

## Genesis 3

This chapter has often been referred to as the story of the fall; referring to the fall of humanity from a state of immortality/perfection into a state of death/brokenness. For this reason it has played an outsized role in the theology of the church. However, if this story is that important, we might think that it would be front and center in the scriptures. However, it isn't. It is mentioned only marginally in one other place in the Old Testament and receives only a couple of passing references in the New Testament. This article then, will focus not on the "fall" but on the story itself; a story told in six acts.

Act One: This act opens with the snake, a creation of God, offering Eve an alternative understanding of life in the garden. While God had prohibited eating from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, the snake tells the first lady that the prohibition is simply one option among many. Another option was that she and Adam could eat the fruit, have their eyes opened and become like God, knowing good and evil.

Act Two: This act brings us face to face with the first recorded act of disobedience. Eve and Adam, after observing the fruit and evidently discussing the positive possibilities inherent in eating it, partake. While the story has Eve eating first and then offering it to Adam, this does not make Eve any more culpable than her significant other, for in fact, it was Adam to whom the prohibition was first given. They were each then, responsible for their own actions.

Act Three: Here we see the consequences of their actions. First there is shame. Adam and Eve become ashamed of their own bodies (bodies which were gifts of God) and try and hide them from each other. This shame extends to hiding from God. Next comes blame. They blame the snake and each other for their own, freely chosen, act of disobedience.

Act Four: This is the trial. God questions them as a prosecutor would. "Who told you, you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" "What is this that you have done?" God discovers the answers to each of these questions and convicts the first couple of having violated God's good commands.

Act Five: This is the sentencing phase of the trial. The snake is forced to eat dust and become the enemy of humanity. Eve will suffer in child birth, be filled with desire for her husband and her husband will rule over her. Adam, will be forced to toil for a living and will ultimately return to the dust from which he came. Thus, there are consequences beyond shame and blame for violating God's rules.

Act Six: This is the act of grace. God, in response to their disobedience, does not impose an immediate death sentence, but instead clothes them. God makes for them "garments of skins." Even though the couple will be expelled from the garden, they will not be expelled from God's gracious love. As the Biblical story continues we will watch as God's love becomes the thread that will bind the entire scriptural story together.

This story has often been used as an excuse for our disobedience. Adam and Eve "fell", thus condemning all of us to "fall" as well. It's all their fault. Rather than reading the story in this way, perhaps we can see it first, as the eternal story of humanity wrestling with its/our own disobedience to God's loving commands and the consequences that flow from that disobedience. And second we can see it as a challenge for us to choose to obey in order that we might find the full life God offers.

Questions:

1. What are the snakes in your life that tempt you?
2. Where have you blamed others for your own choices?
3. How do you work at listening to God more than the snakes around you?