

Genesis 3 nlt

¹ The serpent was the shrewdest of all the wild animals the LORD God had made. One day he asked the woman, "Did God really say you must not eat the fruit from any of the trees in the garden?"

² "Of course we may eat fruit from the trees in the garden," the woman replied. ³ "It's only the fruit from the tree in the middle of the garden that we are not allowed to eat. God said, 'You must not eat it or even touch it; if you do, you will die.'"

⁴ "You won't die!" the serpent replied to the woman. ⁵ "God knows that your eyes will be opened as soon as you eat it, and you will be like God, knowing both good and evil."

⁶ The woman was convinced. She saw that the tree was beautiful and its fruit looked delicious, and she wanted the wisdom it would give her. So she took some of the fruit and ate it. Then she gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it, too.

⁷ At that moment their eyes were opened, and they suddenly felt shame at their nakedness. So they sewed fig leaves together to cover themselves.

⁸ When the cool evening breezes were blowing, the man^[a] and his wife heard the LORD God walking about in the garden. So they hid from the LORD God among the trees. ⁹ Then the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?"

¹⁰ He replied, "I heard you walking in the garden, so I hid. I was afraid because I was naked."

¹¹ "Who told you that you were naked?" the LORD God asked. "Have you eaten from the tree whose fruit I commanded you not to eat?"

¹² The man replied, "It was the woman you gave me who gave me the fruit, and I ate it."

¹³ Then the LORD God asked the woman, "What have you done?"
"The serpent deceived me," she replied. "That's why I ate it."

...(14-15)

¹⁶ Then he said to the woman,
"I will sharpen the pain of your pregnancy,
and in pain you will give birth.
And you will desire to control your husband,
but he will rule over you."^[c]

¹⁷ And to the man he said,
"Since you listened to your wife and ate from the tree
whose fruit I commanded you not to eat,
the ground is cursed because of you.
All your life you will struggle to scratch a living from it.

¹⁸ It will grow thorns and thistles for you,
though you will eat of its grains.

¹⁹ By the sweat of your brow

will you have food to eat
until you return to the ground
from which you were made.
For you were made from dust,
and to dust you will return.”

...(20-23)

²⁴ After sending them out, the LORD God stationed mighty cherubim to the east of the Garden of Eden. And he placed a flaming sword that flashed back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.

Alright. What happened before this chapter?

- 1) God created an amazing planet for us.
- 2) God created us Imago Dei—in His image—and we freely communed with God.
- 3) God gave us companionship through marriage.
- 4) God gave nothing but grace to us and did nothing but bless us.

Our response was sin. We did the one thing He asked us not to do.

The original sin in the garden towards God-- was darker, deeper, more far-reaching and more disgusting than any sin that's ever been committed against us.

So, banished from paradise, Adam and Eve then have two sons—they grow up and Cain kills Abel. Seriously? One of Adam & Eve's sons, murders the other.

And that's just the beginning—the sin that was unleashed in the Garden--just keeps escalating.

Within a few generations from the Garden, sin has jacked-up humanity so much--that God decides, "I'm just going to flood the place and start over!"

Let's read Genesis 6:5-9 nlt

The LORD observed the extent of human wickedness on the earth, and he saw that everything they thought or imagined was consistently and totally evil. ⁶ So the LORD was sorry he had ever made them and put them on the earth. It broke his heart. ⁷ And the LORD said, "I will wipe this human race I have created from the face of the earth. Yes, and I will destroy every living thing—all the people, the large animals, the small animals that scurry along the ground, and even the birds of the sky. I am sorry I ever made them." ⁸ But Noah found favor with the LORD.

⁹ This is the account of Noah and his family. Noah was a righteous man, the only blameless person living on earth at the time, and he walked in close fellowship with God.

At this point, God is going to replace this pattern of sin and death with sin and covenant. God is going to respond to our sin by pursuing Noah and his family with covenant love.

“Covenant” is a word that doesn’t mean that much to us these days. Why? We don’t consider that we’re bound to anything in an iron-clad way. We can get away or walk away from any agreement we have promised to keep: the marriage, the house, the loan, whatever.

But we have to hear the word “covenant” in God’s terms. HE HAS NEVER BROKEN A COVENANT!

And God responds to sin with what we call “covenant love”—or back to the Hebrew word “**hesed**” (heh’-sehd).

Hesed means God’s loving-kindness—
the consistent, ever-faithful, relentless, constantly pursuing, lavish, extravagant, unrestrained, one-way love of God.

You and I think of covenants like unemotional legal documents—but God responds to our sin with covenants characterized by and driven by hesed—relentless, lavish, extravagant, unrestrained love!

Ok, let’s look back at our passage (Genesis 6:8-9)

⁸ But Noah found favor with the LORD.

⁹ This is the account of Noah and his family. Noah was a righteous man, the only blameless person living on earth at the time, and he walked in close fellowship with God.

It’s easy to misinterpret this verse and conclude that Noah was a good guy who earned God’s favor through good works.

And it’s often incorrectly read as though there are good guys and bad guys—and so God saves the good guys and kills the bad guys. INCORRECT.

See where it says, “Noah found favor with God?” The Hebrew word for “favor” is “grace”—which shows up here for the first time in the Bible.

Throughout the Bible, starting here in Genesis--people are saved by grace—no one ever earned it. God’s favor always WAS and always IS a gift.

So Noah and his family were literally saved by grace.

Because of grace, God’s covenants are hesed---relentless, extravagant, unrestrained, covenant love.

So let’s read the Noahic* Covenant (*of Noah)(1 of 5 major biblical covenants)
This is after the flood. Genesis 9:1-17

Then God blessed Noah and his sons and told them, “Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth. ² All the animals of the earth, all the birds of the sky, all the small animals that scurry along the ground, and all the fish in the sea will look on you with fear and terror. I have placed them in your power. ³ I have given them to you for food, just as I have given you grain and vegetables. ⁴ But you must never eat any meat that still has the lifeblood in it.

⁵ “And I will require the blood of anyone who takes another person’s life. If a wild animal kills a person, it must die. And anyone who murders a fellow human must die. ⁶ If anyone takes a human life, that person’s life will also be taken by human hands. For God made human beings^[a] in his own image. ⁷ Now be fruitful and multiply, and repopulate the earth.”

⁸ Then God told Noah and his sons, ⁹ “I hereby confirm my covenant with you and your descendants, ¹⁰ and with all the animals that were on the boat with you—the birds, the livestock, and all the wild animals—every living creature on earth. ¹¹ Yes, I am confirming my covenant with you. Never again will floodwaters kill all living creatures; never again will a flood destroy the earth.”

¹² Then God said, “I am giving you a sign of my covenant with you and with all living creatures, for all generations to come. ¹³ I have placed my rainbow in the clouds. It is the sign of my covenant with you and with all the earth. ¹⁴ When I send clouds over the earth, the rainbow will appear in the clouds, ¹⁵ and I will remember my covenant with you and with all living creatures. Never again will the floodwaters destroy all life. ¹⁶ When I see the rainbow in the clouds, I will remember the eternal covenant between God and every living creature on earth.” ¹⁷ Then God said to Noah, “Yes, this rainbow is the sign of the covenant I am confirming with all the creatures on earth.”

Genesis 9:1-17 nlt Noahic Covenant

In this covenant, God redeems--saves creation (earth & animals) and His covenant people. He wipes the slate clean and offers creation and humans another start. And promises never to flood the earth again.

One of the big things I want us to understand is that the GRACE of God—the LOVING-KINDNESS of God is what drives these Old Testament covenants.

In the Old Testament, God is NOT a different “wrathful” or “smiting” God than we have now. The grace we so cherish and depend on now—is the same grace that rescued Noah from the flood.

Because of God’s covenant love with Noah, sinners are allowed to live and increase on earth.

Because of God’s covenant love with Abraham, his descendants became a nation.

Because of God’s covenant love with Moses, a nation of slaves was saved, freed & led to their Promised Land.

Because of God’s covenant love with King David, an eternal kingdom led by Jesus Christ would be established.

(SELAH)

And now we live in the age of the New Covenant.

In God’s covenants He always used a mediator—a person: Noah, Abraham, Moses, & King David.

In the New Covenant, Jesus is the mediator. And this New Covenant is also God’s LAST covenant.

Let's look at Hebrews 8:7-12 which talks about the New Covenant. (And FYI this is the same passage written by the prophet Jeremiah in ch 31.)

⁷ If the first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no need for a second covenant to replace it. ⁸ But when God found fault with the people (sin), he said:

"The day is coming, says the LORD,
when I will make a new covenant
with the people of Israel and Judah.

⁹ This covenant will not be like the one
I made with their ancestors
when I took them by the hand
and led them out of the land of Egypt.

They did not remain faithful to my covenant (sin),
so I turned my back on them, says the LORD.

¹⁰ But this is the new covenant I will make
with the people of Israel on that day,^[a] says the LORD:

(See the pattern? God makes a covenant. We sin and BREAK the covenant. God keeps coming after us-- pursues with ANOTHER covenant—"hesed".)

(THIS time) I will put my laws in their minds,
and I will write them on their hearts.

I will be their God,
and they will be my people.

¹¹ And they will not need to teach their neighbors,
nor will they need to teach their relatives,^[b]
saying, 'You should know the LORD.'

For everyone, from the least to the greatest,
will know me already.

¹² And I will forgive their wickedness,
and I will never again remember their sins."

We read that passage because it's saying, "Take notice—this covenant is NOT like other covenants—this NEW covenant is OTHER.

Sidebar: Really encourage you to read **Hebrews 8:6-9:28** on your own. It's a great passage making sense of the old covenants and the New Covenant.

And as Jesus sat down to eat the Passover meal with the disciples—instead of observing the 1,000 year Mosaic Covenant tradition of reciting very specific words, check out what Jesus says in Matthew: 26:26-29

During the meal, Jesus took and blessed the bread, broke it, and gave it to his disciples:

"Take, eat.
This is my body."

Taking the cup and thanking God, he gave it to them:

"Drink this, all of you.
This is my blood,

God's new covenant poured out for many people

for the forgiveness of sins.
I'll not be drinking wine from this cup again until that new day when I'll drink with you in the kingdom of my Father." Matthew 26:26-29 The Message

In this new covenant, God provides a member of the Trinity—himself—Jesus Christ—as the mediator.

Jesus is the blood sacrifice.

Jesus is the payment for our sin.

Jesus--nailed to the cross for our forgiveness—our freedom—our gain.

And in this New Covenant, the Holy Spirit is made available to everyone—both Jew *and* Gentile...

Check out 2 Corinthians 3:5-6

It is not that we think we are qualified to do anything on our own. Our qualification comes from God. ⁶ He has enabled us to be ministers of his new covenant. This is a covenant not of written laws, but of the Spirit. The old written covenant ends in death; but under the new covenant, the Spirit gives life. 2 Corinthians 3:5-6 nlt

So under this New Covenant, we are ALL ministers with ministry to do—not by ourselves, but equipped and guided by the Holy Spirit. This New covenant is OTHER.

This is radically different than anything that came before. Under prior covenants, priests did ministry and served a high priest (man).

This New Covenant says we are ALL ministers (priests) who personally and relationally serve our High Priest, Jesus.

And why is this new covenant so amazing? Because:

Jesus is a better Noah—who brings judgment of sin, salvation by grace and a new world free from sin and its effects.

Jesus is a better Abraham—bringing His blessing—not just to a nation—but throughout ALL NATIONS.

Jesus is a better Moses--- who fulfilled the law, allowed God's wrath to Passover us because of His blood on the cross, conquered our pharaoh, Satan, and journeys with us all of our days even though our sin and complaining.

Jesus is a better King David—who is sitting on an eternal throne, ruling as the only King of kings and is coming again to establish his eternal and global kingdom of peace and prosperity.

(SELAH)

At the beginning of the Bible, there is paradise. At the end of the Bible, there is a new paradise.

In between---is the drama of our continual pursuit of sin followed by God's continual pursuit of us. We sin. God pursues. ("hesed")

To us, a covenant is an unemotional legal document.

To God, a covenant is a grace-driven, love filled, iron-clad promise—to redeem us and love us—and it's signed in blood by a God who is incapable of breaking a promise.

In the New Covenant—Last Covenant. God nailed His Son to a cross –so His blood would cover our sin. Knowing that we—like our Old Testament ancestors, will continue to choose sin over God.

And in this New Covenant, because we are ALL TERMINAL—we are promised new bodies. Illness and grief will be gone. No mourning, no crying, no pain. Eternal life in the presence of the Author of loving covenants.

<<<< Baptism >>>>