

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?" And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths. And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?" And he said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself." He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" The man said, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate." Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate." The Lord God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel." To the woman He said, "I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you." And to Adam He said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return" The man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living. And the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.

Text: Genesis 3:1-21 A 3/9/25 Romans 5:12-19 Matthew 4:1-11 Psalm 86 Resp. Ps. 32
Hymns: 744, 369 (tune: #175, 1st tune), 360, 149

OUR FALL – GOD'S GRACE

Dear fellow believers in Christ,

Why is there so much suffering in the world? Why are some people so bad? Why can't we all just do what is right and good, and let everyone in the world live in peace? Is there a God? If there is, why doesn't He fix all this? The third chapter of Genesis gives us the answers to these questions. There we learn of **OUR FALL**, and **GOD'S GRACE**.

In the beginning, God in His grace made the human race and everything else that exists perfect. Within His perfect creation God made a special place, the Garden of Eden, where He put the first

two people, Adam and Eve. God had the power to force Adam and Eve to serve and obey Him. But God wanted them to serve Him willingly, and obey His commands out of love and gratitude for all He had done for them. God made Adam and Eve so they perfectly understood all that He expected of them, and were perfectly able to do it. There was one specific command that God gave Adam and Eve: not to eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God warned them that if they disobeyed Him, they would die.

Peter warns us, *“Your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour”* (1 Pet. 5:8). Satan entered a snake and spoke to Eve: *“Did God really say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden’?”* The devil misquoted God, trying to get Eve to doubt and question what God had said. Eve did the right thing and repeated God’s command not to eat of the one tree. When Satan tempted Jesus in the wilderness, Jesus kept turning to God’s Word to refute and resist Satan’s temptations. When Satan tempts us, we need to keep turning to God’s Word so we can keep what God says straight in our minds and know what God wants us to do. Satan and his temptations cannot stand before the Word of God.

The devil then told Eve, *“You will not surely die.”* Satan flat-out lied. Jesus has warned us, *“The devil ... is a liar”* (Jn. 8:44). The devil tries to put things into our minds that are absolutely untrue, tempting us to sin. Satan went on, *“God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”* Another lie. Satan wanted Eve to think that if she ate the forbidden fruit, she would become like God. Scripture says, *“Flee ... lusts”* (2 Tim. 2:22). When the devil starts to tempt us, right away we need to turn away from his temptations and turn to God for the strength to resist him. James says, *“Submit yourselves ... to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you.”* (4:7-8a)

Scripture tells us, *“Whatever is true, ... whatever is right, ...”* (and so on) *“dwell on these things. ... Put these things into practice”* (Philip. 4:8-9) All we need do is ask God, and He will help us resist temptation and instead let our minds dwell on good things and keep ourselves busy doing good things. Sadly, for Eve and Adam and our entire human race ever after, Eve was now focused on the devil’s temptation. And she, and Adam who was with her, gave in. *“When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.”*

“Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin cloths.” Satan had told Eve, *“You will be like God, knowing good and evil.”* Adam and Eve already knew about good, because God had made them perfect. Why would they want to know about evil?! But Eve wasn’t thinking about that. She was thinking about becoming like God. God knows what evil is, because God knows everything. But God is not evil. Adam and Eve came to know evil because they became sinful. Instead of becoming like God, Adam and Eve became ashamed that they didn’t have any clothes on. Satan makes his temptations seem so appealing. But when we give in to them we find that Satan’s promises are always empty. Giving in to Satan’s temptations always and only results in bad things happening.

“[Adam and Eve] heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day.” The psalmist says that God is *“slow to anger, and abounding in mercy. ... He does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities”* (103:8, 10). In His grace, God did not destroy Adam and Eve, and thus, our human race. He came to them to restore them, and us, to Himself. Scripture says, *“Through the Lord’s mercies we are not consumed, because His compassion does not fail”* (Lam. 3:22). *“The Lord is ... not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance”* (2 Pet. 3:9). *“If You, O Lord, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand? But with You there is forgiveness; that You may be feared”* (held in awe) (Ps.130:3-4).

In His grace, God gave Adam and Eve the opportunity to come to Him and confess their sin. But *“the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.”* After the sin comes the shame and guilt. We are left to face the harsh reality of what we have done in sinning against God. Adam and Eve didn’t come to God. So, in His grace, God came to them and confronted them with what they had done. *“The man said, ‘The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.’ The woman said, ‘The serpent deceived me, and I ate.’”* Adam and Eve tried to hide from God. Adam blamed God for making Eve, and Eve for tempting him. Eve blamed the devil. What foolishness!

Romans 3:20 says, *“By the Law is the knowledge of sin.”* When we disobey what God says in the Bible, we have sinned. We have the tendency to ignore our sin or excuse it or try to hide it from God. When we do, we’re being just as foolish as Adam and Eve.

James tells us, *“When tempted, no one should say, ‘God is tempting me.’ For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death. Do not be deceived, my dear brothers. Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows”* (1:13-17). It’s not God’s fault that bad things happen in the world. God made Adam and Eve perfect. They chose to sin against God. Bad things happen in the world now because of sin. Either someone does something wrong (sinful), or things just go wrong because we live in an imperfect (sinful) world. It’s not God’s fault when we do bad things. God doesn’t make us sin. No one else, not even Satan himself, can make us sin. The devil and other people can tempt us. But when we give in to temptation it’s our own fault. John says, *“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we say that we have not sinned, we make [God] a liar”* (we’re calling God a liar for confronting us with our sin), *“and His Word is not in us”* (we’re not listening to God’s Word) (1 Jn. 1:8, 10). When we sin, God doesn’t want our excuses. God wants our confession and repentance.

“The Lord God said to the serpent, ‘Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.’” In His grace, God did not leave Adam and Eve, and us, hopeless as Satan’s slaves. God promised to send His Son as Eve’s and Adam’s descendant. Satan would *“bruise His heel;”* that is, Jesus would die. But He would *“bruise [Satan’s] head;”* that is, Jesus would rise from the dead and defeat Satan.

The central theme of Lent is that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, suffered and died on the cross for our sins. The central theme of Easter is that Jesus rose again from the dead, so our sins are forgiven and we're saved and we're going to heaven! When we see a snake crawl around on its stomach, it's a reminder of our fall into sin, and of God's grace.

After the third chapter of Genesis, from which our text is taken, God speaks of Adam and Eve in Scripture as being believers. So although we don't hear of their repentance here in our text, we know that they did repent. Therefore God, in His grace, didn't punish them. In His grace, God forgave them. 1 John 1:9 says, *"If we confess our sins, [God] is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."* God assures us in His Word, *"I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake; and I will not remember your sins."* (Is. 43:25)

Sadly, for Adam and Eve, and us, their sin had consequences. One is that women have trouble in pregnancy and childbirth. Another is that men (and women) have trouble in their work. And there's much trouble and heartache in life in general. In the beginning, God made our human race and His entire creation perfect. Adam and Eve chose to disobey God, and became sinful. We're told that *"Eve was the mother of all living."* Every human being is a descendent of Adam and Eve. We're all sinful, too. Nothing in the universe is perfect any more. So we must all live with the consequences of sin. Because of sin, no person or other living thing is perfect. We all die.

In His grace, God has given hope to every human being even in our death. Scripture tells us, *"Death is swallowed up in victory. 'O Death, where is your sting? O Grave, where is your victory?' The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ"* (1 Cor. 15, 54-57). God's words to Adam apply to us all: *"You are dust, and to dust you shall return."* We will die. But even in death, we see God's grace. God doesn't let us live forever in our sinful state in this sinful world. Through death, God takes us out of this sinful life, and brings us into perfect, eternal life in heaven! We must die, but by faith in Jesus we will live with Him forever in perfect health and peace and joy in heaven!

All mankind fell in Adam's fall, One common sin infects us all;
From sire to son the bane descends, And over all the curse impends.

But Christ, the second Adam, came To bear our sin and woe and shame,
To be our Life, our Light, our way, Our only Hope, our only Stay.

As by one man all mankind fell And, born in sin, was doomed to hell,
So by one Man, who took our place, We all received the gift of grace.

We thank Thee, Christ; new life is ours, New light, new hope, new strength, new powers;
This grace our every way attend Until we reach our journey's end! Amen.

(TLH #369:1, 4, 5-6)