

Fallen

Genesis 3-5

Central Idea: Despite the regular falling short of God's excellent goal, God continues to redeem humans who miss His best.

Introduction

Many of us at some point in our lives have witnessed the moment of apprehension, fear, the heart-pounding feeling that we are just not good enough, that we're in over our heads. I get this feeling sometimes when it concerns money. When I have situations in which I owe people money, it at least makes me nervous, but many times it's worse than just nervous. Just like anyone else, I fear failure and reaching the end of my rope. We've all been there.

In Genesis 3-5, we begin to see that in those moments of utter failure, God is there, and He is actively redeeming the situations that we get ourselves into. We will see a pattern of sin and redemption in these chapters and characters' stories. They will go too far, and God will do what they could not. Let's take a look at the first human beings in God's creation and how He redeemed their worst situations!

Text – Genesis 3:8-19

⁸ 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. ⁹ But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?" ¹⁰ And he said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself." ¹¹ He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" ¹² The man said, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate." ¹³ 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." ¹⁴ 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. ¹⁵ 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." ¹⁶ 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." ¹⁷ 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; ¹⁸ thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. ¹⁹ 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.”

Text – Genesis 4:8-14

⁸ Cain spoke to Abel his brother. And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him. ⁹ Then the LORD said to Cain, “Where is Abel your brother?” He said, “I do not know; am I my brother’s keeper?” ¹⁰ And the LORD said, “What have you done? The voice of your brother’s blood is crying to me from the ground. ¹¹ And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your hand. ¹² When you work the ground, it shall no longer yield to you its strength. You shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth.” ¹³ Cain said to the LORD, “My punishment is greater than I can bear. ¹⁴ Behold, you have driven me today away from the ground, and from your face I shall be hidden. I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me.”

- I. God’s high standard is set for His people.
 - A. His love compels Him to set the standard.
 - i. When we come to Genesis 3-5, we see two accounts of the first people on earth, first Adam and Eve, and then Cain and Abel, their sons. We are going to see that sin begins with the parents, and then continues to the sons.
 - ii. God sets His high standards for us because He wants our very best and because He loves us. Most approach things like the Law of God with trepidation, thinking that God just wants to rule our lives and tell us what to do.
 - iii. On one level, God does want to be the Lord of our lives, but the reasoning for His lordship is wholly different than the reasons humans have for becoming rulers.
 - iv. God wants our very best. He set up and designed the world with certain rules for living that will bring blessing, satisfaction and pleasure into our lives, but there are other ways in which our living will bring curses, destruction and pain.
 - v. So when we approach God’s choice between obeying His one law in Genesis 3 and seeing His high standard of excellence in the offerings of Cain and Abel, it is easy for us to see Him as some mean-spirited God expecting more than humans can handle, but that is not the case.
 - vi. God sets two paths before Adam and Eve. They choose the path that leads to destruction, as all of us have done as we have sinned against God. He sets before Cain two paths, and Cain chooses that of murder, which sets in motion the opposite of God’s very best for his life.

- vii. As is made clear in the book of Proverbs, when we choose folly instead of wisdom, we will reap the consequences of folly. Here, we see this principle played out in the lives of Adam and Eve, and then in their children, Cain and Abel.
- viii. **Application:** God loves us and wants His very best for our lives. But when we choose options that do not glorify Him or that are destructive to His purposes and plan in creation, we will find ourselves in danger, dread and pain. It seems from the creation of the world that humans had choices, and that they tend to choose the path that leads to destruction. We need the wisdom and discipline of the Lord to see His blessing!

B. His standard is a challenge to be accepted.

- i. Some might approach the “impossible” challenge of a high standard from God as a level that we can’t reach. Some would think that holiness is never going to be reached in our lives.
- ii. But God did not set impossible goals at all. He set standards that are challenges for us to reach. If they were not possible, what would be the purpose of a loving God giving them to us?
- iii. He knows that we can achieve these high goals. That is why He set them for us. Not only this, but He also gave us His Holy Spirit, who helps us to attain these goals.
- iv. We see the end product of God’s goal, which is to make us more like Jesus, and that is not only a lofty goal, but a good goal. It makes us better than we could be on our own.
- v. So here, God expects certain things from the first humans. From Adam and Eve, He expects obedience, but they choose rebellion. From Cain and Abel, He expects excellence in their offerings and discipline, but Cain chooses anger and murder instead.
- vi. God warned Adam and Eve of the dangers of eating from the forbidden fruit, but they did not listen, and God honored their choice. Some wonder why God doesn’t just fix all the injustice of the world, but they neglect the fact that this is what we chose.
- vii. God warned Cain that if he was angry, sin was crouching at his door, but Cain did not listen, and anger led to Abel’s death, the first murder between brothers.
- viii. **Application:** God does not challenge us with impossible laws and commands. He wants us to rise to the challenge, to call on His Holy Spirit to help us achieve those high and lofty goals. His standards are not impossible when we obey, discipline ourselves, and ask the Holy Spirit for help!

II. Humans fall short of His standard.

- A. The regular reaction to God's standard is sin.
- i. We see it at least twice in these passages, that first Adam and Eve, and then Cain will violate God's high standards and find themselves in consequences they could not have imagined.
 - ii. The challenge for us today is to understand that free will requires at least two choices. And that is what God gives Adam and Eve. They freely choose rebellion and God honors their choice.
 - iii. Let's take this to eternity. If people choose for their whole lives sin and selfishness and rebellion, then they bear in this life and the next the consequences of that choice, where sin causes physical death, and separation from God, which is what Hell is in eternity.
 - iv. But if people live a righteous life, seek God and His ways, practice His ways and obey, they will have abundant life with His help in this life and in the next, this union with God is what Heaven is like for eternity.
 - v. Those two choices are enough to give our free will what it needs. And every day, we make decisions in one of those two directions. We are still choosing between two paths today.
 - vi. There is a sin cycle in Genesis 3-5 that we see as we read, and the accounts of Genesis 3 and 4 have the same cycle when we look closely at them.
 - vii. First, we see God's expectations, then we see the reality of the situation, that the humans tend to choose disobedience. Next, we see the consequences, that God curses the fallen creation, and that there are lasting consequences for their sin.
 - viii. **Application:** It is no different today. We still see this when we choose the wicked path, the selfish path, and the sinful path. The same options are still before us every time we must decide how to proceed in our lives. The decisions that we make affect our whole lives, the whole course of our lives, not just that moment. But we tend to only look at the moment's consequences. Consider the future when you have decisions to make!
- B. The results of sin are devastating and all-encompassing.
- i. Let's take a closer look at the results of sin and disobedience and rebellion. These accounts are in the Bible to instruct us in our own character and walk with God, in our own decisions we make today.
 - ii. Looking at Adam and Eve's account first, we find that God gives them the choice of either obedience or disobedience. He does not force them to violate His choices. He tells them of the consequences first.
 - iii. It is the serpent, a representative of Satan, that challenges God's word and entices Eve and Adam to disobey God's word and neglect the consequence that He told them.

- iv. For the first time, God's creation challenges His word! Notice that in chapter one, if God spoke, it happened. The power of His voice was not challenged. But the serpent challenges His word, and humans have been doing it ever since.
- v. When we hear from God through His Word, the Bible, through the Holy Spirit, or through any other means by which God speaks, and we don't obey, we are letting Genesis 3 happen all over again.
- vi. God must curse His once-good creation out of necessity based on the decision of human beings. Please understand that God does not enjoy cursing the earth or the people in it or the creatures. He does it because of the pollution of sin into the world.
- vii. The curse is three-fold, once for woman, once for man, and once for the serpent, for all three violated the choice to not eat the fruit. The serpent challenged God's word and enticed the woman. The woman ate of the fruit first, but the man was right there and also ate.
- viii. The violation is different for each of them. The serpent challenged and taught to challenge God's word. The woman took leadership in the home from her husband and personally disobeyed the word God gave when she reasoned it would be good to eat. The man did not stop her, exhort her to not sin against God, remind her of the consequences, or anything else. The man passively ate and let his wife take his ordained place in the home.
- ix. For these violations, God set in place with great despair the curse as a direct result of their choices. He honored their choices with the resulting consequence, the curse.
- x. Now let's see the same results in Cain's life. Interestingly, the first brothers understood that God deserves sacrifice, and so they sacrificed to the Lord. Each of them offered a sacrifice of their life path.
- xi. For instance, Abel was a man of hunting and shepherding, so he offered up the best of his first animals. Cain was a man of farming and planting, so he offered up some of his crop to the Lord.
- xii. Some make a distinction that Cain's offering is not accepted by the Lord because it is not a blood sacrifice of an animal, however, I believe that it was not the offering itself, but the excellence of the offering that is called into question.
- xiii. We see in the sacrificial system later that there are all kinds of offerings, not only the animal sacrifices, but those of grain, bread, drink offerings and the like. It is possible, however, that there is a difference between an offering and a sacrifice. Most of the offerings are out of gratitude for God's provision while the sacrifices are to atone for sin.

- xiv. It is unclear from the passage whether or not these are offerings or sacrifices. God has a set expectation or standard of excellence, and they are both aware of it, but Cain does not fulfill His standard of excellence.
- xv. Instead of reacting with humility and attempting to offer a better offering, Cain turns to anger and jealousy over his brother's more privileged and accepted offering.
- xvi. And the results are staggering! In Adam and Eve's case, sin will lead to death, first the death of their close relationship with God as sin separates immediately, and eventually to physical death.
- xvii. But Cain brings physical death to the forefront and immediacy through his angry response, and now blood has been shed and life has been taken. It is understood that God is the giver of life and death, not humans.
- xviii. In his anger, Cain brings the promise of death for sin right to the front, but it is not his life that is taken for his sin. Instead his sin violates his brother's life. Sin will always affect more than just you. Adam and Eve's sin is seen in Cain's reactions. Cain's sin impacts Abel's wellbeing, not his own.
- xix. **Application:** Your sin will always affect more than you realize. It will be more encompassing than you could have calculated in the consequences it brings, and it will affect more people than you thought. It's one of the first lies of the enemy that my sin will only hurt me. The fact is that our sin hurts others.

III. God redeems Humans from Sin.

A. God does not see our sin as an impossible barrier.

- i. Once again, in Cain's position, we see that God must ordain a curse, though it hurts Him to do so. Things had started so well with a very good creation and the highlight of creating humankind.
- ii. We see God cursing Cain for his sin against his brother, and the thing that he loved to do, to farm the land and to get its fruits, was no longer an option for him. Instead of being a country boy who loves to farm, Cain goes off and sets up a city (Gen 4:17).
- iii. The curse of God by its nature, just as the consequence of death for Adam and Eve, is a hurtful and destructive curse, but more than warranted by the choice to sin. It takes away Cain's joy and love of farming. Your sin will take away your dreams and joys and desires, for they are collateral in your willful desire to do your own thing.
- iv. Does sin keep happening in the human race? Yep. In fact, Lamech will commit the same sin in the fifth generation from Cain. And he demanded the grace of God rather than asked for it (Gen 4:23-24).

- v. But even with the harshness of the curse, God does not leave Cain to death by the first person that finds him. Along with the curse comes God's seal of Cain.
 - vi. Seals are not used all that often in the Bible, and so we must see God's grace in this approach. While many only see Cain's story as a failure, God does indeed bring a redemptive purpose to Cain's situation.
 - vii. Seals are used throughout the Bible by kings to show their protection, authority and ownership of documents. God seals Cain, seals the saints in Revelation and seals angels, amongst others. This seal protects Cain from those who wish to kill him for his sin.
 - viii. Cain cannot bear the consequences of his sin, but that is what happens when we sin. Sin promises much but delivers very little. In fact, it takes rather than gives. For the momentary pleasure we get out of our sin, we suffer much more than we enjoy.
 - ix. Still, God protects him by giving him a mark or seal for the rest of his natural days. Sin always leads to death, so Cain eventually dies, but he becomes an urban man instead of a rural one. And his line will not turn out so well.
 - x. **Application:** Our sin will lead to consequences. Sometimes we get so used to the consequences of sin that we don't even realize what life could be like without these consequences. Our whole world is steeped in sin and fallen, and so we have become used to the new normal rather than standing in God's better vision of the way things could be. Let's not get so comfortable with the consequences of sin that we don't realize how much it truly destroys our lives and hopes and dreams!
- B. God provides a way back to Him.
- i. In the first story of Adam and Eve, the redemptive act of God is only displayed in a sentence, but it's powerful if you read closely. Adam and Eve had tried to fix their own sin problem.
 - ii. They took fig leaves and weaved them together as garments, but that is only a temporary fix. Fig leaves do not last a very long time at all. Their hiding from God did not show any improvement from the results of sin either.
 - iii. **Illustration:** Even today, children who know they are in trouble will run from the authority rather than face it for punishment. Just last week as I was enjoying my vacation with my family, my little niece found one of my computer cords and as soon as I walked toward her to retrieve them so she did not hurt herself, she booked it for the other side of the room.

- iv. We are still blaming others and running away and hiding like Adam and Eve did. This is how we lose our innocence, because we become quite good at hiding, or so we think!
- v. But there is no place we can go to hide from God. When God asks the question, “Where are you?” it is not because He does not know or because he cannot find them, but because they are to realize what disobedience has done to their relationship with God. They used to walk with God in the garden in the cool of the day and now they are hiding in the bushes.
- vi. Sin will destroy your relationship with God. It will keep you from the joy of the Lord, from the presence of God, and from His will for your life. It gives you a false covering, a false sense of hiding, but God will expose your soul.
- vii. But then there is the grace of God as He provides the first sacrifice for human sin in Genesis 3:21. God made clothes for them out of animal skins. Think for a second. Where do you get animal skins? From dead animals. Though it’s not explicit in the text, it seems that God has sacrificed animals for their sins.
- viii. Later, the ultimate sacrifice for the sin of humanity will once again be initiated and completed by God through His Son Jesus on the cross! God has always founded the initiative for human redemption! We can’t heal, save, deliver ourselves. It requires an act of God, even from the very beginning.
- ix. We will discover that of the two lines, Cain’s and Seth’s, Seth’s line seems to continue at least some semblance of godliness. God is willing to walk with everyone but some resisted His presence.
- x. We could compare Lamech who killed a man like his father five generations removed to Enoch who walked with God and was taken from the earth at the age of 365. We see that though both lines are touched by sin and sin is everywhere, that there is a way toward godliness. But we must choose it!
- xi. **Application:** God always provides a redemptive solution. It may not be easy. It may not be popular. It may not be what you wanted or expected. It might mean sacrifices on your part from your desires. But He is always working in His creation His redemptive purposes. He seeks to return you to the place He had at the beginning of the world, when all was right with it! But God does not sit around. He is actively pursuing your redemption and mine. Always.

Conclusion

From the first sin of Adam and Eve, humans have struggled with free will. We tend to choose the wrong path, but God has not given up on us. We even try to cover our own sins or fix it ourselves, but that never works in the long run. God works tirelessly to provide a way of redemption. He has most recently provided that way of redemption through His ultimate sacrifice in Jesus Christ. And through trusting in His sacrifice, each of us can receive God's salvation from sin and into His presence!

Action Points

- God sets high standards that we can only meet with the power of the Holy Spirit. It is possible for us to live a holy and righteous life before God when we are obedient to His Word and Spirit! How long can you go without sinning? Have you ever tried to extend that length?
- Sin always has more consequences than we might have considered. It affects more than just us, but others around us. It affects more consequences than we could have imagined, and changes the course of our lives and our walk with God. Don't let sin ruin your life!
- God is working His redemptive purposes in us even now. He sent Jesus to be our sacrifice, to pay for the sin that we willfully chose long ago. But now in this new life, God expects us to choose Him and obedience! How can you act in a way that shows God gratitude for His sacrifice for you today?