

Genesis 2:7-9, 15-17; 3:1-7

⁷The LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.

⁸ Now the LORD God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. ⁹ And the LORD God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground—trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

¹⁵The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. ¹⁶ And the LORD God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; ¹⁷but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.”

The Fall of Man

3 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?’”

²The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, ³but 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.’”

⁴“You will not surely die,” the serpent said to the woman. ⁵“For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

⁶When 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. ⁷Then 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.

Tragedy in Eden

I.

How *could* they?

You’ve seen the type on the news. People who seemed to have it all. They had a great life. Every good thing you could imagine or ask for. And yet... one moment of indiscretion and they threw it all away. One stupid act cost them a great life and earned them a 6x9 foot cell, instead. With everything they had, why do something stupid and risk it all?

Dozens of news stories every year make me wonder—how could that person choose to throw it all away? There must be an underlying factor. Addiction, perhaps? Something else?

There once was a couple like that who had it all. Their home was perfectly climate controlled. Without programming a thermostat the temperature was never too hot or too cold. It was never too humid or too dry. Gnats didn’t swarm around your face or mosquitoes sting your arms. Fruit grew in abundance from a variety of trees. The garden itself was beautiful. Not only a perfect balance of nature, but exceptionally pleasing to the eye, as well.

They didn’t have clothing or a place to buy clothes, but they didn’t need them. There was no shameful need to cover their nakedness, and there were no climate concerns to make them the slightest bit uncomfortable.

The very name of their home—Eden—has come to mean paradise. Their home was perfect. They lived in perfect harmony with nature. They got to talk to the Creator God on a daily basis. There was, quite literally, *nothing* that they needed or lacked.

On a day that lives in infamy, everything changed. “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?”’” (Genesis 3:1, EHV).

Eve answers. “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.’” (Genesis 3:2-3, EHV).

Eve understood the one command God had given to her and her husband. There was to be no use of that one tree for food. Why even go to the point of picking a fruit when you were not to eat it? When she added the concept “don’t touch,” Eve wasn’t trying to add to God’s command—she just wanted it to be clear that *this* particular tree was off limits for food. There were plenty of trees that had delicious fruit.

“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” (Genesis 3:4-5, EHV). Did God actually say you would die? Hogwash! You will become like God. Yeah, that’s it! That’s the ticket. God doesn’t *want* you to be like him. He wants to keep you down. He wants to keep you stupid. He doesn’t want any competition from you.

The temptations of Satan are insidious. What he said wasn’t *completely* false. There was just enough truth in there to get Eve to doubt God’s Word and to doubt his goodness. Just enough to get her wondering.

She stretched out her hand. Took some. Ate it, and gave some to her husband who was right there with her during this whole conversation.

“The 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” (Genesis 3:7, EHV). Their eyes were opened, all right. They noticed a whole bunch of things. They realized they were naked. They understood they had rebelled against God.

Satan had been half right. They now knew both good *and* evil. They knew that God was good, and their rebellion made them evil. Their relationship with God was broken—damaged beyond all recognition. They ran away and hid from God.

II.

Back to those sad figures in newscasts. You hear about how well off they were in life and what they threw away for just a moment of indiscretion—a moment of stupidity. How could they?

There was something that was just out of reach. Something that was alluring.

Unless your name is Jeff Bezos, there is *always* at least one spot above you on the ladder of personal wealth. You and I look at the billionaires and think that with just part of their wealth we would be satisfied. But would we? Once you are there, there’s always one more step on the social ladder—just out of reach. There’s one more thing that you really, really want that you can’t quite afford. It’s not fair. Someone else has what you *don’t* have. So you reach out your hand to cheat just a little bit.

As for Jeff Bezos, much of his personal wealth went to his wife, from whom he is getting a divorce. Why? Because there was one more thing that he wanted. Another woman. A different woman. He reached out his hand and took. It isn’t putting him in a 6x9 cell, but it is costing him billions of dollars. There are *always* consequences for reaching just beyond what you should have.

“Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall. Humpty Dumpty had a great fall. All the king’s horses and all the king’s men couldn’t put Humpty together again.” In the early stages of its existence, this nursery rhyme was a riddle: “What, when broken, can never be repaired, not even by strong or wise people?” The answer is, an egg. A broken egg can never be put back together. We have to learn to deal with the mess.

So goes the Humpty Dumpty story in the Bible. Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit and had a great fall into sin. No matter how hard they might try, nothing could ever be put back together again.

The repercussions for that first crack in perfection have reverberated throughout time and eternity.

There are ecological consequences. God told Adam: “The soil is cursed on account of you... ¹⁸Thorns and thistles will spring up from the ground for you” (Genesis 3:17-18, EHV). There are sociological consequences. God told Eve: “Your desire will be for your husband, but he will rule over you” (Genesis 3:16, EHV). There are biological consequences. To Eve he says: “I will greatly increase your pain in childbearing” (Genesis 3:16, EHV), and to Adam: “By the sweat of your face you will eat bread until you return to the soil, for out of it you were taken. For you are dust, and to dust you shall return” (Genesis 3:19, EHV).

The consequences run deep. It’s more all-encompassing in scope than even a prison sentence.

“In the day that God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. ²He created them male and female and blessed them, and on the day they were created, he named them ‘mankind.’ ³Adam lived 130 years, and he became the father of a son in his own likeness, according to his own image” (Genesis 5:1-3, EHV).

The relationship with God was destroyed. The consequences run so deep that Adam and Eve—and their children and grandchildren for innumerable generations—would no longer have the close personal relationship with God that Adam and Eve had always known up to that point. A separation from God is baked into our DNA.

Sin is more than the bad stuff that we think or say or do. Those bad actions are just the symptoms of the terminal disease we all carry. “You are dust, and to dust you shall return” (Genesis 3:19, EHV).

Do you hear the sound of eggshells crunching under your feet? It is the sound of broken-ness—the sound of your natural condition.

III.

The completely holy, just, and righteous Creator of heaven and earth sees our disease. He sees the corruption. He sees the sin that has separated us from him. Because he is completely holy, just, and righteous, he *must* pass judgment on us. They are corrupt. They must die.

“Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall. Humpty Dumpty had a great fall. All the king’s horses and all the king’s men couldn’t put Humpty together again.”

When my kids were little, the Humpty Dumpty nursery rhyme changed for our family. Grandma made every one of her grandchildren a Humpty Dumpty stuffed toy. They were loved so much that after awhile Humpty Dumpty’s face wore off and his body became so thin that stuffing was oozing out. Grandma took Humpty Dumpty one night and gave Humpty Dumpty a new face and fixed it so that his stuffing wasn’t oozing out any more.

Ever after, the nursery rhyme in our house became: Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall. Humpty Dumpty had a great fall. All the kings horses and all the kings men couldn’t put Humpty together again. **But Grandma could!**

And all the king’s horses and all the king’s men could never put us back together again. But God is more powerful than any king. God is even more powerful than grandma. Though grandma could put Humpty Dumpty back together again for her grandson, God could put back together the mess of our shattered relationship with him. He could put it back together so that not even a crack remains.

God turned to the snake and said: “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” (Genesis 3:15, EHV). It was a curse that God pronounced on Satan, but Adam and Eve could see beyond the curse to the gracious promise of God to send his only-begotten Son to restore their relationship.

Paul says it this way: “For at the appointed time, while we were still helpless, Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷It is rare indeed that someone will die for a righteous person. Perhaps someone might actually go so far as to die for a person who has been good to him. ⁸But God shows his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:6-8, EHV).

IV.

The Lenten season is a time to especially remember *all* of this—both the bad and the good. It isn’t just Adam and Eve’s sin that causes us problems, each one of us reaches for things we shouldn’t have. Each one of us follows the whisperings of Satan to go our own way—to doubt God’s goodness and his promises.

Each one of us is like a broken and shattered Humpty Dumpty. No king’s horses. No king’s men. No Grandma. Just the eternal King’s Son, puts us back together again. Not only does he remove the sin, he restores perfection, so that we will go back to a new Eden—a new heaven and a new earth—paradise restored. There we will be with him. We will enjoy a perfect climate-controlled environment, where nothing will ever destroy that relationship again. Amen.