**Genesis 3:1-15**

**Text.** Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden’?”2And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, 3but God said, ‘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.’” 4But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. 5For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” 6So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. 7Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.

8And 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. 9But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?” 10And he said, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.”11He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?” 12The man said, “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.” 13Then the Lord God said to the woman, “What is this that you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”

14The Lord God said to the serpent,

“Because you have done this,
    cursed are you above all livestock
    and above all beasts of the field;
on your belly you shall go,
    and dust you shall eat
    all the days of your life.
15I will put enmity between you and the woman,
    and between your offspring and her offspring;
he shall bruise your head,
    and you shall bruise his heel.”

**Sermon Intro.** A friend of mine from college named Harold tells this story after he was arrested for a DUI as a teenager. The Sunday after his arrest, an arrest that everyone had heard about in his small town, he stood up in church during one of the hymns. And this was the type of the church that stayed seated for most of the songs. No one else was standing, but Harold stood up, as if to say, ‘This is me; and this thing we are singing about – it’s the grace I need; and I can stand before you, a sinner, because of the extraordinary grace of God.” And he’s also saying, ‘no more, Lord; I will offend you no more. I don’t want to break your law again.’ Sadly, Harold was corrected for standing up in church, and it was said by someone that he must have been proud of what he did.

Do not misunderstand grace – it means the humble sinner stands the tallest, the one who shows their need of Christ – if you humble yourself, you will be exalted. And now that we understand his grace – when you see the plan God has made to pay for your sins – to see that kind of grace gives you everything you need to not continue in a life of sin – we are a people who should love holy living – we love to please God.

We’re in the midst of a series on the mission of God in the world – we see who God is and what he wants us to be as his people; we’re going to examine the introduction of sin and evil in the world – and together declare that we are against evil; we resist sin, and we proclaim God’s grace. Satan is an intruder; he brings nothing good in God’s world, and so we reject him – and that’s an active role that we take right now as the church. So, we’re going to explore that this morning. I want you to see in this text The Root of Sin, the consequences of Sin, and the answer to sin.

1. **The Root of Sin**

The text says –

*Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden’?”*

Revelation 12:9 shows us clearly that the snake is Satan – he is the serpent, and further, he is the great deceiver of the whole world, that’s how he’s described in that verse, in the book of Revelation – the deceiver of the whole world. And Satan asks Eve here, ‘Did God actually say it’? Satan is asking her, what did God really mean? Eve responds by saying that God said –

*‘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.’”*

This is a direct quote from Genesis 2:16-17 where this command is quite explicit. But notice how Satan then will twist the words and bring into question the sincerity of God. Satan says –

*“You will not surely die. 5For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”*

Notice something that is very clear here. Adam and Eve don’t reject general moral principles here. They reject the direct Word of God. God gave them very clear instructions – telling them, I’ve given you all this, everything that is good – but this tree, do not eat of its fruit, or you will die. In Genesis 2:16-17, God calls this tree the tree of knowledge of good and evil; and that’s our topic of conversation this morning – what does this mean, evil?

It cannot mean that Adam and Eve have no idea what evil is, after all – God is telling them, do not sin; he is holding them to moral standards that correspond to their being made in the image of God – they know what it is to disobey – the name, the tree of knowledge of good and evil, means that if you eat the fruit of this tree, you will experience the effects of that sin – you will have knowledge of that kind of evil, by experience. And God is saying to them, you don’t want that – I am giving you a choice, God says; he did not create sin but he did give humans the freedom to choose, to love God or to reject him, and any kind of love must have that choice involved; real love is not real love if you have to; God gives man that free will and sadly, Adam and Eve chose sin, and they did experience the effects of sin; they knew their nakedness, their shame, and they had the instinct to cover up. God told them, they would die – but not right away. He would give them a response to their sin, and we’ll get to that in just a minute.

**App.** But here’s something we need to see about ourselves in this text – Adam and Eve had a choice to resist evil – and so do we. We’re told in the Bible that every person now has a sinful nature just by being human, that is a result of the fall – that sinful nature pervades every human life, making things difficult in every corner of the earth; but, if you are in Christ, if you trust in the Lord, you have the Holy Spirit, which means you are set free to now be able to resist sin. Sin will always be there as a temptation in this life, and Satan is still allowed to tempt in his evil ways – but to resist sin brings glory to God and shows the powerlessness of evil over the life of the Christian. We are a people to resist evil by not giving in to sin; we must be marked out by a real holiness that looks different from the rest of the world. We won’t do that perfectly of course, you will fall short, that’s where grace comes in – we’ll get to that as well – but it’s enough right now to say that this is our goal – to be characterized by goodness. People should be able to look at the church and say, that’s where the strongest marriages exist, it’s here where selflessness is obvious, where serving the needs of the community is most apparent, those are the ones who care the most – and traditionally, this has been the case in the world. Christians are the one who start orphanages and hospitals and universities – because we care. Apply that then to your own life – and ask yourself this question today – do you strive to live a life free of hate in your heart – do you have compassion and empathy – do you care – and are you personally committed to choosing to resist sin? Because this is who we are as a church – people committed to resisting the evil one; it’s been our plan from the beginning – resist Satan; don’t fall for his lies.

**Ill.** There’s a theologian named Walter Brueggeman – and he says that in any human endeavor – things like jobs, marriages, friendships, sports – anything – there is always vocation – permission – and prohibitions. And it has to have all three in order for it to be good. By vocation he means – you’ve got a job to do – there is a task at hand – take sports for example, there are rules and there is a way to victory – and you have permissions within that, fun things to do – that makes it great, but you also have rules to abide by, constraints which allow the flourishing to take place, and if you didn’t have those the game would become meaningless – the restrictions preserve what is good – the same is true in marriage, or in business – doing things according to the rules makes it better, as you establish trust and you see selflessness at play because one is willing to honor the rules for your benefit. And this is how we can apply that – living in God’s world has all three – vocation, we have a job to do, to enjoy life and bring him honor and glory – and there are permissions, lots of wonderful things we can do, and also prohibitions, things that God says, no don’t do that – he wants to stop us from running into that busy street on our own – because it’s for our good, and if we would abide by his rules, we’d be far more joyful and get to experience the best of all the permissions. And of course we find those rules in God’s Word – in the Bible.

**Ill.** And if you are in agreement that the Bible is God’s Word, his special revelation to people to tell them not only what to do but what he has done, then – and hear me out on this - conformity in one direction or another is an inevitable reality. This is what I mean - either conformity that says, I will confirm my own life to the Word of God, or a movement that says I will confirm God’s Word to my beliefs, screening out what doesn’t fit and adjusting it as needed to fit your own Word, you are twisting the Word of God to fit the Word of Sally or Joe – and sorry to all you Sallys and Joes out there, but you get what I mean. Let me suggest that this is the more common approach – and it just can’t be. You cannot say, I’m glad that the Bible inspires me, but I am Lord of my universe, and I will do whatever I think is best.

If you don’t believe the Bible is the Word of God, then you don’t have this problem; you do live by principles, they are just of your own creation – and you just think of as a collection of wise sayings and inspiring stories, but to take the Bible seriously is to move one way or another, and let me suggest that what the Bible says is that you must confirm yourself to it and not the other way around. The Bible is equally offensive to all cultures and times, it’s just that different parts are offensive depending on your time and place. For example, people who come to faith in Christ in the Middle East don’t have any problem with the sexual ethics of the Bible – it very much fits with their cultural views – but they have a harder time with forgiving a brother or sister fully despite without just retribution. In our modern western minds, we have no problem with this forgiveness concept, in fact, we’re all about that – everybody just love everybody, forgive everybody. But we have a major problem with the sexual ethics of the Bible as we see them as repressive and inflexible. Both are offended by the same Bible, yet in very different ways. Both are called to conform to God’s Word and not the other way around. But do this and you are actively resisting sin, conform your life to God’s instructions.

1. **The Consequences of Sin**

So, sin has been in the picture since the beginning of mankind – and there are consequences to that sin. But now let’s look at the consequences of sin. Take a look at the text starting in v. 11 –

*11God said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?” 12The man said, “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.” 13Then the Lord God said to the woman, “What is this that you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”*

This is a very modern reaction – blame-shifting. Adam blames Eve; Eve blames the serpent; no one takes responsibility. You see that sin introduces a disintegration of relationships – relationships that were made very good in creation. There is a fracturing of the relationship with man and creation – man will work the ground by the sweat of his brow – it will produce thorns. There is a fracture in the relationship between man and God – man is removed from the garden and the biggest emphasis here is that they are removed from the presence of God – despite his mercy, despite his taking care of them by clothing them, and continuing their lives – God can’t be with sin, and so he removes them. The whole story of the Bible can be charted by the presence of God – he would make the temple to put right in the middle of his people – he would want to be with them, but it would take sacrifices and purity and a system where the priest comes into the holy of holies just once a year because of the great holiness of God. So, the relationship with man and creation is broken, so also is the relationship between man and God, and finally, there is brokenness between man and man. The text goes on to say that men will try to dominate women, and women will not respect men. And then we remember this – that because of sin, you will die. Man will die as a result of sin – and it wasn’t meant to be that way.

But of course that’s not the end of the story – the whole Bible is God’s rescue mission, restoring the world as it was meant to be, and drawing you to himself. And here’s the first promise of this rescue right here in the text -

1. **The Answer to Sin**

This is what we read in verse 15 –

*I will put enmity between you and the woman,
    and between your offspring and her offspring;
he shall bruise your head,
    and you shall bruise his heel.”*

There’s a famous psalm, Psalm 110, a psalm directly about Jesus, which declares that the king who sits on the throne of David will rest at the right hand of God the Father and will have as his footstool the enemies of God under his feet. This is connected to this promise right now in Genesis 3:15. Right after the act of sin, God declares that he will crush Satan – his head will be bruised and he will then sit under the foot of Jesus; as a result of this act, the offspring of the woman will also be bruised, he will be bruised on the heel by the crushing of the serpent – and this is true, of course, Jesus will die as a result of this action, but a gracious action as it is given by God. This is the earliest promise of the gospel, and a powerful one.

The sin of Adam and Eve might seem like a small sin, they ate some fruit – but all sin is awful in the eyes of God and worthy of death, that’s how strange sin is in the world, and how disconnected sin is meant to be from human beings – but there is something greater than our sin, as the song goes – the grace of God. God’s grace is far greater than all our sin.

**App.** Because the reaction by God is so immediate, you can have confidence than no sin can be too great and there is no waiting period by which you have to get yourself back in order before grace is given to you. If you are loved by God then you are loved by God, and by your faith you are forgiven by his grace despite the wretchedness of your sin and without need for moral improvement before you receive grace. We are a gospel-centered church, a Christ-centered church, and a cross-centered church, where we acknowledge the necessity of Jesus for salvation and the equal amount of need for salvation in every single person on the earth.

If you know that grace, then, if you know that Jesus went to the cross for you – then you are now a participant in pushing back evil in the world – by living a life of holiness, by rejecting sin, you are then part of what God is doing in reclaiming the earth for himself. Satan is allowed to tempt you, but he can never destroy you – you have the Holy Spirit, so march forward in that reality and honor God with your life.

**Closing.** A big feature of the story is the idea that they knew they were naked, you see this back in v. 7; they sewed fig leaves together to try and cover themselves; I actually have a fig tree in my yard, so I can tell you fairly precisely how big a fig leaf is, and I can tell you, it’s not enough. In v. 21 later in the chapter we’re told that God made coverings for them, he made them clothes out of animal skins. And this means a couple of things – God knows that we do have to cover up now because of sin, we are ashamed of it with purpose, but God himself covered them, out of his amazing grace. But he didn’t go buy them clothes at Target – he had to kill an animal in order to cover them, it says they were covered with animal skins. We know then that he loves human beings far more than the animals, but also we see a pattern here – death would come as a result of sin – and here it’s the death of an animal in order to clothe them, and all throughout the Old Testament God would say, please sacrifice an animal in order to show that you have a debt because of sin, and that sin results in death – you must atone for your sin. And we’re told in the New Testament that this whole system was pointing to one death – to the spotless lamb of God – Jesus Christ, who would be like a sheep led to slaughter, according to Isaiah 53 – he would be the one sacrifice to cover our sins. And we know here from this text that in doing so, he would crush Satan – there is no power he has in the world anymore, and that defeat of Satan would cost Jesus his life – live your life by this story – let it be the thing that motivates you into living a life that is pleasing to God – resist sin; like my friend Harold, stand up and say, me, Lord, I am yours; I will live for you. Let’s pray.