

Genesis 3.14-24 Sermon / Faith Bible Church / 08.23.20

Introduction

- † **[1: Title]** Think of the worst things you can imagine someone else doing: child pornography, statutory rape, manslaughter, drug dealing to teenagers, occultic activity, adultery, child neglect... these are things people in my circle have done. Sometimes it amazes us that God can forgive all that; our first thought when we hear of these things is of judgment, rather than grace.
- Now think of some of the sins you have committed recently. Common sins include telling “white lies,” taking supplies from work, disrespecting government authority [especially while driving a car], pornography and lust, caffeine addiction, gluttony, laziness, materialism, failing to be intentional about evangelism... Now we think about grace, right, because they are our sins.
 - Today, we will see how God responded to the original sin with both judgment and grace.
- † Two weeks ago, we moved out of the literary setting, into the crisis that introduces the tension of our biblical narrative. Somehow Satan rebelled and gained control of a snake in the Garden of Eden.
- That snake spoke falsely about God’s character, God’s revelation, and the nature of the forbidden fruit. Eve was deceived by the snake, so she ate some of the fruit. Adam, sitting idly by, not only declined to rebuke the snake and stop his wife, he went along and ate some too.
 - The first result we saw was shame: Adam and Eve were now shrewd to the ways of evil, they recognized it in their own action of rebelling against God by eating the fruit, so they felt shame. In response, they covered their nakedness from each other with leaves and hid from God.
 - When God confronted them about the situation, giving them an opportunity to repentantly confess, Adam and Eve instead tried to rationalize their sin by shifting blame.
 - So here we are in Genesis 3.14. Let’s see how our protagonist, our hero, God himself, will respond to this crisis.

[2: 3.14-15] Genesis 3.14-15 NIV: 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. 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.”

- † One aspect of God’s response is judgment. God has all authority in the universe and the ultimate power. He is the one, eternal, creator God. People, the snake, even Satan [our real antagonist] are created; they have to submit to God’s judgment. Notice that God does not even have to command his judgment here, he simply proclaims it; if God says it, it will be so, just as in the creation process.
- † God starts with the snake. As I said before, it is remarkable that the text is not interested in explaining why the snake turned evil or how evil began in the paradise garden amidst God’s pure and useful creation.
- But we know from later revelation in the Bible that Satan, an angel who had rebelled against God, came and spoke through the snake to lead Adam and Eve into rebellion. So now God will speak against the snake, but he also will speak prophetically against Satan.

- Snakes don't actually eat dust, and they likely always crawled on their belly, so what we have here is metaphor and wordplay. In v.14, God humiliates the snake. The imagery is of sucking the dust kicked up by the other animals, which is meant to convey humility and defeat; going on the belly describes the cringing and vulnerability of a beaten foe.
- This imagery will be a perpetual reminder for all of creation that creatures rebelled against the creator. Perhaps it is fitting if the snake – which became shrewd in the hands of evil – in some way allowed evil to have that influence. The snake was shrewd, but now he would always be humbled and vulnerable. It was tempted to evil, so it will eat dust.
- We'll come back to v.15 in a few minutes. We also will talk in a few minutes about God's language when he says "cursed are you above all."

[3: 3.16] Genesis 3.16 NIV: To the woman he [God] said, "I will make your pains in childbearing very severe; with painful labor you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you."

- † There is judgement against the woman: reproduction now will be severely painful. There is grace for the woman too: she was created in part to help reproduce the image of God throughout the earth, and she still is fertile, she still can fulfill this part of her role as God's image.
- † **[4: control]** The second sentence poses a translation challenge. Some English translations [like NIV] make it sound like the woman now would desire her husband sexually. This does not fit the context and it ignores the fact that she likely already had sexual desire to encourage reproduction.
 - The Hebrew text has no verb, it just says "toward your husband, your desire." The same construction is used in **Genesis 4.7**, where God tells Cain [NIV], "...if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door. [Then in the same construction as our verse:] **It desires to have you** [literally, "toward you, its desire"], **but you must rule over it.**" Based on that clear meaning, some English translations [NET, NLT] and I interpret God to be saying to Eve that she will desire to control her husband.
 - In the process of committing the first sin, Eve led her husband, who was supposed to be the head of the household. God declared she now would want to be first, to control her husband, yet the husband now would not just lead, but rule or dominate her.
 - It is clear that male dominance, rather than male servant leadership, became the norm. Some men become passive and let their wives rule the household, but those who do not often have a sinful tendency to be arbitrary, self-indulgent, even abusive autocrats, rather than loving, sacrificial, selfless leaders of the partnership God intended men and women to enjoy.
 - Thus the household of people would have division, not unity; guardedness, not openness; in a perpetual reminder of the family's rebellion against God, of giving up their place as his image.

[5: 3.17-19] Genesis 3.17-19 NIV: To Adam he [God] said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate fruit from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat from it,' Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat food from it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. 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."

- † Because his image bearers rebelled against him, God cursed the earth. Earlier we saw that the snake would be the most cursed of all the animals, but indeed all the animals would be cursed, both with physical death and with suffering in a corrupted environment.
 - Some suffering is by the corruption of the human race and our submission to Satan's rule here, but some suffering is due to God's judgment on mankind for sin.
- † **[6: pain]** Again we see God respond with both judgment and grace. Because man sinned by eating what was forbidden, he no longer would have easy pickings, but he still would eat.
 - Man now would have to work the fields to produce food, but the ground would produce obstructive weeds amidst the crops, and the crops would be susceptible to weather and uncertain provision. The land would be less fertile, and outside of the garden paradise.
 - As the woman would have painful toil [עֲצָבוֹן] in birth, the man would have painful toil [עֲצָבוֹן] in work. Before his work was fulfilling, enjoyable; now he would have to strain just to feed himself.
- † **[7: death]** Instead of creation submitting to man's rule, it would resist him, and indeed it would swallow him into itself upon his physical death. God had threatened to bring physical death upon people if they rebelled by eating the forbidden fruit, and here God reiterates that. God also reminded Adam that God had created him out of the dirt, and now to the dirt he would be destined.
 - "You are dust!" says God, not "you are my image," but "you are dust," just a created thing, not even something elegant and beautiful, rather the dust that the humiliated snake would eat! If you think about it, that's one of the worst insults in the Bible! God's wrath is terrible here.
 - Adam and Eve wanted to be like God, in the top circle, but they lost everything: spiritual life and relationship with God; physical life and quality of life; the opportunity to rule in God's name.
- † None of this could be undone by Adam and Eve. They would suffer these things their whole lives.
 - The worst part about this is that these curses are passed on from generation to generation. We can see this is so, just by observing the conditions of the planet and our culture.
 - Because of this event which we call "the Fall," we inherit corruption in our human nature, and thus we are born in spiritual death, separated from God, inclined toward rebellion and sinful acts, destined for Hell.
 - The Bible later reveals that we inherit from our parents a blinded intellect; an evil and idolatrous heart; defiled emotions, passions, behavior, and character; an enslaved will. It breaks my heart to have passed all that on to my little girl.
 - Also because of this event which we call "the Fall," God holds all people accountable for the human race going rogue back in the Garden of Eden, so he carries out his original threat with the judgment of physical death.
- † Another effect of "the Fall" is that instead of people reigning in God's name, evil reigns now on the Earth. Jesus called Satan "the ruler of this world" [John 12.31], referring to the fact that Satan lured Adam and Eve into giving up their reign of the Earth when they chose to obey him instead of God. Satan and his demons are only restrained somewhat by the Holy Spirit, so God's work can be done.

[8: 3.20-21] Genesis 3.20-21 NIV: Adam named his wife Eve, because she would become the mother of all the living. The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them.

- † We have three things to discuss here: first the promise God made back in v.15; second Adam's response to it here in v.20; and third God's first step toward that promise in v.21. In a sermon filled with big ideas, these are the biggest, so tune back in if you have wandered into daydreaming!
- † **[9: chiasm]** There is a poetic literary technique in vv.9-19 called chiasm: the topics are man, woman, serpent, woman, man. A chiasm emphasizes the middle, in this case vv.14-15, in which God announces the perpetual struggle and his solution to that crisis.
- In v.14, God gave judgment to the snake. But in v.15, God turned to the power behind that serpent in the garden, Satan or the devil.
 - God used this pattern several times in scripture: God had Ezekiel prophesy against the human ruler of the state of Tyre, and then against Satan as the real power behind that evil ruler [Ezekiel 28.12b-17a]; similarly, God had Isaiah prophesy against Babylon and then against Satan as the real power behind that evil empire [Isaiah 14.13-14].
- † **[10: 3.15]** In **Genesis 3.15 NIV**, God said to Satan, the evil power behind the snake's treachery, **"...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."** The NIV uses the term "offspring" so average readers will understand, but the Hebrew word [זָרַע] means "seed."
- This verse is called the protoevangelium, which means the first gospel promise. Even in this terrible moment of God's wrath and judgment, God provided hope.
 - **[11: woman]** Satan had deceived and tempted the woman away from God, but God promised to woo the woman back, even to the point that she would be hostile toward Satan. Thus Satan might have gained control of the planet and corrupted humanity, but he would not control all of humanity.
 - **[12: plural seed]** And God promised that those whom Satan influenced for evil – both the fallen angels we call demons and the people who reside in spiritual darkness – would face hostility from those descendants of the woman [her plural "seed"] who were procreated to live as the image of God. Thus Satan's reign always would be opposed here by the people of God.
 - **[13: singular seed]** And God promised that one day, one of the woman's offspring [her singular "seed"] would destroy Satan, though Satan also would kill that man, would attack the man's heel, using the metaphorical imagery of the snake.
 - This is the first promise of a savior: that a man, the seed of the woman, would come to defeat Satan. This ultimately is our protagonist's plan, God's plan, to overcome the literary tension or crisis: he will send a deliverer to conquer Satan and all evil, and somehow set things right again. **1 Corinthians 15.22 NIV: For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.**
- † **[14: Eve]** Now consider Adam's response in v.20 to God's promise in v.15. Up until now, Adam had been calling his wife [אִשָּׁה], which came to mean woman. Now Adam named his wife, "Eve." Actually, he named her [חַוָּה], but we say "Eve" after the Latin translation of [חַוָּה].
- Eve [or חַוָּה] is related to the ancient Hebraic verb "to live"; based on similar usage in Ugaritic and Phoenician, we think Eve means "Life Giver." That makes sense, since the text says "Adam named his wife Eve, because she would become the mother of all the living."

- She has not had a child yet, and she and Adam have just received a death sentence from God, but Adam could name her “Life Giver,” because he trusted she would procreate the image of God and thus continue to fulfill the purposes God gave them, because Adam had faith and hope. He believed the promise of v.15, not only of a savior, but that the savior would be one of Eve’s descendants. Adam was back on the top line, trusting and obeying God’s revelation.
 - This promise of a human savior was cherished, handed down through the generations, such that when Cain and Noah were born, and when Isaac was offered for sacrifice, their parents wondered if those children were to be the promised savior.
- † **[16: skins]** V.21 is God’s first step toward fulfilling his promise. We learned back in v.7 that Adam and Eve felt shame, so they felt vulnerable about being naked, so they instinctively clothed themselves with fig leaves. They had to use plant matter, because there was no death yet and they were not allowed to kill. They did not eat animals; they could not kill a pig to make a football; they could not kill something furry to make clothing.
- But God wanted to cover their sin, not just their nakedness. Mankind’s effort of fig leaves and hiding was inadequate. God’s plan involved repentant confession and animal sacrifice. This is how God dealt with their guilt, it is the method by which God forgave and delivered them.
 - Animal sacrifice, shed blood, would temporarily atone, that is it would temporarily make peace with God, temporarily appease God’s wrath. God would allow death to come upon the animal as a temporary and symbolic punishment for sin. Ok, the clothing might not have been stylish leather, but with God as the tailor, who knows?
 - The custom of sacrificing animals would be handed down generation to generation. We see Able keeping animals, we see sacrifice with Noah, Abraham, and their descendants, even Moses and the people in Egypt before the Exodus. God later codified animal sacrifice into the Mosaic Covenant he made with Israel before they entered the promised land.
 - Animal sacrifice was a temporary atonement, which foreshadowed what would happen with the promised savior. When Satan struck the savior, killing him [as it happened, on the cross], Jesus actually took our punishment for sin from God the Father. As awful as the physical and emotional suffering was for Christ, what happened in the moment of death was much worse, as he bore all our sin and all God’s wrath for sin.
 - This is good news for us, however: this sacrifice of the savior provides everlasting atonement, everlasting peace with God, everlasting appeasement of God’s wrath, which leads to God forgiving us, which leads to God declaring us righteous in his sight, which leads to God reconciling with us, adopting us, giving us everlasting life. That is good news!

[17: 3.22-24] Genesis 3.22-24 NIV: **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.” So the LORD God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. After he drove the man 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.**

- † God shows his sense of irony here: Adam and Eve wanted to be like God, which was one reason they ate the forbidden fruit; now God says that’s good reason for expelling them from paradise.

- We talked about the tree of life before. It is unclear how this tree worked, but apparently eating its fruit could sustain physical life. Since God was bringing a judgment of physical death to all people, he expelled them from the garden, so they could not have access to that tree.
- Outside the garden, man would start his work cultivating the hostile ground. The garden would be supernaturally guarded by angelic sentries, literally cherubim, of which Satan had been one.
- Note that God provided the grace of promise and sacrifice before banishing them. God always provides a reason to hope. If you are feeling hopeless, you are being deceived, so you need to come back to the promises of God in his revelation.

Conclusion

† **[18: title]** Let me summarize the situation, and then we will close.

- Adam and Eve had sought extra freedom, but lost all of it, because now they were in bondage to sin, death, and evil. Sin brought people from life to death; pleasure to pain; abundance to scarcity and toil; harmony and intimacy to alienation and conflict; innocence to guilt; joy to fear and shame; purity to corruption. Sin is no friend of ours.
- God's response to the crisis was partly judgment. His curse would let evil have its time to reign, removing the guarantee of fertility and harmony, forcing people to choose between following God and following Satan, being on the top line in submission and dependence or the bottom line of rebellion; and either way facing struggle just to survive.
- God's plan for resolving this crisis, the literary tension of the narrative, included three parts. First, God allowed repentant confession to restore people's relationship with God. Second, God allowed animal sacrifice to temporarily atone, which means it would temporarily appease God's wrath and make peace with God, regarding sin. Third, God provided the promise of the coming savior, to be known as the Messiah or Christ, who would come to defeat Satan and destroy the hold of sin, death, and evil, by becoming the permanent sacrifice, taking the burden of all our sin and our punishment for sin so that we could be restored to relationship with God permanently.
- So despite the bleak situation at this point in our narrative, Yahweh, the hero or literary protagonist, is still in control. He still has a plan to develop a representative people for himself, he has implemented a plan for the salvation of individual people who will learn to trust and thus obey, and that plan also involves the ultimate salvation of all creation, to be restored to freedom from sin, death, and evil.
- Let's pray . . .