

## The Beginning: Vandalism of God's Good Gifts

### Genesis 3:8-24 (Part 1)

The most famous painting in the world is the Mona Lisa, painted in 1503 by Italian artist Leonardo Da Vinci. It's the most visited, most studied, most sung about, and most parodied work of art in existence. It has rightfully earned the description of "masterpiece." It currently resides in the Louvre Museum in France and is a monument of western culture that you really can't put a price tag on.

With the importance of the painting it may surprise you to know that it has frequently been the subject of vandalism. In 1956 the lower half of the painting was doused in acid while on loan to a museum in southern France. That same year a Bolivian man threw a rock at it and chipped it. The mark was later repaired.

After that it was put behind bulletproof glass, as you can see here, but even that didn't stop attempts to destroy it. In 1974 a handicapped woman who was upset about the Louvre's lack of access for the disabled spray painted the glass around the picture and in 2009 a Russian woman who was mad at being denied French citizenship threw a coffee mug, which she had purchased in the museum gift shop, at the painting.

It seems crazy to attempt to vandalize something as priceless as a Da Vinci painting, but this morning I want you to think of the introduction of sin into God's creation as the vandalism of God's good gift. One author described sin this way:

*"In the biblical worldview even when sin is devastatingly familiar, it is never normal. It is alien. It doesn't belong in God's world. Sin is always a departure from the norm and is assessed accordingly. Sin is deviant and perverse, an injustice or iniquity or ingratitude. Sin in the Exodus literature is disorder and disobedience. Sin is faithlessness, lawlessness, godlessness. Sin is both the overstepping of a line and a failure to reach it – both transgression and shortcoming. Sin is a missing of the mark, a spoiling of goods, a staining of garments, a hitch in one's gait, a wandering from the path, a fragmenting of the whole. Sin is what culpably disturbs shalom. Sinful human life is a caricature of proper human life." – Cornelius Plantinga*

Sin is the vandalism of God's good world. I have labored throughout this series in Genesis 1-3 to show you that God's creation of the world was a magnificently

good and precious gift. Sin is a spoiling of that which is good. Imagine what it would have been like for a moment to approach the Mona Lisa after acid had been dumped on its lower half. The painting is forever altered. I feel like we are at the point in Genesis 3 where acid has just been dumped onto God's masterpiece. This week and next week we want to see exactly how the masterpiece has been altered. The tragedy of the vandalism of sin will be overwhelming at times, but the wonderful part of this story is that even within the dramatic changes that result from sin there will be hope of a completely restored creation. The Mona Lisa will never go back to its pre-vandalism days. But God promises that His masterpiece will. So, in Genesis 3:8-24 we are going to look at the results of the vandalism of sin and see **3 Outcomes of the first sin that dramatically shape life today.**

### **1. Alienation (vv. 8-13)**

We began last week to see the immediate consequences of Adam and Eve's decision to eat the fruit in verses 7-8. Let's read those verses again. Adam and Eve were used to walking with God in the evenings and enjoying his presence. Now, they rush to hide as he approaches. You can see the immediate alienation between God and man and as we walk along the immediate aftermath of their sin we will see that the disruption in relationships extends far beyond God and man.

As God approaches he graciously and kindly calls out to Adam in verse 9. Of course, He knows exactly where Adam is, but he gently calls to Adam to draw him out of hiding. The questioning that happens here is an act of grace itself. God could have left Adam and Eve in their sinful condition or He could have brought physical death immediately. Instead, He graciously seeks them out to draw a confession out of Adam.

Notice here that God calls specifically to the man. He is the covenant head and leader. He received the command in chapter 2 and he chose to rebel in chapter 3. He bears the weight of responsibility and this is why Paul says in Romans 5:12 that sin came into the world through one man.

You can see Adam's sense of alienation from God on full display in verse 10. Now, rather than delight in the presence of God Adam experiences fear and terror. The serpent presented the eating of the fruit as something that would expand their horizons. It would make them more fully alive. In reality, the knowledge it

brought to Adam and Eve was not liberating but confusing, disruptive, and introduced shame. Rather than initially admit to his wrongdoing Adam tries to divert the conversation by giving an excuse for why he is hiding. He's attempting a cover up. God responds in verse 11 with two questions.

Think about the answer to the first question. Who had told Adam he was naked? It wasn't the serpent. It wasn't God. It was his own conscience. He is experiencing the guilt for his crime. God knows this and that is why he asks the second question. The guilt, shame, fear, and alienation all comes from the breaking of God's command.

But rather than admit his sin, Adam's guilt before God drives him to turn on his bride. Look at verse 12. Think about the last words Adam said concerning his wife in 2:23. What a dramatic change. His delight has turned to disgust. You can see here that he is blaming the woman and God for his sin. He no longer views God as the giver of good gifts but now thinks that God is the one who messed things up!

What is actually going on when we blame shift? Well, we don't want the sense of being guilty or responsible for our sin. We don't want to acknowledge that we have violated God's law, so we try to offload that guilt onto someone else. In other words, blame shifting happens when guilt is present.

God turns to Eve and rather than think of this as God agreeing with Adam that Eve is the problem, understand God as bringing Eve's sin into the discussion as well. Look at verse 13. She feels the guilt and shifts the blame to the serpent.

Like a mirror that has been smashed with a hammer, the harmony that once existed has been shattered into a million pieces by sin. Divine to human, human to human, and even human to the natural world. Sin vandalizes our relationships but thankfully we aren't left forever in this state of disruption.

One of the glorious ways that our salvation in Christ is described is reconciliation. Of course, we are reconciled to God, but a sweet byproduct of that is our reconciliation with one another. We are reconciled, but we still have the remnants of the sinful nature attempting to pull us back apart and create division and fractures in our relationships with one another. This is why there is such an emphasis on unity among believers in the NT. The church is the masterpiece of God showing to the world what life is like in the new creation. How can we live

together in frustration, anger, gossip, and bitterness when God's goal in our salvation is reconciliation? Listen to 2 Corinthians 5:17-19. Let's live out our vertical reconciliation with God in our horizontal relationships with one another.

Now, this alienation that comes from sin is the vandalism of God's good creation. What kind of an art enthusiast would respond to the vandalism of the Mona Lisa with a shrug and an embrace of the perpetrator? No, the crime committed against God's masterpiece will bring swift judgment and that is the 2<sup>nd</sup> outcome we see.

## **2. Condemnation (vv. 14-19)**

The condemnation of God on this disobedience unfolds to each of the three parties involved. Each will suffer judgment because of his or her role in the vandalism of God's artwork. It's fascinating to see that each judgment will correspond to the nature of the crime. He begins with the serpent in verses 14-15 and unlike Adam and Eve, God only has words of condemnation for the serpent. The man and woman, made in His image will be the recipients of grace in the midst of judgment, but not the serpent. In fact, the serpent's defeat is the very means by which mankind receives victory. But we'll get to that.

Now, as you read these two verses you have to keep in mind that in the temptation story we read about an actual snake, but that snake was empowered by Satan. So, don't read these verses as speaking to the snake you find in your back yard, but to the Father of lies. Look at verse 14. Overall this verse points to the humiliation and defeat of Satan. He was exalted in pride and now he will be brought low through humiliation and loss.

Snakes don't actually eat dust and this phrase is used elsewhere to describe defeat. Listen to Psalm 72:9. But verse 15 makes it very clear that something much bigger than a garden snake is being addressed here.

Verse 15 describes an ongoing and escalating conflict that will result in injury for one party and ultimate defeat for the other. Look there. The word enmity speaks to an ongoing hostility, beginning with the woman and the serpent but continuing between the offspring of the woman and the offspring of the serpent. Now, this word offspring can also be translated "seed" and it's singular, but it can refer either to a collective group or a representative of that group. So, it may refer to

the nation of Israel or it may refer to the king of Israel as the representative of the nation. You see both of those played out in the OT and I think both are described here in verse 15.

The enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent here sets up a dichotomy between two opposing groups of people. In Scripture children are expected to resemble their parents and the offspring of the serpent reflect their father, the serpent, by opposing the purposes of God. The seed of the woman are those whom God uses to advance His purposes and promises.

There's a great battle or friction between these two groups. Those who belong to the seed of the serpent make every attempt to destroy the seed of the woman. Think about the next story in Scripture in Genesis 4. Cain aligned himself with the pride and disobedience of the serpent while Abel offered his sacrifice in a way that honored God. Cain killed Abel and it's clear that he was driven by anti-God purposes.

The importance of the seed of the woman is clearly demonstrated throughout the book of Genesis. Genesis 5 is the first genealogy in the Bible and I know you are tempted to skip genealogies, but this one begins with Adam as God's son and continues to Noah. But notice what is said of Noah by his father in 5:28-29. His father was trusting in the promise of God that the seed of the woman would deliver them from the curse brought on by the serpent. In Genesis 11 we find the ultimate representation of the seed of the serpent. The people collectively gather together to make a name for themselves apart from God and to specifically oppose God's purposes. Listen to 11:4. After God deals with this attempt to exalt mankind we find another genealogy going from Noah's son Shem down to Abraham.

We can trace the "seed" of the woman from Adam to Noah to Abraham. Then we find that God gives us more information concerning how He will crush the head of the serpent and advance his purposes in Genesis 12:1-3. It's through Abrahams line and God will create an entire nation from Abraham and blessing will come through this nation.

And so, the rest of Genesis is the story of this family line, the seed of the woman. The focus moves from Abraham to Isaac to Jacob. But at each point along the way there are threats and hindrances to the advancement of the seed of the woman.

Then in the book of Exodus the focus becomes the entire nation of Israel, collectively, as advancing God's purposes as God's son, the seed of the woman. Listen to Exodus 4:22-23. But in Exodus you have the seed of the serpent, Pharaoh and his servants trying to eliminate the seed of the woman. Think about the attempt by Pharaoh to wipe out all the male Hebrew children through forced infanticide. Think about the enslavement of the Israelites under Pharaoh. The conflict continues.

As the OT progresses the promises get more specific that a singular individual will be this seed from the nation of Israel and that He will be a King, representing the people and winning a great victory on their behalf. But as the OT progresses you see the seed of the serpent tempting God's children to betray their maker and instead give into the same temptation of their first parents. The conflict continues.

The conflict will come to head, and both parties will suffer. Notice the language here. The serpent's head will be crushed but the seed of the woman will be injured in the fight. The entire OT is built on this promise in Genesis 3:15 that the work of the serpent will be undone through a coming individual who will suffer in victory.

We have the ability to look back from our vantage point in time and see passages like Galatians 4:4-5 and hear an echo of Genesis 3:15 in the words, "born of a woman" concerning Jesus Christ. But what would Adam have known at this point? Adam would have heard this promise of the defeat of the serpent with great hope. His vision would have been clouded but he no doubt could have seen enough to know that God had not abandoned them. Things would be set right. The masterpiece would be restored. And this hope would have given him the ability to endure the painful judgment he would suffer as a result of his sin. But this hope would have also given him the faith he needed to turn from his sin and trust in the goodness of God for his future.

Adam lived a long time after these events and life was hard for him. But he was sustained by looking back to the Words of God in this promise. It's no different for you and I today. We live under the same vandalism of God's good world. But we also live under the same promise of Romans 16:20. Hope is there this week.