

Genesis 3

The Bigger they Come the Harder they Fall

Introduction

The Greeks have a myth about a character called Icarus who, in escaping from Crete, flew so high that the sun melted the wax with which his wings were fastened on, so that he fell into the sea. In the English language the name of Icarus can be used to describe any ambitious act which ends in disaster. The reality described in Genesis 3 is very much like this. Adam and Eve were deceived into believing that they needed to escape from the situation God had put them in. They sought to fly too high, to become more like God than God ever intended when he created them in his image. Their high-flying pride resulted in them coming under the heat of God's judgment. They fell and crashed badly, doing immense damage to themselves and to all human beings ever since.

Outline: (1) The FALLacy; (2) The Fall; (3) The Fall-Out.

1. The FALLacy (1-5)

The New Testament does not hesitate to identify the serpent with Satan. In Revelation 12:9 John describes Satan in this way: *"The great dragon was hurled down - that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray."* The serpent, the snake, is Satan. But look at verse 1 carefully: *"Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made."* The snake is presented as being one of the wild animals created by God. Remember, when God created the man and the woman in his royal image, he commanded them, *"Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground"* (Gen 1:28). The snake's temptation challenges this God-created order. Will people rule over all creatures, including the snake, or will roles be reversed? As we know, 'the worm turns' - after all I suppose you could call the snake a giant worm. Snake charmers blow on their pipe and have the snake dancing to their tune. But instead of ruling over the snake, an animal created by God, the woman and then her husband are charmed by the snake's seductive tones and end up dancing to the snake's tune. Paul summarises Genesis 3 in Romans 1:25 when he says, *"They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature (not created things!) rather than the Creator - who is forever praised. Amen."* The snake, of course, is one of the most detestable of creatures. So the irony of Genesis 3 should not be lost on us. From being the highest of all God's creatures and the lord of all creatures man becomes the servant of the lowest of the low.

How did the snake achieve this? First he asks, *"Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden?'"* Guileless Eve is easily manipulated. She replies, *"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.'"* Now the snake introduces the fallacy: *"You will not surely die," the snake said to the woman. "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."* You get the devil's argument. God has a selfish reason for denying you access to the fruit of that tree. "It's all politics," the devil says, "A power game! You are already very much like God and God doesn't want you sharing all his privileges. After all God knows good and evil and he doesn't

die, so why should you? It is a good thing to eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; an enlightening thing, it will make you as wise as God himself. Don't let God be a spoilsport and deny you this wonderful blessing."

Paul says to the vulnerable and fickle Corinthian Christians, *"I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I may present you as a pure virgin to him. But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ"* (2 Cor 11:2-3). As in Ephesians 5 Paul begins by thinking of Jesus as the perfect man and husband who left his Father to be united to his wife, the Church. However, he remembers how the serpent deceived Eve and led her astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Adam. A leopard does not change its spots and a snake does not change its markings and character even if it does shed its skin. Satan is still in the business of breaking up marriages and he is especially seeking to wreck God's marriage plans for his Son. You will remember that when David and Jenny were married, Pastor Law asked, as is normal, "Can anyone here give any reason why these two people should not be married?" When God asks the question, "Is there any reason why his Son Jesus should not be married to the Church?" Satan intends to shout out, "I can! She is not a virgin!" Sadly, I know that's not much of reason for stopping marriages these days. But God and his Son Jesus are perfectly pure. God will only allow his Son to marry a virgin, someone who is sincerely and purely devoted to Jesus. So Satan is still trying to use fallacious arguments to deceive you and me and defile us so as to make it impossible for us ever to be married to Christ. Be faithful in guarding the Garden, protecting your relationship with God and not allowing anything to stop you from living your life in the presence of God.

2. The Fall (6-13)

People often think the idea of God sending ordinary people to hell, people who don't murder or steal or sexually abuse kids, is ridiculous and absurd. But we fail to see how enormously evil it is for ordinary people like us to thumb our noses at God and what he wants and to feel we are free to decide for ourselves what is good and what is evil, what is right and what is wrong. That's precisely what we see Eve doing in verse 6: *"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."* In her mind's eye she sees how wonderful it would be to be able to make the same kind of absolute decisions God makes about what is good and what is evil, what is right and what is wrong. And to her it sounds great, exactly what she needs. So having stepped into God's shoes she proceeds to lace them up. She takes of the fruit and eats it.

But we must not think that Eve did this all in a corner, on the sly, behind her husband's back. No, it is next explained, *"She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it."* This is very revealing. Not only have the man and woman become subject to the snake's bidding but the man has become subject to the woman's leading. Genesis 2 made it clear that the woman was brought to the man by God just as the animals were brought to him by God. He named her just as he named the animals. Yes, the woman "matches" man. She is his equal and it is together, as one flesh that they image God. Yet man is still the head for the reasons I've just given plus the simple fact, brought out by Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:8 that man was created first and woman was created for man, not man created for woman. But when Adam follows the leadership of his wife in taking the forbidden fruit we see this God-created

chain of command being snapped.

3. The Fall-Out (7-24)

Fire authorities in California found a corpse in a burned out section of forest while assessing the damage done by a forest fire. The deceased male was dressed in a full wet suit, complete with scuba tanks on his back, flippers, and facemask. A post-mortem revealed that the person died not from burns, but from massive internal injuries. How could such a thing possibly happen? (*Invite suggestions*). Dental records provided a positive identification. It was discovered that on the day of the fire, the person went for a diving trip off the coast some 20 miles from the forest. The fire fighters, seeking to control the fire as quickly as possible, called in a fleet of helicopters with very large dip buckets. Water was dipped from the ocean and then flown to the forest fire and emptied. You guessed it. One minute our diver was swimming in the Pacific Ocean, the next he was doing the breaststroke in a fire dip bucket 300 feet in the air. Apparently he extinguished exactly 5ft 10inches of the fire.

God told the man and the woman, *"You must not eat from the tree, .. for when you eat of it you will surely die."* Horror movies sometimes have the living dead, for example, corpses that come out of their graves and walk around. We call them zombies. Truth is stranger than fiction. We would be horrified if we could see people outside of Christ as God sees them. In Ephesians 2:1 Paul reminds Christians that before they came to know Jesus they were dead in their sins. Every person who does not know Jesus Christ is a zombie. They are the living dead. We now know how a dead diver came to be in a burning forest. What about all those in our fallen world who are dead in their sins today? What is the cause of death? Massive internal injuries. When Adam and Eve fell we all fell, and the damage has taken place on the inside - in our hearts and minds.

When the atom bombs were dropped on Nagasaki and Hiroshima not only were 67,000 instantly killed but there was an immense Fall-Out. Radiation caused immediate physical horrors for tens of thousands of survivors and people in other cities. Now 63 years later the effects of that Fall-Out are still being experienced as children continue to be born with deformities. Most people would think I was exaggerating. However, the great sin of Adam and Eve, the Fall, results in Fall-Out which is far worse than the Fall-Out resulting from the bombs dropped on Nagasaki and Hiroshima.

The Fall-Out described in verses 7 to 24 involves 5 disastrous consequences: (1) Shame (7-13); (2) Enmity (14-15); (3) Pain (16-19); (4) Death (19); (5) Exclusion (22-24).

(1) Shame

"Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realised they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves." Satan rightly told Eve that if they ate of the fruit their eyes would be opened; that they would enter a new sphere of knowledge and experience; that they would be like God knowing good and evil. Indeed, their eyes were opened and now they both became like God in an illegitimate and obscene manner. By their very action in taking the fruit both of them decided in an absolute manner that what is good is what is good "for ME".

Consequently, as soon as they eat of the fruit they both realised that their love for each other was no longer pure. The woman now knows that her husband will only value her nakedness as something good because it gratifies him - is good "for HIM." The man recognises also that his wife now values his nakedness for what she can get from it for herself. Their beautiful sexual relationship has now been polluted by dominating desires for self-gratification.

When they hear the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day they hide from him among the trees of the garden. Why? Because they realise God can see their embarrassment in being naked with each other. Now they shrink away from the presence of the Lord in the garden. Are you hiding from God among the trees of the garden? For you the trees might be your work or your studies or some hobby or other relationships?

(2) Enmity

Verse 15 is a major verse in the Bible: *"And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."* Every person in the world and every person in this room belongs in one of two conflicting groups. You are either what this verse calls the seed of the serpent or the seed of the woman. In the next chapter Cain is a seed of the serpent who attacks Abel, a seed of the woman. Jesus called the religious leaders who opposed him "a brood of vipers", that is, the seed of the serpent. Jesus is the greatest Seed of the Woman. The snake struck his heel, as it were, when Jesus died on the cross. But it was when Jesus was lifted up in his death and resurrection that the head of Satan was crushed, as it were. All Christians are the seed of the woman and so Paul promises us, *"The God of peace will soo crush Satan under your feet"* (Rom 16:20). Expect opposition, expect persecution and hostility. In Genesis 4 this happens in the family. You too may experience this from those you love.

(3) Pain

God tells the woman she will suffer pain in childbearing (v16) and he tells the man he will only be able to make a living from the land through painful labour.

(4) Death

This is stated in verse 19: *"until you return to the land, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return."*

(5) Exclusion

"So the Lord God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the land from which he had been taken. After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life." The flaming sword indicates that now people have become the enemies of God who threaten to defile the Garden instead of guarding its purity. Indeed now this role of guarding the Garden has been taken away from the man and the woman and given to the cherubim instead. What possible future can there be for people.

The bigger they come the harder they fall. Our first ancestors fell and suffered massive internal images when they attempted to soar too high by deciding for themselves what was good and bad for them. Their fallacy was to think God was

cheating them. The fall-out has been utterly horrific and continues to this very day. But as we live under his lordship we put aside our own standards of right and wrong and accept his. As those belonging to Jesus we share in his victory on the cross, when he the ultimate Seed of the Woman crushed the head of the serpent. Indeed, by virtue of our union with Christ the promise of Genesis 3:15 will also be fulfilled in us. When Jesus returns, we too as the seed of the woman the head of Satan will be crushed irreparably under our heels. Do not be swayed from a thorough trust in the goodness of God. At all points in your life set yourself to know what he considers right and what he considers wrong.