



# PARADISE LOST

SERIES: HOW IT ALL BEGAN

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 Genesis 3:8-24  
 Fifth Message  
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In our last study in Genesis 3, we saw how Satan sowed seeds of distrust in Eve. Satan's approach was to undermine Eve's confidence that God had her best interests in mind. He intimated to her, "Is it really true that God said you could not eat from every tree in the garden? Doesn't God give you the freedom to expand your mind and fulfill yourself in every possible way? Isn't he trying to suppress you, to make you irrelevant and keep you from being what you want to be?"

That was Satan's mode of attack then, and it is his approach still today. The Deceiver wants to get us to distrust God, to think that he does not care about our welfare, so as to undermine our confidence in what God has said. If we fall for Satan's deceit, we end up believing his lie that our circumstances do not fit the pattern that God has revealed, and that we need to live as we think best. The inevitable result is death. Death may not be immediate, but a death-like state sets in, a condition that is manifested in boredom, frustration, emptiness, resentment, and coldness and indifference to human need.

During the first Muslim period in Spain, in about 900 AD, an Arab chieftain prince said this: "I have now reigned about fifty years in victory or peace. Riches, honor, power, and pleasure have wanted on my call. Nor does any earthly blessing appear to have been wanting to my felicity. In this situation I have diligently numbered the days of pure and genuine happiness which have fallen to my lot. They amount to fourteen." In fifty years of rule, this prince remembered but fourteen days when he was genuinely happy. Many can empathize with that. We try to do things our own way, only to reap a harvest of unhappiness and dissatisfaction. As one person put it, "First I tried health food, then transcendental meditation, then jogging; and now I am more serenely, tranquilly, robustly miserable than I've ever been before!" We need to believe God, not the Tempter.

I want to begin this morning by reading from verses 6-7 of chapter 3. Although we have looked at these verses already, this will help refresh our memories.

**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 desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings. (3:6-7, NASB)**

Our human attempts to set things right always have a pathetic quality about them.

Notice that it was the man who caused the fall, not the woman. The text says, "she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate. *Then* the eyes of both of them were opened." Mankind did not fall until Adam ate. Eve has had a lot of bad press. She has been blamed for the fall, but she is not responsible. The apostle Paul says that she became a sinner, but she is not the one responsible for the fall of the human race. Adam must take the blame for that.

We have already pointed out that during this exchange between Eve and Satan, Adam should have called time-out, or taken a hoe to the snake. Even after his wife ate, he should have said to her, "Wife, you have disobeyed God. Satan deceived you. I don't how God is going to correct what you have done, but he has a way of making everything right. Try to put that fruit back on the tree. Wire it on if you have to." And Adam should have sought out the snake and said, "If you ever mess with my wife again, I'll take your head off."

But Adam didn't take either of those steps. Instead, he capitulated to his wife. Husbands today are no different. It is because we are so drawn to our spouses. But there are times when, in order to be pleasing to God, we must be displeasing toward our wives. Few men are willing to do this, however. We fear our wives' displeasure, so we settle for peace at any price. But James reminds us that our policy must not be peace at any cost, but purity at any cost. "The wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable," says James (3:17). We need to please God, not ourselves.

A husband's natural tendency is to respond in one of two ways in conflicts with his wife. He either capitulates, or he tries to dominate. Some husbands have rounded heels; they roll over backwards rather easily when faced with the possibility of displeasing their wives. The second tendency is more my style. I tend to overreact and dominate. Periodically, I launch into a tirade about how we are going to operate in our home in the future. I even sprinkle in a few spiritual-sounding phrases and add a little Scripture to sanctify what I'm saying. Everyone in my family responds by wondering what problem I was wrestling with that day. Even on the rare occasions when we husbands respond properly we still feel guilty, because it is hard to be gentle and strong and do what God has called us to do, in spite of the pressures we feel from our families.

Notice that it is Adam who is called on the carpet here. Adam is the one whom God seeks, because he is responsible for spiritual leadership in his home. It is his job to keep the snake out of his house, to be the spiritual pace-setter, and to correct things when they are out of alignment. Verse 8:

**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. Then the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?" And he said, "I heard the sound of Thee in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself." And He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" And the man said, "The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate." Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" And the woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate." (3:8-13)**

Adam and Eve pass the buck, refusing to face the facts. That is what mankind has done ever since the fall. We duck and hide, bob and weave. We hide both physically and emotionally in an effort to defend ourselves. But we have no defense against God's scrutiny. God knew where Adam was. He asked the question, "Where are you?" not for his own sake, but for Adam's sake. Adam needed to know that he was out of kilter with God. Something had gone wrong, and so God as a Father went seeking him.

At first, Adam was hiding physically, but then he began to hide verbally. One commentator writes, "They should have smitten their breasts, and cried out, 'Father, forgive me!' But they couldn't do that, and so they hid." That is why some people get upset when they hear the gospel explained—because they don't want God to find them out. Instead of confessing their sins, they start blaming others. Adam blames the woman, and indirectly blames God: "The woman you gave me, she gave me from the tree and I ate." Eve, in turn, blames the serpent.

The serpent doesn't have anyone to blame, so the curse falls on him. Verse 14:

**And the LORD God said to the serpent,  
"Because you have done this,  
Cursed are you more than all cattle,  
And more than every beast of the field;  
On your belly shall you go,  
And dust shall you eat  
All the days of your life;  
And I will put enmity  
Between you and the woman,  
And between your seed and her seed;  
He shall bruise you on the head,  
And you shall bruise him on the heel." (3:14-15)**

I do not think the serpent had legs up to this point. He probably crawled on his belly from the beginning.

From this moment forward, his method of locomotion becomes symbolic. For the rest of time he would have to bite the dust. He would experience defeat and frustration. He would be like one of the villains in the old Western melodramas who captures the heroine and ties her to the railroad track, but in the nick of time the hero, in white hat, arrives and rescues her. The villain goes offstage muttering, "Curses! Foiled again!" That's Satan. He is not the formidable foe that he is often depicted. He is subject to God.

God said that he would put enmity between Satan and the woman. From that day forward there would be hostility between mankind and Satan and his demons. So we can expect life to be difficult; anything else is unrealistic. At times we are shocked when trials come our way, but the apostle Peter tells us not to be surprised, because we are in a battle. But the outcome of the battle is sure. We read in verse 15b, "He [her seed, the offspring of the woman] shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel." In other words, the serpent would inflict a painful wound on the man, but the man would inflict a mortal blow on the serpent: He would crush his head. In the New Testament, we learn that the man in question is the Lord Jesus. He was struck on the heel: He was crucified. But he rose again, and inflicted a mortal blow on the serpent. So when trouble enters the world here in the garden, at the very outset we learn that there is hope: God is going to keep the serpent in his place, and ultimately deal him a death blow. No matter how dark things become, no matter how vigorous the conflict, there is hope. Things are under control.

Next, God speaks to the woman. Notice that he does not say, "Because you have done this." He says that of the serpent in verse 14, and of Adam in verse 17, because they are directly responsible, but he does not say to the woman "Because you have done this, such and such will happen." She was not ultimately responsible. Verse 16:

**To the woman He said,  
"I will greatly multiply  
Your pain in childbirth,  
In pain you shall bring forth children;  
Yet your desire shall be for your husband,  
And he shall rule over you." (3:16)**

The consequences for the woman would be twofold: she would experience pain in child rearing, and she would have an ambiguous relationship with her husband. In this remarkable chapter we are told the root causes of every disturbance in the home. It is stated very deftly and subtly, but the message is clear.

The first thing God says to the woman is that she would have pain in childbirth. The word "pain" encompasses things like toil and sorrow—not only the pain of conception, but the pain of child-rearing. Children are a pain to raise! (And parents can be a pain, too. I know, because many times I have been a pain to my family.) Children are hard to raise, because they enter the world

as fallen beings. They are part of the problem, like everyone else. They are fallen, sinful, rebellious and disobedient; they will go their own way.

It is a mother who feels this most keenly. A threat to her child pains a mother's heart. Mothers feel more sharply than fathers any sense of danger to or failure in their children. Their hearts are bound up with their children. Who is it that always attends parent/teacher conferences? Who is it that can't sleep at night because she is worried about what is going on with her son or daughter? Who ponders all of those things? Because of the fall, fathers tend to leave the burden of caring for their children, especially younger children, to their wives.

Grace, of course, overrules this failure. That is the wonderful thing about the gospel. Grace demonstrates to a mother that it is God who is ultimately responsible for raising her children. She can entrust them to him. The parents of the generation that entered the land of Canaan and conquered it did not themselves go into the land, because they feared for their children. Their unbelief caused them to perish in the wilderness. It is ironic that the children entered, but the parents did not. God took care of them. Ultimately, a mother has to trust God to raise her children. And grace does something to fathers as well. Husbands must seek to lift this responsibility from their wives and involve themselves with their children. Fathers are responsible to train and equip and love their children. And they must begin to do this in the children's early years.

The second result of the fall is the wife's ambiguous relationship with her husband. God said to Eve, "your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you." We find this expression again in 4:6-7, and this is how we must interpret these words here in Genesis 3:

**Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it."**

Cain became angry with his brother, and his face fell; he became depressed. God told him that sin was like a wild beast that was crouching at his door. Its desire was for Cain. It wanted to capture him and control him, but he must master it. The same two terms used here in chapter 4 are used in our passage in chapter 3: "Your desire will be for your husband, but he will rule over you."

In these words God reveals the fundamental problem in many marriages. The problem with fallen woman is that she wants to possess her husband. Her whole life centers around him. Her self-esteem is wrapped up in her marriage relationship. Men, on the other hand, can live a much divided life. They can be involved in business, recreational and educational pursuits, all at the same time. They can pour their lives into a number of things and find satisfaction in each of them. But the fundamental relationship in a woman's life is her relation-

ship with her husband. And apart from the grace of our Lord Jesus, she will tend to smother and control him.

And husbands tend to respond to this by dominating and tyrannizing. "Rule" is a very strong Hebrew term that means, "to dominate." So husbands get mad when their wives become possessive. They storm around and pout and become angry, passive-aggressive individuals. They become passive when they should be active, and active when they should shut up and be passive. That is what sin has done to man.

But when Jesus enters a life, he becomes the center, the one who satisfies a wife and meets the needs that her husband cannot meet. And what grace does for a man is teach him to love his wife "as Christ loved the church." That is what a wife really wants—to be loved, to be cherished, to feel secure. The worst thing husbands can do to their wives is to undermine that feeling of security; to deride and ridicule them, to point out their weaknesses, spiritually, physically or emotionally.

It is interesting that the New Testament does not command wives to love their husbands. (Titus instructs the older women to teach the younger women *how* to love their husbands.) Wives will naturally respond to their husbands, but men have to be commanded to love their wives. Women are told to *give in* to their husbands, but men are told to *give up* for their wives. That means doing the little, practical things that indicate their wives are special to them.

Next, God speaks to the man. Verse 17:

**Then to Adam He said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat from it';**

**Cursed is the ground because of you;  
In toil you shall eat of it  
All the days of your life.  
Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you;  
And you shall eat the plants of the field;  
By the sweat of your face  
You shall eat bread,  
Till you return to the ground,  
Because from it you were taken;  
For you are dust,  
And to dust you shall return." (3:17-19)**

The man, likewise, has a two-fold curse: the ground (not the man, notice) is cursed, and he must suffer death. These are the two things that frustrate men most. As young men we venture out in life, filled with excitement about our vocation and the possibilities that lie before us. But as we grow older, we become more disillusioned about our jobs. Work gets frustrating and fails to satisfy. It doesn't matter how hard we toil or how many hours we put in, work never satisfies fully. That is why many men become workaholics and bring home a briefcase full of work at night. They pour their lives into their vocations, because they think that if they work hard enough, it will pay off. But it never does, no matter what your vocation. I feel this myself. At least once

every five years I think I should be doing something other than pastoring. The grass is always greener on the other side, but someone has pointed out that you still have to mow it when you get there! Nothing, no profession, satisfies all the time.

This helps explain why men go through a mid-life crisis. They reach a certain age, and they feel they should be at the top of the heap. But even those who reach the top find that they still are not satisfied. They have destination sickness. Having achieved everything they wanted, they don't want anything they have. They get frustrated. They think an affair will liven things up, and they go downhill from there. It is because the ground is cursed.

That is why Jesus says to "seek first [God's] kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you" (Matt 6:33). As we give ourselves to knowing God, then we will be satisfied, whether or not we achieve what we wanted in our vocations. That doesn't mean that we should not work hard, or that we should not want to be the best we can be in our field. But we must be realistic. Ultimately, work will not satisfy us. Only God can do that. Sooner or later we have to come to God and say, "Lord, here is my life. Do with me as you please. I want to be an instrument to accomplish your purposes in the world, not my own." That is when life becomes fulfilling.

The second result of the fall for man is death. There is nothing quite as frustrating as death. We spend an inordinate amount of time preoccupied with it. Think of the amount of money and time we invest, simply because of the fact of death—the defense budget, the cosmetic industry, medical research, etc. We are consumed with trying to stave off death. But it finally gets us. The death rate is an impressive 100%. We live as though we are immortal, but we are not. Watches and calendars remind us that our time is short. Here God says to Adam, "You are going to return to the dust." Every time Adam turned over a spade of dirt he would be reminded of his death. He came from dirt. That was his origin, and that was his destination.

Verse 20:

**Now the man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all the living. And the LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them.**

**Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil; and now, lest he stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever"—therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden, to cultivate the ground from which he was taken. So He drove the man out; and at the east of the garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim, and the flaming sword which turned every direction, to guard the**

**way to the tree of life. (3:20-24)**

Adam had been eating from the tree of life all along. As far as we can discover, God did not even tell him it was the tree of life. To Adam it was just one of the trees of the garden, and he was eating from it. Had he continued he would have become immortal. But now he is banished. It would be a terrible thing for a fallen man to live forever. Death, therefore, is a gracious thing. Think what it would be like if despots like Hitler were immortal. How awful life would be. So in one way, death is a gracious thing. Fallen man can't live forever. Something has to change, so death is introduced into the picture.

There is a delicate touch here. The Lord slew an animal and made garments for Adam and Eve and clothed them. An animal had to give up its life for Adam and Eve. God made little leather shirts for them, and he sent them out clothed into the cold, hard world. The Jews say that the first five books of the Bible begin and end with the love of God. God cares for us! Most of the religions and cults try to get God to notice and care for man. They say that if we go to enough meetings, if we do the right things, then God will care for us. But we need to see that right from the very beginning, God cares about us. He cares about our homes. He cares about our relationship with our children. When we hurt, he is moved to compassion.

Notice also that Adam did a very simple thing. He named his wife Eve, because she would become "the mother of all the living." That statement indicates the change in Adam. God had said that Eve would have an offspring, and that offspring would trample on the head of the serpent, and Adam took God at his word. He trusted God that Eve would produce that offspring, and so he called her "the mother of all the living." He went from rebellion to trust at that moment.

And so can we. The thing that gets us off base in our homes is that we don't do things God's way. We think we know better. We eat of the tree, instead of letting God reveal truth to us. But when we repent, and trust him, things begin to change for the better. He will turn our pain, and even the scars that result from our sin, into good. That is the promise that is ours every day of our lives.

Perhaps you have never made that initial act of repentance. You have been doing things your own way all your life. If this describes you, invite God to take ownership of your life today, and trust in the shed blood of Jesus Christ to cover all your sins. If you do this, you will find the way back to God that he has provided, and to the life we were intended to live.

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