

### **Sermon Text (Genesis 3:14–4:2 ESV)**

3:14 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.”

20 The man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living. 21 And the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.

22 Then the LORD God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever—” 23 therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. 24 He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.

4:1 Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, “I have gotten a man with the help of the LORD.” 2 And again, she bore his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain a worker of the ground.

### **Cursed in a Moment; Saved in a Moment**

It all began in a moment. Before anyone or anything existed, even before time existed, God existed. Then, in his first creative act, God created all of the matter in the universe, as well as the space in which it exists, out of nothing, and time began. All of this happened in a single moment, which is stated in the very first verse of the Bible: “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1). At first, God’s creation had no form, but, over the course of six twenty-four-hour days, God gave his creation form. And, once he had finished, “God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good” (Genesis 1:31). In other words, it was perfect.

The crown of God's creation was mankind, whom God made in his image. Now, because "God is spirit" (John 4:24), he has no physical body. So, when the Bible says that mankind was made in the image of God, it does not mean that mankind was made to look like God. It means that mankind was created in perfect righteousness and holiness and with a true knowledge of God. Because of this, the first man and woman, Adam and Eve, acted in perfect agreement with God's will and loved God perfectly. They showed their love for God by not eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which God had commanded them not to eat. However, God's perfect creation would not remain perfect for long.

One day, a serpent, which was being used by the devil as his tool, asked Eve a simple question, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?" (Genesis 3:1). This was a crafty trick by the devil. He had taken the words that God spoke and twisted them into something that God didn't actually say, all in an attempt to make Eve doubt God. However, Eve didn't fall for the devil's craftiness. She responded to the serpent by telling it the words that God actually said, "You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die" (Genesis 3:3), a perfect response from a perfect woman.

However, the devil wasn't done yet. This time, instead of twisting the Word of God into something that God didn't actually say, he now just called God a liar while lying himself. The serpent said to Eve, "You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil" (Genesis 3:4-5). What the devil said to Eve was a half-truth. It's true that, if Eve ate the forbidden fruit, that she would not physically die immediately, but she would spiritually die immediately. And she also would eventually physically die too. It's also true that, if Eve ate the forbidden fruit, she would know good and evil, but the way that she would come to know evil would be by becoming corrupted by sin.

This time, Eve gave in to the devil's temptation, along with Adam, who was with her. Even though Adam and Eve were already perfectly righteous and holy, even though they had a true knowledge of God, and even though they had dominion over God's creation, that wasn't enough for them. They wanted to be like God. They wanted to make themselves their own gods. And so, just as in a moment, God created the heavens and the earth; in a moment, God's perfect creation was ruined and became corrupted by sin.

Because of the sin of our first parents, Adam and Eve, we are all by nature sinful. As the apostle Paul says in his letter to the Romans, "[B]y the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners" (Romans 5:19). We had lost the image of God and were no longer perfect, now having the image of our first parents after they had fallen into sin. As a result, we want the same thing that our first parents did, we want to make ourselves our own gods, and we do so whenever we put ourselves and our own sinful desires above God. "I know that I should go to church, but I'm just so tired today. I can skip one week to get some sleep, right? Besides, if I went to church now, I would just be falling asleep in the pew anyway, so it would be better if I just stayed home." "I should study my Bible more, but I can put it off for just one day, right? I can just make up for it tomorrow." "What God is saying in this verse doesn't make sense. I think that this is what he actually meant." "I know that God wants me to love my enemies, but I couldn't possibly love someone like that! How could anyone? Why would God ask me to do something like?" Every moment that we neglect gathering around the Word of God, and every moment that we disobey a command of God because we doubt God and think that we know better, we are putting ourselves and our own sinful desires before God and are, therefore, making ourselves gods. Moment after moment we fall for the same temptations that the devil gave our first parents and believe his lies.

After Adam and Eve sinned, God had every right to do nothing but punish them, and yet, even though there were consequences for their actions that God told them about, in this moment, God gave them hope. God said to the serpent, “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” (Genesis 3:15). God gave them hope by giving them the first promise of the Savior, and, thousands of years later, that hope arrived in the person of Jesus.

Jesus was not created in the image of God like Adam and Eve were. Jesus was God. And yet, in order to save us from our sins, Jesus became a man and put himself under the law, keeping it perfectly in our place. Jesus faced every temptation that we face today, and he faced the same temptations that have plagued mankind since the very first temptation. During the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness, the devil tried to twist the Word of God to make it mean something that it didn’t actually. After setting Jesus on the pinnacle of the temple, he said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, ‘He will command his angels concerning you,’ and ‘On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone’” (Matthew 4:6). And, while we can sometimes fail to spot the devil’s lies, Jesus never failed to. He responded to the devil by saying, “Again it is written, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test’” (Matthew 4:7).

The other two temptations that are recorded from the temptation of Jesus deal with doubting God and making yourself a god. The devil said to Jesus, “If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread” (Matthew 4:3). But Jesus answered, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God’” (Matthew 4:4). The devil also said to Jesus, after showing him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory, “All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me” (Matthew 4:9). But

Jesus said to him, “Be gone, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve’” (Matthew 4:10). If Jesus had used his power to turn stones into loaves of bread, he would have been doubting that his Father would provide for him. And if Jesus had bowed down and worshipped the devil to make all the kingdoms of the world his, he would have been placing his own desires above the will of his Father. But Jesus didn’t give into the devil’s temptations. Moment after moment, where we so often fail, Jesus succeeded.

Jesus resisting the devil’s temptations and keeping the law perfectly was according to his heavenly Father’s will, but that wasn’t all. It was also his Father’s will that he suffer and die on the cross, facing the punishment that we rightfully deserve for our sins. Even though Jesus knew what was coming, even though he knew what he would have to endure for us, he didn’t put himself above his Father’s will. He didn’t save himself, thinking that he knew better than his Father. Instead, he perfectly obeyed his Father’s will and, in doing so, completed the work that needed to be done to save us from our sins. In a moment, God’s perfect creation was ruined and corrupted by sin, but now, in this moment, when Jesus breathed his last, sin was defeated, and with it, the devil. In a moment, the promise that God made to Adam and Eve and to all mankind all those years ago was accomplished.

What Jesus accomplished for you all those years ago is brought to you today through the waters of baptism. In that moment, all of your sins are washed away, and you are made a child of God. The old, sinful self is drowned, and the new self rises to the surface, which is a restoration of the image of God that was lost at the fall into sin. As the apostle Paul says in his letter to the Ephesians, “[P]ut on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness” (Ephesians 4:24). Unfortunately, our old self doesn’t want to stay dead. It keeps wanting to come back, and whenever a moment presents itself to do so, it takes it. However, in those

moments when we fail and fall into sin again, Jesus is there to offer us forgiveness. Our lives are full of moments, both good and bad, and we can look at all of the moments in which we failed and fell into temptation and fall into despair. But all of those moments put together are no match for the moment that Jesus saved us. That is the greatest moment of all.