

First Things

Genesis 3

“The Fall That Explains It All”

1. **SATAN IS THE ADVERSARY TO MANKIND**
 - A. He is a dangerous foe
 - B. He is a deceptive foe
 - C. He is a defeated foe
2. **SIN IS THE AFFLICTION IN MANKIND**
 - A. The spiritual effects of sin
 - B. The social effects of sin
 - C. The sustained effects of sin
3. **SALVATION IS THE ANSWER FOR MANKIND**
 - A. A salvation decided by God
 - B. A salvation demonstrated by God
 - C. A salvation delivered by God

1. I want to tell you a story. It is about a fellow named Humpty Dumpty. The story goes like this:

*All the king's horses and all the king's men,
Couldn't put Humpty Dumpty back together again*

2. You say, “Wait, that’s not the whole story.” You are right, and without the whole story, the end just doesn’t make any sense.

3. If you don’t know that Humpty once sat on a wall and that from that wall Humpty had a great fall, then you don’t know why all the king’s horses and men are trying so hard to put him back together again.

4. There is a story of another great fall that you and I must know if we are ever going to make sense of the big story of the world in which we live.

5. Genesis chapter 3 records for us what theologians call the fall of man. It is hard to estimate the importance of what is revealed in this single Bible chapter.

6. One old preacher and author described Genesis 3 as, “...the pivot of the Bible,” saying, “...if we take it away, the rest of Scripture becomes meaningless.”ⁱ

7. Without the narrative of Genesis 3, the grand narrative of Scripture would be very difficult to discern.

8. Were we robbed of Genesis 3, we would have no real understanding of why our world is the way it is, and also no real foundation for God’s plan of redemption in this world.

9. Looking at this key chapter in the Word of God, there are some very basic truths that emerge. These are truths that help us to understand the world in which we live.

10. In many ways, this fall explains it all. Let me show you what I mean. Looking at this text, we learn first of all that:

I. SATAN IS THE ADVERSARY TO MANKIND

1. On January 29, 2002, in his state of the union address, then President George W. Bush used the term "axis of evil" to describe the nations of Iraq, Iran, and North Korea.

2. There were many in the media who criticized the president for using such terms as "good" and "evil". They talked as if evil were a mythological concept.

3. You don't have to be all that perceptive, though, to realize that there is *in fact* the very real presence of evil in our world.

4. In the Garden of Eden, we meet the father of all evil, and the great antagonist in the human story. Here he appears as the serpent, but we know that this is none other than the devil himself.

5. Observing his work in the garden and his part in the fall of man, we are reminded of some important truths regarding our great adversary. We are reminded that:

A. He is a dangerous foe

1. Genesis 3 opens by saying, "*Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made...*"

2. Take note of that word "subtil". The *ESV* renders it as "crafty". It is translated from a word that can carry either a positive or a negative connotation.

3. At times, the word simply means to be shrewd, or sensible. At other times, the word speaks of craftiness. It is what we mean when we say that someone is "slick".

4. In describing our enemy, the devil, this word reminds us that he is no buffoon. Our adversary does not oppose us in an overt or obvious way.

5. No, he is shrewd and crafty in his approach to mankind. He will even appear, as Paul puts it, as "an angel of light". (II Corinthians 11:14)

6. This is what makes him so very dangerous. He is subtle and crafty, disguising his intentions with a slick sales pitch for his candy-coated poison.

7. He is not only presented here as a dangerous foe, but notice also that our adversary:

B. He is a deceptive foe

1. In Genesis 3:1, we are told that the serpent engaged Eve in a conversation.
2. His first words to her betray his intentions. He asks, "*Yeah, hath God said...?*" He begins by questioning the Word of God.
3. Eventually, he gets to the point, and says to Eve in verse 4, "*Ye shall not surely die.*" There it is. God said that if they ate of the fruit of that particular tree, they would surely die.
4. Satan said to Eve, "You won't die. He is lying to you." In reality, Satan is the liar. In fact, in John 8:44, Jesus said that the devil was a liar, and the father of lying itself.
5. Jesus Christ is the way and *the Truth*, but since the very beginning, Satan, our adversary has been the opposite of that truth. He is a deceptive foe.
6. Lest we give the enemy too much credit, I would add one more thing that we learn about our adversary in this great chapter. He is not only a dangerous foe, and a deceptive foe, but notice also that:

C. He is a defeated foe

1. In verse 15 of this chapter, we have what is called the *protoevangelium* - that is, the first gospel.
2. When God begins to pronounce judgments for the fall, he begins with the serpent, and in verse 14, He pronounces a curse upon the serpent as an *animal*.
3. Then in verse 15, He pronounces a curse upon the serpent as an *adversary*. He said, "*And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.*"
4. With this prophecy, God declared a war on our great adversary. He swore that the day would come when the seed of the woman would crush the head of the serpent.
5. 2,000 years ago, at the place of the skull, Satan bruised the heel of the woman's seed, as the Lord Jesus died on the cross.
6. Yet, three days later, the chains of death were snapped by the power of God, and the body of the Lord Jesus came back to life.

7. When he walked out of that tomb, with His first step, the serpent's head was crushed and the devil's days were numbered. We have an adversary, but He has been overcome by the risen Lamb!

8. Looking at this text, we see not only the fact that *Satan is the adversary to mankind*, but we learn also that:

II. SIN IS THE AFFLICTION IN MANKIND

1. Having read Genesis 1 and 2, we know that the world in which we live is no longer the paradise described there.

2. We know something is wrong with this world, and one preacher has aptly said, "If you want to know what is wrong with the world...don't look out the window; look in the mirror."ⁱⁱ

3. The greatest evidence for the fall is seen in the defective and depraved hearts of mankind. There is something wrong within us.

4. We are not what God originally created us to be, and Genesis 3 reveals that what is wrong with us is the affliction of sin that entered our race in the Garden.

5. Notice with me some of things we see about sin in this chapter, and how it relates to our world today. Consider:

A. The spiritual effects of sin

1. With the taste of the forbidden fruit still lingering on their lips, there was an immediate spiritual impact upon the first couple.

2. Verse 7 says, "*And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.*"

3. Verse 8 adds, "*And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden.*"

4. Adam and Eve had been created for communion with the Lord God. They had enjoyed an unbroken fellowship with Him.

5. Now we see the entrance of two unnatural and previously unknown feelings: they were *ashamed* and they were *afraid*.

6. Though we were made for God's glory, and created to know Him and enjoy Him, the spiritual effects of sin are seen in the fact that man has been running and hiding from God ever since the fall.

7. Consider not only the spiritual effects of sin, but notice with me also:

B. The social effects of sin

1. The whole social order is turned upside down in Genesis chapter 3. Before the fall, Adam and Eve listened only to God.

2. At the fall, someone has noted that, "The woman listens to the serpent, the man listens to the woman, and no one listens to God."ⁱⁱⁱ

3. The effects of the breakdown in the social order are seen when Adam and Eve are confronted by God with their sin.

4. Adam explains his actions by saying in verse 12, "*The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.*"

5. Eve also plays the blame game, saying in verse 13, "*The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.*"

6. Why is our world so filled with conflict and contention? It is because the affliction of sin has left us selfish, and we would rather point the finger of blame than confess our own failures to God.

7. In 1992, during the L.A. riots, beating victim, Rodney King asked the famous question, "Can we all get along?"

8. The affliction of sin is the reason we cannot answer "yes" to that question. There is the spiritual effect of sin, the social effect of sin, and also, there is:

C. The sustained effects of sin

1. In verses 16 and 17, God hands down individual judgments for Adam and Eve.

2. Even though they were addressed directly to those two people, as our first parents, those judgments were also handed down to us.

3. Women still feel the pain of Eve's punishment. Men still toil under the strain of Adam's sinful burden.

4. As Paul says in Romans 5:18, "...by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation..."
5. No, we weren't physically present at the fall, but we are nonetheless recipients of its sustained effects, and we are willing participants in its sin and its curse.
6. There is something wrong with humanity, and the Bible reveals that it is the affliction of sin.
7. There is a third and probably most significant truth revealed in this chapter through which we understand our world. We see here not only that *Satan is the adversary to mankind*, and *sin is the affliction in mankind*, but we see also lastly that:

III. SALVATION IS THE ANSWER FOR MANKIND

1. After the glory of the first two chapters of the Bible, this third chapter feels dark and despairing.
2. The chapter closes with the exit from Eden, and the barring of man from the tree of life. Verse 23 says, "...the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken."
3. Instead of happily ever after, it looks like hardness ever after. Yet, when we look with Spirit-filled eyes, we see that behind all of the heartache, there is hope.
4. Even in the midst of the grief, we can still see the gospel. Even with all of His judgment, God reveals that He has a plan for the salvation of mankind.
5. We have come a long way since our parents were locked out of the Garden. Nevertheless, the answer for mankind is still the plan of salvation introduced first in Genesis 3 by a loving God.
6. Consider the plan of salvation that God previews here in Genesis 3. First of all, it is:

A. A salvation decided by God

1. In Genesis 3:15, where we find the *protoevangelium*, that first gospel, we are mindful that it is God who introduces this prospect of a seed that is to come.
2. This was not Adam and Eve's plan. No, their plan of salvation was to try to cover up their sin with the works of their hands – their man-made aprons.
3. Religion seeks to do the same thing. It tries to cover sin with good works and acts of devotion.

4. Religion, however, is not God's plan. God's plan is the gospel, and it was decided by Him before He ever formed the first man.

5. The answer for mankind is a salvation of God's design, one that was His gracious decision. I would add further that the answer man needs is:

B. A salvation demonstrated by God

1. Obviously, God did not fully reveal the plan of the cross and the gift of His Son in Genesis 3. Nor does He fully disclose it in Genesis 4, or even in the whole of the Old Testament.

2. What God does in this chapter is begin the process of demonstrating the gospel, and illustrating His plan to His people.

3. Look what happens in verse 21. It says, "*Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them.*"

4. You don't have to read too much into that to realize that an animal gave up its life so that Adam and Eve's sin and shame might be covered.

5. What is that, but a demonstration of the gospel? On Calvary's cross, Jesus died for our sins, offering up His life so that we might be clothed in His righteousness.

6. We see here not only that the salvation that mankind needs is a salvation decided by God, and demonstrated by God, but also, we now know that it is:

C. A salvation delivered by God

1. What God promised in Genesis 3:15, and demonstrated by the skins of that first sacrifice, we now know God has delivered in the person of His Son, our Lord Jesus.

2. What Adam and Eve, and all their Old Testament descendants could only anticipate, we can now fully appreciate.

3. We know that, "*...when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.*" (Galatians 4:4-5)

4. While God in times past spoke to our fathers by the prophets, and through prophecies, we know that He has, "*...in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds.*" (Hebrews 1:2)

5. In other words, we are not still waiting for the answer to mankind's problems. God has delivered the salvation man needs in the person of the Lord Jesus!
7. Does mankind need peace? Jesus is the Prince of Peace. Does mankind need healing? He is the Balm of Gilead. Does mankind need hope? He is the Blessed Hope.
8. Does mankind need forgiveness? He is the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world. Does mankind need direction? He is the Way.
9. Does mankind need answers? He is the Truth. Does mankind need freedom from death? He is the Life!
10. What our sin-sick race needs is the Salvation the God has delivered through our Lord Jesus!

1. Postmodernists deny the existence of what they call a "metanarrative". What they mean by that is one big story that helps to make sense of all the other stories in the world.
2. I would argue to the postmodernist that Genesis 3 *is* the metanarrative. The answers we need to understand the world we live in are basically contained in this one, Bible chapter.
3. We have an adversary, and his name is Satan. We have an affliction, and its name is sin. But, praise be to God, we also have an answer, and it is salvation through Jesus Christ!

ⁱ Thomas, W.A. Griffith, Genesis: I-XXV, (The Religious Tract Society, London, 1907), p. 45

ⁱⁱ Merritt, James Dr., *unpublished sermon notes*

ⁱⁱⁱ Matthews, Kenneth, quoted by R. Kent Hughes in, Genesis: Beginning and Blessing, (Crossway Books, Wheaton, IL, 2004), p. 65