

# Genesis 3

by John Nelson Darby

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*The sermon emphasizes the nature of sin, the work of Satan, and the hope of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.*

**Scripture:** Genesis 3:1

**Topics:** "Trust in God's Grace", "Sin and Redemption"

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## Description

John Nelson Darby explores the themes of sin and the consequences of disobedience as illustrated in Genesis 3. He emphasizes how Satan introduces doubt and distrust in God's goodness, leading humanity to sin and separation from God. The sermon highlights the futility of trying to hide our sin from God and the importance of recognizing our need for His grace. Darby reassures that despite our failures, God has provided a way back to Him through Jesus Christ, who offers redemption and restores our relationship with God. Ultimately, he calls for believers to trust in God's love and grace, which empowers obedience and brings true happiness.

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## Transcript

It is not only the word of God which lets us know that there is sin and misery in the world. Man knows very well that iniquity and defilement are in himself, and no one is satisfied with his portion here below because he is ill at ease in his own heart. The word of God shews us much more - how Satan entered the world, and the consequences of sin in our relations with God.

The first thing the old serpent does is to put something between God and us, to put himself between both. The only thing which can render us happy is that there is nothing between God and us, and that God loves us. Satan begins by rendering the soul distrustful of God, and suggests to the woman to wish for a forbidden thing, and to satisfy the wish, hinting that God does not love to gratify us, and would keep some great good from us. The enemy does not direct our mind either to the goodness of God, or to our obeying God. The woman knew well why she ought not to eat of the fruit of that tree, and that death would be the inevitable result. Had not God forbidden and threatened?

God has warned us of the consequences of sin. He had said, "In the day that thou eatest, dying thou shalt die," But Satan, who ever seeks to deny and lower the truth of God, says to the woman, "Ye shall not surely die . . . ye shall be as God." And it is true that the fall has rendered man much more intelligent relative to good and evil; but Satan hid from him that he would be severed from God, and with an evil conscience. Their eyes were opened, it is said; and they knew that they were naked as they looked at

themselves.

All that which is near us appears more important and greater than that which is still distant. The forbidden tree being near, and the judgment of God far off, Eve takes of the fruit and eats. So the spirit of falsehood says till this day to men, Ye shall not die; the threatenings of God will not take effect. He conceals the warnings of God; and one does then what Satan and one's own lusts push one on to do. If a Christian is not vigilant, his conscience will lose its activity, and in place of seeing God he will see his own nakedness.

Man still uses leaves to cover his nakedness. He does his utmost to hide from himself the evil which is there; but when God reveals Himself, it is quite otherwise.

118 God draws near as if nothing had happened; then what ought to have been a joy for man without sin becomes, because of sin, the source of immense alarm. Adam flees, and seeks to hide from before the eye of God, as if he had succeeded in veiling his nakedness to his own eye. What a horrible thing for man to be thus hiding himself before God!

Adam fears, for conscience is always touched by the presence of God; it takes away every hope of enjoying sin when it penetrates into our conscience. Then one only sees God, who is feared, without our being able to appreciate Him.

The relations of man with God were thenceforward broken, and in a manner irreparable, as to man.

"Who told thee that thou wast naked?" says the Lord. Adam answers by accusing the woman, and God who had given her to him. Dastardliness always comes into the soul with sin. Adam wishes to excuse himself by lies, and to leave the fault and blame between his wife and God. He leaves to God the care of arranging the thing with the woman. Thus a bad conscience fears God too much to confess its sin, yet it knows too well that it has sinned to deny it. If you had full confidence in God, and were perfectly sure that God loves you, you would be very happy. But Satan is here; and his great power consists in producing distrust where there is happiness and intimate relation with God to destroy in our hearts. You trust your own will and your own efforts for your happiness; but, distrusting God, you will not, you cannot, confide to Him the care of this happiness, and leave yourself to His mighty love.

The beginning of sin is the unbelief which doubts God. Thereby in effect Satan began. He persuaded Eve that God had kept something for Himself that the creature might not be too happy and blest.

The woman was wrong in conversing with Satan; she ought not to have listened to a voice which insinuated distrust of God. What Satan did then and always, he persuades every man that God is too good to condemn us because we sin; and man, spite of his sin and his conscience, hopes and persuades himself that he will not be condemned. It is the voice of the old serpent. Now God has shewn by the death of His Son that the wages of sin is death.

Conscience being evil, every effort of the world is to hide from itself its nakedness before God. It would remove from men gross and outward sin, drunkenness, murder, and robbery. It seeks by law, and efforts of philanthropy, individual and co-operative, to blot out the open effects of sin in the world. Such are the aprons of fig-leaves, which remove nothing at all, but serve for the moment to hide from ourselves our nakedness and our misery, to avoid thinking of the justice of the condemnation God has put from the beginning on the sin that dwells in us. Now that sin is between our conscience and God, one wishes at least that there should be something to hide us before Him. With this end in view, man employs what he

calls innocent things. Thus the trees were so, but man made use of them to conceal himself from before God. God had given all to man in this world; but man uses it now only to deprive himself of the sight of God, and thus pretends to be innocent in employing these good things after such a sort!

119 When the voice of God awakens conscience, people still wish something to hide them from Him; but this is impossible. God says to Adam, "Where art thou?" There is no means of hiding any longer. If God said so to each of your souls, would it be your joy to be in His presence? God alone is our resource and refuge when we have sinned. It is only God who takes away guile from the heart, for He alone can pardon. Now if you hide yourself from God, where are you for your soul? God had not yet driven Adam from His presence till Adam fled from the presence of God. Conscience tells us that if we have sinned, no leaves or trees can hide us in His presence. If there be a just God, man is wretched in his conscience; he cannot be quiet in sin but solely on condition that there is no God. Every hope of unbelief is that there be no God, or, what comes to the same thing, that He be not just or holy.

Adam wishes to excuse himself, as if he had not lusted himself, as if he had not followed the voice of his wife instead of hearkening to God, as if he was not responsible for having failed himself. Now if there were not lust in us, sin would not be produced. In the midst of all God's goodness, who has given His Son for poor sinners, you have no confidence in God, and this is a state of sin. It matters little how it is manifested, it displays ingratitude and distrust. Eve listened and believed Satan, instead of hearing and believing God. This, man ever does; and he hopes for salvation and eternal life though he sins. All the efforts you make to be happy shew that you are not happy. Why the arts and pleasures of the world if the world were happy? All that which would have been the effect of God's presence in your hearts and consciences would stop your pleasure. Therefore if all your pleasures are incompatible with the presence of God, what will they be for you in eternity? Will they carry you to the foot of the throne of the Holy and Just, to shew Him that you have spent many innocent hours far from Him? There are not only disobedience, distrust, falsehood, which are sin: there is worse still - the state of soul which seeks to be light and giddy, far from the presence of God.

120 Man may withdraw himself from God's presence whilst grace lasts; but he will not be able when God shall judge him. Satan will help you, your best friends according to the world will also help you, to withdraw yourself from His presence, to deny and forget it, but that will certainly not go on longer than the time of grace granted to us. Therefore, while it is called today, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts. God knows that you are sinners: He knows the iniquity of Satan, who would make man his prey; but there is an answer to that which Satan knew, and of which man could have no idea: God makes a revelation of grace (v. 15). A promise is not given to those who are incapable of enjoying it. The natural man cannot enjoy what flows from grace, because faith is necessary to that, and confidence in God. The question thenceforward is wholly between the serpent and the second Man. God says nothing to Adam but words which shew the actual consequences of sin; He says to the serpent what He will do. Thenceforth the only hope for lost man is in this promised Seed; and even before he is driven from His presence, God reveals what Jesus will do to destroy the work of Satan.

There is not a single sign of repentance in Adam after his sin. He had shewn the dastardliness, meanness, and fraud of his heart; but God only occupies Himself with His counsels and the answer He has in Himself. He announces the Seed of the woman, whose glory and power are developed throughout all His word.

Now it is no longer an anticipation or promise of grace: Jesus is come. Wretched man thought that God did not wish to give him something through jealousy of his happiness; but this was the lie of Satan. God,

who seemed to refuse a fruit to man innocent, has given His Son to man a sinner. And the heart of man is so perverted that he has no confidence, though God has given His Son. Jesus, instead of fleeing from condemnation, went to meet it; He took on Him the sins of His bride, instead of loading her with fetters. He has by death destroyed him that had the power of death. The effect of the death of Jesus is to inspire us with perfect confidence. The death of Jesus put us in relationship with God, without fear and without difficulty, because it clothes us when we are naked and miserable. There is nothing but grace for us after the judgment which has struck the Son of God.

121 Is your confidence in God? Do you believe that He gave His Son, that His love did so to save fully poor sinners? This confidence gives peace and obedience, because nothing is more precious than the love of God; and this love makes us prefer obedience and its consequences spite of all the difficulties. May God touch your heart, and give you to render Him glory by receiving all that His love has done for you!

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