

Broken bottles, broken plates,
Broken switches, broken gates,
Broken dishes, broken parts,
Streets are filled with broken hearts
Broken words never meant to be spoken,
Everything is broken.
Seem like every time you stop and turn around
Something else just hit the ground.

So sang Bob Dylan in his 1989 song “Everything is Broken.” In a time of detachment from life and the world around him, the song has a strong driving beat while communicating the despair that everything in life is broken.

We are so accustomed to brokenness that we fail to appreciate how much we are conditioned to how everything is broken. In a perfect world were there was no evil and corruption, we would not have police officers, lawyers, judges, nurses, doctors, insurance brokers, counsellors, and even pastors! We are used to things breaking down and throwing them away. We have disposable plates and cups; we get rid of old washers and dryers; we upgrade from used to new vehicles; we try to upgrade partners and marriages!

How did everything become so broken? What is wrong with the world, with you, with me? When we left Genesis 1&2, the world was perfect. Adam and Eve were together. Harmony existed. The world was ideal. But by the end of Genesis 3, everything is broken. What went wrong?

Meet the Serpent – Leader of the Rebellion (Gen. 3:1)

When we open Genesis 3, we meet a very shrewd figure – the serpent. While our English bibles make him sound to be trouble by describing him as ‘crafty,’ he is far more subtle in his trouble. The Bible doesn’t clearly lay out for us where this leader of the rebellion came from, but what we do know is that he has many names in the Bible story: the Father of Lies; the Accuser of the Brothers; the Devil; and Satan. As the story unfolds, we find out that he was one of the key Warrior Angels who oversaw a large cohort of God’s angelic army. At some point, this mighty warrior leader led a rebellion and lead a great revolt against God, raging against his goodness and seeking to destroy everything good.

Discover His Tactics – the Method of Rebellion (3:2-5)

When the serpent finds the woman, he uses three tactics in his rebellion.

First, he creates confusion. “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden’? (3:1). The method of confusion is quite simple. Ask a question that casts doubt. Question God’s Word and Law.

Second, he fosters presumption. “You will not surely die!” (v. 4). God had made it clear that breaking his Law would result in death, but the serpent suggests that God has exaggerated things. “Are you serious? Do you think he’d really do that?”

Third, he appeals to ambition. “God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” (v. 5). By casting doubt and making it seem like God was exaggerating, the serpent now sows the temptation – God is withholding good things from you because he’s not wanting you to be like him!

Confusion about God’s Word; Presumption about God’s grace; Ambition to be God’s equal. These have always been the tactics of evil. Doubt God’s Word. Think God isn’t serious. Desire to be in control.

We might wonder why God was so specific about the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Why was it there in the first place? We don’t exactly know, but the language of discerning good and evil shows up later in the Bible story – the same language here. It is used of those in authority who are charged with the task of making wise decisions in carrying out justice (2 Sam. 14:17; 19:35; 1 Ki. 3:9; Isa. 7:15-16). Solomon, Israel’s wisest king, prayed that he might receive “an understanding heart to judge...to discern between good and evil” (1 Ki. 3:9). So it seems that Adam was to come to this tree as prophet, priest, and king, to hear God’s Word, discerning what would defile God’s temple garden, and make a judgment against evil. But as he stands there with Eve, he fails in his roles.

Discover the Moves into Temptation

As Eve responds to the serpent, there are three things she does when she reiterates the command. And these three moves open up temptation.

First, we minimize God’s goodness. When God had given the command, he had first given a gracious and good provision. “You may freely eat!” But when God’s goodness and generosity is forgotten, we are opened up to becoming suspicious of him.

Second, we add to God’s Word and make God more restrictive. God had clearly said that they were not to eat of the tree, but Eve adds the words, “Neither shall you touch it.” By adding to the command, God is seen as harsher than he really is.

Finally, the consequences are minimized. God had said, “You will surely die,” but this is reduced to ‘You will die.’ While this might seem small, minimizing the consequences reduces God’s holiness.

And the result is Eve taking the fruit, eating it, and handing it to her husband.

But before we blame Eve, notice that Adam is there, suggesting he has been there from the start. Adam, the one who is the Prophet, Priest, and King, fails in each of these roles by being a passive man. As a prophet, he did not correct the miscommunication of God’s

Word. As a priest, he allowed an unclean animal into the garden. And as a king of the King, he allowed the serpent to have dominion and headship where he should have led.

Discover the consequences of sin – Emnity Gen. 3:8-13)

The results are disasterous. Immediately their eyes are opened, and they are filled with guilt and shame. They hide when they hear the Lord coming to walk with them. And the momentary lapse is full of eternal consequences.

The first consequence is that they have wanted to be like God rather than with God. And this is the human condition. We would rather be in control than have rest for our soul. But being in control never brings rest to the soul – it only stirs up envy, strife, bitterness, rage, and malice. When fellowship with God is not our aim, control will be our game.

The second consequence is that they do not take personal responsibility. “The woman you gave me....” “The serpent....” When we are only victims, we will fail to take responsibility for our actions. When we are only victims, we will never find healing and wholeness. But we are both victims of sin and perpetrators of sin. We must reject theories that suggest that we do not have to take responsibility for our struggle because of our group identity, our gender, our backgrounds. Those things can inform us, but they do not excuse us.

Discover the pain of death – The Curse (3:15-19)

God, being perfect and holy, cannot have his temple garden defiled by impurity. He must protect the glory of his name. And so he pronounces a curse. First on the serpent, then to the woman, and finally the man.

To the serpent (3:15), the Lord casts him out of this pristine place and tells him that he will creep on the ground forever and experience conflict between his descendents and the woman’s descendents.

To the woman (3:16), the Lord tells her that there will be great pain in childbearing, reminding her that life now can only come through great physical pain, and this will be true about eternal life. In addition, there will be dysfunctional relational dynamics between women and men. In the home, Eve will struggle with Adam’s headship (“your desire will be for your husband” – cf. 4:7 where sin’s desire is for Cain to create disruption) and instead of Adam being a servant head, he will struggle with being passive at times and domineering at other points.

And to Adam, there must have been a sense of dread. What would happen? But instead of Adam receiving the curse directly, he learns that work will be a challenge for him. Work will be full of conflict, pain, and struggle. It will take the life right out of him. And in the end, he will return to the dust from where he came.

As God pronounces the curses – this inability to function as the prophet who holds to the Word of God, a priest who desired to be like God more than with God, and the king who allowed the serpent to rule rather than coming to the tree to rule rightly, God sends the first humans into exile – out into the wild wilderness.

See the Glory of Christ (Gen. 3:15; 21)

As Dylan released his song “Everything Is Broken,” it was part of an album filled with resignation and gloominess. And yet, for all of the brokenness, sorrow, and resignation within the album, it was a comeback album for Dylan after his two previous albums had flopped. And the comeback album was called, “Oh Mercy.”

Everything may be broken, but the cry of the soul is that there would be a word of mercy. And there are two hints in Genesis 3 of a coming mercy.

First, as God pronounces the curse upon the serpent, he tells him that he may be nipping at the heels of the sons of God, but the serpent’s head will receive a mortal bruise (3:15). There will be many attempts to overthrow evil, but Adam’s descendants will fail over and over. But when Christ came, he was bruised and beaten, nailed to a cross, put on display as though evil had won. But as that cross was raised, it was raised on a hill called Golgotha – the Hill of the Skull. And as that cross was raised, the cross pierced into the skull of that serpent of old and declared that his days were numbered. As Revelation 20:1-3 declares, the serpent of old will be bound, and then thrown into the pit of destruction forever (Rev. 20:10). Evil will have its end. Death will not have dominion because Jesus Christ has been raised to life (Rom. 6:9)! The serpent’s rebellion will be crushed. Victory is secure!

Second, as God sends Adam and Eve out of the garden, he takes their poor attempt to cover themselves with leaves and offers a sacrifice. The skins of this sacrifice then become the clothing of the exiled king and queen who are sent outside of the holy place guarded by God’s warrior angels. But this is not the end. The sacrifice that covers them tells us that there is a better sacrifice to come that will cloth our filth with righteousness. Jesus comes to be our perfect sacrifice and clothes us with his righteousness as his royal representatives. And as he clothes us and as we wait to dwell with him forever, his apostle says these words: “Be excellent in what is good. Be innocent of evil. And the God of peace will soon crush Satan underneath your feet” (Rom. 16:19b-20a)!

Everything is broken...for now. But those who trust in the promise of God know that the story doesn’t end with everything broken. It ends with mercy triumphing over judgment. So we might sing “Everything is Broken” now, but the album cover tells it all – “Oh Mercy”!!!