

MAIN POINT

When Adam and Eve sinned, the penalty brought physical and spiritual death. And sin didn't just affect mankind, but the entire creation was cursed. All of today's problems point back to Genesis 3. And yet our loving, merciful God promised a solution, as seen in his encounter with Adam and Eve after they sinned.

INTRODUCTION

A non-believer once asked, “Why didn’t God just plant the tree of knowledge of good and evil a hundred miles away from Eden, or at least put a fence around it?” How would you answer her question?

“An automaton cannot love its maker.... An involuntary love is a contradiction in terms.... On the other hand, if Adam was free to love God on his own initiative, he was obviously free also not to love God. If he was able to make the right moral choice, he was necessarily able also to make a wrong moral choice.” *Dr. Henry Morris, The Genesis Record*

Note to study leader: “Automaton” (pronounced ô'tāmə,tän) is defined as a moving mechanical device made in imitation of a human being.

In our last lesson from the Genesis series, we looked at Satan's temptation of Eve, leading to the fall of Adam and Eve in Genesis 3:1-7. This week's lesson will look at the rest of Genesis 3, looking at how the curse brought on by Adam and Eve's sin affected the whole creation, and specifically how it affected humankind. We will also be looking at how God comforted Adam and Eve with a message of hope in the midst of this tragedy. He let them know that one day, a Savior would come and make everything right.

UNDERSTANDING

1. THE CURSE

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ GENESIS 3:7-13

What was the initial effect of Adam and Eve's sin, described in verses 7 and 8?

They tried to hide their nakedness with fig leaves, but still found it necessary to try to hide from God.

Why do you think the fig leaves failed? How is this a picture of man-made religions today?

Man-made religions realize God exists, and that we have done things that are unacceptable in God's eyes. Our natural response to these realizations is to try to cover our sin through religious rituals or good works. But these actions are not able to remove the guilt of sin in our lives.

What did God accomplish with his questions to Adam in verses 9 and 11?

This gave Adam a chance to confess his sin to God.

What were Adam's and Eve's explanations for their disobedience?

They deflected blame onto someone else. Adam blamed Eve, and even God for giving her to him. Eve blamed the serpent, who tricked her. As a side note, spouses, it's probably not a good idea to publicly blame your spouse for difficulties you are encountering.

Why do people tend to cast blame on someone or something when confronted about their wrongdoing?

People still blame their sins on Satan, their environment, parents, spouses, friends, or someone or something else. While temptation comes to us from many sources, we alone decide whether we obey or disobey God. We are accountable for our sins (see Romans 14:12 and 1 Pet. 4:4-5).

ASK VOLUNTEERS TO READ GENESIS 3:14-20, ROMANS 5:12, ROMANS 8:18-22, AND REVELATION 20:14-15

Note to study leader: The verses that have just been read from Romans 5 and 8 are linked together as part of a common thought on the effect of sin. Romans is the most systematic, thorough description of the gospel message presented in the Bible. After establishing the fact that all have sinned, Romans chapters 5 through 8 discuss the effect of Adam's sin, first on mankind, and then on the entire creation.

What are the consequences in Genesis 3:14 that came about based on the serpent's sin?

The serpent was cursed, and would now crawl on its belly, eating dust all the days of its life.

What consequences came about due to Adam's sin described in verses 17-19?

Sin brought death (Romans 5:12). The primary meaning here is physical death ("dust you are, to dust you will return."), as mortality came upon the entire creation. Death, disease, and suffering are now a normal part of life in this fallen world. But death also includes spiritual death, or separation from God, as pictured by Adam and Eve being expelled from the garden. This spiritual death will ultimately result in eternal separation from God in hell (Revelation 20:14-15) if we don't take advantage of God's free gift of salvation through Christ's finished work on the cross.

The entire creation was cursed (Romans 8:18-22). We see the ground was cursed, resulting in a battle with thorns which are trying to take over our gardens. Sweat and hard work are now required in this life. And animals were cursed (the serpent was cursed "above all" the other animals, implying all the other animals were cursed as well). Animals were now mortal, and carnivory came about as the result of the curse, along with numerous other changes (For example, it is likely that skunks were not able to squirt stinky stuff on other animals before the curse).

What specific curse was given to Eve in verse 16?

First, there was more pain and suffering, specifically during childbirth. There was another significant change caused by their sin. Eve was told that "Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you." This may sound like she would now be given some sort of desire to submit to her husband. But this is likely the opposite of what Eve's curse involved.

As mentioned in a previous lesson on marriage in Genesis 2, God assigned the role of "helper" to Eve before the curse. This role did not imply a less valuable position. "Helper" refers to someone who supplies what another lacks. The Bible describes God as a Israel's "helper" (For example, Deut. 33:29).

In the curse given to Eve, God said, "Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you." The Hebrew word "desire" ("tesuqa") can be translated as "the desire of a beast to devour." We see "tesuqa" used in this way in Genesis 4:7, where God tells angry Cain, "...if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it **desires** to have you, but you must master it." (Spoiler alert for our next lesson on Genesis 4 ☺)

The ESV translates this portion of Gen. 3:16 as "Your desire will be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you." Because of the curse, we all now have to deal with our self-centered sinful natures. Rather than naturally choosing to help her husband, Eve's sin nature will desire to control or manipulate him to get her own way. And rather than desiring to lovingly lead, respect, and care for his wife (Ephesians 5:28-29 and 1 Peter 3:7), Adam will in his sinful nature tend to use his physical strength to dominate her and get his own way.

As Paul said in Romans 7:24-25, “What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!”

2. GOD’S PLAN OF SALVATION

“This is the first gospel sermon that was ever delivered upon the surface of the is earth. It was a memorable discourse indeed, with Jehovah himself for the preacher, and the whole human race and the prince of darkness for the audience. It must be worthy of our heartiest attention.” *Charles Spurgeon (spurgeon.org)*

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ GENESIS 3:15 AND 20-24

What did God promise to Eve in verse 15?

Eve’s offspring (the Messiah) would one day crush Satan’s head. This would first require Jesus to go to the cross to pay the death penalty for our sin, as pictured by Satan bruising the heel of Eve’s offspring.

What is pictured in God clothing Adam and Eve?

We also see the plan of salvation pictured in the clothing God provided for them. Fig leaves were inadequate. An innocent animal was sacrificed to provide the means for Adam and Eve’s sin to be covered. And no work was required on their part. God didn’t just provide the animal skins, but He actually clothed them.

3. THE CURSE WILL ONE DAY BE REMOVED!

ASK VOLUNTEERS TO READ ISAIAH 11:6-10 AND REVELATION 22:1-5 and 14

God did not allow mortal Adam and Eve to live forever in their cursed condition. Jesus’ atoning death cleanses those who repent and trust Him as their Savior. His resurrection allows us to be restored to God. The verses from Isaiah 11 likely describe Christ’s millennial kingdom, when some of Eden’s initial conditions will be restored. And one day in the new heavens and new earth, all wickedness and the curse will be entirely removed, and we will eat from the Tree of Life while dwelling with God forever!

APPLICATION

ASK VOLUNTEERS TO READ MATTHEW 5:44-45, PSALM 62:5-8, AND JOHN 16:33

What point do you think Jesus is making with his comments about the rain and the sunshine in Matthew 5?

We all live in a fallen world. And as Christians, we are not exempt from the effects of the curse. We will face difficult times while living on this earth.

What lessons can we draw from the verses in Psalm 62 and John 16:33?

We need to ensure that during difficult times, we use these circumstances as a motivation to cling tighter to Christ, rather than get angry at him and push him away.

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, we thank you for sending Jesus to do for us what we could not do for ourselves. We thank you that you are our rock and our fortress, and that Jesus has overcome the world. We look forward to the day when there will be no more curse, and we will dwell with you forever! In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

COMMENTARY

Genesis 3:8-24

3:8. Genesis often describes the close relationship God desires with individuals by using the word for “walk” (Gen. 5:24; 6:9; 48:15). What for the first humans had been an enjoyable daily communion with God became something to be avoided. The man and woman had hoped to become like God. Instead, they could not face Him. Hearing God approach, they retreated among the trees of the garden hoping to escape His presence. The shame they felt before God mirrored the shame they felt before each other.

The pair’s feeble attempt to cover their nakedness prefigured their feeble effort to escape condemnation by covering themselves and by blaming others. Hearing God approach, they retreated among the trees of the garden hoping to escape His presence. The shame they felt before God mirrored the shame they felt before each other.

3:9 God took the initiative in reaching out to sinful humanity. This pattern—humanity sinning, then God seeking out sinners—becomes the primary theme of the rest of the Bible. Its ultimate expression is found in Jesus Christ, who came to seek and to save people alienated from God because of their sin (Lk 19:10); in Him God once again walked on the earth in search of sinners. The all-knowing God asked Adam, Where are you? for Adam’s benefit, to encourage Adam to face his sin.

3:10. God called out asking the man where he was. God spoke as a loving father. He could see them and knew exactly where the man and woman were, but He invited them to reveal themselves and admit their sin. The use of the masculine singular “you” indicates God spoke specifically to the man. When Adam heard God, he was afraid. The man avoided answering God’s question but provided a reason for his hiding. The man stated he feared God seeing him naked and thus hid himself. While he did not answer God’s question directly, the man’s response indirectly acknowledged his sin. This sin had created a shame he had not previously known and had impaired his relationship with God (just as it had damaged his relationship with the woman).

When Adam heard God, he was afraid. Rather than walking with God as righteous men of later generations would do, Adam hid from Him. Through the use of two direct questions God brought Adam to accountability for his sin (v. 11). God does not overlook sin, but He can be gently firm in confronting it. Adam answered neither of God’s questions. Instead he sought to shift the blame for his sin first to the woman, and then to God. The woman passed the blame to the serpent and admitted that prior to eating, she was deceived (v. 13).

3:11. The man’s admission of nakedness revealed his sin. Rather than condemn the man, however, God invited him to confess. Through the use of two direct questions God brought Adam to accountability for his sin. God does not overlook sin, but He can be gently firm in confronting it.

3:12. Adam answered neither of God’s questions. Given the opportunity to confess, the man instead blamed the woman and God. The man implied the woman caused him to sin. He further charged God with ultimate responsibility because He gave him the woman. The man sought to convince God he was an innocent victim of circumstances, led astray by the woman whom God should have created with greater care. The man’s excuse constituted a lie because he had eaten the fruit knowing exactly what he did (3:6).

3:13. God then turned His attention to the woman, providing her the opportunity to confess. Like the man, she blamed another, accusing the serpent of deceiving her. Both her and her husband’s excuses indicated they realized they were in trouble and hoped to save themselves by shifting God’s attention to someone else. 3:13.

3:14. Though accountability began with God’s confrontation of Adam, judgment began with the serpent. Because of the serpent’s key role (being used of Satan) in bringing sin into the human experience, it would be permanently consigned to the position of ultimate shame, under the foot. Hostility between the first woman and the serpent would be passed on to future generations. This verse is the first foretelling of the

gospel of Jesus Christ. Even though the woman had been deceived into eating the forbidden fruit, she was still held accountable for her act. Two penalties were imposed; both struck at the heart of a woman's roles in life. More than would have been the case had sin not entered creation, bearing children would add to the sum of anguish in the universe. Marriage would also be marred; though the woman's desire would be for her husband, sin would mar God's plan for marriage and create tormenting inequality and subjugation. The latter is a description of the ravaging effect of sin on a husband-wife relationship, not a prescription for abusing one's wife. Because Adam listened to and obeyed his wife's voice in preference to what God commanded (2:17), a curse would strike at the heart of a fundamental relationship in his life as well. Adam's relationship with the ground would now be forever damaged by sin. All the days of his life he would experience painful labor as he worked to bring forth the fruit of the earth

3:15. Hostility between the first woman and the serpent would be passed on to future generations. This verse is known in Christendom as the protoevangelium, or "first good news," because it is the first foretelling of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Using an emphatic Hebrew construction, God announced here that a male descendant—He—would someday deal the serpent (meaning Satan) a fatal blow. The New Testament writers understood Jesus Christ to have fulfilled this prophecy (Heb. 2:14; 1 John 3:8). In an extended sense, the New Testament also indicates that God would work through the church—those indwelt by the Spirit of Christ—to destroy the works of the devil (Rom. 16:20). The assertion that the snake would only strike his opponent's heel (as opposed to head) suggests that the devil will be defeated in the ensuing struggle (Rev. 2:2,7-10).

3:16 Even though the woman had been deceived into eating the forbidden fruit, she was still held accountable for her act. Notably, however, the word "cursed" is not contained in God's words to her (vv. 14,16). Two penalties were imposed; both struck at the heart of a woman's roles in life. More than would have been the case had sin not entered creation, bearing children would add to the sum of anguish in the universe (God said he would intensify, not originate, woman's labor pains). Marriage would also be marred; though the woman's desire would be for her husband, sin would mar God's plan for marriage and create tormenting inequality and subjugation. The latter is a description of the ravaging effect of sin on a husband-wife relationship, not a prescription for abusing one's wife. The NT teaches that marriage should reflect the relationship of Christ with the church (Eph 5:24-25) and be characterized by a husband's understanding of and respect for his wife (1Pe 3:7).

3:17 Because Adam listened to and obeyed his wife's voice in preference to what God commanded (2:17), a curse would strike at the heart of a fundamental relationship in his life as well. Adam's relationship with the ground would now be forever damaged by sin. All the days of his life he would experience painful labor (cp. the woman's labor pains, v. 16) as he worked to bring forth the fruit of the earth.

3:18 Prior to the first couple's sins God is only recorded as having put trees in the garden (2:8-9); now there would also be thorns and thistles. Prior to sin, humanity had only to reach up to get food; now they would have to bend their backs to gather plants of the field.

3:19 The simple plucking of fruit in order to eat food (literally "bread") would now be replaced by backbreaking labor and the sweat of the brow. Working daily in the soil, Adam would be continually reminded that he was dust and that he would return to dust.

3:20. The new name Adam gave his wife emphasizes the woman's life-giving role that counteracts the curse of sin, which is death (v. 20). Yet the divine order calls for a reciprocity exhibited in male servant leadership and female submission, both of which are modeled in Jesus Himself. By making clothing out of skins, the Lord God graciously provided for humanity's need in a way superior to what Adam and Eve had done with fig leaves. Because of sin, people now knew good and evil experientially (v. 22). Since the gift of life was directly tied to obedience, man's sin meant that the penalty of death must be enforced.

3:21. By making clothing out of skins, the Lord God graciously provided for humanity's need in a way superior to what Adam and Eve had done with fig leaves. The use of animal skins anticipates the OT system of animal sacrifices (see Lev. 1; 3-7; Num. 15:1-31). In the NT, the apostle Paul spoke of a day when God would clothe His people with immortality (see 1 Cor. 15:53-54; 2 Cor. 5:4), thus providing the complete undoing of the curse of humanity's sin.

3:22 Because of sin, people now knew good and evil experientially. Since the gift of life was directly tied to obedience, man's sin meant that the penalty of death must be enforced.

3:23 As the Hebrew text ironically expresses it, the Lord God sent Adam from the garden so that he would not send forth ("reach out"; v. 22) his hand for the garden's fruit.

3:24 Following their sin, the first couple went east, a direction associated with departure from God in numerous biblical examples. Other instances of eastward movement in Genesis include Cain's journeys after judgment (4:16), humanity's migration toward Babylon (11:2), and the migration of Keturah's sons (25:6). Cherubim are used as an artistic motif in the tabernacle (Ex 25:18-22; 26:1) and are also mentioned in Ezekiel 10 and 11. The ironies continue as the man who was once commanded to "watch over" the garden (Gen 2:15) is now guarded from the garden.