**WHEN GOD'S LOVE IS DOUBTED**

Genesis 3:1-24 (Key Verse: 15)

*““And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."*

In the previous passages we learnt about how God created the heavens, the earth and everything in it. Each time God created the creatures, he said it was good, and when he created mankind, he said it was very good. When God created the woman Eve from the rib of Adam, Adam was very pleased when God presented her as his suitable helper. He said: “*This is now bone of my bones, flesh of my flesh, she shall be called woman, for she was taken out of man.”* Adam and Eve enjoyed paradise in the garden of Eden, fulfilling the mission that God gave them to take care of God’s creations, to rule over and subdue.

However, in today’s passage things take a turn, leading to the fall of man, the first turning point in human history. What happened? How did this occur? Due to doubt of God’s love man fell into sin, turning God’s perfect world into a cursed world with no true hope and purpose in the people’s hearts. Therefore, from today’s passage we will learn what led men to doubt the love of God, and how this could lead to the fall of man. We will also learn about God’s response to the fall of the man, how even in those circumstance God made a grand plan restore hope in men, him meaning and purpose in the world.

I pray that God may have mercy on us today, to receive one word, so that the love of God may be fully established in our hearts.

The passage today begins by introducing us to the serpent, one of the wild animals that the Lord God created, we are told that it was crafty than any of the other wild animals in the garden of Eden. Now the serpent came to the woman, Eve and said to her: *“Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden’?”* Why did the serpent ask the woman this question? To understand this question, we first need to understand who the serpent is. The serpent here was Satan who did not have good intentions, but the intention to destroy what God has created. When God created the heavens, the earth and everything in it, it was good, when he created a man, he said it was very good. Now Satan was once an angel of God but fell due to pride and became the enemy of God. And so today Satan came to the woman as a serpent and asked this question to destroy what God has created.

In what sense could Satan use this question to destroy what God has created? First by planting doubt in the woman and leading her to disobey God and ultimately fall into sin. The grand plan of Satan is to destroy the woman and Adam’s household by leading them to sin. Even today, Satan operates in the same way, destroying many marriages by just leading them to sin. Now concerning today, we know that God gave the command about the tree in the garden to Adam before Even was created in **verse 2:16-17** saying: *“And the Lord God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; 17 but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.””* From this verse, the command is very clear, but to plant doubt the serpent said “…*did God really say you must not….?”* The devil used the word really to plant confusion and doubt in the woman. What did the woman say when the serpent asked this question? Let us look at **verse 2-3**: *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.’”* In this response, the woman confirmed the command from God that indeed man shall not eat from the tree in the middle of the garden or he/she will surely die.

On the surface one may say she answered well, however, in saying this the woman also said that God said you must not touch it. This was not true, God did not say you must not touch it. In saying this the woman revealed to the serpent that she does not know exactly what God said, because she added something onto the command of God. She opened a door for the serpent to also add or remove. This revealed that the woman was very casual about the absoluteness of the word of God. We need to be absolute about what the word of God says, adding one thing or removing one thing may change the message and command of God altogether and lead us astray.

When the serpent realized that the woman was quite flexible and not fully sure what God said, the serpent went deeper in his plan to destroy, by leading the woman to disobedience. Let us look at **verse 4-5**: “*“You will not certainly die,” the serpent said to the woman. 5 “For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.””* Here the serpent first firmed up on doubt, the serpent did this by telling a fat lie saying: “*You will not certainly die*” The command of God is very clear that you will certainly die, but the serpent used this because it knew that the woman did not really have the absolute word of God in her heart.

Furthermore, the serpent said to the woman, that if she eats from the tree, her eyes will be opened, she will be like God. Here the serpent planted pride in the woman, that she will be like God. Both Adam and Eve had everything in the garden of Eden, they were free to eat from any fruit bearing tree, they had beautiful views of mountains and rivers, they had purpose, God gave them a mission to take care of his creatures; to rule over and subdue, they had a life of meaning and purpose. But the serpent reduced that to nothing by planting pride in the women. Leading the woman to doubt the love of God. Suddenly in the woman’s mind there were questions such as, if God loves me why is he refusing me from eating from the tree in the middle of the garden so that my eyes can be open? Why is God controlling me? And because of this, the woman fell into the temptation. Because of doubt of God’s love, that God has provided all she needed, she fell into the temptation. In **verse 6** it says: “*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.”*

When both Adam and Eve ate the ate from the tree, the serpent was nowhere to be seen, they were left all alone with the weight of sin on their shoulders, they were left on their own with the misery of sin, their eyes were opened, but they were wandering around sewing fig leaves together making coverings for themselves. Because of their disobedience, they hid from God when they heard him walking in the garden in the cool of the day. Sin broke their relationship with God, it drove them away from God, they became like Satan and saw God as their enemy.

What then did God do when the woman and the man disobeyed and committed the sin? Did God struck them down and eliminate them from the surface of the earth? What did God do? Let us look at the **verse 9-11**: “*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?””* At this point God knew that Adam and Eve have fell into sin, and he did not struck them down, but rather he wanted to reveal to them their sin problem and what led to this sin problem. He first did this by calling the man saying: “*Where are you?*” God knew that the serpent went to the woman, he knew that it was the woman who gave the fruit to Adam, but still he called on Adam, saying where are you? Who told you that you are naked? Have you eaten from the tree I commanded you not to eat from?

God called Adam because he was the head, basically he was saying where were you when the serpent tempted them woman? The woman fell because the word of God was not firmly established in her heart, she was not absolute but casual about it. Why was she like this? She was like because Adam did not lead, he did dedicate time to teach and plant the word of God firmly in the woman’s heart. As mentioned earlier, God gave Adam this command before the woman was formed and it was Adam’s responsibility to relay and establish this word firmly in the woman’s heart. Furthermore, because Adam also ate the fruit when the woman gave him, we can conclude also that the word of God was also not firmly established in Adam’s hearts.

 As husbands God created us to lead our family, to teach the word of God so that it is firmly established in our hearts. So we need to study the word of God and lead our family in the word, because it is through the word of God we can be guarded from the evil of this world, our human wisdom and intelligence cannot guard us and lead to live a life with meaning and purpose, a life that is pleasing to God. When we live with our own wisdom and casually towards the word of God, we open a door for the devil to destroy and plant doubt about the love of God towards us, we open a door for sin enter our hearts, rule us and torment us.

When Itu and I got married we used to study the word of God together, I remember in our first week of marriage we did daily bread from Mother Barry based on Paul’s letter’s 1st and 2nd Corinthians. It was wonderful, we could experience the love and mercy of God and our marriage could kick off on a good foundation. However, as time went, our studying of the Bible together declined. Why? I can’t tell you, perhaps I got busy at work etc. And ever since we have been trying to resume and it is just difficult. And I believe this lack of study of the word of God together, has caused so many problems in our marriage. When we have disagreements, I always find myself hurting Itu, and this is because it comes from my own wisdom. Many times, she told me that I am not gentle to her, that I have this harsh face and my voice is harsh, that I do not handle matters with grace.

I on the other will be thinking that because we love each other, she should know that whatever I say is not because I want to destroy or harm her. I was even thinking maybe she needs to get used to how to talk, I even tried to explain to her that some people at work also misunderstand me saying I am angry when it is not the case. But no matter how many times we discuss this, I continued to find myself hurting her. And from this passage I am learning that all this is because of my failure to lead my family with the word of God. Because of my lack of leading my family with the word of God sincerely, without compromise, I opened a door for the devil to plant doubt, conflict and disagreements in my family. I pray that God may help me to repent and take up my role as a husband and leader of the family and lead my family with the word of God and not my human wisdom.

After God had revealed the problem of leadership, switched roles which led to the fall of man, he further revealed his mercy and grace. At this point the devil thought he has won, he thought it is the end, a curse has been released into the world forever, separating mankind from God. Because of this curse, man was separated from God, in **verse 23** it says: *“So the Lord God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken*”. However, God in his great wisdom, mercy and grace revealed his grand plan to restore mankind to have a personal relationship with him, to come to him any day and any time.

What was God’s plan to restore mankind? Let us look at **verse 14-15**: “*So the Lord God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, “Cursed are you above all livestock and all wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life. 15 And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”* Here God first revealed that he is the Lord God, creator of the heavens and earth. He revealed his power over the serpent by cursing it above all livestock and wild animals, to crawl and eat dust all the days of its life. The Lord also revealed his Lordship by the curse of mankind, childbearing pains for the woman, making her the pleasure for her husband and for the man, God cursed the ground that the man will work, through painful toil for the man to eat.

And finally, God’s grand plan to restore mankind is through the offspring of the woman, whom the serpent’s offspring will strike his heel, and the woman’s offspring will crush his head. Here the offspring of the of the woman is Jesus Christ who will crush the power of sin and death, a strike of Jesus heel is Jesus’ suffering on the cross through crucifixion and death which he overcame through resurrection. Jesus crushed the head of the devil by taking up the sin of the whole world. Restoring all mankind who believe into the original image, into children of God. When Jesus was crucified the curtain in the temple was torn from top to bottom, opening a way for all mankind to come to God regardless of their sins.

Adam and Eve fell because they doubted the love of God, however through Jesus Chris, God continued to express his deep love for mankind, love so deep that he sent Jesus Christ, his one and only Son into this very sin filled world, born in the mostly lowly conditions, live among sinners, suffer in the hands of sinners, mocked and killed like the worst criminal for the sins of the world. When we sincerely and truly think about Jesus, we cannot leave any room of doubt for the love that God has for us. I pray that we may meditate daily on the word of God and his love through Jesus Christ who was crucified for us and rose to life, conquering the power of sin and death. This is how we can conquer the devil schemes to plant doubt on the love God.

**Conclusion**

From today’s passage we have learnt that since the beginning, the devil’s goal is to destroy mankind through leading him/her to sin. We have learnt that devil does this by planting doubt in the love that God has for us, by planting pride in our hearts. We have learnt that the devil is able to plant this doubt and pride when we do not have the word of God firmly established in our hearts. We have learnt that devil is also able to plant this doubt and pride when men, husbands and fathers do not lead the family according to the direction of God. We have learnt from the passage that as men, we have to consistently and sincerely lead our family by teaching the word of God to our families so that it is firmly established in their hearts.

We have also learnt that even though Adam and Eve doubted God’s love and disobeyed him, God did not give up on mankind. But rather he expressed even much greater love for mankind, by giving his one and only Son Jesus Christ as a sacrifice, to die for the sins of all mankind and crushing the power of sin and death forever. God forsake his one and only Son Jesus for our sake, in **Mark 15:34** it says: *“And at three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?” (which means “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”)”*

Through Jesus God revealed his great love for us, no greater love than this. I pray that God may have mercy on us to not loose sight of the love of God revealed through Jesus. I pray that we may sincerely study the word of God diligently and allow it to be planted and deeply rooted in our hearts so that we do not even give a slightest chance for the devil to plant doubt and pride in our hearts.