

The Fall

SCOTT HOEZEE

People who teach creative writing tell aspiring novelists that you do not really have a compelling story until something goes wrong. Well, maybe that is why the Bible tells the most compelling story of them all, because you read no more than two chapters before suddenly things in God's creation go terribly wrong. Today on *Groundwork*, we will think about the tragic story of humanity's fall into sin. Stay tuned.

DAVE BAST

From Words of Hope and ReFrame Media, this is *Groundwork*, where we dig into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Dave Bast.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And I am Scott Hoezee; and Dave, this is now program number two in a planned five-part series on some of the stories we read in the earliest part of Genesis, Genesis 1 through 11. So, in the previous program, we looked at the story of the creation from Genesis 1 and 2; and then in future programs, we will look at the tragic story of Cain and Abel. We, of course, will look at the story of the flood; and we will wrap up with the Tower of Babel, and where this part of Genesis ends; but today, we go to Genesis 3, and what is known as the story of the Fall.

DAVE BAST

Right; and it does not take very long. We only have two chapters of bliss...of Edenic happiness in paradise before Adam and Eve mess everything up. I guess the point to start is to just note that it was paradise, that they had everything they could possibly need. They had plenty of food; they had companionship with one another; they had responsibilities to tend the garden...to care for the animals. In fact, God actually brings the animals to Adam and has him give them names, which implies kind of a lordship over them. They are ruling the creation on God's behalf. They are his honored and trusted servants and everything is good.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And above all what they had was the image of God given to them as a gift that no other creature on the planet had ever been given. They had the image of God, which gave them true...as Calvin would say and the Reformed tradition says: True kind of righteousness and holiness; and so, they had a relationship with God; and all they had to do was trust God...trust that God had their best interests at heart...trust that God wanted them to live happily doing things God's way. If only they could do that, they would maintain that relationship, but there is that phrase: If only...if only; because as a matter of fact, they do not maintain that good relationship.

DAVE BAST

Yes; and now we are introduced for the first time to what Paul would call in the New Testament the mystery of evil or the mystery of iniquity; and we read in Genesis 3 about a new character who comes in:

The serpent was more crafty than any other wild animal that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God say you shall not eat from any tree in the garden?"

Immediately we ask: What's up with this? Where did the snake come from? Who is this?

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes...where did the snake come from? How come he talks? How come Eve didn't think it was weird that a snake would talk? And of course, traditionally we have identified the serpent as the devil...as Satan...as the tempter; and I think that is right; and of course, that is also why from time immemorial, serpents with their beady little eyes and their hissing and their slithering have been a symbol of temptation and evil, and often a stand-in in a lot of movies even for the presence of the devil...

DAVE BAST

And most people are creeped out by them, too.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; but we have no idea...right? I mean, why is this creature, who is clearly not a good creature; who is clearly there to mess things up...where does he come from? We are not told. The text takes no interest in that question.

DAVE BAST

Yes...just as much a mystery as the serpent is the Satan, the accuser, if we choose to associate it. He does not make an appearance in Genesis 3, not per se. The devil is not mentioned here, but we wonder: What is his story? What is his back story? And the Bible really does not answer that either. I mean, a lot of Christian tradition has pulled together various references, and they think of Satan as a fallen angel, and there is something in the book of Revelation to that effect, but a lot of that is guesswork, too; and as far as Genesis 3 is concerned, it is still a mystery...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DAVE BAST

Why is there someone who would cast doubt on the goodness and the Word of God?

SCOTT HOEZEE

And that is exactly what this serpent does; and of course, this story...whatever else we make of it, it is a paradigm—it is an example of how the devil works; so pay attention, the Bible is saying; this is going to happen to you, too; and so, right off the bat...right, the serpent questions the very words of God: Did God really *say*...and then he goes on...you cannot eat from any tree in the garden? So, the serpent is questioning the goodness of God by making God look stricter than he really is: Really? God put you in this garden and you cannot eat any of the fruit? What kind of a God is that? So, the serpent now casts doubt on God's Word...casts doubt on God's goodness, and exaggerates it; because of course there was only the one tree they could not eat from...so, the serpent says: Well, it must be all the trees, and then Eve corrects him...kind of.

DAVE BAST

Right, kind of. ²So the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, ³but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden...(traditionally that is the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil), nor shall you touch it, or you shall die.'" (But that little last point is an addendum, isn't it?)

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right; so Eve corrects the serpent, but she does not correct him quite correctly, because nowhere did God say you could not touch it. He said you could not *eat* it, but he did not say you could not *touch* it. So, you see what is happening here, right? The serpent casts doubt on God's goodness and makes him look stricter than he is. Eve says: No, no, no. He is not quite that strict; but then she adds something else that also makes God look stricter than he is: Oh, we cannot touch it either. God did not say that...God never said that. So, Eve is

already going with a very bad flow here. You know, she is taking her cues from the serpent: Let's make God out to be a little stricter than he is.

DAVE BAST

Right; and you said, Scott, that this is a paradigm, and it really is. It is a kind of anatomy of a scene of how temptation works in our lives; and it starts with just a little bit of doubt...it starts with just a little bit of questioning...maybe a little misremembering.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes.

DAVE BAST

We don't quite get the commandment straight: What *did* God actually say, and does he really have our best interests at heart? Is he trying to somehow test us or probe us or keep us from something that we really need or that we really want? And that insidious seed of doubt begins to grow and begins to grow, and pretty soon we think: Hey, wait a minute; this cannot be right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; how can God be so unreasonable? Why should I have to live with these unreasonable demands? So, right; that is exactly how it goes: A little doubt in God's goodness leads to a little more doubt in God's goodness on Eve's part...

DAVE BAST

A little twisting of the Word of God.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; and once you start down that path, it is called bad momentum. It is just sort of a bad rock rolling downhill; and the devil has got us going in the direction that he exactly wants us to do: Doubt the Word of God; doubt the goodness of God; make God look to be like a strict bully; now we are wide open to a bigger move.

DAVE BAST

Yes; well, but let's note: At this point, Eve has not sinned; she has not broken the commandment. She has gotten her facts a little bit garbled. She is going in a bit of a bad direction. As you suggest, the momentum is going the wrong way, but she has not sinned yet. That is going to come, though, and we will see how it happens in just a moment.

Segment 2

SCOTT HOEZEE

I am Scott Hoezee, along with Dave Bast, and you are listening to *Groundwork*, and today the second program in a five-part series on the early stories of Genesis; and today we are in Genesis 3. We just saw that out of nowhere a tempter in the form of a serpent—a snake—appears in Eden, immediately casts a little bit of doubt on God's Word. Eve corrects him, but then she casts a little bit of doubt on God by making God out to be stricter than he really was; and now the serpent goes for the kill.

DAVE BAST

Right; and he does so with a big lie. ⁴So the serpent said to the woman, "You will not die." (And then he backs that up by slandering God.) 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."

SCOTT HOEZEE

⁶So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desired to make one wise, she took its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband, who was

with her, and he ate. ⁷Then the eyes of the both of them were opened and they knew they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made loin clothes for themselves.

DAVE BAST

So, having gotten Eve to doubt God, to begin to change a little bit the commandment that God had issued, the serpent comes right flat out and says: God does not really care about you; he does not really have your best interests at heart; he is jealous of you and he wants to keep this good thing from you because he knows if you take and eat this, guess what? You will be just like him. And you can almost see Eve, and then later Adam...you know, Adam is not described, but he is with her up to the hilt in this whole thing, I think...you can just see them start to think...the wheels start to go around: Wait a minute...you know...we could have something really good here...

SCOTT HOEZEE

And God wouldn't want us to not have that...

DAVE BAST

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

I mean, to be more like God, that is a good thing.

DAVE BAST

And to increase knowledge...to know good and evil...well, we are supposed to know everything, aren't we?

SCOTT HOEZEE

It's all good...it's all good; but of course, it is not all good; and the tragedy here, of course, is that we as readers of Genesis—and Adam and Eve should have known, too—they already were like God. They had been made in God's likeness—in his image, we were told in Genesis 1. God had already made them like himself, but they now wanted to be a little bit even more like God, and on their own terms, too.

DAVE BAST

Yes; you know, I have often thought that line of the devil's: You will know good and evil... Well, in one sense, he wasn't lying; they *did* know good and evil in a new way. They knew evil by experience; and they knew good from then on only as something they had lost. You know, sort of a be careful what you wish for because you think this experience is going to be so wonderful and so empowering and so enlightening, and you actually undergo it...you actually do that thing...you actually take that dare, and you are sadder but wiser, as the saying goes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes...how many times haven't any number of us said of something we did that went disastrously bad...how many times have we said, well, it seemed like a good idea at the time...

DAVE BAST

At the time; right, yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Well, not really. So, Eve now has given that tree and given that fruit a second look, and a long look; and as somebody once pointed out, Eve says she saw the fruit and it looked good, and it was. Everything in God's creation was good, we are told. It was all good. The tree was good, the fruit was good; Eve was not tempted by something bad; she was tempted by something good, but it just wasn't good for her, because God had said no on that one; so, yes, the tree and the fruit...of course it was good, but it was not good for *her*.

DAVE BAST

St. Augustine is kind of the authority on this whole story. He wrote a lot about it, and the consequences, and a lot of Christian thought has followed him in its understanding of this. Augustine said that at the outset it was possible for Adam and Eve not to sin...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DAVE BAST

They had that power, as we pointed out. They had the image of God. They had everything they needed. They could easily have resisted the tempter's suggestions; but after they fell, that was no longer possible; and as a result, their whole nature was, in St. Augustine's words, it was curved inward on themselves; and he often talked about the root sin as being pride...as being putting yourself in the place of God...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DAVE BAST

You can say yes to that here in this story, but there is also something more, isn't there?

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right; I think if pride was sort of at the bottom of it for sort of wanting to displace God or put yourself on a par with God, that would be a proud thing to do; but the next thing that happens is the sin of being covetous, because Eve covets the fruit. What is coveting? We covet what we do not have and want to have and think we should be able to take for ourselves; and so, in coveting, you see what you don't have; you conclude: There is no reason I shouldn't have that, so I am going to take it, even if it means stealing...even if it means, you know, whatever...ill-gotten gain.

DAVE BAST

Right; I want it...I want it!

SCOTT HOEZEE

She covets the fruit; she covets the superior, Godlike knowledge it will supposedly give her, and so, she takes it. She gives into the coveting...she takes it; she gives it to Adam...

DAVE BAST

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And then, one thing the serpent said comes true: Their eyes are opened.

DAVE BAST

Yes, and they realize they are naked, and they are filled with shame; so shame enters the world...

SCOTT HOEZEE

So, their eyes are opened, but they do not see something good. The serpent says: Your eyes will be opened, and then you will know stuff...

DAVE BAST

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Well, they know stuff, all right, and it is something bad; and we can tell that from what happens next in the text.

DAVE BAST

So, as we read on: ⁸Adam and Eve hear the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord among the trees of the garden; ⁹but the Lord God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?" ¹⁰He said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself."

SCOTT HOEZEE

¹¹And he said, "Who told you you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree which I commanded you not to eat?" ¹²The man said, "The woman you gave to me, she gave me the fruit from the tree and I ate." ¹³And the Lord said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" And the woman said, "Well, the serpent tricked me and I ate."

So, a lot of finger-pointing going on here. The original, it wasn't my fault; the devil made me do it; which in some sense is true; but what is interesting here is, we immediately see what happens. Their relationship with God is ruptured. They hear him, they hide.

DAVE BAST

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

They hide from God. A Jewish rabbi was once asked: Rabbi, why did God call out for Adam? Didn't God know where Adam was? The rabbi said: Oh yes; God knew. It was Adam who no longer knew where he was.

DAVE BAST

Yes, that is a great point. I love the fact that God starts with a question. I think that question is really an invitation. God isn't...as you said, Scott...God isn't requesting some kind of knowledge. It is not like his GPS unit is on the fritz and he has lost...you know...lost sight of where Adam and Eve are, or the bushes are hiding them from God's sight. The story is artlessly told, but it is beautifully told, too. God is reaching out to Adam and Eve; and frankly...think about this: God could have just blotted them out. He could have just said: Well, that is a failure. I have to start over again. Instead, he says: Adam, where are you? He is reaching out and wanting to resume a conversation. It is as though he is extending himself...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DAVE BAST

And if he hadn't, the Bible would have been a very short book, wouldn't it?

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right; and we will see that in the next program, too, with Cain. God comes and says: Where is your brother? He comes with a question, which invites dialogue, of course. He does not come with judgment of thunder and lightning bolts getting loosed; no, he comes with a question here, and again in the next chapter; and somehow or another, through that comes grace, but here is the...

DAVE BAST

You know, this is so important, to recognize this. The whole Bible from beginning to end is the story of a God who is on a quest, from this point on, anyway...from Genesis 3 onward he is reaching out...he is searching...he is the Father who is looking for the prodigal to come home...he is the woman who sweeps the house looking for the lost coin. He is looking for Adam and Eve, and the great dramatic story of the Bible will be the story of how that search succeeds; and he ultimately will bring all his children home again.

SCOTT HOEZEE

You can draw a pretty straight line from this to the arrival of the Messiah, Jesus Christ; and in fact, that is even previewed for us. We will look at that in just a moment.

Segment 3

DAVE BAST

You are listening to *Groundwork*, where we are digging into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Dave Bast.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And I am Scott Hoezee; and we have just read, Dave, from Genesis 3, the tragic story of how, bit by bit, the tempter—the serpent—got the man and the woman to eat the forbidden fruit; and the first thing that happens is they hide from God; and that is where we have been ever since, right? We cannot endure God’s holy gaze anymore. God looks at us, he shines the light of his holiness on us, and we are exposed...

DAVE BAST

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And we just want to cover ourselves. That is where we have been ever since; but as you said, Dave, just a minute ago in the last segment, God does not come with judgment, he comes: Where are you? I want to talk to you. I want to find you; and he does find them...

DAVE BAST

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

But he doesn’t wipe them out.

DAVE BAST

No; but there are consequences. So, there is a sort of judgment that falls, first on the serpent. God condemns the serpent to crawl on its belly and eat the dust, and he prophesies against the serpent, and he says to the woman: You know, your relationship with you husband is going to be different from now on. He is going to kind of rule over you, and you are going to have pain in childbirth; and to the man he says: The ground is going to be cursed because of you. You are going to have toil and frustration; and again, the world that we know so well...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DAVE BAST

The world where things go wrong...where you cannot grow a garden vegetable without having weeds.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right; these are both punishments and consequences, and the consequences of what the humans did end up extending even to the earth itself, and we know that; but, before he is finished, in Genesis 3:15, a verse that is sometimes given a really big theological term to describe it: the *protoevangelium*, which literally means a preview of the Gospel, or literally the first Gospel word in the Bible, comes in Genesis 3:15, where God says to the serpent:

I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers. He will strike your head and you will strike his heel.

Most commentators from time immemorial have seen it as saying: I am going to send somebody—an offspring of this woman is going to come and end this once and for all.

DAVE BAST

Yes; so, out of the pain, and even the curse, of childbirth, which is laid upon the woman, will come the ultimate savior, the ultimate victor, the one who will finally do in the power of evil and the devil who stands behind it; and who will do so at great cost. He will crush the serpent's head; the serpent would bruise his heel. In the C. S. Lewis space trilogy—the second novel, *Perelandra*—the hero, Ransom, who is a Christ figure, has an injury that will not heal on his ankle...on his heel, which he gets from the evil one, whom he defeats in that story. So, all of this is prefiguring the costly victory that Jesus will win finally, and finally and forever inflict the decisive defeat on the enemy.

SCOTT HOEZEE

But it will take a while. It is going to be a long time before Christ comes; and we have noted this before, I think, Dave, on other *Groundwork* programs; and something our colleague Neal Plantinga has noted before, and that is the oddity that in the Bible the act of creation looked easier for God than the act of redemption...

DAVE BAST

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

It would seem pretty...God spoke, and it was...God spoke and it was; and that is how Genesis 1 goes; but now that evil has come, it is going to take a while; and God will speak another word, but it will finally be the cry of dereliction from the cross: My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Only when the Word of God who spoke in the beginning cries that is salvation achieved. So, we are on a long path here, but it is a path of hope and a path that indeed leads straight to the Gospel.

As we close the program, Dave, maybe we could just think a couple of things about some things we can take away from this otherwise unhappy story.

DAVE BAST

Well, I think for one thing we have the anatomy of temptation here. We have talked about that. The tempter is always trying to get us to doubt the goodness of God—to wonder: If God was truly good, could this have happened to me? How could he ever permit this? There must not be a God. You know, it is replayed over and over and over again. God does not really love you; God does not really care about you; God is making unreasonable demands; he does not want you to be happy.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right...this is something we all know. I read something just earlier today, on the day we are making this program, of a Christian woman who is a poet who died. They had wanted a child. She finally got pregnant with a child, and in the middle of her pregnancy discovered she had a fatal form of breast cancer; and her first thought was: Why? O God, if you really loved me, why would you give me a child and then give me a fatal disease at the same time? We are always tempted to question the goodness of God; but again, that is where the hope of the Gospel comes; that Jesus is with us, and through all of that we do not have to doubt the goodness of God because he gave us his only begotten Son. Any God who would do that certainly has our best interests at heart, even though we suffer and do ask hard questions.

DAVE BAST

Yes, absolutely; and Christ is the proof that God is for us. I think of those great verses at the end of Romans 8, where the Apostle launches a series of rhetorical questions: ^{8:32}If he did not spare his own son...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DAVE BAST

But freely gave him up for us all... There is that *protoevangelium* again coming true in the Gospel when Christ goes to the cross. If God has already does this for us, how will he possibly withhold anything good?

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes.

DAVE BAST

And the answer is, he won't.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And that gets us to the other thing that we said: Eve coveted because she thought she was lacking something. We no longer have to doubt that. God has given us all things. In Christ Jesus, he has given us access to God; and Jesus even said: You know what? You can call him Father now. So, we do not have to covet what we don't have. We don't have to suspect that we are missing something, like Eve and Adam did. We can know that in Christ, God has given us all things. In fact, he has recreated us in the image of God through Christ.

DAVE BAST

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Adam and Eve besmirched the image in this story, but in Christ it gets restored to us. So, we said earlier it is not a good story until something goes wrong, but in this case, it is a great story in the Bible when, through Jesus, things go wonderfully right.

DAVE BAST

Thanks be to God.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Well, thanks for listening and digging deeply into scripture with *Groundwork*. We are your hosts, Scott Hoezee and Dave Bast, and we hope you will join us again next time as we look at Genesis 4, and the story of Cain and Abel.

Connect with us on our website, which is groundworkonline.com. Share what *Groundwork* means to you, and suggest future topics and passages for *Groundwork*.

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