

The Snake in the Grass

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- [0 : 00] I want to turn to Genesis chapter 3, Genesis chapter 3. God made everything good. He spoke, it appeared, and it was good. And as we arrive in Genesis chapter 3, things are all good. We come upon some bad. For the man and the woman that God created are deceived. They fall short of the glory of God that created them. Over the next few weeks, we're going to look at their decisions there. What we can learn from that. And then delve into the ramifications of those decisions. Of their wrong choices. And our wrong choices. Because not only did they sin and fall short of the glory of God. Romans 3.23 says, we've all sinned and fall short of the glory of God.
- [1 : 13] There's a lot to learn. But first, this morning I want us to understand the bad that's in the midst of such a perfect atmosphere. There in the garden. We'll begin in Genesis chapter 3. With verse 1. And it says this. 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 actually 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 tree in the garden. But God said, you shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that's 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'll be like God. Knowing good and evil. I will tell you that there is a lot, I believe too much theological discussion about the identification of the snake in that passage.
- [2 : 26] Some theologians are quick to say that the serpent is not Satan. Because it's not identified as Satan in that passage. There's a Hebrew word for such theological understanding as that. And that word is baloney. The reality is the best interpreter of scripture is scripture. The best interpreter of the Old Testament is the New Testament. And so I want you to read the words of Jesus in the revelation of Jesus Christ. In Revelation 12, 7 through 9, when it says, Now war arose in heaven. Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was defeated. And there was no longer any place for them in heaven. And the great dragon was thrown down that ancient serpent who is called devil and Satan.
- [3 : 36] The deceiver of the whole world. He was thrown down to the earth and his angels were thrown down with him. And how about Paul predicting his coming demise in Romans 16, 20, when it says, The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. That alludes to a passage we'll look at in the coming days. Genesis 3, 15. That talks about our battle against evil. This is the beginning of the influence of Satan upon us in this passage.

If God created all with such order and it was all good, then where in the world did Satan come from? We need to study in order to understand that a variety of scripture to get a better understanding.

But it becomes clear when we do that. Job chapter 1 verse 6 puts Satan with this quote, Sons of God.

That's an Old Testament term for angels. Jesus also referred to him as one. In Matthew 25 verse 41 when he talks about the parable of the sheep and the goats and the end time.

[4 : 51] Ezekiel 28 paints a poetic picture of what went on with Satan and prophecies of his coming demise. Now it actually, in Ezekiel 28, is giving a warning of the king of Tyre who is an enemy to Israel.

But when reading this description, you begin to pick up on the fact that this king is simply a puppet of the real evil one. For the king of Tyre is like a window, I believe, into the true spiritual force that is behind him.

It says in Ezekiel 28 verse 12, Son of man, raise a lamentation over the king of Tyre and say to him, Thus says the Lord God, You were the signet of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.

In other words, Satan is attractive. You were in Eden, that's when we get a pure clue.

If signet of perfection and full of wisdom and perfect in beauty didn't give you a clue, you were in Eden ought to give you a clue. We're talking about more than just the king of Tyre.

[6 : 14] Okay? The garden of God. Therefore, this description is, and we'll look at another one like this, but it's kind of intertwined. It's speaking of Satan, as well as one of his puppets, being the king of Tyre.

Every precious stone was your covering. And then it goes on to list those stones. You were an anointed guardian cherub. And let me tell you, no earthly king is an angel.

And this is speaking more of the cherubim, which the cherubim, that I am on the end of that word makes it plural in the Hebrew. It is the inner circle of angels.

They are the ones that's closest to the father, guarding his holiness of sorts. He said, I placed you, you were on the holy mountain of God, in the midst of the stones of fire you walked.

What does that mean? Well, Zachariah gives us an indication. Zachariah speaks of God protecting through a wall of fire as a symbol of his holiness.

[7 : 26] This seems related. In other words, what it means is he was close with the Lord. It says, you were blameless in your ways from the day you were created till unrighteousness was found in you, in the abundance of your trade.

You were filled with violence in your mist and you sinned. So I cast you as a profound thing from the mountain of God and I destroyed you, O guardian cherub, from the mist of the stones of fire.

Your heart was proud because of your beauty. You corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor. I cast you to the ground. I expose you before kings to the feast their eyes, to feast their eyes on you.

By the multitude of your iniquities in the unrighteousness of your trade, you profane your sanctuaries. Unrighteousness of trade talks about dealings. And I will tell you in any dealing that the devil does, don't deal with him.

Don't do a trade with him. And then it talks about you profane your sanctuary, which talks about worship. For the king of Tyre, it could talk about the gods that they worshiped.

[8 : 35] For Satan, it could talk about so many ways he disrupts worship. Both of these things, dealings and worship, trade, sanctuaries, they both get tainted by the influence of the evil one.

It says, so I brought fire out from your mist. I'll tell you what this speaks of. It speaks of the future demise of Satan. As if it's already happened, because it is settled of sorts.

Satan is already defeated. I hope you know that. And he knows that he's defeated. It's kind of like a, what we're living in now, it's kind of like when a ball team is gonna lose.

And they know they're gonna lose. There's not enough time in the game to score enough points for them to win. And so the coach grabs that guy that don't play and says, listen, you see old number one out there?

Take his knee out, all right? Let's leave a mark on these folks. We couldn't leave a mark with them cleanly, so let's do it dirty. Let's just throw them out there and see what we can do. An evil one's been taken out knees ever since because he knows he won't win in the end.

[9 : 51] So I brought fire out from the mist. It consumed you. And I turned you to ashes on the earth in the sight of all who saw you. All who know you among the peoples are appalled at you.

You've come to a dreadful end and shall be no more forever. So he was a top angel. One of the cherubim and placed on the pinnacle among them.

He was in the glory of heaven and he was righteous at first, but then pride took over. Why? Because he was pretty. Because of his beauty. Because he was smooth.

And violence followed that and sin took over and God cast him out. We have a similar description in the fall of Satan in Isaiah. Again, this passage speaks of an earthly king, the king of Babylon.

But Babylon itself is a symbol of Satan's empire on the earth. You see that much more clear in Revelation. That the parallel cannot be mistaken.

[10 : 53] Again, this king's life, as described, becomes a window into the true spiritual force that's behind him. Isaiah 14, 12 through 15 says this, How you are fallen from heaven, O day star, son of dawn.

How you are cut down to the ground, you who laid the nations low. You said in your heart, I will ascend to heaven. Above the stars of God, I will set my throne on high.

I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far reaches of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds. I will make myself like the most high.

But you are brought down to Sheol, to the far reaches of the pit. Revelation 12 gives us an even clearer understanding of the havoc that he caused in heaven when it says, as I've read earlier, but I'll read again.

Now, war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back, but he was defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent who's called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world.

[12 : 07] He was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. In other words, he wanted to replace God. He wanted to receive all the beauty, all the glory, all the wisdom, all the power of God.

Revelation 12 calls him a dragon, and it goes on to say how his tail swept down a third of the stars.

That is apocalyptic talk, symbolic talk for angels, which become demons when he swept them down.

It's illustrative talk that gives us insight into what started this whole cosmic battle. Now, besides a good conversation about the origin of Satan, why did I share all that?

Why is that important? I mean, you come in here today, as I do, with stuff. You want a word from God. So why do we need to know those things? Why do we need to know this in view of what we face today?

[13 : 15] I want to spend the rest of our time together by putting it all in perspective, because this serpent was not only in the garden. He's still lurking around. 1 Peter 5, 8 says, He is a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour.

And I believe you need to take him seriously, and I believe you need to properly assess the situation. And I want to help you do that today through God's word. First thing, just to put it simply, he is not all that.

He pretends to be. He's not what he makes himself out to be. He is a created being that went the wrong way.

Sometimes when people talk about him, it's easy to get the impression that it's Rocky versus Draco or something from Russia. And if you don't know what I'm talking about, I'm sorry.

You need to go home and watch all six movies of Rocky or seven or eight or nine or ten, however many there are. The reality is, this is not an even battle.

[14 : 23] We're warring out. He's not equal with God. He's not even close. Satan's not omnipotent.

He does not have all power. He cannot do anything he wants. Job teaches us that at least when dealing with believers, he can only do what God allows him to do.

And when Jesus cast out demons, they coward again and again and again. Not only that, but he's not omnipresent. He can't be everywhere at one time.

He can only tempt one. Now he has a lot of help because scripture tells us that he took a third of the stars or a third of the angels out of heaven and took them with him. And they began to work in his evil empire, spiritually, cosmically, around us.

But help me for a minute. If he took a third of the stars, which are synonymous for the angels there, if he took a third with him, how much was left?

[15 : 33] Y'all get your pens out and work on that a minute, all right? Twice as many. Twice as many. So if you have any question about the power of God himself, period, I want you to know that the forces that fight with us against evil are twice as much as what fight against us.

Not only that, but if you're a believer today, you have the Holy Spirit of God working in you. The same Holy Spirit that was in the creation of the world, the same Holy Spirit that had the power at the sound of his voice to create all things is the same one living in the believer.

The Christ that knows all things and is at all places at one time, including in our lives. What in the world are we worried about?

I want you to understand something too. Satan's not omniscient. He does not know all things. I hope I can explain this.

The demonic forces that war against our souls know a lot, but they're not omniscient. It is somewhat like AI and algorithms, and I'm a little out of my league here when I say this, but the best I understand from my own experience, if you search on your phone for an item, you go to Google and you look up that item on the internet, when you go back to Amazon, you'll see ads for it.

[17 : 17] Now, how's that? But I didn't search on Amazon. I searched on Google. Let me go beyond that. If you have a conversation with somebody about a product, when you have your phone on you, not when you're on the phone, but when your phone's on you, you'll get ads for the things you've talked about.

Some of you on Facebook. And if you're on Facebook and you have your phone sitting on the table in a restaurant and you talk about somebody and you're not on your phone, what happens when you go back to Facebook?

If they're not already your friend, whoever you talked about, there's a suggestion that they ought to be your friend and maybe you'd talk a little nicer about them. Now, does the phone read the mind?

No, it does not. Does it know all? No. But listen, it picks up on the patterns. It picks up on the things that you say.

It picks up on the places that you go. My phone will suggest to me how long it's going to take for me to get home from where I am.

[18 : 36] Well, what if I ain't going home? Just another voice in the car telling me what to do. The things you look at and it suggests what seems appropriate and if you're not careful, it'll suggest what seems inappropriate.

That is so much like the evil one that it's almost as if he uses this thing to destroy lives.

But I want you to understand he can't read your mind. He can't control your decisions. He can't make you do anything.

I don't want to freak you out when I tell you this. But I do want you to understand it. You're being watched. You're being listened to.

You're being pursued. Thank God the child of God has all of heaven rooting for us.

[19 : 54] And not only that, but the devil can't make us do it. And we're not near as alone in it as we think we are. 1 Corinthians 10, 13.

If you don't know this verse, you need to learn this verse and rest your life on it because it's one of those kind of verses. No temptation has overtaken you that's not common to man.

Now, I'm going to tell you, I'm tempted to pitch a tent here and stay here a while because one of the primary points that Satan loves to point out at people is, you're the only one that understands exactly your circumstances.

Nobody's ever been there. And if they were in the same situation that you were in, they'd all do the same thing. But somehow, yours is unique and different. He loves doing that. Thank God.

God is faithful. And he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation, he will also provide the way of escape.

[20 : 56] The devil can't make you do a thing that you may be able to endure it. That teaches us a bunch of stuff. One thing it teaches us is we're not alone.

We're not alone. We're not the only one that's dealt with what we're dealing with. And if we think we're the only one, the devil will try to convince us of that, that you're somehow an exception to God's rule, that therefore it's okay for you.

That's as dumb as getting in a cargo van that says free candy on the side of it. Don't do it. Don't do it. Don't fall for it. Others have dealt with the same thing.

We are also not alone because God is there, thank God. If you're a child of God, he walks with you, he talks with you, he lives within you, and he will take your hand and you'll just follow his lead and he'll lead you out.

Trust the Lord and his word. Don't trust your judgment. It's tainted. It's tainted. Proverbs 14, 12 says, there's a way that seems right to a man, but in the end, it's the way of death.

[22 : 04] So don't trust you. Trust him. He's not all that.

Not only that, he's not looking out for us. He's looking out for himself. Pride comes from Satan. He's eat up with it and he loves to pass it on.

Ego is stoked by Satan. I read Isaiah 14, 12 through 15 a little while ago. It makes it so clear. I just want you to see the I wills in two verses of scripture.

I will ascend to heaven above the stars of God. He wanted to be equal with God. He wanted to reach God's level. Above the stars means above the angels.

I will set my throne on high. In other words, he's got to be number one. I will set on the mount of assembly. That's the authoritative position. Verse 14, I will ascend above the heights of the clouds.

[23 : 06] The clouds are a symbol there of the glory of God. He will rise above the glory of God. He wants the glory that only God can receive. I will make myself like the most high.

That's his goal. Now listen, Satan can't take the place of God. He cannot defeat God. He knows that. Therefore, he will try to take the place of God in individual lives.

He wants to sit on the throne of your life. How does he do that? He tries to convince us to be our own gods or to be like God. That was his strategy in the garden and it's still a strategy.

It's not that complex, quite honestly. It's all about pride. Who's most important in your life? Are we the ones most important in our lives? Or is God what's most important in our lives?

Every time he says, you can do it, every time Satan says, you can, you can do that. You can think that. You can say that.

[24 : 22] All of that is based on his I wills. It all goes back to that. He's looking out for his causes. It's all about his pride and every sin we involve ourselves in comes from a base of our pride.

When we sin, we put ourselves first before God. When you sin, you decide that your, your action is more important than what God would have you to do.

That's what sin is. Period. Putting yourself on the throne of your life. It is prideful rebellion that marked his fall. The prophets tell us that. Revelation tells us that.

And he still prides himself on filling us full of pride and rebelling against God. He'll tell you what you want to hear to get you to do what he wants to do.

We'll look in the coming weeks more at that. But be clear about something. Satan is not all he pretends to be.

[25 : 28] He is not all he claims to be. And he's not looking out for you or for me. He's looking out for himself. What does that mean for us?

Well, based upon that, I'm going to give you three homework assignments. I don't like homework. Never liked homework. I don't like giving homework. But I'm going to give you some today.

One is this. Know that you are not alone. Keep reminding yourself you're not alone. You're not the only one that's been there.

Your circumstances, although unique, are not near as unique as they feel. Your circumstances do not justify wrong action.

Does not. We're here to build one another up. You're not alone. Let's encourage one another before it gets ugly.

[26 : 27] Let's. Listen to me. Let's encourage one another when it gets ugly. It's not time to kill the wounded.

It's time to love them. And let's know that it's not just us. First John 4, 4 says, He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.

God will win in you and through you. How does he do that? Second, I have to take home point. Stand strong.

Stand strong. Satan's a bully. You ever had a bully in your life? There's no boy in one of my classes and I was a freshman in high school.

I'd like to meet him in an alley. Man, I didn't want to meet him then. I was scared to death of him and he knew it. So he'd pursue me and mess with me and pick on me.

[27 : 37] I'm going to go look him up. The horror that it gives you most of the time for nothing.

That's what Satan does. He's a bully. He's a bunch of fluff. And you can sock him in the nose with the word of God. You can put him out if you'll just stick to God's word.

No temptation has seized you except what's coming to pass. And God will provide a way out. James 4 verse 7 says submit yourselves therefore to God.

Resist the devil and he'll flee from you. That's a promise of God's word you better hold on to. Resist him and he'll run from you.

He'll run from you. You give in and he'll hang around. Don't fall for his bluffs nor his horrible lies. You have God within you.

[28 : 52] His army is behind you. Don't be conjured into compromise. Third thing is this. Give thanks to God. Give thanks to God.

1 Corinthians 15 56 and 57 says this. The sting of death is sin and the power of sin is the law but thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

My friend, we can live holy for him. We can have victory over sin and when God gives you victory thank God for the victory.

Give him praise and when you do and you acknowledge that he brought you out victory will come that much more often and I promise you if you got a habit in your life don't do it the next time you feel like doing it and the next time it'll get a little easier not much easier it'll get a little easier and the next time it'll get a little easier and before long you'll be habitually following God because you made it a pattern in your life because you resisted the evil one and because he flees from you he'll hit you somewhere else turn around and face him where he does by the power of the blood of Christ you have victory because of what Christ did for you not because of your bravado not because y'all so good looking that's not where the victory is the victory is in Jesus and he's beat

Satan's beat and he knows it and so he's just going to cause a skirmish afterwards that's all thank the Lord for every victory and victory will come more often because I got news for you Satan's just a snake in the grass just a snake in the grass I have this this phobia of snakes I do I do I don't like them I don't like them now I'm fascinated by them it reminds me a lot of sin really I mean you know I'm fascinated by them when I go to the to the zoo I go to the whatever the serpentarium whatever it's called that's not what it's called but man I run to that thing and look at them snakes and I'm amazed by them they are amazing to me to watch them it just sends chills all over my mind as long as that glass is two inches thick between me and that 24 foot long python or boa or whatever it is going to wrap his little love and alarms around me

[31 : 45] I want nothing to do with it when I was a kid there was a bush that overhung a creek in our neighborhood and there was some type of green snake that would hang out in that bush I come up on it I'd go around town and pick up or go around my little community and pick up beer cans and coke cans and all that stuff and I'd get different sponsors for the boats that I'd race down the creek and I'd race some cans down the creek and when I got to that bush I there was a snake in there so I just kept I hope you get the spiritual principle because I ain't got time to share it I just kept going back to that bush scared to death barefooted scared to death but wanting to see another one they'd kind of wrap around that old branch on that bush and I'd have to look in there because they're the same color as the leaves I'd see one and I'd be you know I just kept going back kept going back one day I left there and I was disappointed because I didn't see anything and I took off walking and when I looked down there was a little bitty brown snake he wasn't bigger than an elementary pencil

I mean he was tiny but he had his little head raised up he was just sunning there and he let his little tongue out at me and I ran a quarter of a mile home afraid to look behind me because he might be coming down the road after me I was scared to death let me tell you what I did wrong I kept going back to the bush I kept wanting just to get a glimpse I didn't want to pick them up didn't want them to wrap around my arm didn't want to love on them I just wanted to go back and get a hint of it that's what I did wrong what I did right is when I saw one I tucked tail and ran there are parts of your life today that you need to tuck tail and run scripture says flee away from quit letting him mess with you and if he's got you discouraged and he's got you beat down and feeling defeated resist him resist him and he'll run from you trust the Lord don't let a snake in the grass make you skittish you live for the

Lord Jesus with every head bowed and every eye closed I don't know who needs to hear what this morning but I'm telling you Genesis chapter 3 and I've just tried to lay a foundation for it tells us so much about the world in which we live today explains so much of the struggles that we have so many of those are inward but man what's inward ends up becoming outward if you're here this morning and you've never given your heart and life to the Lord Jesus Christ I want you to know Jesus came and died for you he took your sin upon himself he died in your place and if you'll confess your sins before God if you'll agree with God on your sin you'll ask him to change your life and become the

Lord of your life and from this day forward you'll live for him I think God he'll accept you where you are he'll save you for all of eternity and empower you to stand strong against the evil one everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved he'll change you today if you even feel an inkling that way I promise you it didn't come from you it came from God pursuing you you respond to that in obedience maybe you're here this morning and privately you've made a decision for Christ you've surrendered your life to him but you've never made that public you've never told anybody about it I encourage you to make that public today you're to follow up that decision with baptism to let other people know it's what Jesus showed us how to do it's what Jesus commanded us to do I encourage you to come I'd love to guide you in that process maybe God's drawing you to this church you're a believer but you feel like God's leading you to this church to be a part of this church you come

I'd love to guide you in that and maybe you just got stuff ah let's be honest we got stuff that we need to take before the Lord don't sing through this invitation and fail to do business with God because it'd be easy to do you do business with God whether it's in your place where you are whether it's at this altar you lay it down before the Lord and you commit today that you'll resist the evil one you'll change a pattern in your life with the hope of the Holy Spirit of God leading you in that for his cause and for his kingdom Lord Jesus I love you and I thank you for the privilege you give us Lord to be in this place and God I pray Father you'll work and move in our midst right now as only you can in Jesus precious name Amen Amen