

Now the serpent was more clever than any wild animal which the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Has God really said, 'You shall not eat from any tree in the garden'?"

²The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees of the garden, ³but not from the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden. God has said, 'You shall not eat from it. You shall not touch it, or else you will die.' "

⁴The serpent said to the woman, "You certainly will not die. ⁵In fact, God knows that the day you eat from it, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

⁶When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was appealing to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took some of its fruit and ate. She gave some also to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. ⁷The eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized that they were naked. They sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for their waists. ⁸They heard the voice of the LORD God, who was walking around in the garden during the cooler part of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.

⁹The LORD God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?"

¹⁰The man said, "I heard your voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, so I hid myself."

¹¹God said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree from which I commanded you not to eat?"

¹²The man said, "The woman you gave to be with me—she gave me fruit from the tree, and I ate it."

¹³The LORD God said to the woman, "What have you done?"

The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

¹⁴The LORD God said to the serpent:

*Because you have done this,
you are cursed more than all the livestock,
and more than every wild animal.*

*You shall crawl on your belly,
and you shall eat dust all the days of your life.*

*¹⁵I will put hostility between you and the woman,
and between your seed and her seed.*

*He will crush your head,
and you will crush his heel.*

It was the sixth day of the existence of the universe. God had created a perfect home for the greatest of his creation. But now it was time to introduce that creation into its environment. He created a man and named him Adam, the focal point of his creation who would be a true friend of God. But even though at the end of each day God called his creation "good," what he had formed so far on the sixth day was "not good." As Adam carried out his job of naming all the animals, he noticed that none was alone like he was.

So, God put Adam to sleep and formed a woman from his rib. Adam named her Eve. But this Eve was not like Adam in every way. She was without sin, just like he was, but God designated her as Adam's helper. While God's love for both of them was equal, their roles would be different. And they would be dependent on each other to carry out those roles. Then Adam takes her to be his wife, setting the example of marriage. They had a perfect marriage in a perfect world. And God gave them a way to serve him. Every time they walked past the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, they would be worshipping God. In a sense, this was their church.

In the reading from Genesis, though, it all changes. The devil takes the form of a serpent and comes to Eve. He asks her, “Has God really said, ‘You shall not eat from any tree in the garden?’” He’s questioning what God said, trying to undermine Eve’s memory. And Eve responds, “We may eat fruit from the trees of the garden, but not from the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden. God has said, ‘You shall not eat from it. You shall not touch it, or else you will die.’” Eve repeats back God’s command, but it seems like she adds something to it. In Genesis 2, God never told them not to touch the fruit from the tree. Maybe God had told them this at a different time, but maybe Eve is starting to question what God really wants.

We know all the times in our lives those questions of the devil, the world, and our sinful flesh have tempted us to question what God says. We start to wonder: “Does God really want me to keep from joining in when everybody’s piling on some person who deserves it? Am I really supposed to take it literally when the Bible says to look out for my neighbor instead of myself in every situation?”

The serpent takes up a new line of attack: “You certainly will not die. In fact, God knows that the day you eat from it, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” Now he’s contradicting God outright. He’s claiming that God is hiding something special from them, keeping them from reaching their full potential. And Eve is really considering these words now.

Again, we see the same tactics from the deceiver as well. Think about these lies that cause us to wonder if God is holding us back from something more: “God’s ideas of physical relations and marriage are outdated. God does not know love like you do.” Or, “Don’t be fooled to think salvation can only come through Christ. There are many other valid religions. And at the end of the day, how can God reject you if you’re trying to be a good person?” This list could go on and on, as we think there is more to life beyond what God has to offer. We think we can differentiate between bad and good, but often we believe all kinds of lies about who we are compared to God. Because of the fall into sin, which we’ll talk about in a moment, we now know good and evil, but we can’t always distinguish between the two.

Back to Eve, though. She is moved by the serpent’s offer to know what God knows, so she eats the cursed fruit. Then she gives some to Adam. In that moment, everything changes. We hear, “The eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized that they were naked.” They recognize the sin within themselves, and their first move is to cover it up. They fashion clothes and put them on because their souls are now ugly. But they can’t just cover their souls, so they cover all of themselves.

Along comes God to hang out with them. Imagine hanging out with God! Imagine throwing this away for some special knowledge of God. And they hide. They don’t want God to see them. God calls out to them, “Where are you?” Adam tells God they hid because they were naked. Then comes the million-dollar question: “Who told you that you were naked?” Had they eaten from the tree he commanded against?

What’s Adam’s first move? Deny, deny, deny. It’s not his fault. It’s Eve’s, you know, the one Adam just got done calling, “bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.” Then he blames God for giving him a broken helper. But read verse six again. Doesn’t it seem like Adam is watching this whole thing with the serpent go down and remaining quiet? Eve’s job was to help, and Adam’s job was to lead. He’s clearly not leading if he watches her do what God commanded them not to do and doesn’t even try and stop her. Then he follows suit. This explains why God goes to him first. He’s neglected his job, and the buck stops with him. Husbands, remember this next time you shirk your responsibility to lead, your wife has to take the lead, then something goes wrong. The buck stops with you. God then turns to Eve, and she, too, will take none of the blame. “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”

What a mess! Both Adam and Eve's self-esteem is shot. They no longer look at themselves as God's perfect creation. Now they have to cover up and hide their faults from the world. Their relationship with each other is in full collapse too. How can you trust each other when you know the other person is willing to turn on you to save their own skin as soon as things go south? What God called a partnership before was going to be a constant struggle now. But worst of all, their relationship with God is shredded. No longer do they feel welcome in God's presence. Humans would hide themselves from God because of their deep shame. Later on, God tells them their lives are about to get harder. They will get evicted from the Garden. There will be painful childbirth and strained relationships with men for all women. Work will no longer be joyous for men. They're going to work hard and have little to show for it. But the greatest change for mankind is the fact that they will now die.

We look to today, and these curses from God check out. Our lives and relationships are fraught with struggle and unhappiness. We try to cover up our naked souls because we know how ugly we are deep down too. What are we hiding? What is it we are shameful about? What scares us? Do we feel isolated from God, the people around us, and even ourselves in a way? What are those handful of sins that constantly weigh on you? All of this is a reminder to us that we live in the same fallen world Adam and Eve were cast into.

Adam and Eve ruined God's creation in just a matter of minutes, so it would have made sense for God to hit the reset button and cast them away. Instead, he comes to them. He walks into the Garden because he wants to have a face-to-face conversation with them. You think about the times when you're angry over someone's sin against you or you've sinned against them. You don't want to look at the other person's face. That just makes it feel more personal. It makes the sin hurt more. But God does go and look at their faces because he cares for them. He doesn't give them a pass. Quite the opposite. He does it to uncover their shame.

But after the dressing down, he speaks the first mention of the promise. He says to Satan, "I will put hostility between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed. He will crush your head, and you will crush his heel." No more will people be friends with the devil. God is going to send the seed of the woman to crush the devil's head. Jesus comes to have his heel crushed, but the outcome is victory.

This promise would restore Adam and Eve. It would restore them to himself, as they lived the rest of their lives with this promise that they would be right with God again. It would also restore them to each other. As forgiven children of God, they'd be able to constantly forgive each other.

This promise of God would restore us too. It removes those coverings we place on ourselves to shield us from having to own up to our sin. When we confess our sins, we are confessing the reality of the situation. That reality is that we can't even begin to count the sins we've committed, but we know there are many. All those sins have been removed, the few we remember and the many we don't. They're removed because God made a promise to restore what was broken. They're removed because that promise came to fruition, and who could have doubted a guarantee from God? Certainly, Adam and Eve did not. They trusted God's guarantee to restore them, and as we know, he did.

Our hearts are humbled by sin. The sins of our past weigh on us and the shame of who we are disgusts us. But thanks be to God that he uses fellow Christians to look us in the eye and speak the words of forgiveness as if they came from Christ himself. And the most beautiful thing is, they do. You are restored from sin and loneliness to God's beloved creation. Amen.