ephesians 2, we are told that "1 ...you were dead in the trespasses and sins 2 in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— 3 among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind." Before becoming children

of God, we were children of God's wrath. We deserved the punishment of eternal death because of our rejection of Him. God's seriousness is shown through the reality of hell. Do we take sin as seriously as God or do we shrug it off and just fall back on the forgiveness given through Jesus? Has this become a ritual habit rather than a true inward repentance? If we truly humble ourselves and truly appreciate the gravity of sin and our inability to do anything about it, we will truly appreciate the magnitude of God's grace in sending us Jesus to take God's wrath, for our sin, on the cross.

So, a bit of a breather now. I realise that some of that might have been quite heavy for some of you, but it needs to be heard and understood. I hope you can now understand sin a bit more clearly and the desperate need that mankind had for a saviour.

And now, I'll show you where the Saviour is in Genesis 3. Because the curse is not just a curse, it also contains a promise. And within that promise is the promise of salvation and the defeat of the Devil. It all lies in **Genesis 3, v15**: "And I will put enmity between you (the serpent) and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel." Now, this doesn't mean that whenever we see a serpent, it will immediately go for your heel. From my own personal expertise, gained from the hours I've spent watching the nature channel, most serpents are quite docile and run away when they smell humans, let alone see us. The woman's offspring is mankind; the serpent is the Devil. So there will be a war going on between mankind, as a whole, and the Devil. And the Devil will attack mankind, and one of Eve's offspring will crush the Devil's head. Now, in v15, I say 'one' of Eve's offspring because there are two meanings to the word offspring. There will be a war going on between the Devil and mankind as a whole. But, mankind, as a whole, doesn't have the power to deliver a fatal blow to the Devil, because mankind, as a whole, is a slave to sin. But one of Eve's offspring, Jesus, isn't a slave to sin, and he does have the power to crush the Devil's head. Because of mankind's sin, punishment needed to be given. The Devil wanted this to be given to mankind. God sent His son Jesus to take that punishment in our place, on the cross – the Devil's power to say that mankind was bound by sin and death was crushed - it no longer exists as a result of God's wrath having been carried out on Jesus.

In Romans 5:17-19, Paul explains this to us: "17 For if, by the trespass of the one man (Adam), death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ! 18 Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all. 19 For just as through the disobedience of the one man (Adam) the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man (Jesus) the many will be made righteous." Jesus is the second Adam, only he is perfect, complete in his obedience, obedient even to death on a cross. Jesus is like Adam in being a man; yet he is unlike Adam because the gift of righteousness is completely unlike the sin of Adam. This is the certain hope that we have; the hope we remember at Christmas; that at Christmas, Jesus came down to this earth to live the perfect life; the perfect life that Adam didn't live; the life that we could never live as a result of being Adam's offspring. Sin, death and condemnation on the whole of mankind came through Adam; grace, righteousness, justification and life, come through Jesus, for those who believe in him. So the gift of Christmas is not just the arrival of a new-born baby born with animals as an audience, the gift of Christmas is in Romans 5:17 – it is righteousness, with God, through Christ. And it is free. In Romans 5 v15-16, the word 'gift' is literally translated as 'free gift'. And the extent of this gift is so much more than the effect of Adam's sin. The gifts given by Jesus don't just even out the negative aspects of Adam's transgression. We need to see how, in every way, that Jesus' work is far more superior. It triumphs over all sins, not just Adam's. The death brought about because of Adam is not just cancelled because of Jesus. As Christians, we don't just have life, we have eternal life. In **1 Cor 15:47-49**, Paul explains this to us: "47 The first man was of the dust of the earth; the second man is of heaven. 48 As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the heavenly man, so also are those who are of heaven. 49 And just as we have borne the image of the earthly man, so shall we bear the image of the heavenly man." When Jesus died on the cross, he took the punishment for our sins. This means, that when God looks at us, instead of seeing a sinful human, he sees the spotlessness and holiness conferred onto us by Jesus. At Christmas, we remember Jesus coming down to earth in human form, and that is just part of his amazing work of human salvation.

As a result of sin, we, as sinful humans, needed a way to have our relationship with God restored. Being sinful, there was no possible way that we could do that ourselves. So, God sent Jesus, in human form, to live the perfect life and to present Himself as the perfect sacrifice to take the punishment we deserved in order that our relationship with God might be restored. And in Genesis 3:15, we see the beginning of that salvation plan.

Let's pray that this Christmas, we may truly appreciate the extent to which we have been raised with Christ and brought back into a right relationship with Him.

Amen

Small Group Study Questions

1. Looking at v1-7, how can we be tempted to compromise our beliefs in today's society?
2. Do we face open opposition or is it subtle undermining and dilution of what we are taught in the Bible?
3. What can we do to prevent ourselves from giving into temptations?
4. Look at v8-13, what is our response when we realise we have sinned? Do we hide it, make a feeble excuse, or do we accept the blame, humble ourselves and ask God for forgiveness?
5. How do we avoid making repentance a habit – how do we ensure that it is a true and inward repentance when we sin?
6. Look at v14-24, how do we see the impact of sin in today's world?
7. Where can we see the hope/promise in this passage?
8. How is this hope/promise fulfilled?
9. What does this mean for us (Christians) when we consider the consequences of sin?