

Series: "Messages From Genesis": "Uh-Oh!"

It was beautiful, just beautiful! God made the world, and when He had finished, He looked it all over and said, "Not bad at all! "God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good!" (Genesis 1:31).

Then God made a man, the crowning glory of creation. This man walked close with God his Creator. God put him in a garden – Eden. "Eden" means "enchantment" "delight" – and it was an enchanting, delightful place!

Then God makes a woman, a companion for the man! There's a joyful oneness between them – "The man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed" (Genesis 2:25). They're able to relate intimately, with ease, with no embarrassment. It really is a wonderful world!

Wouldn't it be great if the world could be like the paradise described in Genesis 1-2? People would get along with each other. People would honor God, and would appreciate and care for His wonderful creation. *That's how it was, at the start!*

Adam and Eve had an immense amount of freedom to walk with God and enjoy God's wonderful world! In fact, God only placed *one restriction* on the man and woman. "And the Lord God commanded the man, 'You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die'" (Genesis 2:16-17). God says, "I've made this paradise for you to enjoy. There are plenty of fruit-bearing trees for food. The only thing I ask is that you don't eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. That's the only thing I forbid. Enjoy the rest!" (By the way, there's no mention here of an apple, or an apple tree).

But oh-oh! Something happens! Enter: the serpent! "Now the serpent was more crafty than any other wild animal that the Lord God had made" (Genesis 3:1). The "serpent" symbolizes evil, temptation. This sly and shrewd serpent slithers up to the woman: "Hey lady... 'afternoon! How's it going?" "Oh, by the way...did God say you couldn't eat from any tree of the garden?" "No," Eve replies. "We can eat of any tree, but not from that tree in the middle of the garden. If we do that we're going to die." The serpent (snickering) says: "C'mon now. You won't die if you eat it!" "But the serpent said to the woman, 'You will not 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.' 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 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" (Genesis 3:4-5).

Eve swallows the serpent's bait. "Hmmm. Maybe it won't hurt if I just go ahead and try it. I'll know a lot more. I'll be like God!" So, she takes a bite, and then some more. She turns to Adam. "Hey hubby, try some of this! It's pretty tasty!"

*The one thing God told them not to do, they did.* And the result was *not* what they anticipated. "Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves" (Genesis 3:7).

The point in this verse is not that sex or the naked body are evil. They aren't. This symbolizes *the loss of innocence*. The joyful intimacy between the man and the woman is spoiled. They are self-conscious, and ashamed.

*Not only do they hide from each other, they hide from God, their Creator.* "They heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden" (Genesis 3:8). The beautiful, intimate, natural relationship with their Creator is gone. Now they hide - guilty and ashamed. The woman, who is to join flesh with her husband and joyfully bear children, now finds that child-bearing is fraught with pain (Genesis 3:16). The man finds the soil fighting back at him as he works the ground, which now produces thorns and thistles (vs. 17-18). Because they ate of the tree God forbid, their end will be death, as God had warned. "By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread until you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; you are dust, and to dust you shall return" (Genesis 3:19). *The goodness of life, as God created it, has been totally disrupted.*

The word "sin" is not mentioned in the third chapter of Genesis, yet this chapter is all about sin, and our nature as sinners. *See, this ancient story is not just about Adam and Eve, it's about us!* The Hebrew word for the man is "adam"- "man". "Adam" is every man, every person. Adam is me. Adam is you. The Adam and Eve story is *your* story and *my* story in our rebellion against God.

Genesis 3 provides profound insight into our nature as human beings, and into the nature of sin. ***Sin is disobedience.*** The *one thing* God told them not to do they did! They disobeyed. Sin involves our disobeying God's commandments, breaking the rules God has laid down for life. 1 John 3:4 says, "Sin is lawlessness."

***Sin is weakness.*** The serpent tempted Eve, and she was too weak to resist his lies and empty promises. Sometimes we really *do* want to do the right thing, or avoid what's wrong or foolish. We *want* to kick a bad habit or let go of a bad attitude. In our best moments we *want* to be pure, we *want* to do what's good – *but we can't*. Paul's famous words in the Bible describe our situation to a "T": "I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate...I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do" (Romans 7:15,18,19).

***Sin involves blaming others and denying our own responsibility.*** Later on, when God asks Adam, "Did you eat from the tree I told you not to?" look at his response: "The man said, 'The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit from the tree, and I ate.' Then the Lord God said to the woman, 'What is this that you have done?' The woman said, 'The serpent tricked me, and I ate'" (Genesis 3:12-13). Adam blames the woman! The woman blames the serpent!

*Don't we do that!* "Don't look at me! It's *his* fault." "Don't blame me. I only did what I was told." "We'd have a better marriage if my husband (my wife) would change...". "I didn't get the pay raise because the boss just doesn't like me." Sin involves rationalizing and blaming others,

which is the opposite of confession and repentance – taking responsibility for my own shortcomings and failures.

***Sin involves trying to play God – putting ourselves at the center of life.*** The tempter said, “Eat this, and you’ll be *like God*, knowing good and evil...” (Genesis 3:5).

*Hear this! All of the many sins that we commit are only symptoms of this basic sin – trying to play God, and put ourselves at the center of life, instead of God.* Sin basically means we want to run our own lives...set our own boundaries and rules for living...declare our independence from God. Years ago, Frank Sinatra had a hit song, “My Way”. “I did it my way!” This could be the theme song for us sinners. “Hey God, never mind. I’ll do it *my way*.” Oh, we may not be so blunt to say, “I don’t need God...no one (including God) is going to tell me how to run my life.” But we have our ways of keeping God on the fringes of our life rather than at the center. We may go to church, live a fairly decent life – but we essentially live the way we want, and push God out of the driver's seat.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter of Genesis describes this classic fall of human nature, that human nature has been corrupted - that we are "sinners". Now this is not the kind of stuff a lot of people want to hear today. I once saw a sign board outside a church near our home that posted a sermon title – “The Effects of Sin”. I joked with Nancy that advertising a sermon with this title will certainly have people standing in line on Sunday waiting to get in the door! But Genesis, chapter 3, shows us the effects of sin. The wonderful world and beautiful life God created is spoiled and ruined.

***Adam and Eve are distanced from God.*** They hide from God! The warm friendship with their Creator is gone. Do we feel God near? Do we have a relationship with God that brings joy and inward peace? Or is God pretty much absent from our daily life?

***Adam and Eve’s relationship with each other is spoiled.*** Sin not only separates us from God, but from *each other* as human beings. It spoils human relationships. Think of all the issues that divide us as human beings. The wars. The jealousy, the suspicion, the resentments that color our human relationships. The friction and fighting in our families, our schools, our work places, our neighborhoods, our governments.

***Sin results in death.*** Adam and Eve ate of the fruit – and died – as God said they would. Not just physical death, but their relationship with God died, the wonderful life God intended for them slipped out of their hands.

Adam and Eve are driven from the Garden of Eden. Paradise is lost! But is that all there is to the story? Is there any way that the relationship with God that was lost can be regained? Can the alienation and hurt and brokenness that mark human life be overcome? Is there any way that God’s creation can be restored to its original goodness?

Right from the start of Adam and Eve’s rebellion, God acts. The Bible pictures God carefully making clothes for Adam and Eve: "And the Lord God made garments of skins for the man and

for his wife, and clothed them" (Genesis 3:21). Later, they bear a child, "with the help of the Lord" (Genesis 4:1). Already, God is reaching out in mercy to this couple who had defied Him!

Already we look forward to someone who will be called the "second Adam". Listen to what Paul writes in Romans, chapter 5: "When Adam sinned, sin entered the world. Adam's sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned... the sin of this one man, Adam, brought death to many. But even greater is God's wonderful grace and his gift of forgiveness to many through this other man, Jesus Christ...Adam's sin led to condemnation, but God's free gift leads to our being made right with God...for the sin of this one man, Adam, caused death to rule over many. But even greater is God's wonderful grace and his gift of righteousness, for all who receive it will live in triumph over sin and death through this one man, Jesus Christ.

"Yes, Adam's one sin brings condemnation for everyone, but Christ's one act of righteousness brings a right relationship with God and new life for everyone. Because one person disobeyed God, many became sinners. But because one other person obeyed God, many will be made righteous" (Romans 5:12,14-19).

In 1 Corinthians 15 it says: "For just as everyone dies because we all belong to Adam, everyone who belongs to Christ will be given new life." "The first man, Adam became a living person. But the last Adam – that is, Christ – is a life-giving spirit" (1 Corinthians 15:22,45).

*God sent Jesus as a second Adam to bring us back into a right relationship with God. That's called "reconciliation". 2 Corinthians 5:19 says, "In Christ God was reconciling the world to himself."*

*God sent Jesus as a second Adam to begin to restore creation to its original goodness - that's called "redemption" - the redemption of all God's creation.*

Obviously, that hasn't happened yet in the fullest sense. We still sin, and our relationship with God - at best - is spotty and imperfect. And the world is still a place of pain and hurt, evil and injustice, decay and death. But when Jesus set foot on this earth it set in motion the start of the world's redemption – restoring God's fallen creation to goodness again.

The Bible says when any of us turn from our evil, self-focused ways and put our whole trust in Christ to forgive and save us, we become part of this new creation. 2 Corinthians 5:17 tells us, "So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!" Jesus is the Second Adam who makes all things new!

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