

Scandal & Corruption: How the Gospel Cleans Us Up

Genesis 3

Good morning! That was a pretty tepid reception! I guess you're waiting to hear what I actually have to say before you clap. It is good to see you this morning. Pat's at the Thanksgiving Leadership Prayer Breakfast this morning and it looks like a few of our regulars here are as well. But it's great to be here this morning! We're going to look at Genesis 3 this morning and we're going to talk about Adam and sort of the scandal and corruption that happened right back at the beginning. Before we do that, let's go to the Lord in prayer and ask him to illuminate our hearts this morning.

Father, we are grateful for just some time towards the end of the week to gather together as men, to look at your word together, to be in fellowship together, to have conversations with our brothers. Lord, some of us came this morning with a lot of worries and cares that are choking out the joy of the truth of your gospel in our lives, and frankly we just stumbled in here, maybe not even wanting to be here but just force of habit bringing us, so I thank you for bringing those guys here. Lord, some of us here are just flying sky high. Things are great and we can see your work in our lives and families Lord, but wherever these men are at I pray that you would just open our hearts and our minds. Help us to love you better Lord, help us to understand you more. We ask that you send your spirit here and that you would use this morning to bring you glory. In Jesus' name, amen!

Let me ask you a question; have you ever done something that you just as you're doing it you know you shouldn't do? Or you said something, the words are coming out of your mouth and you're just trying to grab them back in? I was in the office yesterday and my wife came in, she was dropping me off or something. I'm not even going to tell you the particulars because I'm trying to forget them, but you know somebody said something I made a joke. Well, I thought it was a joke. I said something I shouldn't have said, very disparaging towards my wife, it hurt her feelings, and I did in front of four other women in the office, who of course didn't validate my opinion that was a joke, but instead validated her opinion that it was hurtful. She's walking out the door, and I'm following her out apologizing again and again. The whole time I'm thinking why in the world did I say that? When the thought came into my mind I was like no don't say that Brett, don't say that, and as the words are coming out of my mouth I'm like what are you doing? If could have found something to knock myself out in mid-sentence, I would have done it that to keep myself from saying it! Why do we do that? Why do we say stuff we shouldn't say and do stuff we shouldn't do? In Romans, Paul says the things I don't want to do I keep on doing, the things I want to do I don't do. Why do we do that? All of that is answered in the fall. Why does anybody do things that they shouldn't do, whether they're a believer or not? It's all answered in the fall, but mostly for us as Christian men. The fall, the original explanation of how we became sinful creatures really explains a lot about how the world works but more importantly, it explains about how I work and you work and how we get ourselves into these situations where we do and say things that we just wish we hadn't done or said.

Scandal: The Fall

So here's what we're going to do this morning, we're going to talk about the scandal of the fall, why is it so scandalous and then what actually happened. Then the consequences which is corruption. I'm going to give you a paradigm this morning that what happened in the fall is that our original design got corrupted. Corruption is sort of a whole way of looking at things. Then we're going to go on a little side road and talk about beliefs and affections, and then we'll come in for a landing by talking about the restoration that comes from the Gospel.

So if you look at Genesis 1 and 2, it's the story of creation. It's this great story of how God made everything, and every time he makes something he says it is good. He makes the heavens and it's good, he makes the waters and the earth and it's good, he makes the animals and creatures and it's good. Then there's one thing that's not good, and it's not good for man to be alone. So we can see right off the bat that God made us for relationships. It's not good for us to be alone, so that's in our innate design that God gave us. Then in chapter 2 verse 15 it says the Lord took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. So this is before the fall, and man has his job. His job is to work the garden and take care of it, so you can see right away that God made us with purpose, with meaning, and that work is not a curse. Right from the start God made man with a job, and if you look back at chapter 1 in verse 27 it says in the image of God he created them, male and female. Genesis 1 and 2 sort of mirror each other, they're a quick synopsis of creation and then a deeper dive in chapter 2 of man and woman. He says be fruitful and increase in number. So male and female he created us and we're supposed to be fruitful. That's another thing we're made for, to reproduce and to fill the earth. That verse goes on to say fill the earth and subdue it, rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air. So again we sort of have this purpose, this meaning that God made us for.

Then Genesis 3 happens. Verse 1:

Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden?'"

The woman said to the serpent, "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 serpent said to the woman. "For God knows that when you eat from 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 to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man, "Where are you?"

He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid."

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

The man said, "The woman you put here with me – she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it."

Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?"

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

So here you have this great story, and you can see Adam's failings in this story. The first sin that Adam committed was the sin of inaction. It doesn't say that Eve ate the apple and then called her husband out of the back forty and said hey! Adam! Come up here! I tried that fruit they told us not to try! It's really good! No, Adam was there the whole time. It says she took the fruit, ate it, and gave some to her husband who was with her. So what happens is that the serpent is deceiving Eve and Eve's husband Adam, who is her protector, who she was created out of, he just stands there and does nothing. He does nothing.

Now guys, let me give you a little hint here; if you're ever around and a serpent starts talking to your wife, pick up a stick and kill the snake! Think about this for a second, that serpent may not look like a slithery serpent. I can't convince my wife that those little black racers are good, you know those little black snakes that are in your front lawn and eat mice and stuff. She makes me kill them, so I do. Sometimes when she's not looking I sort of dump them in the neighbor's yard and tell it go away, don't make me kill you. But there's all kinds of snakes whispering in our wives' ears and it's our job to kill the snake, it's our job to speak truth, to say no no no what the snake is telling you is not true. So think about what some of the lies are that are being told to your wives. Look at what the serpent said. The first thing he did was he lied to her. Did God really say you must not eat from any tree in the garden? He starts lying to her right off the bat. Then he deceives her, he's crafty, and eases her into the idea of sinning.

So Adam just sits there and does nothing. He's irresponsible! He's the one that supposed to speak truth, and then ultimately what he does is he forgets. He forgets his identity. Who is Adam? He's the man God made in his own image. So here he is in the garden, his wife is being deceived. He's not doing anything, he's not taking any responsibility for what she's doing, nor keeping his wife safe. So at his very essence, he forgets what he was made for, he forgets who is as a man, he forgets his identity. I see that all around me, guys forgetting their identity. I see young guys in their twenties who are awesome at xbox and you could just ask their mom because they live at her house. They have that college degree and it's nice, but they just haven't settled in on anything yet. Forgetting their identity. I see men who are fathers who let hobbies or work or both distract them from their identity as a father and so they're never home, or always at the office. I saw a man actually sacrifice his marriage on the altar of softball. Are you kidding me? Well, you know, I was really good. I played one night a week, and then these other guys asked me to play on their team, so that was two nights a week. Then this team started going to tournaments, so that was three nights a week. Then you have to go to practice, and sometimes we go away for a week to ten days for a softball tournament. Softball? Really? He forgot who he was! Good gracious man, you're in your forties! You're not a professional athlete, you're playing softball with a bunch of guys! Most of those guys purpose in playing softball was to get together and drink beer afterwards, let's be honest!

Sometimes I see older guys who start to fade. I'm not talking about disease and aging. You could be fifty and be old, emotionally old, spiritually old, just living for yourself. You forget your identity as an older brother bringing younger brothers along, investing in the lives of your grandchildren because we get focused on ourselves.

Corruption: The Consequences

Ultimately, if you look at what happens then, we have the scandal of the fall, and then we have the consequences. So what did Adam and Eve do? They go and they hide. They isolate. This is what we as men do, this is sort of our default action. When things don't go the way we want them to go, we hide, and sometimes when things do go the way we want them to go, we still hide! Because it's just easier! If I'm alone, I don't have to meet anyone else's expectations. If I'm alone, I can do what I want. So we even create a whole culture around this of self-sufficiency, of pulling ourselves up by our own bootstraps, of not needing anybody. That's what we tend to do, we isolate.

Then we see that they realized they were naked. Well, look they were naked the whole time! Think about this for a second, a little side note. If God made Eve himself, personally, she was smoking! And all of a sudden they realize that they were naked? So the problem wasn't the lack of clothing, the problem is that we've introduced into the world for the first time this idea of shame. If you ever do something and you feel ashamed of it; and there's a difference between guilt and shame. Guilt is a legal term. If I've done something wrong I'm guilty of doing that thing. It's an acceptance of responsibility, that's guilt. Shame is what separates me from God. I often wonder, and there's no real good answer to this and theologians probably cringe when people like me ask questions like this, but I wonder what would have happened if when they heard God walking in the garden in the cool of the day if they had simply jumped up and said man we've been waiting for you, we screwed up so bad. We did exactly what you told us not to do. Now they still would have been guilty, but they wouldn't have suffered through the shame because they would have confessed their sin in front of God. I don't know what would have happened, I sure wish we knew, but you can see then that shame came.

The next thing that comes after shame is always blame. Shame always leads to blame. You guys even laughed when I read it, verse 12, the man said the woman you put me here with, she gave me some fruit from the tree and I ate it. I ate it. Who does he blame? He blames God and the woman. The woman you put me here with! Everything was fine until she showed up here, God! No it wasn't! In fact, God said very specifically it's not good, and so Adam decides he's smarter than God. That woman you put here with me. It's your fault, God. She gave me the fruit. I did everything I could to stop her, she practically shoved it in my mouth. No, he sat there the whole time. He took it, he ate it, he did exactly what he knew he wasn't supposed to do, and then he starts blaming. Have you seen this? How many of you have employees that work for you and they do something wrong? It's never their fault is it? Don't you love an employee who comes to you and says I screwed up I did this wrong? I'll fix it. Versus from the moment they know that you know. First they hide from you. Something got written up wrong, or whatever and then when you finally do call them on the carpet, they're thinking of excuses, because that's what they've been doing while they've been hiding, dreaming up excuses. We do this to! We hide from God, and while we're hiding we start making up excuses. You know why I said those things in front of those women in my office to my wife? I had just got back from Alaska. God you sent me to Alaska last weekend (it was a blast by the way). It was cold, six below in November is just wrong, I don't care where you are! But I got to go to Alaska and I got to do work for Man in the Mirror. I got to do ministry stuff, and leadership training, and a marriage training, and I got to preach in a church, and I'm jet lagged! God you sent me to Alaska! You sent me there! Now I'm jet lagged and my brain's not working right, and I'm saying stupid things. It's not my fault! We all do this, we make up excuses, we push the blame anywhere we can push it, including onto God.

So isolation, shame, blame, and then finally corruption, and we're going to skip down to the woman's curse. Verse 16:

To the woman he said,

“I will make your pains in childbearing very severe; with painful labor you will give birth to children...

So remember he said be fruitful and multiply? Eve was going to have kids. Now, it's corrupted, now it's going to be painful. Then since it is not good for man to be alone, I will make a suitable helper for him. Suitable means complimentary, they fit together like pieces of a puzzle. So I'm going to make a helper suitable for Adam but then look at the second half of her curse. This is way worse than we guys got.

Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.

Ouch! This is why women will stay in abusive relationships, because their wiring has been corrupted. They're made to be a helper suitable to their spouse, but it's not suitable to be in an unhealthy relationship. But a woman will stay there because of this.

Then look at the curse we got! Awesome!

“Cursed is the ground because of you. Not just we get cursed, the very ground!

Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat food from it all the days of your life.

It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field.

By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return.”

We were made with a purpose, to live in the garden and work it, but now it is by the sweat of our brow. Now it's hard. So just like women, who were meant to help fill the earth but now bear children with pain, now we who were meant to work and have purpose will now find it a challenge. This is corruption, this is something that was made to be one way and it's off. We know it! We live in a world where we realize that things are just not the way they're supposed to be. How many times have you said to yourself why is this so hard? You probably said it twenty-five minutes ago when you were driving here! Why is this so hard? Because of the fall, because of the very world God corrupted.

So here's the Big Idea #1: **Sin is not just an action; it's a taint on our souls.** It's why we would do something that we know we shouldn't do. It's why the ground doesn't produce without a lot of toil. Sin is a taint. It's not just an action, it's actually altered our very souls. It's why we do the things that we don't want to do, it's why we don't do the things we do want to do.

Our Beliefs & Affections

I want to take a little side road here, I want to talk about our beliefs and our affections. I want you to look back at the way Satan attacked Eve. He attacked her on two fronts. First, he attacks her on her beliefs, on her knowledge, on what she knows. Did he really say that you couldn't eat from any tree in the garden? That starts her thinking. Well no, not any tree, just this tree. Well, you're not going to die. Don't believe that, that's not true. What's really going to happen is your eyes are going to be opened. See, here's the thing; the serpent was right. She wouldn't die when she ate the fruit, but the trick that

he pulled was that was not what God really meant. He took what God said and he twisted it to mean something different than what God really meant. So knowledge is dangerous. Knowledge is dangerous because knowledge can be corrupted. Belief even cannot be enough at times, because the Bible says that even Satan believes in God. The powers of darkness believe in God, and yet still they are going to be cast into the fiery pit at the end. It's not about what you know, it's not even about what you believe, it's about what do you love? What do you love? I know the Yankees are good, but I love the Red Sox! Know that God is God. Adam and Eve knew that God was God, they believed what he said, but in the end they didn't love him enough to trust that what he said was really what was best for them. So sometimes I think it's easier for us in the church to get so focused on believing the right things, and we do need to believe the right things, but that's dry. Belief is dry all by itself, it comes down to who do you love.

I don't know if you noticed before, but the song we were playing was that George Thorogood song Who Do You Love. I was thinking about this this morning and that song popped into my head. So I ran and to Scott and the guys and asked if we could play the song before we start. Who do you love? You cannot memorize the whole Bible, you are not always going to have the right verse in hand when you need it, but if you love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength, you will have what you need. Did you notice what Jesus said when they asked him what the most important commandment was? He didn't say study the scriptures. There's plenty of verses he could have pulled from the psalms about how I know your word and delight in your word. No no, he said love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength, and love your neighbor as yourself. It's who do you love, that's the message of that. We need to make sure we are focused not just on our knowledge. Knowledge leads to belief, belief though needs to lead to affection.

This is a term that some theologians use like Jonathan Edwards use about our affections. What do you love? Who do you love? That one man I spoke of loved softball, more than he loved his family. Some guys love their jobs more than they love their families. You have to answer the question, who do you love? What do you love? Because the thing you should love most is Jesus. Why? Because when you love Jesus and you don't quite understand what he said, you just do it anyway. I've said to my son and daughter sometimes when they were growing up, look sometimes you just have to trust me. I know you don't get it right now. When my son's in eighth grade and he's studying math and he can't figure out any possible reason, any possible way he's going to use algebra for the rest of his life, sometimes you just have to say, look I know. But trust me you need to do it right now. You can either trust me or not trust me. So guys if we love God, even when we don't understand him, we'll trust him anyway. Even when we don't understand why he would want us to be in this terrible situation we're in. Maybe you're in a marriage where you're glad to come to the Bible Study because it got you out of the house a little bit earlier this morning. Why would God ever do that? You know what, sometimes you don't get to know why! You just trust God because you love him. Or you're in a job and you would do anything to get out of that job, but you can't because of your financial responsibilities or maybe you've looked for a job. You don't know why God's keeping you in that job but sometimes you just have to trust him. Or worse than that, you can't find a job, or injustice happens to you. You can interpret God through your circumstances, or you can interpret your circumstances through love for God. I would suggest to you that when we do the latter, life makes a lot more sense.

Gospel: Restoration

So let's look at what the Gospel does for us. Let's think about these things. Jesus restores us back to the way that we were before. Adam stood there and did nothing, Jesus calls us to action. He gave the disciples stuff to do. I was with David Murrow who wrote a book called *Why Men Hate Going to Church*

and he pointed out a really interesting thing to me. He said he taught the crowds but he tested his disciples. So like the five thousand people on the mountainside that didn't have anything to eat, do you know the first thing Jesus said to the disciples was? You feed them! Jesus calls us to action, not to sit back and just say I'm going to let go and let God! What is that? There's no book called Hesitations in the Bible! We're not supposed to just let God do it, he calls us to action! Look at the way he disciple his followers, look at all the stuff he told us to do. Not busy work, but to test us to challenge us, to give us a purpose again.

Adam was irresponsible; we have a great responsibility. Paul talks about how we are joined with him in the ministry of reconciliation. Our job, our responsibility is to help reconcile a fallen world back to a perfect God. Adam isolated, and if you don't see anything else from Jesus, you see this. You see him calling us to community. They will know that you are my disciples if you love one another. When John's disciples came and said are you really the Christ? They told us to come and ask if you're the Christ, that's knowledge. That's belief. Jesus didn't give them an answer, what he said was come follow me. Come hang out. Why don't you spend a day with me. Jesus calls us into a relationship with each other and with him. Adam forgot who he was. Jesus calls us his brothers. Jesus calls us his brothers, the son of the living God calls us his brothers, and God the father calls us his children. Some of us come from families maybe where being a child of your dad was not a great thing. Maybe your dad was absent or abusive, fifty percent of all men in their twenties where at least part of their time growing up was spent with no father around. Our view of fatherhood has been corrupted by our culture, but think about the perfect father. That's what God is, he's the perfect father, he calls us into a relationship with him, and to reject isolation.

Finally, this whole idea of shame. Look, the penalty has been paid. Jesus died on the cross for us. He understood that the wages of sin is death, as Paul says, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ. So the shame is gone, the guilt is gone, Jesus took all of that from us. We get to stand in front of God clothed in Christ's righteousness. When God looks at us and he looks at our record when you are a follower of Jesus Christ, he does not see your record, he does not see your rap sheet, he does not see all your failings as your life flashes before your eyes. That's not what God sees, what God sees is he sees Jesus' righteousness, Jesus' rap sheet, Jesus' life and it's perfect, pure, white as snow, and we get that. It's given to us! So the Gospel restores us back to the way that God originally made us to be. So that's the Big Idea #2: **What sin has corrupted, Jesus has restored.** Accept that restoration! Live in the promise that Jesus gives us, and reject the corruption that sin brings into our lives! Let's pray!

Closing Prayer

Father we recognize that we do things we don't want to do, we say things we don't want to say. Sometimes we say things that we do want to say and then we wish that didn't want to say them. We wish we didn't want to do them. We understand Lord that we live in a fallen world where sin taints everything. But Lord we know that you are reconciling us, restoring us back to the way that we were meant to be. We know that ultimately that will happen when we get to come be with you or you come back. But Lord until that day would you help us to cling to your righteousness, would you help us to cling to you as your brother, Jesus? God help us to cling to you as our father, Spirit help us to cling to you as our councilor, our friend, and advisor. Lord help us not to rely on our own best thinking, on our own desire to isolate and to not act, but instead father help us to step into life, to be bold for the Gospel, because you were bold in your sacrifice for us. In Jesus' name we pray, amen!