

Foundations: In the Beginning...OUR FAILURES
Genesis 3:1-13 (June 4, 2017)

We are looking at some foundational texts that we find in the book of beginnings—the first book in the Bible: Genesis.

Last Sunday, we saw how God designed us to be workers. He assigned us the task of working in this world that He first worked to create. As we do our work, God also commanded that we take care of His creation. It's not ours to destroy.

But, of course, we may choose to destroy it anyway. And we learn why all the way back here in Genesis chapter three.

In this text that we will get to in a moment, we are introduced to a foundational problem that we must deal with: OUR FAILURES.

If there's anything we all share in common, it's this tendency to mess up, to fail—or, in the words of Scripture, to sin. What we also learn here in Genesis—and this message extends throughout the Bible—is that the failures of any of us... affect all of us.

We see this especially, though, in the failures of Adam and Eve. Together, they make a big mistake—and their sin creates havoc for the rest of us.

They break the one rule God gives them in the Garden, and now we all share in the consequences of their failure! Listen to the story as we find it in **Genesis 3:1-13**:

1 Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?" 2 The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, 3 but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.' "

4 "You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman. 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." 6 When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also

gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. 7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

8 Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. 9 But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?" 10 He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid."

11 And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?" 12 The man said, "The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it." 13 Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

Well, as chapter three continues, we're told how God chose to punish their misdeeds: the serpent will crawl on its belly, the woman will experience pain in her belly during childbirth, and the man will be able to fill his belly only by the sweat of his brow.

Then Adam and Eve are expelled from the Garden with only the fig leaves on their backs, so to speak.

Okay, so failure is universal. All have sinned. But have we ever made mistakes that not only affected OUR lives, but also the lives of OTHERS? Most of us have; and it's likely all of us, at some point, will.

Now, most of our failures involve insignificant things. We apologize and recover quickly. Soon, all is forgotten.

For a time, though, our sins make us feel small. They shake our confidence. We wonder how we could've been so careless... or thoughtless.

We've seen this many times--how a single mistake committed by just one person can affect the lives of many. We're in baseball season. A player drops the ball that was "right in his glove." It turns a sure win into a loss.

His team and their fans leave the stadium disappointed, while the other team and their fans celebrate—because... “ol’ butter fingers” let their team score the winning run!

Most of us keep these things in perspective, of course. We realize that it’s only a game, after all. It’s different, though, when someone drinks or smokes or pops, and then drives under the influence, causing an accident that maims or kills someone we love.

Or a dishonest broker misuses the retirement funds we’ve saved and accumulated over a lifetime, leaving us destitute. Mistakes like these and so many others affect us deeply and painfully.

They can be even more tragic still. If it’s the pilot of the plane, the captain of the ship, or the conductor of the train who makes a critical error, many more lives are affected. Many more hearts are broken; and the terrible consequences multiply.

This is part of the message that we find in Genesis 3—that our mistakes and failures send out these small ripples or even large waves that rock many boats. And when we deliberately choose to do what God specifically tells us not to do—which is always a big mistake, friends—when we disobey God, there are consequences.

Adam and Eve happened to be the first to sin, but I’m inclined to believe that had it been any of us instead of the two of them, the outcome would have been the same. Sooner or later, we would’ve eaten the forbidden fruit too.

Adam and Eve are you and me, forever finding ways in our freedom to disobey the God who gave us this freedom. In the process, we, like all those who’ve come before us, make a mess of our lives and, also, the lives of others.

This was bound to happen to Adam and Eve, just as it happens to us—and here’s why. It’s because of the way God made us. God could have created robots, I suppose, and then controlled their every action.

I mentioned robotics last week when we talked about work. Manufacturers are finding that because their robots can be programmed not to make bad choices, they’re more efficient, and much easier to work with!

God could have done that. But God knew He couldn't have a meaningful relationship with a robot. So, instead, God created us--human beings--made in His own image with the freedom to make our own choices--good or bad.

It wasn't the easiest approach God could've taken. I may not always agree with the decisions you make; and you won't always agree with mine. That's the downside of this--YOU have the freedom to be wrong--and I do too!

God knows, though, that having this freedom to choose is best, even when our choices "miss the mark." Without the ability to disagree with each other or, for that matter, to disagree with or even to reject God--think about it: if we had no choice in these matters, all our relationships would be meaningless.

God gives us the gift of freedom knowing that we will make decisions that other people won't agree with, just as we'll make choices that clearly go against God's will.

It's not just our relationship with God that gets complicated. This freedom we have to choose is why all our relationships require effort and humility, coupled with grace, forgiveness, and love.

Before God ever blew the breath of life into Adam and Eve's lungs, God knew they would be tempted by the allure of "being like God," as Satan put it. They would choose to disobey their Creator and eat the forbidden fruit.

God also knew they would need to be saved from sin's death sentence by yet another gift of mercy. He realized that this would be Adam and Eve's story, and yours and mine as well--yet He gave us the gift of life--fullness of life and freedom anyway!

So after God created this world, making something out of nothing, bringing order out of chaos, we come along and--follow this--through what Reinhold Niebuhr referred to as our sense of "Godalmightiness," we keep making mistakes and committing sins that push our lives and our world back toward confusion and chaos and brokenness. All of this is right here in Genesis 3!

What's also very clear is that when we make these mistakes, we don't want to own up to them. Everybody wants to do what they want to do, no matter what God says. And have you noticed:

everybody wants to be excused from their misdeeds, no matter how their bad choices have affected others. That's here too.

It's almost humorous—in a “you either have to laugh or cry” kind of way--how much Adam and Eve and all the rest of us resemble each other! **“God said, ‘Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?’**

(So...) **The man said, ‘The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.’”**
(Genesis 3:11-12)

It's HER fault, God! Women, you've never heard that before, have you? Your significant other would never blame you... just like you... would never blame him!

One man tried to explain it to his wife like this: “I didn't say it was your *fault*. I'm just *blaming* you.” That makes sense, doesn't it?

We expend a lot of energy deciding who's to blame... when all that effort could go into finding solutions to the messes we make!

But how many times do we attempt to excuse our actions by claiming they're really somebody else's fault? That's what Adam did. Eve did it too.

When you look at what Adam said, though, it sounds like he was pointing at both Eve and God... as the real causes of this mess. YOU put that woman here with me, God. YOU are the one who made her so luscious and irresistible.

You gave her those apples to tempt me with—which she DID! Who could BLAME me? No, really, God, WHO could blame ME???

Listen, when times are tough, and reputations are on the line, this only gets worse—everybody starts looking for somebody else to blame! Some will even spend millions of dollars on lawyers or commercials to try to convince us who's to blame.

We see this all the time in big business and politics. Sometimes, though, we see it much closer to home.

Jim Wright wrote an editorial in the Dallas Morning News several years ago about the Carter High School championship football

team. A number of the players on that team got arrested for committing robberies and other crimes.

These were young men with bright futures. Most of them could have gone on to college to play football. Some of them had a shot at the pros—and those guys make pretty good money!

But none of that came about. Why? Because, just for the fun of it, these young men started robbing convenience stores. Jim Wright quoted the quarterback of the team who said after they were caught, "We did this to ourselves. No one made us hold up those stores. We can't blame anyone but ourselves."

Wright then summarized his article with this:

"The thought that we have the freedom to choose our own path, and that having chosen, we are responsible for our choice is a very large one. You don't hear it much in the public forums today. Nowadays it seems the style is to look for ways to get the offender off the hook by finding somebody or something else to blame."

Of course, some will try to blame all this on that old serpent, Satan. That's what Eve did: **"Then the LORD God said to the woman, 'What is this you have done?' The woman said, 'The serpent deceived me, and I ate.'" (Genesis 3:13)**

But Satan can't get us off the hook either. Granted, he's the master deceiver. Jesus told us that when Satan lies, **"he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies." (John 8:44)**

Satan deceived Adam and Eve, and he's full of tricks and schemes to use in an effort to deceive us. He's real good at it, friends. Still, he never forces anyone to sin—he can't.

He would if he could—but the Bible does not teach us anywhere that Satan can make us do anything. He simply keeps shooting those arrows of deception our way until they find their mark and do their deadly damage to our souls.

This is what happened to Adam and Eve when, tempted by the serpent with the forbidden fruit, they bit—becoming the very first failure that came with consequences for everybody else!

So the blame is theirs. And it's also ours. Try as we might—and we all do—we can't place our blame on anybody else. The sin is ours. The guilt is ours too.

And, yes, the death that results from sin—"for the wages of sin is death"—death has always been sin's price—and we can't do anything to get rid of it. We own it!

But by the grace of God, Jesus can do something. Jesus Christ, the Savior, can take it away—all of it--all the sin and shame, the guilt and death. We can't; but Jesus can.

And what's so amazing about this is that God knew--before any of this ever happened—God understood that this is what it would take to save us from all our sinful mistakes and failures!

From before the creation of the world, God knew—but in love, He gave us life, and He gave us freedom. He knew we would break His commandments.

He knew that because of our sin, He would have to give us His only begotten Son to be our Savior—and because He is a God of love and mercy, God chose to do this too.

He invites us to come to Him and trust in Him, to put an end to the excuses and the blame-game, to confess our sin, and receive His forgiveness, to know and love Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord of our lives.

But He still won't take away our freedom. We can say "yes" to Christ, or... we can choose to say "no."

Without this free choice, the relationship would mean nothing. But with this freedom, if we are sincere about coming to Christ and following Him, this means everything!

It means forgiveness. New life. And the blessed hope of eternity. Will you trust Him now? Will you choose to undo all your bad decisions by making the best decision you will ever make—by freely choosing to follow Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord?