

GENESIS 3:1-6 THE STORY OF OUR FALL

Now we come to the second scene of the story. We are journeying through the five scenes of the story of our God, our world, and our lives: creation, fall, redemption, mission and glory.

In the scene of creation, we have discovered a personal, purposeful, powerful God, who made a world where everything is the same in its regularity, and nothing is the same with its variety. We have learned that as humans, made in God's image, we are exalted in the creation, for we are like God, yet we are humbled by our Creator, for we are not like God. We have rejoiced in God's gift of the seventh day - a holy holiday for our spiritual renewal and physical refreshment. We have seen God giving humans what they want, what they need, and what they don't want, but do need. We have read of God giving the woman to the man. We are so much alike, so we should love each other and delight in each other.

Recall the words of Genesis 2:25: "The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame." These words both capture the glory of the first scene, and prepare us for the pain of the second scene.

Imagine that you are driving down a road. It is a clear day, and you can see far ahead. You see flashing lights in the distance. As you come closer, you see they are the lights of police cars, fire trucks and ambulances. It is a terrible accident. You feel badly, but you have somewhere to go, so you are thinking mostly about getting around the accident and on your way.

As you come closer to the accident, you recognize one of the vehicles involved in the accident. It is the car of your spouse, or your child, or your friend. You will not be getting on your way. You will be stopping and entering this awful scene. You thought this had nothing to do with you, but this has everything to do with you.

In the first part of Genesis 3, we read the story we know as "The Fall." This is the moment when man and woman "fall" from their original perfect relationship with God. You may read this story and believe it as a sad story that has nothing to do with you. But as you come closer to it, you will discover that it has everything to do with you.

You read these verses, and you see three characters. But if you read these verses with an eye toward the rest of the story, you discover there are really five characters. There are the characters we see, and the characters we don't see. When we have met all of them, we will realize that this story has everything to do with us.

Let's start with **THE CHARACTERS WE SEE**. The first is *SATAN*. We read in verse 1, "Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made." This character is "crafty." He is smart, and he is clever.

He is Satan. Somehow, he has taken over the body of this animal. We believe Satan is an angel who rebelled against God, then somehow led other angels to join him in his rebellion. Now he enters the second scene of the story, and he wants to cause trouble.

How will he do this? Let's think of it this way. What word best captures who God is? Some would say, "love." Others would say, "holy." When you read about creatures in the presence of God in the Bible, the creatures around him emphasize his holiness.

So what is God's holiness? It is his goodness and his greatness. In his goodness, he is utterly pure and righteous. In his greatness, he is completely sovereign over all he has made. So as Satan approaches the woman, he attacks God's holiness - his goodness and greatness.

He attacks God's goodness. He says, "Did God really say...?" Then he says something God did not say. God said, "You must not eat from one particular tree." But Satan says, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree?'" The woman has seen and experienced God's goodness, and Satan is cleverly starting to attack it.

Then Satan moves in for the full frontal attack. The woman tells him about God's warning of death. Satan says, "You will not surely die." God is lying to you. He told you that you would die if you ate of that tree, but you will not die. You think he is on your side, but he is not. He is not telling you the truth. He is not good. He is not holy.

Satan also attacks God's greatness. He declares, "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." Satan is accusing God of keeping something from the woman. This "something" will allow her to be "like God."

Satan is appealing to the woman's supposed "rights." God, says Satan, is keeping you from reaching your full potential. He is smothering you. God may be great, but he greedily wants to keep hold of his greatness, and keep it from you. What right does he have to do that? Who is he to control you? He is not holy.

Satan, the first character here, attacks God's goodness and God's greatness. That is his plan, even to this day. If he can get between you and God, if he can squirm into your heart with an attack on God's holiness, he knows you will turn from God. How could a good God do this to me or keep this from me? Why is he so great that he gets to be in charge, and I do not? Sometimes slowly, sometimes quickly, this attack turns the human heart against God.

The second character is *THE WOMAN*. She will soon be called Eve. What does she do? To start with, she follows the deception. When you read her first response to Satan, you sense some confusion. Not only does Satan say something that God does not say, but she says something that God did not say. She says that God told them not to touch that tree. Maybe God said that and the writer of Genesis did not record it, but more likely, Satan has already started to confuse her, and she is starting to forget what God said.

We discover more about this far later in the story. In Paul's first letter to Timothy, he writes about men and women, and he declares that the woman was the one deceived in the garden. Somehow, this smart, clever, evil being was able to mislead her.

After she follows the deception, she follows her desires. She knows the tree is "good for food." She sees the tree is "pleasing to the eye." She now believes the tree is "desirable for gaining wisdom." Desire starts, desire builds, and she eats of the tree.

What is sin? Here is the start of it and the heart of it. Sin is a love for the creation, over the Creator. Sin is when I love what God made, more than I love the God who made it. I take what he has given me, and instead of using it as he designs and desires, I use it my way. There was nothing wrong with that tree or that fruit. But when I love it more than I love its maker, I sin.

The third character is *THE MAN*. He will soon be called Adam.

Where is he? That's a great question! We read that when the woman eats, she gives some to her husband, "who was with her." How long has he been with her? It seems safe to assume that he has been with her the entire time. But so what? He says nothing. He does nothing. He allows this scene to unfold, and his silence is deafening.

Then what is he? Paul says she was deceived. He does not quite say this, but the implication is clear. If she was deceived, he was not deceived. He knows exactly what is happening. He is fully aware that this is an attack on God's holiness, and an attempt to turn the creature away from the Creator. But still he says and does nothing, until he eats, too.

He is a rebel. She is suckered into rebellion, but he is sucked into rebellion, both knowingly and willingly. Her sin is still sin, but he is ultimately responsible for this.

So where are we? You have Satan in the form of a serpent, you have a woman, and you have a man. Satan lures the woman into disobeying God, and the man comes along and goes along.

Is that it? If this is just a sad accident, we can feel badly for a minute and keep moving. But what if this scene deeply impacts our story? I assure you that it does. That is why we need to move beyond the characters we see, to **THE CHARACTERS WE DO NOT SEE**.

The first is *US*. You. Me. Everyone here. Everyone out there. Every person who has lived, does live,

personal sin!”

Bill wrote, “It has been a long, long time since any preacher stood before a congregation and called me a ‘sinner’! I had that ‘Why pick on me?’ sort of inner reaction. But then the Holy Spirit spoke quietly to Bill’s heart. “Bill, that is what this is about, isn’t it? That you are a sinner, and an affront to all I am? You need Jesus.” Bill writes, “I had nearly forgotten that Jesus’ death and resurrection had not just been for the world, but for me!”

I say, “You sinned in the garden,” and you may think I am picking on you. Instead, I want you to see that because Jesus did not sin, and because he went to the cross for your sins, you can and should rejoice that while your first representative failed, your second representative succeeded beyond your wildest hopes and dreams.

When we see all of the characters in this story, how do we respond? First, we are humbled. This is not self-hatred, where we despise ourselves and want to do away with ourselves. This is a true understanding of our standing before God. We are Adam and Eve. We love the gifts more than the Giver. We hold a mirror before them, and we see ourselves staring from the glass.

Until we see this clearly, we see nothing clearly. We think we are not so bad. We think we can just do better. We think we can get God to love us, because of us. We fool ourselves. We drive right past the disaster, never realizing that it involves us. Will you be humbled by this scene of the story? Will you see yourself in that garden, doubting God’s goodness and greatness, and damning yourself to death? You must.

Yet we also respond in this way: we are hopeful. This is only the second scene of the story. This scene will be painful, but because we can look ahead in the story, we need not remain in the pain. We can hold onto the hope of the pleasure - the pleasure of God. He delights in you through the second Adam, Jesus the Christ. Your sin is greater than you may have ever imagined, but your Savior is greater than you can ever imagine. He removes your guilt, shame and regret, and he sets you on a new path to serve him, today, every day, and forever.

With this hope, our hearts are stirred by him, and spurred for him. Our story extends from the garden of life that became a garden of death, to a garden of glory, where we will one day live in perfect relationship with our God again. How can we describe the glory of this grace? What passion might flow from us, as we rejoice in the God who sent his Son to succeed where the first Adam failed?

In the play “Our Town,” you see people living the routines of life. But then a young woman named Emily Gibbs dies while giving birth. Yet one day she is allowed to return to earth - but just for that day. She sees people doing all they do, but they are blind to each other. She cannot get them to see or hear what they must see or hear about their lives and their world.

She says, “Just for a moment we’re happy. Let’s look at one another.” But she is ignored. As she leaves again, she cries, “Oh, Earth, you’re too wonderful for anyone to realize you!”

In the first scene of our story, the earth is wonderful. Maybe the first man and woman did not realize this as they should, for they gave up so much, to gain so little. You and I are the same, for we are one with them. But the rest of the story is more wonderful than we realize. The first Adam gave us death, but the second Adam gives us life. We repent of our sin, believe in him for forgiveness and new life, and follow him by living our part of the story for him.

This painful scene is your story. It is my story. It is our story. But through Jesus, the pain of grief is overwhelmed by the pleasure of grace.