

**Sequoyah Hills Presbyterian Church**  
**Knoxville, Tennessee**  
**Rev Rachel Hamburger**  
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**“Eden: Falling Forward”**  
**Genesis 3:14-19**

I don't know how many of you have **taken a fall** sometime -- on the street, on the football field, on a hike, in your own home. I have fallen; they fell. I am reading this morning from Genesis 3:14-19.

In the past decade, I have fallen twice, memorably - once playing Frisbee, tumbling back and once, with my German family (the children), trying to jump on a skim board at the North Sea, flipping backwards. Both times, after falling backwards, VERTIGO set in, such that I had to go to the hospital, and was sick, sick, sick for days.

As I was slowly recovering from the last instance in Germany, my cousin and I were carefully walking in Hamburg, and my foot caught on a crack in the sidewalk; lunging forward, down I went again. I prayed with everything in me, “Please, Lord, may this not put me back into vertigo.” Thankfully it didn't, and I was able to fly home days later. What I gathered from these experiences is that falling backwards sets off something in a different way than falling forward. I determined from then on that when I fall, I'm going to do my best to **fall forward**. Adam and Eve fell from the place God had for them, as we've been reminded in recent weeks. They fell from that good place. They wanted something more than their relationship with God. (I can relate to that sometimes.) They wanted life on their own terms.

“And the penalties, they strike at their pride,” writes scholar FF Bruce. Bruce writes, “Satan repeatedly offers glory and power to anyone who follows him, but now he must crawl on the ground, in shame, the most reviled, dreaded of creatures.

The man Adam's main glory is his ability to exercise dominion, to oversee and care for the earth; but he is now humiliated by the rebellion of the soil,” such that whatever he puts his hand to, there is struggle. Even the ground struggles with thorns/thistles.

“The woman's main glory is that new life must come through her. This is not only linked from now on with PAIN, but also with a deep over-powering desire for her husband, who (taking advantage of this) will now rule over her.” FF Bruce adds, “this is not a command of God!” It's the brokenness of the Fall.

It's the story of the Bible, of the Holy God, who because of his nature, must deal with sin that defies him. *The people of God tested the Most High God and rebelled against him*, the Psalmist says. *They were faithless like their ancestors, and twisted like a treacherous bow*. It's the story of the sin that got into our very bloodstream.

One morning a pastor was greeting people at the door as they came into worship. A woman shook his hand and said, “Preacher, I hope you're not going to talk about sin this morning. I don't sin, and I don't want to hear about it.”

I do believe the days of thinking we are not sinful have passed, as are the days of thinking we don't have a part in the Fall, that you and I weren't there also, in big and smaller ways, even if it's being in grocery store aisle, finding yourself going *against* the arrows, in the wrong direction. *I'm going the wrong way; what do I do? Turn around, back up, proceed quickly before anyone sees me? Do I even care?*

This past week I watched a documentary on the National Parks, these beautiful natural sites preserved. The narrator then turned to historic sites saved, including reminders of painful episodes in American history, "set aside with the belief that a great nation could openly acknowledge them." The pictures were gripping. We know some of our history, then and now, a groaning, weary world, *with many people, the Lord knows, doing the best they can, the best they know how to, the best they have learned or experienced (from their upbringing) ... and the fears, brokenness, sin just keeps getting passed down.*

OK, Genesis 3! It seems the curtain has gone down already, in the third chapter of the Bible. Is the Fall the end of the story? NO, God turned the page in His searing love for humanity, and its welfare. God said to that serpent, the one who prompted it all. *"I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers. (Jesus). He will strike your head, and you will strike his heel."* The phrase, "you will strike his heel," refers to Satan's repeated attempts to defeat Christ during his life on earth. But "He will strike your head" foreshadows Satan's defeat when Jesus Christ rose from the dead. A strike on the head is deadly. Scholars call verse 15, "the germinal pronouncement of the Gospel." Already God was revealing his plan to destroy Satan, sin and death, and to offer LIFE to the world through the Son.

Adam and Eve DID die spiritually that day, for God had said, "The day you eat of this fruit, I told you not to eat, you will die." I am reminded of what my Dad said once when he reflected on a new call in his life. "I knew that every time we say no to God, we die a little spiritually, and I did not want to die spiritually. I wanted to live."

The wonder is not that humankind is punished, but that it/they continue to live on earth, writes commentator Walter Bruggeman. He writes, "**God's grace** will be given to them after the sentence. **God's grace** is given in the very sentence itself .... which IS life apart from the goodness of the garden, life in conflict filled with pain, with sweat, and most interestingly, with the distortion of desire. But it is nonetheless life. When the facts warrant death, God insists on life for his creatures."

LIFE!! It IS happening all over the world. Life!! **Because there was a MAN who IS life, brought life, will forever BE life** ...the only answer for our world, who through His Life came to reverse things, to reverse the Fall.

Romans 5: *"For just as one man's sin led to condemnation for all, so one man's act of righteousness leads to justification and LIFE for all. For if the many died through the one man's trespass, much more surely have the grace of God and the free gift in the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abounded for the many."*

It's IS happening for so many, Grace, in many ways. The news today has much bad news, but it is also filled with more and more stories and experiences of GRACE.

I ask myself, "Do I, do we, live by the effects of the Fall or by the power Grace? Seeing vestiges of the Fall in ourselves, do we throw ourselves daily on God's mercy? Sin may be deep, consequences hard, but Jesus comes to heal us, and the world!

Just for now, life still plays out outside the Garden, but He is here, and He walks with us, talks with us, and tells us we are His own, and His Promises are golden. Christians, in the midst of it all, let's be about *Falling Forward!*

What does that look like for you and for me this day?