

The Beginning of Sin and Death

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- [0 : 0 0] Father, we know that the devil doesn't want us to think about this text. And you know, Father, how we ourselves, our minds quickly flit away from texts like this.
- How easy it is, Father, for us to not hear and not even to notice that we're not hearing. So we ask, Father, that you would be very kind to us. You are always kind and pour out your Holy Spirit with might and power and deep conviction.
- And grip us with your word. And as we are gripped by your word, grip us with the gospel. And this we ask in Jesus's name. Amen.
- Please be seated. So two weeks ago, part of the Bible text meant that we had to talk about abortion.
- And transgender issues. And last week, the Bible text meant that we had to talk about marriage, sexual knowing, and same-sex marriage.
- [1 : 1 1] Nothing controversial. And this week, there's nothing big and controversial like that. Except this is really, really a big passage of scripture. I mean, why is there evil?
- Why is there suffering and pain? Why is it that God seems so hard to know? Why is it that God seems like an abstraction and so distant?
- And not only these things, but why is it that I do wrong things? Why is it that often after a conversation or a meeting, I'm kicking myself because I was meaner or sharper or more angry or more cowardly than I desire to be?
- Why is it that I do these things? Why is it that I do these things? These are really, really important human questions. And the Bible text that we're going to look at today is the first step in coming to understand the answer to these things.
- So it would be a great help to me if you got a Bible and you turned in them to Genesis chapter 3. And if you're unfamiliar with the Bible, Genesis is the very first book in the Bible.
- [2 : 1 7] So it's probably like page 2 or 3 in your Bible. But Genesis chapter 3. And just before we start to read it again and look at it, I just want to share the older I get and the longer I think about these issues.
- And I don't mean any disrespect to anybody else. But the longer I think about these issues, there is nothing in the world in philosophy or spirituality or religion that is as wise as Genesis 1, 2, and 3.
- When understood through the gospel. I just, the more I think about these things, the more I think about how different groups try to understand the existence of good and evil and our longings.
- I don't think Islam or Hinduism or Buddhism or secular thought comes even close to the wisdom of Genesis 1, 2, and 3. This is just me sharing what I have discovered the more and more I think about it.
- It is so wise and so true. And if you get nothing else out of the sermon, if you spend the rest of the sermon thinking about your shopping list or what you're going to watch on Netflix tonight or whatever, I hope you don't.

[3 : 32] But if all you get out of it is a desire to read the truth in Genesis 1, 2, and 3 and meditate upon it, then God has done a good work in your heart. Now it's going to start in a very, very odd way.

In fact, it's going to start in a way that puts us off. Look how it begins. Genesis chapter 3, verse 1. Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made.

He said to the woman, did God actually say you shall not eat of any tree in the garden? And as soon as I say that, some of you say, time out, George. Okay, I thought you said this is a true story.

Talking snakes. George, come on. Like I thought you were making this case. Like I've listened to some of your sermons and, you know, you're talking about creation and evolution. You talked about Adam and Eve.

You talked about how they're real and how they're true and how they matter. And now we come to talking serpents. Like what's going on, George? Well, that's a good question.

[4 : 30] It's an honest question, isn't it? Like a lot of us feel very uncomfortable about it. So I just want to say a couple of things about this talking serpent thing. The first thing is, and this is going to, I was really surprised when I discovered this.

But in the Middle Ages, a lot of Jewish commentators upon this, they believed, well, they actually believed in an early form of Narnia. I mean, how many people have read the Narnia Chronicles or are familiar with the Narnia Chronicles?

If you're not familiar with the Narnia Chronicles, there's talking animals and there's animals that don't talk. And believe it or not, a lot of Jewish commentators believe that in the Garden of Eden, which wasn't the whole world, just a part of the world, that in the Garden of Eden, all the animals talked.

And that outside the Garden of Eden, they didn't talk. I think that's sort of cool, eh? I'm not saying that's the answer to the text. I just was really surprised that that was what some, like our Jewish friends for many centuries, some of them taught.

Listen, here's the main thing. Sort of two main things about it. First of all, I'm going to keep on assuming that Moses is the guy ultimately responsible.

[5 : 38] I mean, ultimately, I believe it's God who caused it to be written, but at a human level, it is Moses. If you don't agree with me, that's, you know, ultimately, nobody doesn't say who wrote the book, okay? But tradition with Moses.

Okay? Just remember this, right? This is like, if you get, here's one of George's hermeneutical principles, okay? Assume for a second Moses wasn't stupid. Just assume.

Moses knew that snakes didn't talk. I mean, that wasn't just something they figured out in 2017. Like, if this text was written 1500 BC or 1300 BC or whenever it was written, they knew back then that snakes didn't talk.

So let's just assume for a second that they knew that. In fact, it's actually a bit of an argument for the text because all the rest of the book of Genesis, as you read it, it's describing, it's talking about in very historical and real terms, as if it's describing things that really happened.

I can just imagine almost Moses having a conversation with God. Okay, well, God, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa. You want me to put in a talking snake? Like, are people going to lose the thread of this if I, you know?

[6 : 41] And he had to trust to put in the talking snake. But if you, here's the other thing, a more realistic thing. If you go and you read in 2 Samuel, there's a very, very interesting pair of stories.

And in the first set of stories, it describes how David lusts after Bathsheba. And then David, after he lusts after Bathsheba, he has an affair with her.

He makes her pregnant. And then he conspires to make it look like her husband has made her pregnant, not him. And when that plan doesn't work, he comes up with another conspiracy to have Bathsheba's husband murdered.

And that's successful. And Uriah, Bathsheba's husband, dies. And it's told, just in a straight narrative form, more detailed than I gave you, but it's told.

Then immediately after that, the whole story is retold in a second way. Some of you who know the Bible know it, isn't it? It's that Nathan comes and tells, who's a prophet, and tells David a story about a man who just had one little sheep.

[7 : 57] And how this rich king came and killed the sheep. And, you know, didn't use any of his own sheeps, but basically stole this one sheep of this poor person and killed it.

And David gets enraged and says, that man should die. And then there's this famous line, Nathan says to the king, you are that man. And it's very, very convicting.

This story here is a bit of both. And one of the ways to understand the story is it's not saying that, by the way, that, I don't know, you know, Eve's walking around. The snake says one thing.

She says something back. He says something. She says something. He says something. She says something. And that takes you about, I don't know, like 15 seconds. She eats the apple. It's not an apple.

Eats the fruit. Wham. Who knows? This interaction could have taken place over hours or weeks. There's no sense of that.

[8 : 54] It's on one hand like the story of Nathan confronting David with the story of the sheep. To try to communicate the historical thing that David actually did to bring it home to him in a very, very powerful way.

And so in many ways, this story is more like that. It's describing something that happened that's real. But it's introducing symbolism and imagery and language that's compressed.

And let me tell you, I, every day this week, when I was reading this text and memorizing it, I would have to stop my preparation. And I know this is saying more about me than it is about other people because my brain isn't very big.

But I would feel like my brain was going to explode because there's so much in this text. And I would have to stop preparing because I would just have to say, God, there is so much.

I didn't say God in a swear word. I mean, I'm actually talking to God. And I said, Lord, there is so much. I feel like my head is going to explode. My heart is going to explode. And God in his wisdom compresses whatever it is that really happens into this very short, in five verses, the interaction.

[10 : 02] And in one verse, the fall and the beginning of death, sin and death and tragedy. And then in a few verses, the beginning of a sense of how God graciously responds in simple language that you could read to a child and they would understand.

It's a brilliant piece of writing. And it's more like, you are the man. That's how it's written. But it's describing something real.

The other thing by this, by the way, is this story is part of a big story in the Bible. And the big story in the Bible is that God makes all things good.

Then evil arises in his created order. And then God promises he's going to deal with it. And then he deals with it in the person of his son. Then we live in a time of the already not yet knowing that God is going to bring all things to a proper end.

And then comes the very end. It's part of an overarching big story. So the serpent, as illud, is brought into this. And it's not really made clear who he is until you actually get to the book of Isaiah.

[11 : 14] And you get to the book of Ezekiel. And most of all, until you get to Jesus. But you see the consequences of the act in a very powerful way very, very quickly.

So let's read verse 1 again now, okay? Okay, hopefully, you know, you're with me. The time out has come. Okay, we have a talking serpent. It's a very powerful image, isn't it?

Now, the serpent, verse 1, was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. Just, by the way, one of these things. I didn't know this until I did my language research.

The word crafty in the original language sounds almost the same as naked in the original language. So the previous story ends with the man and the woman being naked, but unashamed and embarrassed and unafraid.

And so this, the way this is written, the writer is saying, I'm telling you a brand new story, but in a very, very subtle way. If you were listening to it in the original language and you hear the two words which are almost identical, but just slightly different, you see that the story is tying the two of them together.

[12 : 26] And so now the serpent was more crafty or shrewd than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made.

This is really, really, really big. If you could put the first point up, that would be great. Evil is not equal to God's goodness.

And God did not create evil. I mean, there's, you know, one of the problems with Hindu thought.

It's not that Hindu thought is immoral. Hinduism teaches many, like, very common moral things that is just part of the common moral teaching and understanding of humanity.

But one of the problems with Hindu thought is how you ultimately accept that there is, in fact, a real difference between good and evil. Because at the end of all things, there's just God.

[13 : 28] There's just God. And there's just oneness. And it's actually sort of a challenge for Hinduism when you probe into it. And if that's what the real reality is, that there's just one with no difference and no distinction, how do you make clear the distinction between good and evil?

And there's other schools of thought that make it look almost as if good and evil are equal. And it's very easy for us to want to try to blame God for evil. But when it says here that the beast of the field that the Lord God had made, what we're seeing here is that it's not that somehow or another, whoever the serpent is, and it's not going to become clearer until you start to read Isaiah and you start to read Ezekiel and you start to read what Jesus has to say.

And then you start to read the apostles who've learned from Jesus. And then you see in the book of Revelation and you see the carrying on of the images and you see the deepening of the teaching. And it's not going to be very clear right now who it is and what exactly it is that the serpent is.

But what's going to be very, very clear is that the serpent isn't somehow equal to God. And what's going to be seen here is that it isn't as if somehow there's this separate force of evil that's just the same as God that somehow invades God's good creation.

There is a type of invasion here. But what the text is making clear is that all things that exist were made. And what you're seeing here is that the beginning of evil and the beginning of sin comes from the very creatures that God had made.

[15 : 01] That the serpent and the power behind the serpent were made by God and that they were originally made as good and that Adam and Eve are made and they're originally made as good. And that it's in these good things that God has made that out of these good things evil and the breaking of creation is going to come out of the creatures.

And it's the beginning of a long type of reflection that you can have. But the text by saying in these very, very simple words that the serpents made, and we already know that Adam and Eve are made, then we're going to see that when this first act of evil and rebellion happens, and the things which lead up to it, is it comes from the made things, not God.

And if it comes from made things, not God, then it's not equal to God's goodness. God didn't create evil. In fact, we're going to see that from the very entrance of evil into the created order, that God is going to act with justice and opposition to evil, but also with great grace and mercy and compassion without any compromise to his justice and his opposition to evil.

So read it again. You know, at this rate, it's going to be 13 verses, 15 minutes. You can do the math. It's going to be a two-hour sermon. No, we'll go a little bit quicker. Read verse 1 again.

Now, what did God actually say?

[16 : 58] So, if you're like me, most of us just can't instantly remember what God said, but just look, it's probably on the same page, just look at chapter 2, verse 7. If you look at chapter 2, verse 7 through 9, you get to see what God says.

And then in verses 15 and 16, look what it says. So verse 7, Then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.

It's a description of the creation of Adam, the second creation story, as it's called. Verse 8, And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed.

And out of the ground the Lord God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, also by implication in the midst of the garden.

And just go down to verse 15 and 16. So by the way, just before you get further, the Bible doesn't actually talk much about the tree of life until it gets to the New Testament.

[18 : 07] It's sort of, it's mentioned very briefly at the end of Genesis 3. We'll look at that in a couple of weeks. But the, it doesn't touch much about it. But in terms especially of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, it's just a tree.

It's not a magical tree. It's not a tree that has particular powers. It's just a tree. And that's going to be very, very important.

The thing about, the thing about the tree isn't that somehow the tree is magical or special, that the fruit is somehow special in and of itself. It's going to be an opportunity. The tree is just an opportunity for God to give the human beings, Adam and Eve, a simple command that they are to obey.

They don't have to learn the Westminster Catechism. They don't have to learn the Heidelberg Catechism. They don't have to memorize the whole book of Psalms. They have one tree, one simple command.

And you can't have love without freedom. And the way that they show that they love the Lord and that they're free is to follow one simple command.

[19 : 13] That's all it is. Look at verse 15 and 16. The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and to keep it. And the Lord commanded the man, saying, You may surely eat of every tree of the garden.

Notice that? You may surely eat of every tree of the garden. And the implication is, listen, you know, there's thousands, I don't know, hundreds of thousands of trees, different type of fruit.

Adam, I love you. I've provided for you. The fruit is delicious. Eat as much as you want, whenever you want, as varied as you want.

Come on in. Eat to your heart's content. That's what it means by saying surely. You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat.

One tree. Thousands or hundreds of thousands of trees, you can eat. Eat as much as you want. One tree, only one tree. Don't eat of it. And what does it say?

[20 : 28] For in the day that you eat of it, you shall surely die. So let's go back to what the serpent says to Eve. He says to the woman, the second part of verse one, Did God actually say, You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?

Notice that? By the way, so much temptation in our life, and so much problem comes by, that's a very simple thing. Did God actually say? You know, like, when we're having, when I'm having discussions, you know, around maybe issues around, you know, it's easy when you're having conversations with people around slavery being evil, because Christians and our secular society, we all agree that slavery is evil, right?

And there's, you know, it's very easy to have a conversation around, I don't know, like political oppression, or torture, or, you know, profound economic injustice.

Like, it's very easy to have conversations with our friends, because what our culture says, and what the Bible says, we're saying the same type of thing. But when you get to things where our culture differs from the Bible, and then you get talking to Christians, or people just trying to figure out the Christian faith, who are trying to get around it, like it almost always comes up, did God actually say?

Like, did God actually say? Isn't that just like a bit of a cultural thing that you don't have to follow anymore? Like, isn't that just a narrative device? Like, isn't that just like a bit of a mythological thing?

[21 : 57] Did God actually say? Like, this is as new as the most recent class in theology or spirituality. And it's as new and as current as our most recent conversation.

Did God actually say? And notice, he gets it all wrong. He basically wants to say to Eve, did God actually say, you can't eat any of these trees? Like, whoa, what a weird God.

Like, you're pretty in the midst of all these trees. God's weird, isn't he? You know, the other thing that he does here, which is harder to know, I didn't know this until I looked at and did my language studies. Notice in verse, the first part of verse one, it says, Lord God.

And in the second part, it just says God. You know why that's significant? That Lord and God put together. God is in a sense, the general word that if they had been talking abstractly about God to Egyptians or to Hittites or Assyrians, they could use this general word for God.

That's the word God. But Lord is a relationship word. it's a little bit like, you know, every one of my children at some point in time, they, when they were very young, at a certain age, all of them would start calling me George.

[23 : 14] And I would have a conversation with them. I would say, there's seven billion people on the planet who can call me George. There's only, let's say, with my last kid, there's only nine people in the entire planet of seven billion who can call me dad.

dad. And you're one of them. So call me dad. And Lord is more like dad. It's a relationship word. It's an intimate word.

But notice what the serpent does. He uses the abstract word, the distant word, the generic word, rather than the personal word for God.

You know, this is so true of me. One of my problems in my Christian life is I start to think more and more that God's an abstraction. abstraction. It's one of the ways that I make God more distant when he becomes an abstraction to me, a generality to me, an argument to me.

And we see that right here. The serpent says, abstraction, not dad, not the personal name, but the abstraction. And notice how Eve responds.

[24 : 17] See, and this is all the way through the story. So how does Eve going to respond? First of all, if you read Genesis 2, Eve should actually say, you know, you're not talking true of God and part of my job is to protect this garden so that only true and honorable things of God are said, so you need to leave.

That's what she actually should have said. But what does she say instead? Verse 2, and the woman said to the serpent, we may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden.

And by the way, she admits the word surely. She's saying, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. God sort of lets us to have the odd bite of a grape or an apple. Like she's left out his provision, like his throwing open his arms and say, eat to your heart's content.

She doesn't say to the serpent, he said, I can eat of every tree in the garden except one to my heart's content. Instead, she says, yeah, I'm allowed to eat the odd bit of fruit.

You know, isn't that so true of your life? I'm just speaking here to Christians. You know, isn't that so true that it's so easy for me to start, for you and me to start forgetting how good God is?

[25 : 30] Like, I remember, this is quite a few years ago, I was really, really down about how much money I had. Okay? And then it was one of those times as if God spoke to me and said, George, have you ever missed a meal?

Have you ever had a night where, you know, apart from times you might voluntarily have gone out to sleep under the stairs, have you ever had a night that you haven't had clothes or roof over your head or no food?

And I said to God, so to speak, that's never happened to me once, God. And it was as if he said back to me, he said, what are you complaining about? Like, rather than me waking up every day and thinking, God, there's another day where I breathe, and thank you that my mind, it's not the best mind in the world, but it still works.

And thank you that I had a good night's sleep and thank you that I can live in a safe city and thank you that there's food for me waiting to eat in a few moments and thank you for the, rather than counting my blessings, so many times in my life I don't count my blessings but start to think that somehow God is cheap.

You know, that's what she does right here. Say it again, and the woman said to the servant, we may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God, and she uses the abstract word, not the personal word, said, you shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.

[26 : 56] She added something to God's word. By the way, by the way, right here you see the heart of all religion and spirituality. You know, if you're here and you're a Jewish person, I don't want to offend you, but the Bible actually doesn't say that you can't eat meat and dairy in the same meal.

Actually doesn't say that. It just says you can't take the calf and kill the calf and cook it in its mom's milk.

What does religion do? It wants to add to it. And that's what religion and spirituality does. You see, on one hand, it makes God more harsh, and the other hand, it makes him seem like he's distant, and the other hand, it wants to add to God's word to add rules on it because God isn't smart enough to add enough rules, so our church has to make up God.

You screwed up, God. Like, you should have said more no's. So because you forgot because you screwed up, we're going to add the no's you missed because we're like God.

One moment, that's the fall. That's Genesis 3. That's sin. Let's just hope we don't remember that because we can't read Genesis 3 because there's a talking serpent.

[28 : 19] And we're really sophisticated and smart and wise and cultured and all that type of stuff. And it forgets lest you surely die. Like, she's messed everything up.

Verse 4, but the serpent said to the woman, you will not surely die. In other words, God's wrong.

You're not going to die. And then he says, for God knows that when you eat of it, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.

You know, basically, it's just this blatant thing, God's wrong. Don't trust me. I mean, in other words, don't trust God. Trust me.

I'm smarter than God. I know better. You know, you know, this might sound like it's something that when it's put so blatantly, nobody believes it.

[29 : 20] But let me tell you, when I was in university, like 100 million years ago, just after they invented the fire and the wheel, if you went to university, there were constant, constant things about Marxism and Christianity because Christianity wasn't good enough in and of itself.

we had to learn from Marx or you had to have different things about science and Christianity because guys like B.F. Skinner, they have to correct the things because God's word isn't adequate enough.

And now you might have to be a feminist and a Christian or queer and a Christian or postmodern and a Christian. And we don't actually go from this text to realize that what they're saying here is that I need to listen to a French guy or I need to listen to Germaine Greer or I need to listen to Marx and I need to listen to Jesus because the fact of the matter is that it's the, you know, Jesus, I ultimately trust the Bible.

There's several reasons for it, but at the end of the day, I trust it because I believe that Jesus really rose from the dead. And he trusted the Bible and he told me to trust the Bible and you know what?

If he can rise from the dead, he tells everybody he's going to die, he's going to rise from the dead, he rises from the dead and vindicates who he is and Marx didn't do that.

[30 : 44] Nobody else did that. I'm going to trust Jesus. I'm going to trust Jesus. So here in verse 4, the serpent just says, this is what I say. I say something different than God, believe me.

Verse 5, for God knows that when you eat of it, your eyes will be opened and you will be like God. You will be like God. You will be like God. You will be like God, knowing good and evil.

In verse 6, so the woman, when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was a delight to the eyes and that it looked like the type of tree that would make you wise.

And here the word for wise means give you practical power. That's what it means. Practical power. That's what I want. I want effective power.

You know, that's what I want. Not just, oh, you know, these are some really good ideas or some insights. I want power. Practical power. Because I want to be like God. She took the fruit and ate.

[31 : 52] And she also gave some to her husband who was with her. And he ate. And he ate. Could you put up the next point, Adam? I mean, Andrew? In Adam's fall, even though it mentions Eve primarily, it's interesting that the Bible primarily puts the obligation for the fall on Adam.

That's a whole other sermon as to why that is. Part of it, I think, is actually is that while Eve was getting confused by the serpent, Adam just did it.

He just did it. I'm going to do it. There's other reasons, but it's a whole other sermon. But if I'm going to help you read the Bible, I have to put it this way.

If I put it another way, I'm actually not helping you read the Bible. And at the end of the day, I want you to be able to read the Bible for yourself. In Adam's fall, I did not become evil.

I was in a conversation with somebody a couple of weeks ago, and he said to me, you know, George, I think people are evil. Like, are you evil? I'm evil too.

[33 : 05] I think people are evil. Isn't that what the Bible teaches? And I said, that's not what the Bible teaches. That's not what this text is going to teach us. In Adam's fall, I did not become evil. I became bent and broken from my highest heights to my deepest depths with nothing left untouched.

You see, human beings still have heights. Listen to Bach. What a creative genius. Read Pascal's Penses.

Read some really excellent literature. Look at the paintings of Michelangelo or Van Gogh or just human beings have heights.

And we also have depths. Both depths in a bad sense, but depths in a good sense. Why is it that I can be married to the same woman for almost 36 years and there's still more to know?

Human beings have depths. And what the Bible says is that we don't become evil, we don't lose our heights, we don't lose our depths, but that there's nothing in me that hasn't in some way be touched by the fall, that in some way is bent.

[34 : 22] And it's not sort of bent in such a way that I can still use it perfectly, it's bent in such a way that it's broken. If you put up the next way to put the same type of idea, please. Each and every human being is bent and broken by an ongoing desire to be God.

I thought about putting a God, but I thought, no, no, no, you know, I'm going to leave it like that because, you know, some of us just want to be God. Some of us are sure to content to share Godness with our wife or something or our best buddy.

There can be two gods, you know? Some of us want to have our party, like the Nazis were quite happy to have the German people be the gods and everybody else not, you know? But every human being is bent and broken by an ongoing desire to be God.

So for each and every person, only the true and living God can rescue and help them. That's what's going to become so obvious in the text. By the way, the Jewish people don't believe in the fall as a general rule.

It's something that developed later in Judaism and especially with Christianity, it became to full flowers. It became clear and clear. I mean, some Jews believe it, but it's not necessarily a characteristic of Jewish thought.

[35 : 38] But what this text is saying is if in fact every human being, it's not just talking about something that Adam did, but that I also have this ongoing desire to be God that I need to die to.

And if I have this ongoing desire to be God, even after I have been saved, I have an ongoing desire to be God. And if not only I have an ongoing desire to be God, but I'm also bent and broken, then I can never leave my bentness or my brokenness or my desire to be God to fix myself, it brings me to the point of realizing that unless God does something, I am doomed.

Only God can do something. Only God, and only if he has mercy and power, he needs to do something because I cannot do it myself. And we see it right here in the story, how God begins almost immediately, it's very, very interesting.

How is God going to respond to this? And some of you might be saying, well, it's really, really mean of God to sort of cause all of this human beings, like, why did he go ahead and say, okay, Adam, Eve, you did this, wham, I'm going to bang you with my hammer, and I'm going to bang you with my hammer, so now you're bent and broken, and it's all because God is mean.

If he had just been a little bit more patient, not banged me with his hammer, then I wouldn't be bent and broken, and I wouldn't need mean, and maybe he's a little bit angry. There was a few years ago, a guy who used to come to the church, I get an email on a Monday morning, he just called me like 20 names, all bad, and a whole pile of anger.

[37 : 14] I said to my wife, this must be one of those emails where he was really mad, he fired off the email, and he should have waited, because I looked at it on Monday, but he sent it right after church.

So I talked to him a little few days later, and I began trying to be gracious by saying, you know, I almost said the guy's name, we'll call him Bob. You know, Bob, that's probably one of those emails where you think about it, and afterwards you realize you shouldn't send it.

And he said to me, no, I did think about it for a while, I'm in every word, I'm not taking a word back. I thought, whoa, this is going to be an interesting conversation. But that's not what went on here in the text.

Look at what happens with God, look at verse 7. God doesn't do anything to them.

They broke and bent themselves. the words of judgment from God are going to come in when we look at this text in a couple of weeks after Easter, verse 14.

[38 : 25] He does nothing in judgment. Adam and Eve broke and bent themselves by their act. Like, this is very, this is very powerful.

And what you're going to see, you're going to see, it's going to get unraveled. You're going to start seeing the human life unraveling in the rest of the story. And then in Genesis 4, which we're going to look like in four weeks, you see then all of a sudden murder enters in.

You see that sin grows and spreads. And then you're going to see that polygamy enters in and more murder and proud claims against God. And it just starts with this one little thing that at the end of chapter two, Adam and Eve are what we ultimately truly in a heart of hearts just long for, that we could just be open, that we could be transparent, that we could just be open and transparent with ourselves, we could be open and transparent with others, we could be open and transparent with God, and that there wouldn't be anything within us of shame or of guilt or of deception or of masks or of keeping people at a distance, that we would just be right from the depths of our being to our heights, that there would just be an openness and a transparency before each of us, but all of a sudden, when they take this, I am naked.

I am naked because the fact of the matter is, if I want to actually become and think that I'm equal to God, I don't know, I'm pretty puny, and I want to be, all of a sudden, I'm naked.

And it's not like they don't respond by saying, I need God's mercy, oh, Lord God, I've just called you God, but oh, Lord, what have I done?

[40 : 22] I need your mercy, help me, I've broken myself, but they want to hang on to that desire to be God, and if you desire to be God and you are made of dust, then your very existence witnesses against you and you feel naked.

God still sees them perfectly and clearly. His sight has not been affected by their act, but they cannot bear his sight. And Adam wants to be God and so does Eve want to be God and they cannot bear each other's sight and nakedness is now a problem and God has done nothing.

They've broken themselves. And look how God reacts in verse eight. Does he want to say, does he say, whoa, the thunderbolt goes down, whoa, I'm going to grab you and shake you, I'm going to do something because I'm so mad at you.

But what is his words are the first words to fallen human beings? It's in verse eight. And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the cool of the day. By the way, the cool of the day really means the breeze of the day.

It means he's come with the Holy Spirit. And he's walking with the Holy Spirit moving in the trees, moving in the faces, moving where they're hiding.

[41 : 38] He comes to them and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord. And the word presence can also mean the word face. They don't want to see his face.

They hide from his face. I hide from the face of God. I have a deep addiction. On one hand, I long for the day when I can look at the face of God and stand before him naked and unashamed, clothed in the righteousness of Christ.

At the same time, I have a deep addictive fear of the face of God and being naked before him. And my life as a Christian is caught in the dynamics of these two desires and longings.

And the work of grace is to both fan in a flame within us a longing and a yearning for that day when we can stand before God face to face unashamed. And the same work of grace and power of the Holy Spirit and power of the word of God is to call me day by day to die to my desires and my addictions to hide from the face of God.

Read verse 8 again. And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day. And the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God, the face of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.

[43 : 00] But the Lord God called out to the man and said, where are you? Where are you? Could you put up the next point, please? This is really, really important.

It's a matter of tone. In grace and mercy, the Lord God came to draw Adam and Eve out of hiding. He did not come to drive them deeper into hiding.

Even the hardest parts of God's word. God said, is God the shepherd of our souls calling to his lost sheep to come home?

He never said, even his hardest teaching is a call to know who we are before God in our heart of hearts and to come to him and to stop hiding.

This is the shepherd looking for his lost sheep. This is the woman in the parables of Jesus looking for her lost coin. Where are you?

[44 : 08] And the man said, I heard the sound of you in the garden and I was afraid because I was naked and I hid myself. He doesn't come out of the trees.

He doesn't come to God. He stays hidden. But he calls back. He's now afraid of God. Not a holy fear, but he's just afraid of God. His rival. How can I be a rival to the one who holds this unbelievably vast galaxy in existence?

How can I be the rival to that? To him? And God then says, doesn't say, oh, you're so stupid. I hate you.

I want to break you. I want to beat you up. No, what has God said? Another question. Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?

The man said, now note this. The man doesn't say, God, can I, I really need your help. Can I come, can I come out of hiding?

[45 : 11] Can you fix me? Lord, it is just, it is just so sad. I just did it. I just did it because I wanted to be God and I know it's wrong.

But what does the man say? The woman whom you gave me, this is your fault. It's the woman's fault and it's your fault. If it wasn't for you and it wasn't for her, everything would be fine.

you see the breakdown of relationships, the fear, the accusation now against God, the blasphemy against God, the slander, the accusation against God, the accusation against the woman, the fall grows.

Look at verse 10 again. Verse 11, who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat? The man said, the woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me the fruit and I ate.

Then the Lord God, notice here that when God reappears back to Lord God, even his name, all the way through his speaking to them, his name, he hasn't changed his name.

[46 : 22] He's the God who desires to be in relationship with them. Verse 13, then the Lord God said to the woman, what is this that you have done? And the woman doesn't say, oh, Lord, please help me.

Please, please help me. What does she say? The serpent deceived me. It's the serpent's fault. And I ate. Boy, you know, doesn't this describe our life and our existence today, the beginning and how it is?

You know how hard it is to make an apology? Most of us don't make apologies, we make excuses, where we try to bowl our way out of things. It's so true.

So here, just, oh, I've gone way, here, just in closing, can you put up the last point? Only Jesus Christ, only Jesus Christ turns take and eat from a reminder of sin, shame, and death to a reminder of salvation, grace, and eternal life.

Look at verse 6 again. How does it describe what the woman did? the verbs? She took, she takes the fruit, she eats, and she gives, and he eats, and evil enters the world.

[47 : 38] Turn to Matthew chapter 26. And in Matthew chapter 26, verses 26 to 29, look how Jesus speaks when he institutes the Lord's Supper, Holy Communion.

And in here, what Jesus is doing is Jesus knows that he's about to die on the cross, that his death upon the cross is the long-foretold promise that God has made that he was going to make things right himself.

And so, his son is going to die upon the cross, and his death upon the cross is going to be the means by which we can be made right with God if we receive it by faith.

And he's instituting the Lord's Supper so that we remember what Jesus did for us on the cross, that every time we celebrate communion, on one hand, it is like Americans doing the Pledge of Allegiance.

When we receive communion, it is us making our pledge of allegiance to the one who has redeemed us. When we receive the Lord's Supper, we are reminding ourselves that we need a Savior, that only God can have mercy on us and rescue us and start to restore us.

[48 : 52] And it is renewing our covenant with Almighty God and remembering what Jesus has done for us on the cross. And just as Eve, in this story, she takes and she eats, so Jesus, when he's about to institute this new covenant meal, that people will understand after his death and his resurrection what it is that he has done for them on the cross, that they are to receive by faith, that is for the worst sinner or the person who hardly thinks they've saved at all, that every single human who puts their faith and trust in Jesus, he will turn no one away, he will accept you as his child, he will make you his child by adoption and grace, he will clothe you with the righteousness of Christ, he will begin to restore you and to heal you and to fit you for the new heaven and the new earth that we receive by faith and this meal reminds us and how does Jesus describe it?

Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread and after blessing it, broke it and gave it to the disciples and said, take, eat, this is my body. And he took a cup and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them saying, drink it of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

Only Jesus Christ turns take and eat from a reminder of sin, shame, and death and turns it into a reminder when we receive it by faith, him by faith, of salvation, grace, and eternal life.

Please stand. I'm going to invite you to join with me in a prayer. If you could put it up. I think it's going to take two slides.

If the Lord has pressed upon your heart, your need for a Savior, for some of you, maybe this is going to be a conversion prayer because it ends, it begins with confession but it ends with acknowledging who Jesus is and you're asking him, Jesus, to be his disciple.

[50 : 54] But for all of us, we need, this is just, this scripture text, it's just a way of praying the reality of this text and our recommitment to Jesus as Savior and Lord because I have this ongoing desire to be God and I need to regularly come to Jesus, thankful that he has done everything I need to do to make me right with God and I need to continue to deal with that part of me that's just not right so that I can be more like Jesus.

In a few minutes we're going to have the Lord's Supper and we will take and eat. If you're a Christian you will take and eat and remember what Jesus did for you on the cross. But I invite you to say this prayer with me.

Loving God, I confess to you that I flatter myself too much to detect or hate my own sin. I confess to you that I am good at finding specks in other people's eyes and bad at seeing the log in my own eye.

I confess that I too easily make you less generous and more harsh as I forget your word. Thank you for Jesus Christ and his death for me on the cross.

Thank you that in him my sins are forgiven. I am clothed with his perfect life. I am born again to new life. I become your child forever by adoption and grace.

[52 : 26] Please make me a disciple of Jesus gripped by the gospel, guided by your word, and living for your glory. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Father, pour out your Holy Spirit upon us and bind this prayer to our hearts that it might be true today and every day until we see you face to face. And Father, may the work of your Holy Spirit so work within us and prepare us that the words of the psalm will be true in our lives one day.

that all that is within us blesses your Holy Name as we see you face to face. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.