



Genesis #3

The great lie

w/c 31 May 2026

"Those who do not think about their own sins make up for it by thinking incessantly about the sins of others." (C S Lewis)

Read Genesis 3:1-10

The Jews faced a problem: God is good; his creation is good. We do wrong. What happened? For many local religions of the time, it was easy, there would be co-existing good and evil deities; both pre-existing and always at war. Genesis makes it clear that this is not how things are.

Somewhat intriguingly, translations of verse one use words like crafty, clever, subtle or cunning to describe our protagonist. **Why do you think the writer didn't just label them as 'evil'?**

To a degree, Genesis 3 simply pushes the issue one stage further back. The tempter brought evil into the world. Genesis does not explain how they had picked up those traits that were to go on and cause such mayhem for mankind. While that is an interesting philosophical question it is of tangential relevance to us here today. What matters is that we (and mankind around us) are partial to sin; it's somehow in our nature.

For one so short, sin is a complex word. I won't even attempt a definition except to echo some words of St Augustine: *"evil exists as an absence of the good"*.

Both the Hebrew and the Greek used in writing the Bible use several terms for 'sin' each providing a different insight into human failure:

Missing a target – see for example, Genesis 20:9 or Matthew 3:6. In both Old and New Testaments it's the most common term used for sin.

Straying from the path – several words carry this idea, either as accidental step or something more deliberate. It's from early translations of this that we get 'trespasses'.

Ungodliness or lawlessness – these carry an idea of rebellion, of our breaking a relationship with God.

Guilt – For the Old Testament, this is the guilt that follow deliberate wrongdoing. New Testament writers make use of a legal term meaning guilty.

Debt – This idea, not found in the Old Testament, is used in particular by Matthew in his version of the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:12).

The list above is by no means exhaustive; in the Hebrew we also find **wickedness** and **mischief** and, in the Greek, **depravity** and **injustice**.

Reflect on each and think through how they can affect us.

How does this wealth of expression help us understand the enormity of sin?

Psalm 51:4 brings us a key perspective on this variety, David writes that *"...against you only have I sinned."* All sin is against God. Paul describes this as being *"hostile to God."* (Romans 8:7) I'll end though with a reminder that not all sin lies in doing something. **How do we achieve the necessary level of activism to avoid the error identified below?**

"To ignore evil is to become an accomplice to it." (Martin Luther King, Jr)