

Genesis 3

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[0 : 00] I'm aware that we had probably given each sum of Genesis 3 to you recently, but he focused! especially on the Gospel message that you get in verse 15. Today we're going to look! especially the first part of this chapter and considering man's fall is what our! catechism calls the state of sin and misery. And so in many ways you're going to feel like we're taking quite a bit of time this morning staring into an ugly pit.

But the point of doing that will be to see that as Corrie ten Boom used to say, no pit is so deep that he is not deep as still. So let's pray again to ask for your help as we come to hear his word. God of grace, our heavenly Father, in whom alone dwells all the fullness of light and wisdom, illumine our thoughts we pray by your Holy Spirit with true understanding of your word. Give us your grace that we may receive it with reverence and sincere humility. May that lead us to place all our trust in you alone so that we would honour and serve you, bring honour to your Holy Name and edify our neighbours by your good example. And we pray that we are in the name of our Father and our Lord. And we ask in the name of our

Master and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen. The church I'm proven to serve at in Paris, the Chapelle d'Elle. The minister I work with, Samuel, the senior minister there, every now and then will lead a membership class for those interested in finding out more about the church and potentially joining as members. And he will always get his Bible out and he will open it to Genesis 1 and he will pick up that page and say that's how long the Bible spends talking about creation. And then he will turn it and pick up the other page and say that's how long the Bible spends talking about the fall. And then the rest of the Bible all together, that's how much is spent on God's grace and our salvation in Jesus. It's a generalisation of course, and I'll tell you passages later on that expand what happens earlier. And we give fuller explanations on creation and the fall. But we can at least say that as we get to know the Bible, one of the basic things we learn is that most of it deals with this amazing news about God's promise and accomplishment of salvation in Jesus.

And if you've been in church, whether this church or another church for any length of time, I hope it will be clear to you, and if that's not the case yet, I hope it will be clear at least from this morning for you, that the good news in the Bible, what Christians all around the world believe is that Jesus Christ is our Saviour. The Apostle Paul sums it up in this way for example, in 1 Timothy 1.15, the saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. Was it possible that that's totally new for some of you here, whether it's your first time in church or whether that just hadn't clicked for you before? But wherever you may have been up to until now, but let's be clear on this, the simple basic part of our faith and our hope is that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

But there might be some people, there will pretty much always be some people in the church who worry. And you say, well, okay, he may have come to save sinners. I see that in the Bible.

[4 : 08] But not a sinner like me. Surely not a sinner as bad as me. I'm allowed to spend some time to contemplate Genesis 3 as we look at this moment of man's fall and rebellion. So it may be that some of us look at Adam's sin and we tell ourselves, maybe without even noticing, he ate a piece of fruit. So maybe Jesus came for sinners like Adam and Eve, people who pinched some fruit. But he can't possibly have come for a sinner as serious as me.

I've got real sins. You can't have come for real sinners, surely. Though maybe some of you, especially if this is a fairly new story for you, you would read this and say, I'm not sure I'm interested in a God who gets so angry about that kind of thing.

About ten years or so ago, the late R.C. Sproul, who was a theologian and teacher in the United States, he was speaking at a huge conference that the ministry he'd set up and organized.

And they'd often do a Q&A; panel. And he got a question during this session asking, Since God is so full of love, why was the punishment for sin so severe? Death. It's severe.

And the clip of his answer got pretty widely shared online. I'm not sure you could class it as viral, but by the world standards, but probably as close as you can get to violent and reformed Christian worlds.

[5 : 41] But Sproul spent some time considering what his question was. How could God be angry at this little creature who dared to defy his maker? And then he just shouted, What's wrong with you people? And he often started to laugh, but he was deadly serious.

For him that question was a serious question that revealed that we don't really understand who God is or who we are. And he was surely right in seeing that. But it may also be that we could be really helped by a better understanding of what Adam did here in Genesis 3.

It seems to me that we can often think of Adam here as sort of a, sort of naive and unwise in what he did. But there's actually quite a lot going on here. We are dealing here with one of the great mysteries of our faith.

In biblical terms, a mystery is not so much something we don't know, but something that is beyond our understanding. And yet, and we wouldn't have known it if God hadn't told us that it's truth.

But we affirm it, and we have to affirm it because the Bible has revealed it to be true. So for example, the mystery of the Trinity is beyond us. How can someone be one God and three persons?

[7 : 02] The mystery of the incarnation, the teaching that Jesus is one person and two natures, it's beyond us. But we affirm these things to be true because the Bible teaches them. But here too, how can a man who was free and not even neutral, but positively righteous and holy and good, who lived in happy communion with God, how could he choose to sin against God?

But we just can't know. It's beyond us. And that's before we even get into the relationship between his free choice and God's sovereign hand.

We are really dealing with some deep mysteries here. But let's allow the text to teach us, and persuade us, and even encourage us. As it shows us that when the Bible speaks about sin and sinners, and especially when the Bible tells us that Jesus came to save sinners, the Bible knows full well what it's talking about.

Boys and girls here, I don't know what it's been like for you, growing up in a Christian home, growing up in a church. But when I was little, my parents took me to church as well.

And I remember probably when I was maybe even just four, going to Sunday school, and the Sunday school teacher explained to us that we were all sinners.

[8 : 25] And I remember thinking, they found me out. They caught me. Because I knew I could do bad things as a little boy. And I could say bad things and I could think bad things.

But because I knew lots of really nice grown-ups, especially in my church, and I had really nice parents, I thought, well maybe I'll just get better as I get older. As I grow up. Maybe then I could really belong, really fit in, in this church, and just fit in with all these nice people.

But boys and girls, what happens is, as we get bigger, we just find more ways of sinning, and bigger ways of sinning against God.

But the good news is that Jesus tells us that it's not, once you're older, once you're better, I'll accept you. So all of us grown-ups here, you may not realise it, maybe some of you do realise it, but all of us grown-ups here are terrible sinners as well.

But the good news is that Jesus knows about our sin, and has seen our sin, keeping, protecting this sanctuary.

[9 : 37] Of course it's possible, there was no apparent or obvious threat when the serpent came in. It's just something to keep an eye on though. Should we be here?

And then we see the snake talking, so that's unusual. He's talking to the woman. So now there's a competing voice in the temple. You have to wonder, where's the prophet?

Did they claim God's word? And not only is it a competing voice, but it's a challenge to God's authority in what he says. If you look at what he says, did God actually say, you shall not eat of any tree in the garden?

Now that question has a clear and simple answer. No, God said no such thing. But the serpent is subtly sowing in the woman's mind the suggestion that, if he had said that, it would be pretty unfair, wouldn't it?

It would be a bit rubbish if he'd said that. And yet, even if God had said that, he had every right to do so, without in any way compromising his goodness and his love and his generosity.

[10:43] All things belong to him. And yet, here's a suggestion from the beginning that God's word can be treated as just one hypothesis among others, that one option was a claim for us to consider.

A word that we could judge for ourselves. The subtle dig at the absolute authority of our good God. So where is the king whose job it is to represent this absolute and good authority?

She needs Adam with her to help her to stand up to this. Where is he? And as we keep reading in verses 2 and 3, we might wonder what's going on in the woman's answer as well.

We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God did say you shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden. Neither shall you touch it lest you die. But when you look back at the commandment given to Adam, there's no mention of not touching the fruit.

And there's some debate over whether this is just a good biblical understanding of God's commandments. Certainly in Leviticus, the command not to eat certain foods also means not touching them.

[11:52] So maybe the woman here is just a good interpreter of God's word, maybe. And if you're wondering why I'm just referring to her as the woman, it's because we do know her name, but she hasn't got the name yet.

If she hasn't been given the name, that's going to come later at the end of this chapter. It could well be that everything's fine in her understanding of the law, but it could well be that Adam and his wife decided between them, out of wisdom even, not to touch the fruit.

But if that's the case, she seems to be confusing what they've decided to do and what God has commanded. Could that be happening? Might it be that she's starting to bribe the serpent's suggestion that God is deep down in his heart, just a bit of a killjoy, so he really piles on the law? Might it even be possible that Adam has in some way dropped the ball in faith in teaching God's ball and representing him? We haven't been told anything like that, we don't know. It's just something to keep an eye on.

It could well be that everything has been ever bought, but it at least leaves us asking, where is Adam? So we can clear it up. Is everything okay here?

[13:06] And then verse 4, the serpent goes on the offensive and openly contradicts God's word. You will not surely die. God's just jealous. He doesn't want you to be like him. So God lied to you.

When you eat the fruit he was saying to her, you'll know good and evil. That is, you'll get to decide what's good and evil. You don't have to submit to the rules of this killjoy God.

You can do what you want. Now here she really, really needs Adam. She needs a priest to purify the temple, to check out this serpent.

She needs a prophet to declare God's word faithfully to her, to correct the error. She needs a king to reaffirm God's good authority and reign. Execute judgement on this rebellious creature.

Where is Adam? This woman is being diked, she's being tricked by a crafty snake. And as she's looking at this tree, she's noticing how delightful these fruits look.

[14:15] They look really good. And she wants this knowledge. She'd quite like to decide for herself what's good and evil. It all sounds so appealing.

Where is Adam? We need him to help because now she's starting to reach out her hands. She's about to touch her own fruits. She's about to take it.

And that hand is too late, she's eating it now. She's already done it. Surely now more than ever, she needs Adam.

Because could it be, could it just maybe be the case that she might still have a little bit of help?

Could it be that if her husband, her priest stood before God and said to him, My wife was deceived by the snake.

She has done what you've commanded us not to do. She's eaten the fruit. And while I did not keep or protect the sanctuary from this snake, would you at least now let me serve?

[15:24] She deserves death. I understand. Would you take my life for hers? Could it be that maybe God might just be willing to accept that kind of sacrifice of love? Could Adam at least try?

Where is he? Where is he? Well at this first time of asking this big question we have, we find our answer at the end of verse 6, don't we? She also gave some to her husband who was with her and he ate.

There was Adam. Right there, next to her. And here I'm going to put myself in a dangerous position of disagreeing with the brilliant John Calvin.

The commenting on this verse, it says that some have conjectured through these words that Adam was present when his wife was tempted and persuaded by the serpent. This is not at all believable. And it is true that the text doesn't tell us whether Adam was there from the beginning of this conversation or whether he had just arrived in verse 6. But it does seem that those who believe that he arrived at that very final moment after it was all done, they're the ones who would be forced into the lecturing of those.

[16:37] And indeed when you look at the commentaries, you get plenty of theories about how the woman managed to persuade Adam to eat the fruit at that point. Was it through some kind of seduction? Was it through some crafty scheming?

All kinds of theories. But the text doesn't say anything about persuasion. He just gave you the fruit and he ate. And in fact, in the rest of the Bible, the key moment here is particularly the moment of Adam's sin.

Paul would write in Romans 5, sin came into the world through one man and death through sin. Paul even gives an indication that there's a difference in the sin of Adam and the sin of the woman. 1 Timothy 2:14, he writes, Adam was not deceived. But the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. Or you could read it, the woman entered into transgression having been deceived. The woman transgressed having been duped. That wasn't the case for Adam. Adam did it with full awareness of what he was doing.

[17:46] Adam took the fruit in cold blood. And we can agree with Calvin is really incredible. But it does seem actually possible.

As we look at the text that he was there all along. In verse 6, Moses, who wrote Genesis, presents this standfall amazingly fast.

It is quite appropriate for us to call it a fall. We hear about Adam's presence there with Eve. Then about his sin. And this is just really sudden surprise out of nowhere.

And the Hebrew is actually a far more succinct language even than English. And so here at the end of verse 6, what the ESV gives you as 15 words is actually just 5 words.

It's just 4 accent beats. It's just 1, 2, 3, 4. Before you know it, mankind has fallen from innocence to sin and misery.

[18:44] In just that moment, he's forfeited all claims on a promise of glory and eternal life. That final phrase of verse 6, those four simple beats, is one of the most tragic twists in all of literature and especially in all of world history.

All that time, as we saw that she really needed Adam to be there, telling herself that if only he was there, he could sort things out. I mean, he was there all along.

And he let his wife hear these lies and reach out and touch and eat. He knowingly let her chew to death.

It's like those moments in a film or a novel where everything just turns on its head in a moment. I'm not an expert in Lord of the Rings, but I've at least seen the films.

And that bit where Gandalf goes to seek the help of his master Saruman, thinking, oh, he'll help.

And then in a moment, he realizes that his master has joined the enemy.

[19:51] It's shocking. And what we have here is even worse. This is real life. He could have done something all that time.

He could have said something. But he chose to stand by and let it happen. He let his wife be tricked by this snake. He let her sin and die under God's curse.

And then takes the food for himself. Not only that, but he had the goal later on to blame his wife for it all. And even blame God for creating her.

Not only did Adam lose the food, but he did it in such a way that he could blame everybody else for it. We're not dealing here with a naive, unwise young man.

Somehow, mysteriously, we find we're dealing with a man who has become truly despicable. We don't know how.

[20:50] Maybe thinking about it, calling it the fall is not quite strong enough. Maybe we should call it the jump. Adam jumped into his sin.

And instead, he ran away from God. But having asked this question once, let's ask it another two times. And we will go a lot more quickly now. The first time we asked where is Adam, our answer

was right by her side.

And here, let's ask it a second time. And here, God himself is asking it with us. Verse 9, where are you, Adam? And Adam is doing all he can to hide and come back himself up.

They make aprons or loincloths out of fig leaves. They now have a knowledge of good and evil. He now has the experience of having committed evil.

But especially, he has grasped for himself the role of deciding what he will do, a role that doesn't belong to him. And they both know now that choosing evil only leads to shame and danger.

[21 : 49] So they need to hide. And they want to cover themselves up. The Lord God is walking in the garden. He is there to have fellowship with his people. That phrase walking is echoed in the way God's presence is described in the temple later on.

But Adam wants to hide in the bushes. He is grasping at anything and everything that his newly evil heart can find to cover himself up. He gets some leaves that he stitches together.

He gets a bush. More than that, he reaches for this bunch of accusations against his wife and against God. Verse 12, the woman who you gave to me, she gave me the fruit.

Have you noticed that he doesn't blame the prime candidate if you were to blame someone? He doesn't blame the snake. Eve does, but Adam is faithful to his new friend and master.

And turns on everybody else. So we find that when we take time to think about what Adam did, how he chose to plunge himself and his wife and all his descendants and all of creation into death and rebellion.

[22 : 58] To see that it's actually hard, to see how any punishment could possibly be too severe, it was truly despicable. We see him standing at his wife's side.

We see him hiding in the bush. Now let's ask our question a third time, where is Adam? Especially at the end of the chapter. And amazingly, we find that he is not six feet under.

Adam is still alive. Yes, he is cast out of the garden. There is a flaming sword keeping him out of this garden sanctuary.

And he is out in the desert. But he is out there having received some amazing promises. And he is still alive. He is there with his wife and he is now named Eve.

Mother of the living. And that is Adam's profession of faith in God's gracious promise. God will look at life through the seed of the woman.

[24 : 01] Therefore my wife will be called the mother of the living. He is out there in the desert waiting. Waiting for the seed of the woman that promised Saviour.

If you want to look more into that, I do recommend Johnny Gibson's sermon from a few weeks ago. He is no longer wearing his rubbish fig leaf clothes that he stitched together.

He now has animal skin to clothe himself. This God of mercy and grace has made a sacrifice for them. An animal has died now for them.

And now clothes them and covers their shame. So we have asked our question three times. Where is Adam? First with his wife in willful rebellion.

Then in a bush in shame and spite. And then in the desert waiting in hope. And they are waiting for another man.

[24 : 59] The man who in the Bible will sometimes call the second Adam. The last man. And so as I mentioned earlier, we are going to have to ask our question three more times.

Where is Adam? But that is to say, where is Jesus the second Adam? And as we look ahead and look into the Gospel, we find him where we left the first Adam.

We find him in the desert. And Mark tells us that Jesus was driven into the desert to be tempted. He actually uses the same word that we get in the Greek translation of Genesis here.

To say that Adam was cast out of the garden. Jesus is cast out there to face the enemy. This same enemy, Satan. In the same test. Not in the safety of the sanctuary, but out in the desert.

Out in the wilderness. Facing the test that the first Adam failed. But here he wins the battle. But for him, passing the test, offering his obedience, doesn't mean he can go straight through to the Holy Holys.

[26 : 02] To the dwelling place of God to secure that forever. Before he can do that, he needs to face the flaming sword. He knows that he must surely die for his people if he's to get himself and his people to that place of glory that was promised.

So on this second time round, at our first time of asking, where is our second Adam? He's out in the desert. Winning the battle and passing the test. Where is he when we ask a second time?

Not in a bush, but hanging on a tree. Bowing his head to the flaming sword. So he can get into God's dwelling place. With all his people with him.
Hanging there. Not to teach us how to stitch our own purgings. But to clothe us with himself. And all his benefits. As he surrenders to this tree of death.
Jesus becomes to us the fruit of the tree of life. And so what if we ask him one more time? Where is Adam? Where is this second Adam? Adam.
[27 : 13] Now he's finally entered into the Holy of Holies. The dwelling place of God. Raised up in glory. He's been given the Holy Spirit and the throne of glory that the first Adam rejected.
And he sits there in resurrection power. Being a tree of life for us. Being a river of life for us. Being our spiritual food. Being our spiritual life. Being our royal robe for us.
Being our spiritual life for us. And by the power of that spirit who became his reward. He doesn't just stand at his bride's side. He dwells personally in each of us. He knows us and communes with us within our hearts.
He lives in us as our victorious king. And as our faithful prophet. He's crushed the snake's head. Satan is in his death throes. But that means he's been raging against us. He's the accuser. He's going to do all he can to distort the meaning of God's word. So you believe Jesus came to save sinners. They're not for serious sinners like you. And as our faithful prophet. And as our faithful prophet.
He's crushed the snake's head. Satan is in his death throes. But that means he's been raging against us. He's the accuser. And he's going to do all he can to distort the meaning of God's word.
[28 : 20] Including in this passage. So that he can fill you with accusations and doubts. Okay. So you believe Jesus came to save sinners. They're not for serious sinners like you.
So Adam was a serious sinner. And yet even he believed in the promises of God's grace. He said your wife will be the mother of all living.
The hope will come through her. Mother of living. That's a profession of faithful. So when the Bible calls us sinners. And tells us that we are there for the kind of people that Jesus came to save. God really knows what he's talking about. No one who comes to Jesus for salvation. Will surprise him with how sinful they've been. He knows better than we know ourselves.
There's another serious sinner we come across in the Bible. Paul who wrote the verse I quoted earlier in the sermon. Though actually didn't finish the whole sentence. How does 1 Timothy 1.15 end?
[29 : 22] The same is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am the foremost. Who I am chief.
Your translation. And he's not saying that as an invitation for us to wallow into self-pity and to go deeper than him. Oh no, Paul, I am the foremost. Paul is making the point that he was a truly awful man.
He persecuted the church of Jesus Christ. That is really despicable and serious. And yet Paul can say, he came for the likes of me.
He died for me. He saved me. Me. But even if anyone here were the second in line for that type of chief of sinners.
What you see here is that if you cry out to Jesus. Put your trust in him. Put all your hope in him. There is no chance you are too far for him to reach you.
[30 : 26] There is no chance that you are too sinful for him to save you. I quoted earlier from the Quarantine. Who, no pit is so deep that he is not deeper still.
So I appeal to you. If you are not in Jesus Christ, you are attached to this despicable Adam. I appeal to you and let go of him. Turn away from this despicable man and all that he stands for. In his sin and stubborn rebellion.
Abandon this desire to define the terms of your life yourself. To decide for yourself what will be good and evil. Let go of that knowledge of good and evil.
And grab hold of this second Adam. Who got back in and beyond. Grab hold of Jesus Christ. Who came to save you.
[31 : 23] Let him give you his life. Clothe you. Feed you. All at the cost of his own life. Let him love you.
Let him transform you. Discover the joy of submitting to him. Living under his kingly reign. Of having this priest minister to you and pray for you.

And the joy of listening to his words each day. Let's pray.