

So What Went Wrong?

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[0 : 0 0] The reading tonight is from Genesis chapter 3, verses 1 to 6, which is on page 5 of the church Bibles. That's Genesis chapter 3, verses 1 to 6.

Now the snake was more crafty than any of the wild animals that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, did God really say you must not eat from any tree in the garden? And the woman said to the snake, we may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say you must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.

You will not certainly die, the snake said to the woman, for God knows that when you eat it, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil. When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it.

She also gave some of it to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. About?

Yes, brilliant. Well done. Muted myself. Well done. Good evening, St. Silas. Great to see you all. We're almost getting balanced. I don't know. I've been a bit annoying with this, and I'll try to put it in the center.

[1 : 2 1] I hope that's all right. Great to see you all. If you've got your Bibles open, keep those open. That would be enormously encouraging, and I've printed off a yellow sheet, which should be an aid, or at least give you some hope that we're coming to the end of the talk.

So, yeah, that would be good. Martin didn't say my favorite Luther quote, which is, I preach, I write, and then I sit and drink Wittenberg beer with my friends, Amsdorf and Philip.

And the Word of God does the work. So, let's pray tonight as we open this passage that God's Word will work in our hearts and our lives.

So, Father, we thank you that you have spoken to us clearly and fully and finally through your Word. Please help us to hear it tonight.

Please help us to think about it tonight. Please help us to think through where we are slow to believe it and where we find it hard and challenging to believe.

[2 : 2 9] Please come to it expecting to be challenged and expecting to be refreshed and encouraged with the good news of Jesus. Jesus, please help me not to distort anything that your Word says tonight, Father.

May only those things that are helpful be remembered. Amen. Great. Well, hopefully you had a good time chatting through that question. What's wrong with the world today?

I won't get us to feedback because, yeah, we might end up all over the show with that one just yet. But a couple of years ago when I was a ministry trainee quite a few years ago, I had one of the roles that I was asked to do as a ministry trainee was go speak to people and ask them one question as a way to get into talking about Jesus.

And that question was, what do you think is wrong with the world today? What would you do to change it? What's the one thing that you'd need to change it?

And some of the answers were pretty self-evident. Well, what we need is everyone needs to be more educated and then the world will be better. Or we think what we need to do is we need to fix politics.

[3 : 41] We need our politicians to be honest and then the world will be better. We need everyone to be well-off and not be poor.

Everyone must be rich and then the world will be better off. And while those things are good, let's face it, clever people still do bad things.

Educated people still do bad things. Rich people do bad things. All sorts of people, despite having everything they need in life, still end up doing bad things and making the world a less good place to live in.

So what's wrong with the world today? Well, our passage this evening gives one answer to that question. It's one drumbeat that runs through this passage.

And the answer that it gives is sin. It's when we say, I'm going to try to define it here. It's not a great definition. When we choose to do things our own way and say no to God and we choose not to trust Him.

[4 : 49] When we choose to act in our own strength rather than simply trusting and obeying God. Sometimes in our kids clubs we've got a silly acronym.

It's a bit dumb, but it's helpful. It helps me out. And we say, sin is saying, shove off God. I'm in charge. No to your rule. Who are you to rule my life?

And so just by way of context, what we've seen so far as Genesis is that in chapter 2 and chapter 1, we see how God has created the world and has been created absolutely wonderfully.

It's a rich place. It's a beautiful place. And it's filled with good things and yummy things to eat. It's filled with gold. It's filled with trees. It's filled with precious jewels and stones.

There's an abundance. And in the world, God has made a special garden. And the garden is a wonderful place. It's a paradise. And God has made a man. And He's placed the man in the garden.

[5 : 47] And God has given the man a helper. Someone who is just like Him. Who will help the man to care for the garden. To guard the garden from all the wickedness out there.

And to expand the garden to be God's image bearer in the rest of the world. And at the end of chapter 2, what we looked at last week, we've got that wonderful picture, that wonderful verse.

Adam and his wife were both naked and they felt no shame. It's a verse of relational perfection. Of being exposed and completely invulnerable and unashamed.

But then by chapter 4, we land in the world that we know. A land of rivalry. A world of murder. A world of shame. A world of envy and deceit.

Of broken relationships. And so the question is, what's wrong with the world? How did we get there? And the answer that Genesis gives is chapter 3.

[6 : 48] And that is the sin. And so tonight we're going to look at sin and its pleasures, as it were, how sin comes about. And then the next couple of evenings we're going to look at, the next couple of Sunday evenings, we're going to look at the consequences of sins.

And so the challenge for us tonight is that as we come to this passage and we think through how we want to become Christians, then we need to understand what this passage is saying.

What is at the heart of the Christian faith. And if we want to live victoriously as Christians, then we need to understand what this passage is saying.

So I'll give us a bit of a steer. How we're going to work through this. We're going to consider where sin starts. Then we're going to consider where it leads to, point two. Then we're going to consider what sin desires to be God instead of God.

And then we're going to think about the pragmatics of sin. How sin works. A seeing that leads to disobedience. And then finally we're going to consider, we're going to have a bit of hope and think about how sin is conquered very briefly.

[7 : 51] So where sin starts, that's our first point there on the sheet. Doubting God's goodness and doubting God's word. Verse one there. And so verse one we read, Now the snake was more crafty than any of the wild animals that the Lord God had made.

And he said to the woman, Did God really say you must not eat from any tree in the garden? And the question when we were discussing this as a staff team, And as I came to this passage, What's the big deal about eating a fruit?

I mean, I'm not a great fruit eater. I regularly get told to eat more fruits. But surely it's not a bad thing to eat a fruit. Surely it's a good thing to eat a fruit. And so what is going on in this section?

And I think to understand it, What you need to do is you need to read chapter, verse one there. In the voice of someone who's incredibly sarcastic.

And so the person that I thought of was Anton Eger from Ratatouille before he gets reformed. So you think of him and you might think, Did God really say you must not eat from any tree in the garden?

[9 : 06] And when you do that, straight away you see what the snake is doing here. The snake is trying to get you, is really asking, Is God good?

God had said they mustn't eat from a particular tree in the garden. And so the snake's questioning that rule that God has given.

And then secondly, can you really believe what God is saying? Is God good? And can you believe it? And so if you're anything like me, The thing that stops us coming to Jesus, And the thing that draws us away from following Jesus, When we're faced by temptations as the world, Is that we stop thinking that God is good.

That he has my best interests in heart. And we stop thinking that he's telling the truth When he speaks to us. And in Genesis so far, we've seen the goodness of God.

We've seen the abundance of the garden. How wonderful it is. It's a paradise. But as Christians living today, We see greater evidence of God's goodness to us.

[10 : 17] We have God's word. We can know exactly what God is saying to us. We have a wonderful church family to be a part of. Lots of people come to church because they like the community.

And it takes them a while to figure out what Christians actually believe. We have God living within us through his Holy Spirit. And we have Jesus who died for us on our behalf.

Who died in our place. And so all that we have is far greater evidence of God's goodness to us Than simply a garden.

And so how can I trust that what God is saying is trustworthy? I think sometimes when we go through a particular good time in life And we feel we've got a blossoming relationship or something Or we enjoy doing something that's really good And then we kind of think, Is this the kind of thing that God wants me to do?

And we start doubting it. And we say, If something feels so right, so good, How can it be wrong? And how can I trust that what God has said about a particular issue Is right or wrong or not?

[11 : 33] Can I trust Him? And so the question there is, Will I allow God to disagree with how I feel? Is God not simply a party pooper? Can I trust what He is saying?

Or do I believe that God is telling us the truth? Alternatively, when we go through a time of suffering, Is God good then?

Can I trust that He still is good in those times that are hard? Can I trust that He is trustworthy Even when things are really bad?

And so sin and the devil, they say, God is not good or trustworthy. But Genesis says God is good and entirely trustworthy. Do you believe this?

Next we're going to look at point two on our sheet there, Where sin leads. And this was the thing that really struck me as I prepared this week, Thinking about this, Is where sin leads.

[12 : 33] And it leads to a distorting of the word And to a denying of God's judgment in verses 2 to 4. Now, if you're like me, You came to this and you saw a talking snake, And you're like, What's going on here?

Where have I landed? I've never seen an animal speaking in my life. And I think that's intentional. That's exactly deliberate by the author here. Because what we see in the section of Genesis Is like a dystopic drama.

It's like Divergence. Or like Hunger Games. Or like, Or like, What was that to, Or another dystopic drama like that. What was that one we had this morning Where I haven't watched? I'm not on Netflix.

What was it? What? Yeah, the great, yeah, got it. Right, it's like a dystopic drama. What do I mean here? So look, We see everything that God has created And good being subverted here.

So you see, You see the snake, The creature, Ruling over the man. Man was told to rule the creature. Then we see the man failing to guard the garden.

[13 : 42] That was his one job. Keep evil out. That's what God had told him to do. But he fails to do that. And so everything here is a subversion. It's a dystopic drama. But I wonder if you've spotted the thing That's the most bizarre And the most dystopic in the section.

And that's not a talking snake. I can accept that. But the weirdest and most dystopic thing here Is the distortion of the truth of God's word.

So just notice, The serpent says in verse 1, Did God really say you must not eat what? Not from any tree. God had said they could eat from every tree Except one tree.

The tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the garden. And then we see how, Verse 3, The woman responds, But God did say, You must not eat from the fruit of the tree That is in the middle of the garden.

And you must not touch it. And you see how she expands On what God had said they weren't allowed to do. Or you will die. And then we see how it distorts even further.

[14 : 51] Where the snake says in verse 4, You'll not certainly die. Even though God had said, Very explicitly, If you eat from that tree, You will most certainly die.

So the snake had said to the woman. And so I think the temptation is here, We are tempted to distort God's word. We're tempted to make it sound more restrictive than it is.

So the snake says, Did God, So the snake makes God sound restrictive, Like someone who's down on people. But notice, You must not eat from any tree in the garden.

But notice how infectious this distorting is. Look what the woman then goes on to say. And you must not touch it. She picks up on the distortion that the snake does.

And she starts doing it too. And so God's word becomes more and more distorted In this section. And they make God sound unfair and unrestrictive.

[15 : 55] Even though everything that he has made is good. And so as we go around And we listen to what happens in our society around us And we listen to our friends around us, Very often, People will make God sound restrictive, Like a spoilsport, When he is really incredibly good and generous.

It's not just that the distortion spreads among the people In this section, But it also spreads in intensity. So it's verse 1, You must not eat from any tree.

But then verse 4, You will not certainly die. Which is a direct opposite Of what God has said Earlier in the passage.

You will certainly die. And the implication of that is The snake ends up denying God's judgment.

And so God had said, You will most certainly die If you do eat the tree. And the snake says, No, you won't die. You can't trust God. He's not trustworthy.

[17 : 03] And so the question that this passage asks us, Who will we believe? Who will we trust? And if we are told that God is restrictive and unfair, Then it's only natural that we think, Well, God isn't trustworthy.

How can I trust him? How do I know that? Or sometimes we think, Well, when I get to heaven, Then I'll negotiate new terms with God. I don't have to take what his word says seriously.

And sometimes we think of God just like us. We get things wrong. We say things wrong. And we think God's just like that. But he's not like that at all. What have we seen in Genesis?

That God's words always do what they set out to do. That in Genesis, God's word has created the heavens and the earth.

And so when God says in chapter 2, verse 17, You will most certainly die if you eat from the fruit of that tree. You can be absolutely certain that it's going to happen.

[18 : 11] And I think it's very easy for us to justify our sin to ourselves. You know, I think we can, when we reach temptation, Well, we kind of read God's word in a way that sounds better for us.

Or we try to excuse the issue that's drawing us away from God. Or we think that I'm different. And that God doesn't mean what he says in his Bible when he comes to me.

But what we see in this section is that God is absolutely trustworthy. That he will bring about the things that he has said he'll do.

He keeps his word every time. And so Genesis says that despite what the world and the snake and everyone else says, God's judgment is as sure as the moon at night and the sun in the day.

He created those. And so he'll bring his judgment in the future to come. Great. I wonder if we might just look at our third point there. What sin desires to be instead of God?

[19 : 19] And you might be wondering, as we looked at the garden, we had those two trees, the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And you might be wondering, what is that tree about? And what does it represent?

And there's lots of debate about it. Some say it means discerning good from bad. Some say it means determining what's good from bad. Some say eating of it is like an ending of innocence for Adam and Eve.

An awakening to all the bad things in the world. But Genesis places the emphasis on none of these. The emphasis here of eating the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is that the man and the woman wanted to be God instead of God.

What sin desires. So point three here. It desires to be God instead of God. Verse five. So just look at verse five. For God knows that when you eat from it, your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.

You can be like God. It's right there at your fingertips. All you have to do is eat from the tree. And so sin at the heart says we learned it in Sunday school.

[20 : 38] Shove off God. I'm in charge. Know it's your rule. I want to be God of my own life. I want to run my life my own way. Who are you to tell me how to do that?

How to live my own life? And the irony is that when we try to do that, we end up just making a massive hash of everything. It's a bit of an old movie. Bruce Almighty.

You know, Bruce is the man who ends up being God and he tries to be God and everything goes to pot. He gets everything wrong. And that's a bit of an old illustration. But I was thinking about this this week.

And the application that I thought of was Boris Johnson. He's incredibly powerful. He's the man with unbridled ambition. He's completely accurate.

Like he looks like a bumbling guy, but he's really precise in everything that he does. But time and again, he seems to be completely out of control. You remember Michael Gove.

[21 : 36] Michael Gove was going to be the guy that backed him to be a PM. How did that go? It didn't work. Michael Gove betrayed him. And then you look at Boris's love life and it's completely out of control.

And he's the most powerful, the most precise guy you can think of. And you think of your own lives when you try to do things your own way and it just goes to pot completely.

So turning over, we look at verse point four. Their house and works are seeing that leads to disobedience. Verse six.

So just look at verse six. When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it and also gave some to her husband who was with her and he ate it.

And so the woman, she sees the fruit, she desires it, it looks good, she eats it and she gives it to the man. And it's a story as old as history.

[22 : 36] We see something. It looks good. It looks appealing. It looks appetizing. We desire it. We harbor that thought in our heart for a while and then eventually we put it into action and we grab that thing that we know we shouldn't do.

We do that thing but we still want it anyway. Just notice here, the thing that struck me as I came to this is everything about this tree is good. It is a good tree.

It's the knowledge of good and evil. Its fruit is good. It's desirable for being wise. Who doesn't want to be wise? In the Bible, we're encouraged to be wise.

We've seen how God gives all good things. And so it's a good tree. Everything about it is good but it's off limits because in God's wisdom, He has said they're not allowed to eat it.

And so often when we come to sin, we think if something is good, then it's okay. Irrespective of what the Bible says.

[23 : 43] We think if it feels good, then it's okay. If it's what my heart wants, then it's okay. It doesn't matter what the Bible says, what God says about it.

And this passage says to us, something can be the best thing in the world. It can be good for food. It can be good for desiring wisdom. But it can still be off limits simply because God has said so.

And the challenge of this passage is, if we are coming into the Christian faith and we think about, do we want to be Christians, is are we going to trust God? Do we see that He's trustworthy? And secondly, if we are Christians now and we think about going on in the Christian life, is are we going to keep trusting God?

Or are we going to follow our own hearts and minds and think through what is good in its own efforts rather than trusting God? And so the thing that makes sin sinful is what God has said about it.

And I think when we're younger and when you're older, you get slightly more jaded. When you're younger, everything is bright.

[24 : 55] Everything is shining. Everything seems good. And there's lots of temptations. And many times, we allow ourselves to be sucked in by the goodness of those temptations and those things.

And we imagine God won't judge us. We imagine that He's not trustworthy. Or we imagine that He's not as good as He claims to be. And we imagine that, well, maybe in this little area, I can be God instead of God.

And the challenge of this passage tonight is do we see the deceptiveness of sin? That it distorts God's truth.

It distorts everything that it touches. It's the anti-Midas. It turns gold things into nonsense things. The deception of the devil.

The snake in this passage is the devil we see from Revelation. Do we see how sin distorts our view of God? That He is a good God who's created all good things, who speaks clearly and authoritatively with power?

[26 : 05] Do we see how the road to ruin is paved with good things, things that seem very desirable and very good to have?

And do we see that at its heart, sin is a rejection of God? It's treason against our Creator. And treason only has one punishment, and that's death.

Do we see that God is serious when He says that my word is serious and I will judge people for saying no to me, for rejecting my word, for rejecting what I've said to them?

And if we see this and we see how weak we are, and then if we look at our lives, then like me, you'll end up in a place of mourning. You'll be, I'm a weak person.

I can't do this. I fail in lots of ways. I can never say no to sin in the ways that I know I should. And you might be wondering, is there any hope for you?

[27 : 12] And so that's our final point there on the sheet. How sin is conquered through God's grace. And I just want to take us very quickly to two verses as we close.

We're both in Romans. We heard about Romans, how Romans changed Martin Luther's life. And we've looked, we're going to look a little bit further in Romans. So Romans chapter 5, verse 15.

I'll read it out for us. For if the many died by the trespass, that's the sin of the one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift, the free gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many.

And then Romans chapter 6, verse 23. For the wages of sin, the judgment that comes from sin, is death. But the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

And so all of us will never conquer sin on our own lives, on our own merits, on our own strength. We will be exactly like Adam and Eve in this passage.

[28 : 24] We will see stuff, we will desire it, we'll give in to it. But the hope of the gospel is that we can know forgiveness. We can know what it is to be innocent and right in God's eyes by trusting God and the death of His Son on the cross.

And the great shame of Genesis is that Adam and Eve had it so good. They had it so good in the garden, it was great. And they blew it. And we think, what have you done?

What have you done? But the glory of the gospel is that when we trust and believe in Jesus, He doesn't take us back to the garden. He takes us to somewhere far better where God will live with us forever, which will be the garden maxed up, super maxed.

It will be amazing. It will be brilliant. It will be spectacular. We'll have relationship with God perfectly. No matter what you've done will be forgiven and forgotten. When you trust in Jesus, He will take you there through God's grace to somewhere that is better than that thing that was lost.

The better garden. And the glory of it will be that sin will be conquered, the snake will be conquered, the devil will be conquered, once and for all, forever, never to return.

[29 : 50] And we'll be with God perfectly forever. Amen. Let's pray. So, Father, we come to you in mourning for what was lost, mourning that we distorted your truth, that we said no to you in lots of ways.

We mourn the sin that entered the world, that caused you so much pain, that ruined your good creation. But, Father, we rejoice that what was bad you meant for good.

you meant to bring us into a perfect and better relationship through your Son, Jesus, that you have prepared a place for us that is far better than the garden, where you want us to be with you forever, around your throne, rejoicing and praising you for all that you've given us, for all the good that you've done for us in Jesus Christ.

Amen. Amen.