

## Core 52 – Week 3 – The Fall

### Genesis 3

(Show picture) Adam stood a strapping 6' 3" with finely chiseled features. He was the perfect specimen of humanity, the masterpiece of his creator.

And then Adam fell. The results of Adam's fall were disastrous. No longer the perfect man, he lay shattered in a thousand pieces. He had to be removed from his special place.

It happened on a Sunday night in 2002 at the NY Metropolitan Museum of Art. Adam's fall was first discovered by a night watchman. Foul play was suspected. Perhaps a vandal. Later investigation, however, showed that Adam's pedestal had collapsed under the weight of the more than 500 year old statue sculpted by a Venetian Renaissance master.

(Next Slide) We are here this morning to look at the fall of a different Adam. We don't know what Adam looked like, but he was the masterpiece of his Creator. He and his wife Eve both fell from the weight of their own sin. We want to see not only what the fall meant for them, but what it means for us. This year we are doing Core 52 where we are looking at 52 of the most important verses in the Bible and the stories and ideas that go with them. This first series in Core 52 is beginnings from the book of Genesis. So far, we've looked at creation, and what creation tells us about who God is and who we are. Who is God? He is powerful, purposeful, eternal, and good. Who are we? We are made in the image of God and we live with God-given meaning and purpose.

The Garden of Eden was the perfect starting point for humanity. It was a beautiful and bountiful paradise where Adam and Eve could grow in their relationship with each other and with God, and from this Garden they could begin to build humanity into a glorious civilization. But something went very wrong. Both the Old and New Testaments point to what happens in Genesis 3 as where we went off course.

With their disobedience, Adam and Eve introduce into God's perfect creation and into the human condition the problem of sin. This is the beginning of what went wrong. This isn't just what went wrong for Adam and Eve. This is our story. The same thing that ensnared them, gets us as well.

Now, as we read through Genesis 3, you won't find the word *sin*, but this is the origin of sin. Sin simply means to miss the mark. It is to fall short of who God is— his nature, his character. As we learned last week, you and I were created in the image of God, and when we fall short of that image, it creates a problem. Romans 3:23 says, "*For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*" We fall short of his glory, his beauty, his holiness, his wonder. In a word, we fall short of God's perfection. Adam and Eve fell short because they did the ONE THING God asked them not to do. Ever since, human beings, as a race, and you and I have been coming up with all kinds of ways to fall short.

This story, often called The Fall, is one of the oldest ones in the book, literally. But it's also as fresh as this morning when you lost your temper. It's as relevant as yesterday, when you did that think you know you shouldn't do. It's as recent as Friday night when you lied to your parents about what you were doing with your friends. Their story is our story. Let's take a look.

Genesis 3 tells us all about the cause, the character, and the consequences of sin. The process that leads Adam and Eve into sin, is the same road we take

## I. The Cause of Sin

First, let's talk about the cause of sin. It begins with just a simple temptation. Genesis 3:1 says, *"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 cause of sin wasn't God.** Some want to pin the blame on God here. They say, "He shouldn't have put the tree in the Garden. He should have known what would happen. He could have done more to keep Adam and Eve away. He could have at least put up a fence.

But this isn't God's fault. James 1:13 says,

*<sup>13</sup> Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. <sup>14</sup> But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. <sup>15</sup> Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.*

So, why did God put the tree in the Garden in the first place? We can't know for sure, and there may be multiple layers to this answer, but I'll tell you what I think is part of it. There has to be a choice. A relationship based on love must be chosen. God didn't create Adam and Eve as automatons who only served him because they had no choice. If it's programmed into their AI, so to speak, they might do the right actions, they might say the right words, but it isn't real. Love isn't love unless it is chosen. God's heart is to have a real relationship with people. He wants us to love Him, and be loved by him. This means Adam and Eve had to make a choice. It's no different for us. You and I have to choose.

**The cause of sin isn't also the tree.** God created all of the trees in the garden, including this one. It's called the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God put it right in the middle of the Garden. He pointed it out to Adam and he clearly warned him what would happen if he ate of it. Now the tree wasn't evil itself. It didn't cause evil. It didn't create sin. Like everything else in creation, it was... good.

The couple of other times this expression "the knowledge of good and evil" is used in the Bible it refers to young children who are not yet old enough to understand the full ramifications of right and wrong. They aren't yet accountable to make moral decisions. Such children are in a state of innocence. They haven't yet reached the age of accountability.

Adam and Eve are living in such a state of innocence. They lack a fully developed moral

compass to be able to discern good and bad in all of their aspects. Now they had a basic understanding of right and wrong. They knew they had a choice, and they knew which choice God said was wrong. But the deeper complexities of morality and ethics simply weren't an issue for them. Many Bible scholars believe God intended for humanity to grow in this knowledge in His time and in the proper way. What this tree represented was a shortcut— an easy way to get to that point. That's one of the things that sin does. It always offers you a shortcut- a way of getting what you want without waiting, without the work, and without the limits.

Stealing becomes a shortcut to getting the things you want without having to work for it or pay for it. Sex outside of marriage is a shortcut to intimacy and pleasure without the protection and foundation of marriage. Lying becomes a shortcut to getting what you want or protecting feelings without trust and integrity.

**The initial cause of sin, the thing that ignites the temptation, is the serpent.** Now, the serpent is never named nor identified in the text, but later we are given his true identity. This is none other than Satan. Revelation 12:9 calls him *“that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world.”* Jesus says in John 8:44 that devil *“is a liar and the father of lies.”*

The Bible is very clear that Satan is real and active in this world. According to Scripture, he is a rebellious angel, and demons are other rebellious angels who were thrown out of heaven. Don't listen to those who tell you that Satan is a myth, he's just a symbol, that he's not real. He is real and he is bent on your destruction. He wants to take you down just like he does Adam and Eve.

## **II. The Character of Sin**

### **A. Disguise**

That's the cause of sin, but let's look at the character of sin. How does sin work it's evil? First Satan always comes at you in disguise. Don't be looking for horns and a pitchfork. Don't be looking for some disgusting, revolting, or grotesque thing. Be on guard for something beautiful. Something tempting. Something desirable.

Verse 1 tells us he was crafty. This is a word that can be positive or negative depending on the context. On the positive side this is someone who is clever and prudent. On the negative side though, this is a person who is cunning and tricky and knows how to manipulate people and situations to their own ends. Satan is the master at that.

First, he appears as a beautiful animal. Keep in mind that the snake Eve talks to is nothing like snakes as we know them. We learn in Scripture that Satan is able to disguise himself to make his deception more appealing. 2 Corinthians 11:14-15 says Satan masquerades as an angel of light and his servants disguise themselves as angels of righteousness.

When Satan tries to deceive you, he will make his lie as appealing as possible. He will put it in a

positive light and he will make it sound really good. The devil is an excellent salesman. He never comes at you with horns and a pitchfork. He will look like your best friend. He will come in the form of a respected and trusted authority figure. He'll couch himself in politics you support. He hides behind a mask and comes in slick packaging.

A choice between good and evil almost never looks like a choice between good and evil at first. It looks like a choice between hard and easy. This doesn't mean the hard choice is always the right choice, but it does mean if you are choosing between hard and easy, beware, be on guard, and double check. Satan will always make a choice between good and evil seem like a choice between something else.

### **B. Doubt**

First, Satan comes at you in disguise. Next, he gets you to doubt God and God's word. Notice, how Satan phrases his question. *"Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?'"* He's trying to get Eve to question what God said. This isn't what God said at all, and Satan's question focuses entirely on the negative. It's all about what she can't do. It makes God sound sooooo unreasonable. The truth was that God had told them they were free to eat from any tree except one.

This doubt affects Eve. She starts reinterpreting what God says. For one thing, she leaves out one of God's words. Look at verse 2, *The woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden.'* What word did she leave out? *Freely*. It's just one word, but it's a big one, and leaving it out diminishes what God had given them. It diminishes the love and goodness and generosity of God. Satan will get you to doubt God to make sin look better.

Next, Eve starts adding to what God had said. She continues in verse 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.'"* What did she add? God never said anything about not touching the fruit. She adds to the command. Once she starts doubting God, his command sound more restrictive, demanding and unfair.

### **C. Denial**

So, sin comes at you in disguise. Then, it gets you to doubt God. Thirdly, it denies that there are any consequences. Satan directly contradicts God in vs. 4, *"You will not certainly die."* God had said, *"for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."* No, she didn't die the moment she bit the fruit. No, she didn't die that very day, or even the next day. But from the moment Eve and then Adam disobeyed God, they started down a sure and certain road to death.

Satan will always try to convince you that you can sin without consequence. Satan is the worst of dishonest salesman. The price tag he shows you is never what you pay. Sin always comes with fees, penalties and conditions that he will never disclose upfront. Satan hides all the fine print until you sign on the dotted line. Know this— there is always a price to be paid for sin. No

matter how good it looks. No matter what Satan has promised you. No matter how unreasonable God's demands may seem. No matter how many other people are doing it. Even if you can't see any negative repercussions ahead of time, there is always be a price to be paid.

#### **D. Distract**

Next Satan tries to distract Eve from the real reasons for God's command. He convinces her that God was only being selfish with His command. He says in verse 5, *"For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."* God just doesn't want you to become like Him. He's just protecting his own turf.

Satan will do the same thing to you. He'll convince you that God is trying to keep something good from you. God is just trying to hold you back. Here's what you need to know this morning: God is for you; not against you. God is always on your side. Whenever God tells you, "No," it's for a very good reason. God never says, "No" to be unfair, to be petty, or to get back at you." God's rules are always to protect you from something that could hurt you, or to provide for you something you need. That's God's rules. They are guard rails that keep you from going over a cliff and get you to where you need to go. It's as simple as that.

#### **E. Desire**

So, the process of sin is disguise, doubt, deny, distract, and then finally, it appeals to your desire. Satan will always make sin seem like something you just have to have. "You want to be like God, don't you? You want to know good and evil, don't you? You don't want to miss out. Everyone's doing it. It feels great and it doesn't hurt anyone. Why wait, when you can have what you want right now. You deserve this, don't you?" You ever have these arguments play in your head?

Notice how desire works on Eve in verse 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."*

In Genesis 2, we're told that all the trees of the garden are pleasing to the eye. We see that same expression in here in 3:6, but in the Hebrew it's an entirely different word. The word used in chapter two simply means desire or take pleasure, but the word used here in chapter 3 means longing, yearning, craving. We've moved from simple desire to lust. There's nothing wrong with desire. God created us to desire certain things. We have certain physical, emotional and intellectual appetites, and that's okay. God made us to enjoy certain things, and to find pleasure in them. God is not against a good time.

But sin takes desire and twists it into some grotesque and uncontrollable. It grows from a want to a need. It goes from something that we can control and channel in healthy ways to something that controls us and drives us. Desire serves us, but we become the slave to sinful craving. If there is a craving in your life that you can't control, it controls you, then beware,

Satan has you right where he wants you.

All of Satan's tricks didn't just work on Eve. They worked on Adam too. Let's not give him a pass. Look at the end of verse 6, "*She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.*" Adam was there the whole time. He heard this whole discussion. He never once jumped in and confronted the serpent. He didn't defend his wife. He didn't defend God's character.

He was like so many men today. He just sat in the spiritual backseat and let things happen. Let me tell you something guys. God has called us to be protectors and providers for our family, but Satan loves for us just to sit in spiritual backseat saying nothing. Doing nothing. Just going along for the ride. It is time for us to take the spiritual wheel of where our families are going.

As you can see, Satan has a lot of weapons in his arsenal, and he will use any and all of them. He will use every wily way he can to deceive you. Satan has been using the same tools and tactics from the very beginning, and he continues to use them today. It's important we understand what sin is and how it works in our lives.

### III. The Consequences of Sin

We've seen the cause of sin. We've seen the character of sin. Let's talk real quick about the consequences of sin. I wish we had more time to spend on this, but we'll have to leave this discussion for our Core 52 group.

In a word, the consequence is death. God had told them, "*In the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.*" Here's the thing, though. Death works on multiple levels, physical death being only the most obvious of them. From the moment they ate of the forbidden fruit, Adam and Eve began their journey through the grave. Getting old. Bodies wearing down. Sickness and disease all enter the picture this point. As you read through Genesis, you see the steady decline of the average life span for people. At first, it's like 900 years, then 800, 700, 600, and on down it goes until people are living only 70 or 80 years. It's physical death at work.

But death works on more levels than just physical death. But there's also the death of relationship. Adam and Eve were meant to live in perfect relationship with each other. That's gone now. Vs. 7 says, "*Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.*" They're embarrassed of their nakedness, and they hide it from each other. It was never a problem before, but it is now.

Adam and Eve were also meant to live in perfect relationship with God, and that's died now too.

*8 And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. 9 But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?" 10 And he said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself." 11 He said, "Who told you that you were*

*naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" 12 The man said, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate." 13 Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."*

They hide from God because they are afraid. It's no longer a relationship built on love and trust, but fear and shame. Notice how Adam tries to blame woman and God for what he did. "It was that woman YOU gave me." This is the death of relationship.

Death also affects creation itself. This world with sin and death in it is now a dangerous place. It's no longer a perfect paradise filled with only love and life. I truly believe that natural disasters, plagues, famine, disease can all be traced back to this point. Romans 8 talks about how all creation has been subjected to futility because of our sin, and all creation groans longing for the day of its salvation. One of the great promises of the return of Jesus in the book of Revelation is that Jesus will make all things new, including creation. There will be a new heavens and new earth, free from sin and death.

Satan and sin will promise you everything, but know this: Satan want nothing good for your life. Satan has only three goals for your life. In John 10:10 Jesus says that has come only to do three things. You know what they are? He wants to steal, kill, and destroy. He wants to steal your joy, kill your hope, and destroy your life. Don't believe anything he says about God. Don't believe anything he says about God's word. Don't believe anything he promises you.

Thankfully, Adam's story wasn't finished with his fall. Under the leadership of three conservators, a team of dozens of scientists, engineers and curators began the meticulous work of restoring Adam to his glory. Using the latest technology like CT scans and the most advanced materials in the world they slowly put Adam back together.

12 years after his fall, Adam returned to his place in the museum. Thankfully, Adam and Eve's story wasn't finished with their fall. God has meticulous plan to restore humanity, to restore you to the glory for which you were created.

The end of this story isn't written in Genesis 3. It's found on a cross where Jesus, the perfect Son of God and sinless man paid the price for our sin. It found in an empty tomb where Jesus overcame death and made a way for us once again to eat from the tree of life.

I Corinthians 15:21-22 says, *"For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive."*

I know we all know sin. The process I talked about here this morning has happened in all of our lives. The question that matters is, "do you know Jesus?"