

## Beginnings 5 - God Loves You

There are a number of things that take place in Genesis 2 and 3 that we need to work our way through before we get to the main application of this Message. We start with the command God gave concerning the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, the appearance of Satan and his lies, temptation, the Fall, and the judgment of man. And yet for all those very specific events, I would like to demonstrate that the most significant aspect of all of this is the love of God.

### 1. The command of God.

Gen 2:15-17 And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.

16And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat:

17But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

God is very specific in His commands, but people are very sloppy in their estimation of God. Man creates god after man's image of how they would like to think God is. Of course man's imaginations are all over the place. There are probably as many different notions of God as there are people. Finite man will never be able to determine what God is completely like. The best that man can come up with to explain all that goes on around him is that God is capricious, contradictory, and doing whatever suits His current whim of whatever He wills at the moment. But God doesn't change according to convenience.

There are things that we might have difficulty understanding in the Bible due to lack of vocabulary, grammar, and understanding of history. We might have to pay closer attention to the Bible to understand, but God and His word don't change.

Ps 119:89-91 For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven.

90Thy faithfulness *is* unto all generations: thou hast established the earth, and it abideth.

91They continue this day according to thine ordinances: for all *are* thy servants.

Man would rather not believe in God rather than deal with the God who doesn't conform to man's desire and self-righteous judgments. God distinctly said, "...of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

## 2. The lies of Satan.

It is at this point in chapter three that Satan enters to try to ruin everything. Remember that Satan cannot be victorious in the end. He just has to ruin other's chances to know God. Satan is no gentleman who surrenders when he sees he can't win. If he is going down, he has to take as many as he can with him.

Gen 3:1-5 Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?

2And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden:

3But of the fruit of the tree which *is* in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.

4And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die:

5For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.

Satan worked through a very clever line of reasoning.

He questioned God's Word (verse 1). He did not deny that God had spoken. He simply questioned whether God had really said what Eve thought He had said.

He questioned God's love for Eve (verse 1). The way Satan asked this question implies that he was questioning God's love. "If God really loved you, He wouldn't keep something from you, would He?" Satan used this same tactic on Jesus in the wilderness: "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread" (Luke 4:3). In other words, "Why are you hungry if you are God's Son?" As the author Tennyson once said,

"That a lie which is half a truth is ever the blackest of lies;

That a lie which is all a lie may be met and fought with outright;  
But a lie which is part a truth is a harder matter to fight."

"A lie that is all of a lie can be met with and fought outright. But a lie that is partly the truth is a harder matter to fight."

Satan denied God's Word (verse 4). He finally threw out God's warning altogether, telling Eve, "You will not surely die." It is but a short step from questioning God's Word to denying it.

He substituted his own lie (verse 5). Satan told Eve that if she eats from the tree, she "will be like God, knowing good and evil." Interestingly, this was Satan's own sin, for he had attempted to

take God's place.<sup>1</sup>

Eph 6:11 Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

2Cor 2:11 Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.

We are familiar with the Devil's wiles and are not ignorant of his devices. He is a cheat. He casts doubt, inserts inuendo, equivocates, slanders, and lies. Jesus judged certain of the Jews who rejected Him:

John 8:44 Ye are of *your* father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.

Satan was there in the Garden of Eden to work his evil. His disciples confronted Jesus. He worked to spoil the church in its infancy. Early in Christianity, Tertullian in 198 AD wrote against heretics and had this to say about Mithraism. Now you might not have heard about the Persian religion of Mithraism, but it was popular in Tertullian's day, coming from the East.

...[It is the Devil's] character to overturn the Truth, who [seeks to surpass] the very realities of the Divine sacraments in the idol-mysteries. For he too baptizes certain persons—his own believers and faithful ones; he promises a putting away of sins by means of the laver; and if my memory still serves me, Mithras seals there on their foreheads his own soldiers. He celebrates, too, an oblation of bread, and introduces a representation of the resurrection...

– "*Prescription*" of *Heretics*, Tertullian. 198 AD

Why this is significant is that Mithraism was the religion of Emperor Constantine who, in 313 AD, published an edict that

- squelched paganism
- made Christianity legal
- and spurred an influx of pagan influence into the imperial church of the Roman empire.

Satan's religious counterfeits were a poison pill planted in Christianity...and we are still dealing with it today. Then there are any number of novelties and

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<sup>1</sup><https://harvest.org/know-god-article/the-devil-tempted-eve/>

innovations to befuddle the believer.

The following are some of the cults listed by John Ankerberg and John Weldon in *Facts on Life after Death*. Listed also is each group's divisive opinion about both heaven and hell along with its founder's quotations.

- Christian Science, founded by spiritist Mary Baker Eddy, teaches that "there is no death." They believe that "heaven and hell are states of thought, not places. People experience their own heaven or hell right here on earth."
- Edgar Cayce, a spiritist and New Age prophet, said that "the destiny of the soul, as of all creation, is to become One with the Creator" and that no soul is ever lost.
- New Age cult leader Sun Myung Moon of The Unification Church believes that "God will not desert any person eternally. By some means...they will be restored."
- Mormonism, founded by occultist Joseph Smith, argues, "The false doctrine that the punishment to be visited upon erring souls is endless...is but a dogma of unauthorized and erring sectarians, at once unscriptural, unreasonable, and revolting."
- Jehovah's Witnesses, founded by Charles Taze Russell maintains that the wicked are forever annihilated because "the teaching about a fiery hell can rightly be designated as a 'teaching of demons.'"
- The Church of the New Jerusalem (Swedenborgianism), founded by spiritist Emanuel Swedenborgh, emphasizes that God "does not condemn anyone to hell."
- Eckankar, a New Age religion founded by Paul Twitchell and Darwin Gross, insists that "there is no death"...and that there is no eternal hell.
- Lucis Trust and the Arcane School/Full Moon Meditation Groups, established by New Age spiritist Alice Bailey, argue that "the fear of death is based upon...old erroneous teaching as to heaven and hell."
- The Love Family (The Children of God), founded by spiritist David Berg, views hell as a temporal purgatory:

"The lake of fire is where the wicked go to get purged from their sins...to let them eventually come...out."

- Rosicrucianism, an occult philosophy, declares that "the 'eternal damnation' of those who are not 'saved' does not mean destruction nor endless torture," and that "the Christian religion did not originally contain any dogmas about Hell."
- Unitarian Universalism confesses the following: "It seems safe to say that no Unitarian Universalist believes in a resurrection of the body, a literal heaven or hell, or any kind of eternal punishment."
- The Theosophical Society, founded by medium Helena P. Blavatsky, declares, "we positively refuse to accept the belief in eternal reward or eternal punishment." Hence, "Death is not a cause for fear."
- The spirits everywhere proclaim their allegiance to cultic teachings, declare Ankerberg and Weldon. "Ramtha," the spirit speaking through medium J. S. Knight, claims "God has never judged you or anyone" and "No, there is no hell and there is no devil." "Lilly" and other spirits channeled through medium Ruth Montgomery argue that there is no such thing as death" and that "God punishes no man."

– *To Hell and Back*, by Maurice S. Rawlings

### 3. The temptation of man.

Gen 3:6-7 And when the woman saw that the tree *was* good for food, and that it *was* pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make *one* wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.

7 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.

If Eve had not listened to Satan questioning God's Word, she would never have fallen into Satan's trap when he denied God's Word. Eve was...listening to the wrong person, which ultimately led to her doing the wrong thing. [We have to be careful of who we listen to and where are]

Rom 13:13-14 Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in

chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying.

14But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to *fulfil* the lusts *thereof*.

Eve saw that the tree “was pleasant to the eyes” (verse 6). This is the lust of the eyes. Satan uses this trap to try to get people to entertain fantasies in their thought life. Unfortunately, those fantasies often turn into reality.

Eve saw that the tree “was good for food” (verse 6). Having seen it, she tasted it. This is the lust of the flesh. Likewise, Satan wants us to gratify our desires immediately, whatever they might be—food, sleep, sex, pleasure, possessions, etc.

Eve saw that the tree was “desirable to make one wise” (verse 6). This is the pride of life. Satan wants us to desire to be exalted, to develop an attitude of arrogance.

Eve had a choice to make—she could believe God’s word or Satan’s word. Tragically, she chose to believe Satan, the father of Lies, rather than the One who is Truth.<sup>2</sup>

In all fairness to Eve, she was deceived.

1Tim 2:14 And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression.

She was still guilty. Adam, however, knew what was going on. I am positive that he saw something different in Eve. I can't speculate how, but I am sure he could tell.

It is wrongly suggested that man who knows only sin is not able to make the good choice for salvation and so must be forced, making God the sole author of salvation. If that were true, then someone might say that if Adam and Eve were innocent and knew no sin, they would not have been able to make the evil choice and so must have been forced by God which would make God the author of sin.

Jas 1:13-15 Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man:

14But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.

15Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.

Choices have consequences. We are free agents. I don't know about man's morality in the split second of becoming

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<sup>2</sup><https://harvest.org/know-god-article/the-devil-tempted-eve/>

a sinner, but I know what he was before and after that moment. In some way, the fruit brought sin. Man was not an amoral animal who evolved and sin was not a fluke of nature. No, it was by his choice that he stepped in to sin.

It was at this point that man began to create his own belief system. They knew they were guilty, so they immediately tried to come up with something out of their own imagination of what would be a sufficient remedy. They saw each other and knew they were different. One of them came up with the idea, "I know, how about fig leaves? That should fix this whole mess!" As silly as it sounds, this is, in effect, what they thought. As silly as this is, it is no sillier than any of other man's imaginations to create a religion.

#### 4. The judgment of man.

Judgment is necessary. It is fitting.

Gen 3:14-19 And the LORD God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou *art* cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life:

15And 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.

16Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire *shall be* to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.

17And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed *is* the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat *of* it all the days of thy life;

18Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field;

19In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou *art*, and unto dust shalt thou return.

There should be no doubt about the darkness and despair of the Fall of man. Adam and Eve set the unconscionable evils of the world on course for millions and millions of people. Politicians have more than ample legitimate resources to draw upon to pull at our heart strings for the suffering in this world. Even for those who are suffering because of their own sinful attitudes and actions, their suffering is real.

Jesus confronted the self-

righteousness of those who, though they were just as sinful as those they judged, yet they set themselves as judges of others.

Matt 23:13-15,24,27-28,33 But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in *yourselves*, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.

14Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation.

15Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.

24Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel.

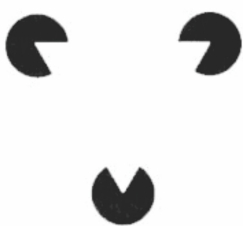
27Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead *men's* bones, and of all uncleanness.

28Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.

33Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?

## 5. The love of God.

In all of this there is a part that could easily get lost in the whole picture. In art there is concept called Figure and Ground. You can see this in the figure in the bulletin.



The question here is, what do you see? Do you see the white triangle? Or do you see the t h r e e

"Pacmen"? The question is which do you identify as the figure and which is the ground? If the black images are the ground, you see the triangle. However, if the ground is white, then you see the Pacmen. I had this as a problem when I had an art class on charcoal drawing. I was baffled about drawing a ball until I realized that I didn't draw a sphere using charcoal at all. What I drew was the shadow behind the ball and the shadow on the ball. I didn't draw the figure; instead, I shaded the ground.

Think about this concept as you look at the Fall of Man.

Gen 3:9,10,15 And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said



unto him, Where *art* thou?

10And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I *was* naked; and I hid myself.

15And 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.

We were told a story back in Bible college about a seminary class that was assigned to do a dramatic reading of Genesis 3. Each prospective preacher summoned up his most thunderous voice when he got to vs. 9 to reflect the righteous indignation of God, "Adam! Where are you!" It's like God was saying, "Adam, you bad boy. You get out here right now and take what's coming to you!" Finally, a student read vs. 9 differently. He read it with a sob and a lump the throat as if God was saying, "O, Adam...O, Adam, where are you, my Adam?"

Here is the love of God. If you concentrate on the sin and judgment as the figure, you would miss the ground, which is God's love. I want to suggest that the sin and judgement is the ground in this passage and the figure that we are supposed to see is the love of God. When you read Genesis 3, what do you see? That is why the title of this sermon is not *The Fall of Man*. I want to make Genesis 3 about how *God Loves You*.

Did God know where Adam was? Of course He did. Then why did He call out to Him? Because just as Adam and Eve chose to sin, it was their choice to respond. Some might say, "Well, that's not much of a choice." What were they going to do in the face of being so obviously caught? Actually, man knows that he is found out by God. When we are confronted with God, we know there is nowhere to hide. I never have to convince people of their sinfulness. I don't have to probe and pick at people's sins so I can put them on a guilt trip...everyone knows they are sinners. Sometimes they confuse being a great sinner with being a sinner, but it doesn't take but a moment to acknowledge that they are sinners.

Here is the love of God. God loves you. He doesn't want you to go to Hell. He wants you to live in fellowship with Him. He is calling out to you and has made provision to cover your sin. It is not with the fig leaves of your own efforts to cover your sin. In vs. 15, from the very moment sin came into the world, God gave us the Gospel. The Seed of the woman, the virgin born Savior, Jesus Christ, was promised to destroy sin, the seed of Satan. Sin would be crushed while the Seed of the woman would be bruised in death only to be gloriously resurrected.

What will it take to receive that resurrection? Repentance and sorrow for sin. This was demonstrated after David

had Uriah the Hittite and husband of Bathsheba killed to cover his sin. He knew the wrath of God and had to repent. Psalm 51 is the great confession of David.

Ps 51:14-17 Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation: *and* my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness.

15O Lord, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise.

16For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give *it*: thou delightest not in burnt offering.

17The sacrifices of God *are* a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.

This sorrow is reflected in the kind of sorrow that the Corinthians showed after Paul's rebuke in 1 Corinthians.

2Cor 7:9-11 Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing.

10For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.

11For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, *what* clearing of yourselves, yea, *what* indignation, yea, *what* fear, yea, *what* vehement desire, yea, *what* zeal, yea, *what* revenge! In all *things* ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter.

It is the sorrow not that one has because they are caught. It is the sorrow that one has for what they are and the affront they are to the God who loves. But, they know that God loves them and they know that He will receive them.

1John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Ps 51:2-3 Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.

3For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin *is* ever before me.

We must always be sure to preach not only that God forgives this action or that action. We must preach that He forgives *us* for what we *are*, sinners; *why* He forgives us, because He *loves* us; and *how* He is able to forgive us, because He sent Jesus to die for us.

1. The command of God. Gen 2:15-17, Ps 119:89-91
2. The lies of Satan. Gen 3:1-5, Eph 6:11, 2Cor 2:11, John 8:44
3. The temptation of man. Gen 3:6-7, Rom 13:13-14, Jas 1:13-15, 1Tim 2:14
4. The judgment of man. Gen 3:14-19, Matt 23:13-15,24,27-28,33
5. The love of God. Gen 3:9,10,15, Ps 51:14-17, 2Cor 7:9-11, 1John 1:9