



The First Sin

God's good creation was marred by humanity's sin against Him.

GENESIS 3:1-7,21-24

Imagine preparing for a formal occasion, such as a wedding, a funeral, or prestigious awards banquet. You pick out your finest attire, put it on, and admire how good it looks on you. As you first arrive at the event, someone bumps you and you spill coffee all over your fine clothes. Genesis 3 reveals an infinitely greater tragedy. God created the totality of this wondrous universe and observed that it was very good, but when humanity sinned against God, His good creation was marred.

In what ways was God's good creation marred by humanity's sin?

UNDERSTAND **THE CONTEXT**


GENESIS 3:1-24

In Genesis 1-2, God's Word brought life, beauty, and order. Chapter 3 demonstrates how listening to the enemy's lies and being unsure about God's Word led to disharmony, loss, and death.

Genesis 3 contains six sections. The first section (vv. 1-5) contains the conversation between the serpent and the woman. The second (vv. 6-7) indicates that the man and woman both ate from the forbidden tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the middle of the garden. It was then that the eyes of the man and woman were "opened," and they realized they were naked.

The third section (vv. 8-13) describes how God called out to the man who had hid himself along with his wife from the presence of the Lord. The man admitted he had hidden himself from the Lord and was afraid because he recognized he was naked. Next, God inquired of the man how he knew that he was naked and if the man had eaten from the forbidden tree. Certainly, God already knew what had happened. His questions forced the man to admit his sin. Although he admitted what he did, the man blamed the woman. When God confronted the woman, she blamed the serpent. And so it began: the unwillingness of human beings to take responsibility for their sins and instead blame someone or something else for their rebellion against God.

In the fourth section (vv. 14-19) God pronounced curses on the serpent, the woman, and the man. In the midst of these curses is a word of hope. God promised that an offspring of the woman would strike a fatal blow to the offspring of the serpent. The New Testament reveals that Jesus is this offspring of the woman who would strike down the serpent and defeat the power of sin and death (Rom. 5:15-21; 16:20; 1 Cor. 15:54-57; Rev. 12:9; 20:2). It is for this reason Genesis 3:15 is called the *protoevangelium*, the first pronouncement of the gospel. In the fifth section (vv. 20-21) God demonstrated His kindness to Adam and Eve before expelling them from the garden in the final section (vv. 22-24).

 **As you read Genesis 3:1-7,21-24, consider what God reveals about Himself concerning human sin.**

EXPLORE THE TEXT

TEMPTED (GEN. 3:1-5)

¹ Now the serpent was the most cunning of all the wild animals that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You can’t eat from any tree in the garden?’” ² The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat the fruit from the trees in the garden. ³ But about the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden, God said, ‘You must not eat it or touch it, or you will die.’” ⁴ “No! You will certainly not die,” the serpent said to the woman. ⁵ “In fact, God knows that when you eat it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

VERSE 1

Verse 1 introduces *the serpent*. Note it is *the* serpent and not *a* serpent. If there is any doubt to the serpent’s identity, the New Testament identifies him as “the ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the one who deceives the whole world” (Rev. 12:9). Satan’s deception began with Eve in the garden, where he manipulated God’s word.

As a liar, the devil is still actively looking for anyone he can deceive and therefore “devour” today (1 Pet. 5:8). Satan took the form of a serpent, *the most cunning of all the wild animals that the LORD God had made*, which in itself was a deception. It’s possible that serpents were not part of the domestic animals that actually resided in the garden. If so, it may explain Eve’s willingness to listen to the serpent. The Hebrew word for *cunning* employs a wordplay, sounding similar to the Hebrew word for “naked.” This wordplay highlights that Satan’s target was Adam and Eve’s innocence.

The tactics the devil used to tempt Eve are the same tactics he uses today. The deception began with a subtle attack on God’s word in what appears to be a simple question, a mere suggestion. However, these first words that came from the serpent twisted God’s words in Genesis 2:16-17. He questioned God’s integrity, goodness, and, therefore, His trustworthiness. How could Adam and Eve obey God if they could not trust the good intentions He had communicated to them? Satan wanted the couple to forget God’s generosity, that every good thing they enjoyed in God’s creation had come from God. Moreover, the serpent subtly communicated that God’s commandments are up for debate, calling into question God’s authority. Today, the deceiver continues to twist

God’s Word, attempting to undermine our faith in God and question His authority over all of His creation, especially His authority over us.

The serpent subtly communicated that God’s commandments are up for debate.

VERSES 2-3

The woman’s response to the serpent indicates she knew that God had warned her and the man that they must not eat from ***the tree in the middle of the garden***, lest they die. Nevertheless, she followed the serpent’s lead by omitting the words, “free to eat,” which communicated God’s generosity. She did not focus on the freedom and invitation God gave them to eat from the fruit that grew on the multitude of lush trees in the garden. Furthermore, Eve referred to the tree’s location instead of focusing on what it was. She also adopted the serpent’s wording, saying **God** instead of “LORD God” which is used throughout 2:4–3:24—except in this conversation. The word “LORD” pointed the covenantal relationship God had with humanity; it was personal.

Eve’s saying that God told them not to ***touch*** the forbidden fruit was inaccurate. It comes off as if God had a sharp edge saying, “Even if you touch it you will die!” She was seeing God as more of the Enforcer than her Protector.

Instead of accurately quoting God when He emphatically said, “you will certainly die” (2:17), Eve lessened its impact by simply saying, ***you will die***. These subtle changes in Eve’s response seem to indicate that she was moving ever more closely to the serpent’s point of view:

- God is not as generous as He appeared to be;
- God is less knowledgeable about things than what He appeared to be;
- God is not as personally invested in us as He appeared to be;
- God is much harsher on us than He appeared to be; and even though God Himself is harsh, the actual consequences of sin are not as bad as God made them appear to be.

These are all lies about God that the devil would have us believe today. The definition of lying is the act of seeking to deceive. It is no wonder Jesus called the devil “a liar and the father of lies” (John 8:44).

This passage reminds us of two things. First, we must be mindful of what we subject ourselves to and take in, realizing how easily and unknowingly we can be negatively influenced by our spiritual enemies. Second, Eve's miswording of God's command reminds us of the importance of studying and knowing the Word of God.

We open ourselves up to Satan's ploys when we are unclear about or begin to stray away from God's Word. Therefore, we need to follow the example of the Lord Jesus when Satan tempted Him. When Satan twisted the Scriptures in an attempt to confuse Jesus, He used the Scriptures within the context of all of God's Word to rebut the tempter (Matt. 4:4,7,10).

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VERSES 4-5

At first, Satan questioned God's word. Then Eve's uncertainty about God's word opened the door for him to contradict God's word blatantly and emphatically, questioning God's character by making Him out to be the deceiver. The serpent's message was that God did not really mean what He said, and that she could not trust God. The first doctrine Satan denied is judgment, denying that the consequence of sin is death (see Rom. 6:23). Once again, this demonstrates how Satan tries to undermine our faith in God by attacking the clear commands of God's Word.

The serpent not only contradicted what God had said but called into question God's motives by distorting what God said. Satan suggested that God was only concerned about His own power and sovereignty, believing that if Adam and Eve were to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil then they would become equal with God. God did not want Adam and Eve's eyes to be ***opened***, a metaphor for a deeper knowledge they did not possess. Satan will always paint the picture of a weak God who is unworthy of our trust, love, and devotion, and as a God who is always holding us back from reaching our full potential.

 **How are Satan's tactics today similar to his tactics in Eden?**

FALLEN (GEN. 3:6-7)

⁶ The woman saw that the tree was good for food and delightful to look at, and that it was desirable for obtaining wisdom. So she took some of its fruit and ate it; she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. ⁷ Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

VERSE 6

Eve saw that the tree was physically appealing (*good for food*), aesthetically appealing (*delightful to look at*), and egocentrically appealing (*desirable for obtaining wisdom*). She saw that this was a good way she could obtain insight, power, and success like God but apart from God. Eve's giving in to temptation follows the recipe for sin that John outlined in 1 John 2:16 when one gives into "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of one's possessions."

BIBLE SKILL: *Create a comparison chart.*

First John 2:16 lists three desires that can pull us away from God and supplant our love for Him—"lust of the flesh," "lust of the eyes," and "pride in one's possessions." Create a chart to record the similarities between Genesis 3:6 and 1 John 2:16. Reflect on how these apply to your own life.

What is amazing is that up to this point it appears Adam was nowhere to be found. But here we learn he was present when the conversation between the serpent and Eve took place. Moreover, Paul stated that while the woman was deceived, Adam was not (1 Tim. 2:14). Adam knew exactly what he was doing when he went along with Eve in eating the fruit without hesitation. Early Jewish tradition places the responsibility squarely on Adam's shoulders as well.

VERSE 7

Immediately, three things happened. First, their eyes **were opened**. But what they saw was not what they had expected. The serpent told Eve what she would gain, but he neglected to tell her what she would lose. They lost their innocence, and all of the beauty they saw before was now spoiled by guilt, fear, and shame. Second, they recognized **they were naked**. Their vulnerability and inadequacy had been laid bare. They had alienated themselves from God. Third, they **sewed fig leaves** to make **coverings for themselves**. Their intimate knowledge of one another was broken by their newly acquired intimate knowledge of evil.

- What is the appeal of something that promises to make a person wise?
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KEY DOCTRINE: *Man*

In the beginning man was innocent of sin and was endowed by his Creator with freedom of choice. By his free choice man sinned against God and brought sin into the human race. (See Romans 1:19-23; 5:19.)

GRACE FOUND (GEN. 3:21-24)

²¹ The LORD God made clothing from skins for the man and his wife, and he clothed them. ²² The LORD God said, “Since the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil, he must not reach out, take from the tree of life, eat, and live forever.” ²³ So the LORD God sent him away from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. ²⁴ He drove the man out and stationed the cherubim and the flaming, whirling sword east of the garden of Eden to guard the way to the tree of life.

VERSE 21

In verses 14-19, God told the man, woman, and serpent what the consequences for their actions would be. The serpent attacked the human race, so he would be defeated by One who would represent the human race. The woman acted independently of the man, so now she would be dominated by him. And having been formed from the earth, the man

would be burdened as he worked it to survive until the day he dies and returns to it.

After God communicated His judgment on Adam and Eve, He immediately showed them grace by making them **clothing** from animal skins to protect them in the hostile environment in which they would now find themselves. Right away, God began pushing back against the consequences of human sin, anticipating what He would ultimately do through the person and work of Jesus.

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VERSES 22-24

If the man and woman were allowed to stay in the garden and eat from the tree of life, then they would live forever in their sinful condition. What's more, God would not allow them to circumvent the judgment of death they had incurred because of their rebellion against Him. God will ultimately defeat the devil, sin, and death, but until then the couple had to endure the consequences of their sin. Humanity needed to learn to trust God and keep His commandments. Therefore, the Lord God drove them out of the garden.

After driving Adam and Eve out of the garden, God **stationed the cherubim and the flaming, whirling sword** at its entrance **to guard the way to the tree of life**. Large carved cherubim were in the holy of holies, and the veil of the tabernacle and temple that separated the people from God had cherubim embroidered in it (Ex. 26:1; 1 Kings 6:23-29). It was not until Jesus offered Himself as a sacrifice for sin that the veil was torn and a way for humanity opened up to God through His blood (Matt. 27:50-51; Heb. 9:11-28).

- **How were providing clothing and guarding the tree of life demonstrations of God's love and grace?**

APPLY THE TEXT

- + Satan is crafty and is actively looking to ways to deceive.
- + The promises that accompany temptation lead to brokenness.
- + God offers grace in the middle of our rebellion against Him.

○ As a group, discuss ways being part of a Bible study group helps guard against Satan’s attacks. Where do you feel most vulnerable to Satan’s attacks? How can the group pray for you?

○ How have you experienced God’s grace in the midst of your rebellion against Him? Is there someone to whom you need to extend grace—to forgive as God has forgiven you?

○ Memorize Genesis 3:15.

Prayer Needs
