

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 7/9/95 PM
Genesis 3:1-8 "Why Do We Struggle with Sin?"

What in the world happened? Have you ever asked yourself that question? We see pain all around us. We hear of wars in Bosnia, bombings in Ireland, and gas-poisonings in Tokyo. We gasp when we hear that good friends who have been married for years are now in the divorce court, dads have gone a.w.o.l., and kids are being sexually abused. Then we're faced with the disturbing realities of failing health and broken dreams. We know Jesus' offer, "I am come that you might have life, and have it more abundantly." We ponder those words--"abundant life"--and then we look at life as we see it around us, and we're forced to deal with a question, "What in the world happened?" Why is there so much evil and destruction?

Friends, the world today is not what it once was. I'm not talking about the "good old days" either. Warren Wiersbe defines "the good old days" as a combination of a good imagination and a bad memory! No, I have in mind the world as it was prior to Genesis 3. Frankly, the world has never been the same since Genesis 3.

This evening we are beginning a new series entitled "Root Issues: Genesis 3-4." We're going to devote four weeks of Bible study to the root issues addressed in the first book of the Bible. Did you realize that core of the problems we struggle with go back to Genesis 3-4?

Why is there evil in the world? How does temptation work? What is Satan's strategy in this world? What is sin, and what are the consequences of sin? Why do we struggle in our relationships with God? We'll find the answer to each of these questions in Genesis 3.

And Genesis 4 addresses such relevant topics as interpersonal conflicts, guilt, and depression. In point of fact, the doctrines of God, man, sin, Satan, and salvation are all rooted in Genesis 3-4.

We live in a sin-cursed world. We all struggle daily with sin. But, tonight, I want us to consider a basic, critical question. Why do we struggle with sin?

Proposition: We'll find the answer in Genesis 3. There are five scenes in Genesis 3 which not only address the origin of sin, but can help us learn to overcome sin.

I. The Dialogue (1-5)

A. Serpent (1): "Did God say?"

B. Woman (2-3): "No, but..."

C. Serpent (4-5): "Not so."

Note: Satan's temptation strategy hasn't changed.

1. He seeks to confuse.

•Confuse God's character

•Confuse God's Word

2. He seeks to contradict.

II. The Decision (6)

A. The woman ate.

**Her sin was deception.

B. The man ate.

**His sin was defiance.

III. The Discovery (7-8)

- A. They were exposed.
- B. They were ashamed.
 - 1. They tried to cover themselves.
 - 2. They tried to hide from God.

IV. The Second Dialogue (9-19)

- A. God (9): "Where are you?"
- B. Man (10): "I hid."
- C. God (11): "Have you eaten from the tree?"
- D. Man (12): "The woman YOU gave me..."
- E. God (13): "What have you done?"
- F. Woman (13b): "The serpent deceived me."
- G. God (14-19): "Because you have done this..."
 - 1. Curse on serpent (14-15)
 - 2. Curse on woman (16)
 - 3. Curse on man (17-19)

V. Disruption (20-24)

- A. Life goes on, but not the same (20).
- B. The consequences for sin are severe.
 - 1. Coverings are needed (21)
 - 2. The tree of life is off limits (22-24).

We'll take two weeks to investigate Genesis 3. In this study we'll look at the first three scenes, and next week the final two.

I. The Dialogue (1-5)

V 1 "Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made." Stop there. What was this "serpent"? The text labels this creature as a "beast of the field." It belonged to the animal world. We commonly think of it as a snake, but there is little support for that. In fact, the text indicates two remarkable abilities possessed by this serpent--it would talk (v 1) and walk (v 14).

Moses (who wrote Genesis) describes the serpent as "more subtle" than any other creature. The NIV uses the word "crafty." Actually, the word is not in itself negative. In Proverbs, for instance, it is translated "prudent" or "wise." Don't forget that EVERY creature that God made was what? Very good (1:31)--that included this prudent, talking serpent. If that's not true, then we've got a thorny question to answer--Where did this serpent get such an evil quality if everything God created was good?

Let's follow the dialogue. The serpent approached the woman in the garden.

A. Serpent (1): "Did God say?"

What did the serpent say in v 1, "Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" At first, the question seems rather innocent, almost casual conversation. It's not. It's malicious by its insinuation.

Please notice something. The tempter doesn't argue with the woman. He suggests. He drops a seed of doubt into her mind. He also flatters. Think of the presumption in those words, "Did God say?" Do you see what the tempter is doing? He

is implying that God's word is subject to our judgment. Is that true? Friends, Satan's strategy hasn't changed one bit in thousands of years.

For example: "Did God really say that homosexuality is wrong? And even if there are some verses in the Bible against it, how do you know that's what He meant for today?"

Another example: "Did God really say I should stay married to someone I'm not compatible with? That doesn't make sense, does it? God wouldn't want me to be unhappy, would He?"

Or this: "Does God say He wants us to tithe all the time? Even when things are really tough. Surely, He understands things are tight, and won't mind if we keep the tithe for the car repairs. After all, He's the one that allowed the transmission to break."

One of Satan's chief weapons is to get us to rationalize God's Word. Often his attack is very subtle. Look again at v 1, "Hath not God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?"

Question--Check out 2:16-17, and answer this, "Did God say what the serpent said He said?" No. The serpent changed the emphasis. Watch that little word "every." God said, "Of every tree you can eat. Enjoy them all. Except one. Only one is off limits. Eat it and you'll die." The serpent turned it around, "Did God say you shouldn't eat of EVERY tree in the garden?" What's the serpent doing? He's arousing suspicion--"Hey lady, why would God keep something pleasurable from you? Do you think God's being fair?"

How did the woman respond?

B. Woman (2-3): "No, but..."

Vv 2-3 "We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden, but..."

Don't miss something. Was the woman's response accurate? No. What did she do? She altered God's Word in two ways.

First, she added to God's Word. She over-magnified God's strictness. How? Had God said, "You shall not touch the fruit"? No. She made God's command more severe than it was.

On the other hand, she subtracted from God's Word. She said, "Lest you die." God had said, "You will surely die."

Application: We can't afford to be flippant with God's Word. We're in danger when we tamper with truth, and dabble with doctrine. When it comes to the Word of God, God meant what He said--no more and no less.

Watch the serpent's comeback.

C. Serpent (4-5): "Not so."

Now we come to a blatant contradiction in v 4, "And the serpent said unto the woman, You shall not surely die." Now what do we have? A standoff. A showdown. It's the serpent's word against God's.

By the way, commentator Derek Kidner rightly points out the first doctrine Satan tries to get us to deny is judgment. "You won't die. There aren't really any consequences to eating a little piece of fruit." The words of today's modernists aren't much different, are they? "You don't believe in a literal hell, do you? How could a loving God send anyone to hell?"

Follow the serpent's reasoning--if eating the tree wouldn't result in death, why did he say God put the tree off limits? V 5 "For God knows that in the day you eat your eyes will be opened, and you shall be as God, knowing good and evil."

Do you hear the subtle lie in those words? The serpent reinterprets evil and makes it sound good. Instead of evil being the opposite of good, he portrays evil as being beyond good, or better than good. "That tree, evil? No way, it's good for you, and God knows it. If you eat it you'll be like God."

Question--Was that true? In part, it was true--there would be knowledge of good and evil. But the serpent didn't tell her the whole story. Not only would she know good and evil, but she'd experience the horrid consequences of evil.

It's becoming quite apparent that what happened in the garden was more than casual conversation between a serpent and the woman. Who was the master-mind behind the serpent? Jesus said this in John 8:44, where He revealed that the devil "was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the FATHER OF LIES." (Aalders, 101) The devil used the serpent in the garden to tempt mankind.

Note: Satan's temptation strategy hasn't changed.

How does Satan tempt us? He uses the same two weapons we see in Gen 3.

1. He seeks to confuse.

How does he do it? Satan is a big promiser. He also is a big distorter. He loves to cast a shadow on two things.

- Confuse God's character--"If God is good, why would He make something so good as this fruit off limits?"

- Confuse God's Word--"Did God really say that? Are you sure? Maybe you've got the wrong interpretation. After all, you can interpret the Bible to say just about anything."

2. He seeks to contradict.

To Eve, he said, "Die? You won't die! You'll live as never before!"

Henry Morris makes this observation (57), "This was the first beginning of sin in the human family. It succeeded so well that Satan and his evil spirits continue to use this approach today. If he can just get a person to begin, even in the slightest degree, to doubt God's Word or His sovereign goodness, then it is easy to go on, step by step, until that person is either openly rebellious against God or else utterly unable to accomplish God's purpose in his life."

Discuss: What lessons can we learn from watching the dialogue in Genesis 3?

II. The Decision (6)

The fateful decision came in v 6. "And when the woman saw...she ate..." Notice how the woman was tempted. First, she saw that the tree was good for food. Second, it was pleasing to the eye. Third, it would make her wise. She started to rationalize.

Temptation comes in the same fashion for us. Listen to 1 John 2:15-16, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world."

Both Adam and Eve made a fateful decision that day.

A. The woman ate.

****Her sin was deception.**

Remember, the woman wasn't there when God told Adam about the forbidden fruit. No doubt, Adam relayed the message to her, so she knew. But the serpent deceived her, and she ate.

Listen to this remark by Derek Kidner (68), "The pattern of sin runs right through the act, for Eve listened to a creature instead of the Creator, followed her impressions against her instructions, and made self-fulfillment her goal."

B. The man ate.

****His sin was defiance.**

Was Adam there when his wife had the conversation with the serpent? 1 Tim 2:14 suggests he was not. When it came to the fruit, Adam certainly knew better. He listened to the voice of his wife instead of the voice of God. And the world as never been the same. Rom 5:12 says, "By one man sin entered the world, and death by sin."

III. The Discovery (7-8)

What happened after the two ate the fruit? V 7 says their eyes were opened, but not like the serpent promised. Notice two severe consequences.

A. They were exposed.

V 7 "And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked." I remind you they had been naked all along, naked and unashamed (2:25). But now they're ashamed. Why? Was their shame related to sexuality? Were they ashamed because now they realized that sexual beings? No.

They were ashamed because they were exposed--not just before each other, but before God Himself. They were naked, that is, they were guilty of sin and totally vulnerable before a holy God. The wholeness they had known only minutes before was shattered. They were exposed physically, morally, and spiritually--they were naked.

B. They were ashamed.

For the first time, they felt something they had never known--guilt. They were afraid of God. They were terrified of God. They sensed they were indecent to stand before a holy God. They were naked.

So what did they do? Instinctively, realizing they had a problem, they tried to remedy the problem on their own. How? They committed two, independent acts.

1. They tried to cover themselves.

V 7b "And they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons." Why? Because they were ashamed. Because they knew they were no longer what God had created them to be. They had rebelled against God.

2. They tried to hide from God.

V 8 "And they heard the voice of God in the garden...and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden." What a tragic sight. The sweet communion with God was gone. Instead of walking with God, now they're hiding from God. Instead of basking in His love, now they're cowering in anxious fear of Him.

That's what sin does to us, too. When we sin, we tend to run and hide from God. Discuss: What lessons does this story teach us about dealing with sin?