

Genesis 3:8-15^{iv}

The man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and they hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?" He said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself." He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" The man said, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit from the tree, and I ate." Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent tricked me, and I ate." The LORD God said to the serpent,

"Because you have done this,
cursed are you among all animals
and among all wild creatures;
upon your belly you shall go,
and dust you shall eat
all the days of your life.
I will put enmity between you and the woman,
and between your offspring and hers;
he will strike your head,
and you will strike his heel."

^{iv} About Genesis 3:8-15

Today's reading about the fall is excerpted from the second (2:4b–3:24) of the two creation stories in Genesis. God has placed a prohibition upon the tree "of the knowledge of good and evil." This is the wisdom that comes, not intellectually, but by experience. It is partly moral in content (2 Samuel 14:17; Isaiah 7:15); but more broadly, it encompasses the power to make distinctions in the whole range of human experience (Numbers 24:13; 2 Samuel 19:35). This power of judgment is to be exercised by humankind in obedience to God and as God's representative. Chapter 3 recounts human rebellion against God's prohibition.

The serpent first insinuates doubt about the facts of the situation and the woman responds by overstating the case. Then he instills suspicions of God's motive and opens the possibility of freedom, especially the freedom to judge God.

The primary sin is disobedience, a stepping outside of the sphere of God's will. This disobedience leads to the disordering of all relationships. First the couple become individually self-aware; they are no longer "one flesh." The relationship with God is disrupted; the couple tries to hide from God. The man accuses the woman and God, and the woman accuses the snake. The judgments given by God account for the natural world and society as these were apparent to the Hebrews. They explain why the serpent crawls and why there is hostility between humans and snakes.

Verse 16 explains why the blessing of fertility (1:28) is associated with pain and why there is tension between the sexes. Likewise, through the cursing of the ground, the work for which humans were created (2:15) is now laborious. Verse 19 would seem to show that the mortal nature of humankind was implicit in the circumstances of creation (2:7), but now death is a conscious and inevitable fate.

Man and woman are now first individualized and called Adam and Eve. In an act of grace toward them, God redeems the sentence of death (2:16) and clothes the couple before sending them out of the garden, showing God's protective care even in a time of judgment.