

Genesis 3.1-7 / Faith Bible Church / 08.09.20

Introduction

- † **[1: Title]** Let's pray...
- † **[2: 3 circles]** We have been talking through the genesis of Genesis, the beginning of the beginning, learning truths foundational to biblical theology, and the literary setting for the biblical narrative.
- We have learned there is one God, who has always existed, and who is powerful enough that he created all the universe to be pure and useful simply by speaking. God is the protagonist, the hero of our narrative.
 - **[3: image]** God had a plan to establish for himself a representative people. He created the first people in his image: to reflect his character, represent him in all situations, reproduce his image throughout the Earth, and rule over creation in his name.
 - **[4: equipping]** God equipped the first people, Adam and Eve, with everything needed for success, including spiritual awareness, heightened intellectual powers, direct communication with God, fulfilling work, the Sabbath day for rest and worship, the paradise garden in which to live, marriage and fruitfulness, and revelation with a simple moral philosophy.
- † All of this is the literary setting to our biblical narrative, from the first two chapters of Genesis. Talk about concise writing! God and Moses give us all that information in two pages!
- Today we will meet the villain, the literary antagonist, and we will see the villain introduce the tension of the narrative which will drive the plot for the rest of history!
 - How will God's representatives respond? Will they use their moral philosophy to do the right thing and win the day? We will find out! Open your Bible to Genesis 3.
- † **[5: top line]** Before we look at our text, I want to elaborate on the simple moral philosophy which God gave to Adam and Eve. That moral philosophy was to submit to God and depend on God; to do what God commanded and trust God with everything else; in short, to trust and obey God's revelation. This is what we call the top line: to do what is right and trust God with the results.
- The alternative is the bottom line, to pursue our own ambitions with our own methods, relying on our own moral reasoning; this always is sinful. It might involve sinful desires or sinful actions, but it always is turning away from obedience and faith, and thus turning away from God.
- † **[6: you]** We are going to use this tool today, so I want to be sure you understand it. Let's consider an example. Suppose my wife put on a new outfit for church and asked me how she looked. Now I am thinking, "She looks hideous in that thing! Should I tell her?"
- **[7: blessing]** "Physical Realm Blessings" might not be the best category title; no graphic is perfect. What I want in this situation is a happy wife, a peaceful marriage; I want no distractions or hurt feelings on our way to church; I want her to think well of me.
 - **[8: bottom]** Now God has blessed me with a great intellect, wisdom, and the ability to reason. I am confident and proud of my abilities. So I reason thus: "If I tell her the truth, she is going to have hurt feelings, she might react with anger, she might even use her blue belt martial arts

skills on me. On the other hand, it is commonly acceptable in this situation to tell a 'little white lie'; that does not hurt anyone, and it gets me what I want." So I lie.

- It is true that God has blessed people with intellect, wisdom, and the ability to reason, right? The problem is that the Bible says all of these are tainted by the corruption in our nature. And even for Adam and Eve, who did not have that corruption yet, these abilities were imperfect, because they were finite, not the same as God's perfections.
- What is the result here of my fleshly thinking? It is sin, right? Let's see why.
- **[9: obey]** The problem is that I have tried to think the situation through without considering God's revelation. God's revelation says "God is truth, there is no falsehood in him; God made me in his image to reflect his character, which means I should speak truth, not falsehood; God commanded that people not lie." If I were to obey that revelation, what would I do in this situation?
- Would I tell my "white lie"? No. Would I laugh at my wife and tell her she looks hideous? No, because other revelation from God tells me I should be kind, gentle, loving, edifying in my speech. So I want to tell the truth in a loving way.
- If I use my intellect, wisdom, and reasoning to evaluate the situation in light of God's revelation, I can make the right decision; if I use my abilities independent of God's revelation, on the bottom-line, then I likely make the wrong decision.
- **[10: trust]** Now the question is, what result will I get doing things God's way? Will my wife still be angry? will my marriage have strife? will my long ride to church be miserable? Will my wife think less of me? Maybe. But God wants me to do what is right and trust him with the results and everything else. God will give me the result he wants me to have. At the least, I will have kept my relationship with my wife pure, stayed trustworthy for her, and prevented her from embarrassing herself in public.
- **[11: spiritual]** Trusting and obeying God's revelation also results in spiritual blessings, such as intimacy with God and avoiding the many negative effects of sin. Ok, now we are ready to use our analytical tool, so we are ready for our text.

[12: 3.1-5] Genesis 3.1-7 NIV: 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'?"

The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, 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.'"

"You will not certainly die," the serpent said to the woman. "For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

[13: 3.6-7] 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. 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.

The Snake

- † **[14: Genesis 2.25]** Last week, we saw Adam and Eve coming together in the first marriage, and we witnessed in **Genesis 2.25 NIV: Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.**
- Adam and Eve were naked [עָרֹם], but not ashamed because they had no sin in them. The Bible often uses nakedness to symbolize vulnerability; they had total openness and trust in their relationship, they could be vulnerable before each other without shame.
 - **[15: Genesis 2.25-3.1]** The very next verse emphasizes the serpent was crafty or shrewd [עָרוּם]. The Bible uses this term to represent understanding the dangers and ways of evil. This is true of the prudent good person and it is true of the scheming evil person; both are [עָרוּם].
 - Adam and Eve were [עָרֹם], naked, vulnerable because of innocence, while the serpent was [עָרוּם], crafty or shrewd, the opposite of vulnerability or innocence. This is wordplay by the author, to show the connection between the two scenes in the narrative, and to show what the snake is about: Adam and Eve are naïve about danger and evil, but the serpent is shrewd.
 - Why was Eve not surprised to hear the serpent talking to her? Moses' audience would have known that the snake could only talk through some kind of supernatural interference. Eve was still naïve; this might have been her first day. We could speculate animals could communicate with people back then, but there is no textual indication of that.
- † I find it fascinating that our text is not interested in revealing why the snake has turned evil or how evil arises in our paradise garden amidst a good and pure world. God is so focused here on revealing something about *people* that he largely ignores revealing anything about the origin of *evil*!
- I probably should leave it like that, since the text does, but I will spend one minute telling you something we learn much later in the narrative: this serpent is Satan, the devil, in disguise; or, perhaps better said, the serpent is controlled by Satan. How do we know?
 - **[16: Revelation]** Later revelation explains it to us; e.g. **Revelation 12.9; 20.2 NIV** refer to **that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray.**
- † If you are new to the Bible, you might ask, who is this Satan? I have a thorough teaching on that subject, which you can access from my website, listed on the slide.
- Briefly, Satan was one of God's top angels; he rebelled against God and led other angels to rebel. Since then, he has caused trouble here, starting with the scene we are studying today.
- † **[17: 3.1]** Back to that scene: The snake was a small creature, subordinate to people in God's plan and not dangerous looking. Thus evil was in disguise as something innocuous.
- Today, most people don't like snakes, and today many snakes are poisonous, so we could miss the implication here, but evil appeared as something that would not frighten Eve, as a good creature in God's creation; this was part of the deception.
 - The snake appeared to be friendly even though its ambition was to break the relationship people had with God, to bring disobedience and distrust, to cause sin and harm.
- † **[18: 2.16-17; 3.1 highlights]** The snake began by emphasizing God's single prohibition, rather than God's massive provision. The snake changed God's Word to make it sound more harsh and

restrictive. God told Adam people could freely eat from all the fruit bearing trees with only one exception, whereas the snake asked whether God denied them the right to eat from any tree.

- † **[19: 2.17; 3.4-5]** The snake then countered, outright denied God's Word: God said they certainly would die if they ate this particular fruit, but the snake denied that.
 - **[20: divine]** The snake misled Eve about God's motivations and planted doubts about God's goodness. The snake implied that God was jealous to protect his favored status, holding them back from their destiny, rather than guiding them into what was good and healthy.
 - The snake held out the promise of becoming divine, like God, and hinted they were missing out.
 - **[21: top/bottom]** So the snake twisted the truth about the plant to make it tempting, something they should eat to gain benefits. The snake made it seem like rebellion, the bottom line, would be the best choice, because they could get something attractive that way, and they should not trust and obey God on the top line, since he wouldn't give this helpful fruit to them.
- † **[22: 2.17]** We should remind ourselves about the plant. "The knowledge of good and evil" is an idiom in the Old Testament, referring to formulating a judicial decision. This fruit would awaken in people a desire and ability to make their own moral choices, rather than relying on God's revelation.
 - That sounds innocuous, but remember the decision about what to do, what was morally right, was God's to make; people were to trust God's decisions, not autonomously make their own moral choices. The only moral choice God had given Adam was whether to obey or rebel.
 - If people rebelled, if they took the bottom line by eating this fruit, they would be seeking to act as gods themselves.
- † **[23: 2.17; 3.2-3]** Some argue Eve is imprecise in her knowledge of God's word: she softens the aspect of freedom; added to the restriction; and de-emphasized the penalty by omitting "certainly." If she did misunderstand, no doubt it was because she learned all this second-hand from Adam, perhaps that same day. I suppose she did misunderstand something, since she was deceived.
 - In any case, it is interesting that it is the snake who comes closest to quoting God's word accurately, when he lied about it, and that God's word was quoted three times, but never completely accurately: the snake questioned it with a misleading representation, Eve paraphrased it, and the snake denied it.
- † **[24: top line]** So what have we learned here?
 - We have to beware that evil can come in a form that seems innocuous, friendly, even good. I had a friend who had gotten into drugs because the drug dealers were the most accepting and loving to him. Even things in life that are otherwise good – such as work or hobbies – but which now draw you away from God and his priorities are doing the work of evil.
 - We have to beware of deceptions, false impressions, about God and his revelation. Today we constantly hear logical arguments why the Bible cannot be historical, why we cannot trust we have an accurate text, that God is distant and not involved in our lives. You are going to hear it, so you have to be prepared to counter it.
 - We have to beware of doubts about the goodness of God's plan for us. Maybe God is withholding a blessing you think you deserve or you really want. Will you trust him? I had to

wait two years between seminary and finding my first pastorate, but I know now that was part of God's plan to prepare me and to prepare them.

- We have to beware of the deception that there will be no repercussions for our sin. Christians are susceptible to this, because we know we cannot lose our salvation, but scripture teaches there are real effects of our sin, on our physical, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual health, in our lives, in the lives of others, and even on our eternal rewards after the resurrection.
- We have to beware of temptation, desiring things not good for us, seeking things in sinful ways, or simply taking things into our own hands when we should be trusting and obeying God.
- When we do feel tempted to do something which we think might be wrong, we should look for the possible deception involved.
- The best way to prevent deception is to know God's revelation well and have accountability with each other; the best way to prevent succumbing to temptation is to have that accountability and commit now to walking the top line, trusting and obeying God, living by God's revelation, in all situations, no matter what the likely results.

† During those first two years after seminary, I got down on myself and God, because I did not feel valuable or loved. My cat, Kramer, and I wasted whole days reading novels and playing video games. I was on the bottom line.

- God brought me back to the top line with his revelatory truth in 1 Peter: As I studied that book, God reminded me that hardship did not indicate God's abandonment or judgment, so I needed to persevere by walking in faith and obedience on the top-line through that time.
- So I started helping at local churches, consulting with local pastors, teaching Bible at the Salvation Army, and casting a wider net with my resume to seek God's will.
- Kramer was unhappy with this development, he lost his sleeping spot on the crook of my arm, but I think the rest of us can see that shifting back to the top-line was the best choice, even if I could not understand, even if I could not enjoy, what God was doing with me at the time.

Adam and Eve

† **[25: 3 circles]** Let's use our tools and what we know from the setting to analyze this situation. As we do, think about how you might fall prey to the same issues.

- God created Adam and Eve to be good in his sight, pure and useful for his purposes. In our narrative, they have no corruption. They have a perfect environment and purity in themselves.
- As we learned previously, God placed the human family in the middle circle, he created them to be his own image: they were to reflect God's character, represent God in every situation, reproduce God's image on the Earth, and rule over creation in God's name.
- So in this situation, they should reflect God's character by doing what they know is right, they should represent God by rebuking the snake's falsity, and they should rule over the snake in God's name, not trust and take guidance from the snake in place of trusting and obeying God.

† **[26: top line]** God's revelation was to avoid eating this particular fruit. To obey God would be to abstain from eating the fruit; to trust God would be to trust he would give them all they needed,

physically and spiritually, and to trust that if God withheld something then that was for the best. Most of us find it difficult to accept it is for the best when God withholds something from us.

- Adam and Eve were not to let a creature decide what was right and wrong, nor even decide for themselves. They were not to use their own reasoning apart from God's revelation. Perhaps God set it up that way because human reasoning was imperfect even before the corruption of sin, because people did not have the infinite wisdom and insight of God; nor do we today.
- By eating the fruit, Adam and Eve failed to reflect God's character, failed to represent God in this situation, failed to rule over the snake in God's name. They took the bottom line of sin in rebellion, they succumbed to temptation and deception.

† **[27: circles; 3.6]** Even before that fall into sin and rebellion, there were problems, problems which made this failure possible. The man, as head of the family [which we discussed last week], was responsible to God for protecting his wife from the snake. He also should have protected his wife from temptation and deception. He failed in both those responsibilities.

- Eve ate first, but Adam let her, he was with her and he let her, and then he ate too. **1 Timothy 2.14 NET: ... Adam was not deceived, but the woman, because she was fully deceived, fell into transgression.** Eve should not have been deceived, but Adam did not even have that excuse!
- His was willful sin. Adam should have obeyed God and brought both the serpent and his wife onto the top line path with God. But Adam followed the lead of Eve instead of God, and Eve followed the suggestion of the snake instead of her husband or God, and thus they subverted the whole authority structure God had set up.
- Instead of people doing the will of God and representing God, as they were created to do, they had done the will of a created beast, they had represented the beast, and even within the family, man had allowed the woman to become the head.
- Adam and Eve wanted to be like God. It might seem silly to think a mere creature like the snake could provide the path to gain the upper circle, but we are no less silly in what we buy into today. And we today still want to be like God in this sense: we do not want to trust and obey God's revelation, we want to use our own reasoning to make our own moral choices, do what we want, and take care of ourselves.
- We saw last week that even before sin and corruption, Adam wanted to change the name God had given him. We have a natural desire for autonomy, part of our relish for life. But we need to exercise our ability to choose only while safely on the top line with God.

† **[28: top line; 3.6]** Eve put utility, aesthetics, and sensual desire ahead of God's revealed will and word; she used her own reasoning to justify going against God's commands. She knew the command well enough and she knew her role with Adam in the Creator's hierarchy, but she allowed herself to be deceived and tempted by the created and to act on her own impulses. We do this every day.

- Despite a setting overflowing with God's abundant provision, Adam and Eve did not trust and obey God's revelation. They chose the bottom line, they failed. This is how we evaluate characters and actions in the Bible and in life, whether they are top line or bottom line. This is how God evaluates. Here we have behavior that was bottom line, wrong, sinful.

- † **[29: 3.7]** The next two weeks, we will look in detail at the effects of this first sin, but we see one effect today: shame. They had been innocent, naked without shame, but now they were guilty and felt ashamed. They moved from innocent nakedness to shameful nakedness; from purity to guilt. They wanted knowledge of good and evil, but it was not what they thought it would be.
- They lost their emotional innocence and sense of security, they lost relational trust and openness with each other, they lost their sense of identity and validation as God's image, because when they chose to sin, when they chose to pursue the bottom line, they turned away, they walked away, from God.
 - Their alienation from each other and from God reveals their spiritual death. We will see that God would repeat his threat to bring Adam and Eve physical death since they rebelled against him by eating this fruit.
- † Adam and Eve did not gain the wisdom they sought; all they gained was a sense of choosing their own will rather than following God's. Immediately, they realized they had not trusted and obeyed God, they had chosen some other path to get here, and so they felt shame.
- The term [עָרֹם] meaning naked often is used in the Old Testament to mean being stripped to a vulnerable position; they were now shrewd [עָרוּם] of being naked [עָרֹם].

Conclusion

- † **[30: garden]** If this is your first week with us, all I can tell you is that last week, we discussed hot women and football. Y'all should have been here! Oh well. I trust that God had something today he wanted you to hear.
- I hope I have helped all of us see more of the literary structure of the Bible, especially now that we are moving out of the setting and into the plot of history. Everything that happens after this in the Bible is based on what we have learned so far.
 - I hope I have helped you appreciate some of the analytical tools we use to understand scripture. The three circles and the top-line / bottom-line paradigms help us understand what happens in the plot and how God assesses the behavior and character of the people in the narrative.
 - I hope we have been adequately warned that evil can appear deceptively as something good; that we need to know and understand God's revelation well and have accountability to fight off deception; and that we need accountability and to consecrate ourselves every day to stay on that top line, to trust and obey God no matter what, so we can resist temptation.
 - The next two weeks, we will see how our narrative's hero, Yahweh God, responds to this crisis. The people made in his image have failed in their mission, submitted to the will of a creature, rebelled against God himself, and introduced a whole host of other problems to our narrative. God will react with judgement; but he also will react with grace, and in grace he will make a promise, that one day will come a savior, who will defeat evil and set all things right again.
 - We know now that savior is Jesus, the divine Son of God who came to be one of us. Let's pray.