

Session Three: The Story of the Gospel - The Fall

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Date: 01 January 2018

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[0 : 00] Welcome back to Gospel Growth.

My name is Brian Hart. We've been talking about getting the gospel, and we're looking at this big cosmic story of redemption, the story that the whole Bible's telling.

We said last week that it's got layers, doesn't it? There's a layer about us, the personal relationship that we get to have with our Heavenly Father, but then there's also a whole other story happening that's bigger than that about the church and the people of God.

And even above that, there's another kind of meta story about the whole universe and why God made everything and how it went wrong, and he's bringing it all back together again to the place that it should have been in the first place.

And so that story of redemption began with creation, God's good world made in love for his glory, for people to be in loving and harmonious relationship with him.

[1 : 01] It's the beautiful beginning of the story of history. In fact, God ends his work of creation by looking at the whole of what he's made and declaring over it, it's very good.

But of course, the story doesn't stop there. And if I told you that it did, you would look around and say, well, the world we live in actually isn't very good. I mean, gosh, just look around.

There's so much pain and suffering and evil even. And so sometimes we can feel like the world isn't good at all. We can feel like it's a terrible place. I mean, just turn on the news on a daily basis.

And we end up asking, why? Why is the world like this? Well, that's what the second part of the story is all about. Now, act two of this big gospel story is the story of the fall.

The big story of the gospel does not actually ignore the brokenness of the world. It takes us right into it. And at the heart of it all is rebellion against God.

[2 : 05] We talked last week about how God is our creator. And if he created us, then that means we owe him everything. But of course, we don't always give him everything, do we? We rebel.

And so it's not very far into the story in Genesis. We see that what happens is a wicked invader comes into God's good world. Genesis 3, starting in verse 1, it says this.

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?

And the woman said to the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said you shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that's in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it lest you die.

But the serpent said to the woman, You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.

[3 : 07] So you see what happens here is that Satan comes to Adam and Eve with a lie, and it's the same one that he's been using on people ever since.

And the lie is this, that God isn't as good as you think he is, that God isn't as good as he says he is. You see, God had given Adam and Eve two trees.

He had given them the tree of life, and he had given the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And God told them, Eat of the tree of life. But the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, God told them not to eat of it.

And he said, If you do, you will surely die. So look at what the serpent is saying here. The serpent is coming, and he's putting some doubt into Eve's head.

He's asking these kind of very unhelpful questions. Did God really say? Would a good and kind God say that to you? Would a good God want to withhold things from you that you know you want?

[4 : 07] I mean, do you see what he's doing? I mean, it's really fascinating. He's using the very first, and so it's really the oldest strategy in the book, as far as temptation goes. Satan doesn't come to Eve and say, there is no God, or God isn't really there.

You can't see him. There's no such thing as God. Satan is really, and this we see in the story, he's perfectly fine for Eve to believe that God is real if he can get her to doubt his goodness.

That's the lie. He says, I know what God said, but you know what he's up to, don't you? He's holding out on you. He knows what's going to make you happy, and he's just trying to keep you under his thumb.

He's trying to keep you down. He's trying to keep you from becoming truly great. The message of the serpent is that God is holding out, and the real way to joy, the real way to achieving your dreams and everything you want in life is not by obeying God.

It's by taking control of your life, by seizing what's in front of you and rejecting his rule. You don't actually have to do everything he says. You see, Satan doesn't mind if you believe in God.

[5 : 21] He doesn't even mind if you know that Jesus died on the cross. Satan knows Jesus died on the cross. The last thing that he wants you to believe is that God is for you, and that he loves you, and that he actually has your best interests at heart, that he's in your corner, that everything he's ever said and done has been for your ultimate good.

And the last thing that Satan wants you to do is to remain loyal to him. What he wants you to do is to turn, even if it feels like it's a small turn, to turn away from his authority as your creator and as your heavenly father.

And that is the lie that broke the world. All of our pain ultimately comes back from people believing this lie.

This is underneath all our sin. Every time we sin, every time we go against God's ways for us, it's because of a belief that we have inside, even if it's not conscious.

Sometimes it's subconscious. But beliefs inside us and desires inside us in which we are convinced that if we obey God, we're not really going to be happy. We've got to take things into our own hands.

[6 : 34] Now, believing God to not be their loving father, but believing him to be someone who's standing in the way of their true joy, Adam and Eve both disobey God.

And so in verse six, it says, so 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 and 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. You see, here's what the lie leads to. It always leads to rebellion when we listen to it.

And rebellion is rejecting God and looking for joy elsewhere. Every time we hear the lie and we listen to it and we take it in, it leads to rebellion. Once that lie is seeped into our heart, we do the same thing that Eve did.

She ate the fruit. She, you know, her creator had given her explicit instructions and she turned from those instructions. She took matters into her own hand. And when we listen to the lie, we do the same thing.

[7 : 42] Now, I think some people ask the question, what is really the big deal? I mean, it seems like this is a bit severe, maybe too severe even that all of human history would be shaped by this one event just by eating some fruit.

Remember, this fruit is from a tree called the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And the Bible doesn't fully explain the stakes. It doesn't fully explain God's reasoning for not wanting Adam and Eve to eat of this fruit.

But I think there are many things that we can say about it. And one thing that a lot of people have argued, and I think it's a pretty convincing argument, is that this tree, it's so named, right?

The tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And knowledge of good and knowledge of evil require incredible maturity, even God-like maturity, to steward and not use for the wrong purposes.

The knowledge of good and evil, the knowledge of how to bless, but also the knowledge of how to manipulate. The knowledge of how to build up, but also the knowledge of how to harm, how to oppress, how to take advantage.

[8 : 46] And so in some ways, the story of human history has been the story of humans who've discovered knowledge they did not have the maturity to steward. I mean, think of nuclear energy. Man, what a discovery, but we couldn't resist turning it into weapons to take out massive amounts of human life.

God didn't say, if you eat of this tree, I will kill you, because they ate of it and he didn't kill them. He said, if you eat of it, you will surely die. And that is exactly what happened.

In fact, if you read on the next few chapters in Genesis, over and over, you see that there's story after story of escalating violence and murder. The knowledge of good and evil led to the loss of life and murder and death.

That is what sin does. Sin is not just doing some bad things. It's rebellion. It's turning away from the creator, deciding we're going to rule our own life and that we know best.

It's deciding that God is not the source of our joy like he says that he is, but we have to go find joy elsewhere. It's always a disaster and it always leads to consequences that go beyond what we could ever imagine.

[10 : 02] We have a saying here at our church that sin is more like a bomb than a bullet. When it goes off, there's shrapnel and it goes places you could never have imagined. And we always have a hard time seeing that on the front end.

I'm a father of five kids. And especially when my kids were very young, it was very hard for them to believe that I had their best interests at heart.

And that always isn't, you know, that's not always their fault. A toddler can't actually understand why it's unsafe to play in the road. Now, if I tell my, when I tell my children they can't play in the road, you know, there were moments where they were so angry because they felt like, you know, they felt like I was standing in the way of their fun.

And of course I wasn't. I want them to have fun. I also want them to not get hit by a car. They couldn't understand that. Listen, the gap between us and God is infinitely larger than the gap between me and my toddler children.

And he loves us even more than I love my kids. He is a loving king. His rule over us is for our good. And we are at our most, we are most free actually when we live under his rule and his authority and his reign.

[11 : 15] When we believe the lie that God himself isn't the answer to our search for joy and we begin to look other places, the irony is that we never actually find what we're looking for. The movie actor Jim Carrey said it well.

He said, I think everybody should get rich and famous and do everything they ever dreamed of so they can see that it's not the answer. It actually doesn't give you what you're looking for. And yet we keep turning away. We're born rebels.

It's easy to wonder, why did Eve do the thing? Why did she listen to the snake? Why did she bite the fruit? It's not just, you know, it can be interesting to think about what might we have done, but we don't really have to wonder what would we have done because we can look at what we do every day.

We do the same thing. We have done what Eve did. We've ignored the voice of our creator. Almost every day, I'm sure, all of us. We've listened to some form of a lie that says that a joy and what we're looking for is found somewhere else other than God and his lordship.

And the result of our rebellion is the breaking of the world. Genesis 3 and verse 7, it says, Then the eyes of both Adam and Eve were opened and they knew that they were naked and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.

[12 : 30] And 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. But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, where are you?

And he said, I heard the sound of you in the garden and I was afraid because I was naked and I hid myself. He said, God said, and who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?

The man said, the woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me the fruit of the tree and I ate. You see how Adam just shifts the blame. See, the fall, the fall is a story of rebellion and our rebellion leads to sin, to shame and death.

This moment is called the fall because we fell from a state of flourishing, a state of harmonious relationship with God, of wholeness and perfection.

And so we have, and the world around us has experienced a breaking in every dimension of life. Right away, Adam and Eve, who used to be naked and unashamed, they're now filled with shame about their bodies.

[13 : 42] They enter into that shame. They begin hiding from God. They start blaming each other. And so we see that the result of our rebellion against God is the shattering of our relationship with him, our relationship with one another, and even our relationship with creation.

If you go on to read the rest of Genesis 3, God tells them that actually the whole world is not under a curse because of sin. We no longer master creation, it now masters us.

And so all of life is a struggle against the dirt. And in the end, the dirt wins. We return to the dirt. So this story gives us an explanation for our world.

It explains what's wrong with us, what's wrong with our heart. It explains the futility of our search for meaning and joy and happiness outside of God. But the fall is not the end of the story.

In fact, right in the middle of this rebellious moment, there is a flicker of hope. God curses the serpent in this moment after the first sin. And then he says these mysterious words.

[14 : 46] He says, I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your offspring and her offspring. And he shall bruise your head and you shall bruise his heel. God says here that one of the results of this rebellion is that there's going to be an ongoing struggle between the descendants of the woman and really what's represented by the serpent, which is evil.

There's going to be this ongoing tension. And there's going to be a war. And what's going to happen? Well, one day someone's going to come and he's going to crush the head of the snake. But his foot will be bit in the process.

And snake bites are venomous and dangerous things. This is the first promise in a line of promises pointing to a savior who would come. We know now that this was actually the first promise of Jesus.

All the way back in Genesis 3, we get this first glimmer of hope, this promise of Jesus in which God says, the world is broken because people have turned from me. They've sought joy elsewhere. They've decided to rebel.

But as soon as they do, God says, I am going to get to work redeeming it. We broke it. But God says he's going to fix it. He's going to send someone to crush the snake.

[16 : 00] But it's not going to be easy. In fact, that snake crusher is going to be bit in the heel and it's going to kill him. Already in this mysterious promise, we see the cost that God himself is going to endure to free us from the chains of the curse.

God's plan to end evil is to take evil upon himself. On the cross, that's what Christ did. He bore the full weight of the whole thing. He took the fangs of the serpent into himself and he died for us.

He did all that. He took our rebellion and our sin and our shame on himself to end the lie of the enemy, to end it once and for all, to show us how good he really is.

You never have to doubt him ever again. He's so good, he would die for you. And he did it to free us from the brokenness of sin, to bring us back into flourishing relationship with him, to bring us back into the garden and to bring us back into his original purposes for our lives to make us very good.

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