

The God Who Punishes Sin

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[0 : 00] Please be seated. Well, today is the third and final chapter in a series on human origins from the opening chapters of God's Word, the Bible.

So, look at Genesis 1 and 2 and now we're in chapter 3. It's very important for us to do this because the Bible is God's Word. It is His revelation to us of who He is but also of who we are being made in His image and our place in His universe, His world.

And so, we need to regularly, I think, come back to Genesis 1, 2 and 3 to know why we were made, our purpose, we exist for God and also to see what is wrong with the world.

I mean, if you were to ask your neighbours and I encourage you to do this, we all know there's stuff wrong with the world but you've got to ask your friends, well, why is the world like this? How can the world be, on the one hand, so good and yet so bad?

How do you explain that? And I think Genesis 1, 2 and 3 is our story from God as to how we explain that. Similarly, you could ask that about people.

[1 : 13] How can people be so good and yet so bad at the same time? You know, and there are different opinions. There are some people, the humanists, who say that at core people are good and we're basically all good.

And then other people who look at the evil in the world and say humans are scum and they are just all evil, you know. And where does the Christian come in on that? Well, this story explains our view of humanity, being made in God's image but also fallen.

Because the world that we looked at in the last two weeks has been perfect. But today we're going to see in the story how the world fell and in particular how we fell, how humanity fell and how that has changed the world in a very bad way.

So let's enter the story and just try and follow it through with me. It's a fascinating kind of narrative of temptation. It starts, something that starts very small, gets bigger and bigger and bigger and then the most worse and horrible thing happens.

And it starts with this funny creature called the serpent. And all we know is that he is more crafty than any other wild animal that the Lord God had made.

[2 : 37] So it's not clear who he is yet but we know he's subtle, he's shrewd. We're supposed to be uncomfortable with this character.

He doesn't come in wearing, like in a pantomime, wearing the bad guy pirate t-shirt or something. He's just quietly, there's something not quite right about this creature.

And he approaches the woman. And I'm going to refer to her either as the wife or the woman, only because she doesn't have her name yet, Eve, until the end of this chapter.

And so sort of who she is in the story is the wife of Adam or the woman. And cunningly the serpent approaches her and hear the subtle attack.

See if you can read what is wrong with this innocent question. Did God say you shall not eat from any tree in the garden? He's just trying to sound curious.

[3 : 38] He's trying to, you know, ask her opinion about God. It sounds very sort of, at one level, sounds okay. But if you read between the lines, you see how he's starting to undermine God.

I mean, the first thing he's doing, he's undermining the word of God. Just the very fact that you could ask in perfect Eden where God dwells, did God say?

When we have seen that God's word is his powerful word that created the heavens and the earth, as if you would ever even start to question, did God say? Do you know what I mean?

So he's already starting to undermine the reality of God's own revelation, God's own word. And I think that's what we do, actually. We do as Christians, when we do wrong, when we are following these guys' footsteps, it's when we start to say things like, does the Bible really say that?

Or maybe I can qualify that. That doesn't apply to me in this case. You know, it's when we start cutting corners like that with the revelation of God that we show ourselves to be children of Adam and Eve.

[4 : 48] And also in what the serpent is doing, he's twisting God's word. So do you see how he twisted God's word? He said, did God say, you shall not eat from any tree in the garden?

Now, that's a misquote of God, isn't it? Because God said, you can have any tree of the garden, just not that one, the knowledge of good and evil. So God's command was actually generous. But the way the serpent rephrases it, he amplifies the prohibition to start to make God look more stingier than he really is and to start to sort of malign the character of God.

You know, did God say you shouldn't eat anything in this garden? Maybe hinting that maybe God is stingy. Maybe God's holding back from you. Maybe God isn't as generous as you think he is. Do you see how subtle the serpent is? If you'd been really focusing and meditating on Genesis 1 and 2, you would have no reason to think that God is stingy, would you?

[5 : 53] He has given them the whole world, a whole garden full of good food. God has been glorious and wonderful and caring and he's given them everything.

He's given to Adam this beautiful naked wife. He's told them to have, you know, enjoy your marriage and have lots of sex and fill the world. God has given them every good gift.

God's record is outstandingly generous. They have no reason to question the character of God or the word of God. And that ought to be our basic framework as well, I think.

Given that this story is the story of the world, the true story of the world, we ought to never question the goodness of God or the revelation of God as the serpent is starting to have Adam and his wife do.

They're starting to question God's word and God's goodness. But we should never, ever do that. God's record is outstanding. God's record is perfect. And the woman sort of defends herself to an extent.

[6 : 55] You shall not eat of the fruit of... She says, you got it wrong, serpent. God actually said, you shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that's in the middle of the garden, nor shall you touch it or you shall die.

And so she sort of, she defends herself. She's aware that there's a game going on and she defends herself. But she seems to have shifted some ground as well. She seems to have conceded some ground.

For example, in Genesis 2, the name of God used often is the name, the Lord God, Yahweh God, the personal name of God throughout the Bible. But when Satan speaks, he doesn't say, did the Lord God really say?

He says, did God say? He reduces the name of God to distance God out a bit. And then when the wife replies, she doesn't say, the Lord God said. She uses the serpent's language and says, God said.

So God is becoming a bit more distant in the language. And the woman seems to add an extra prohibition that wasn't there last week. So she seems to add, you shall not touch it.

[8 : 02] But that wasn't there in Genesis 2. You know, as I sort of tried to emphasize that God didn't have, God wasn't heavy on the rules. God wasn't heavy on prohibitions.

He was heavy on, enjoy this garden, but just don't eat that tree. But you see, it was only a small prohibition. But she's making it sound bigger and more exaggerated by saying, oh, we can't even touch it.

So the ground is shifting. And you sense that maybe she's starting to question God's character and whether they need to heed the word of God. And the serpent senses that he's got her and he's sort of reeling her in now.

And he comes out and outright contradicts God. Let's see now, verse 4. But the serpent said to the woman, you will not die.

He's outright contradicting God now. For God knows that when you eat of it, your eyes will be opened and you'll be like God, knowing good and evil. The serpent is saying to her, God is insecure.

[9 : 11] God is threatened by you. God is holding back from you. Don't you know that if you ate from that tree, you could become independent from God. You could be free from God.

You could become a rival to God. You'd be like him. You could compete with God. And you can see how that lust for autonomy wells up in the heart of the man and the woman.

And they start to sort of entertain that in their hearts. And really, this is the beginning now of the fall. With every sin, there's an act of disobedience.

But long before that, there's a heart change. A heart that begins to question God and the word of God and his goodness. And starts to lust and focus on what you shouldn't have.

And that's what's happening here. Verse 6. So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food and that it was a delight to the eyes and the tree was desired to make one wise, she's now obsessed.

[10:12] She's focused on this one tree. There's a whole garden here. And every tree in the garden last week was described as being good for food and pleasant to the eyes.

But now she's actually focused on this one tree that she can't have. And Satan has got her, you know, really looking at that and not looking at everything else God has given. You can see this is going to go bad, can't you?

You can see in this story your own story of rebelling against God. I hope you can. I mean, here are the elements of what it means to be a rebel, which we all are.

It's when you question the word of God. It's when you don't trust God. It's when you start to malign or doubt his character. It's when you start to want to seek freedom from God or independence from God and have God on the shelf or, you know, God not getting in your face.

And it's when you start lusting or focusing on what you can't have. Thinking about all the time, I wish I had that and, you know, things that aren't yours or shouldn't be yours. All these things mark the essence of being a rebel or being a sinner.

[11:21] And so it happens. She took of its fruit and ate. And she also gave some to her husband who was with her and he ate.

Then the eyes of both of them were opened and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves. As soon as they perform the act of disobedience, the world changes.

Something changes in them and something changes in the world as well. We'll see. They've rebelled against their beautiful God. They've now turned on God. They've turned against God. He doesn't deserve it. He's been so good to them. He's been perfectly good with them and generous and wonderful. And yet they've turned against him. And so immediately there is a harmony that is gone.

There is a peace that is gone. And there's an intimacy that is gone. An intimacy with the place and with each other that is gone. Instead of being naked and enjoying each other's bodies and being one flesh, they're now protecting themselves and hiding themselves and covering themselves.

[12:30] This is like the first experience of guilt and shame and rightly so. And you see in this story the blame is clearly not on God, but I'll try that in a minute.

And the blame is really not focused on the serpent. He has a role to play in the scriptures, but he's not a main character here. Very clearly that the blame is on people.

The blame is on the man and the woman, on the image bearers who are made in God's image, who should know better. The fault with the world is us, is humanity. And we can even narrow it a bit further than that.

Whose fault is it between the man and the woman? Adam or Eve? Whose fault is it? I mean, Adam hasn't been mentioned much.

The wife's been the one giving in and entertaining all these doubts. Whose fault is it? Well, first we need to ask, where has Adam been?

[13:33] Because he at least is the one, he was entrusted with the commands of God. She wasn't actually there when God gave the command, when God gave his word.

So his job was to actually bring the word of God to his wife. She knows the command of God only through him. So there's a sense in which, where was he when they were having this debate about the word of God?

So friends, think about for a minute, Adam and his wife. Adam silently there while his wife is attacked. Paul the apostle, when he recounts this in Romans chapter 5, he says, Sin entered the world through Adam, and death spread to all because all sinned.

And so the Bible very clearly places the blame for death and sin and suffering entering the world in this event on the man, on the husband.

He was the one who ought to have defended his wife and stood up, but he failed to do that. I've got a quote on the slide here, and it sort of speaks to our current moment a bit as well.

[14 : 48] So thanks, Hong Young. This is from a book by Larry Crabb called The Silence of Adam. And it's about men, and it's about how Adam has affected men today.

The silence of Adam is the beginning of every man's failure, from the rebellion of Cain to the impatience of Moses, from the weakness of Peter down to my failure yesterday to love my wife well. It is a picture, a disturbing but revealing one, of the nature of our failure. Since Adam, every man has had a natural inclination to remain silent when he should speak.

And so this is really for the men here now. A man is most comfortable in situations in which he knows exactly what to do. When things get confusing and scary, his insides tighten and he backs away.

When life frustrates him with its maddening unpredictability, he feels the anger rise within him. And then filled with terror and rage, he forgets God's truth and looks out for himself.

[15 : 56] From then on, everything goes wrong. Now what is that Christian author talking about? He's a Christian psychologist. What he's talking about is the basic reality of life that women are much better at stepping into the gap and helping when there's a need than men are.

That men, men like Adam, are more likely to hide, are more likely to do nothing or more likely to acquiesce and let someone else take care of it.

This is the sort of particular sin for men that we have inherited from our father Adam. And so I think often I speak to wives in this church who feel frustrated with their husbands and they think that the other husbands are all better.

They've got the bad one or something when actually it's all men. Do you know what I mean? And the young women looking for a husband and I think why aren't there any, all these men are just playing video games all day and why don't they get a job and move out of their home and if you read the age this week we've got a nation of mummy's boys apparently.

Well they're not mummy's boys are they? They're sons of Adam. And so it's very important I think for the men who are here today to actually decide will they follow Christ their head or will they follow Adam as their head if that makes sense.

[17 : 24] We nearly need to make a stand I think in this church that we want men who will take the initiative for the kingdom take the initiative in their marriages in their homes who will bring the word of God to their wives and to their children who will lead them in prayer who will initiate regular prayer as a family who will initiate reading the word of God as a family who will be involved in the church and not let godly women step into the breach all the time but actually put their hand up.

Do you see what I mean? So the spirit of Adam of gutlessness of laziness of selfishness of cowardice is very alive today and so if you're a man here today you know Jesus Christ is about reversing the fall he's about reversing the effects of the fall and so I want you to think about if you're a man here today what you need to confess so when men for example get caught up in addictions with pornography and Christian men do that they're showing that they're sons of Adam they're cowards they won't get a job and get a real job and find a wife and love her that's too hard but they'll just view pornography online do you see how that's following Adam?

So one way you could respond today is I've actually already invited Jono and Doug and Chris to be in the old church after the service if you're a man who's caught in a cowardly sin or haven't led your family well lovingly Christ-like brought the word of God to them led them in prayer then I want you to go after the church and ask for help ask for prayer from other men in the church that's going to happen after the service you see the big picture now I'm just picking I want to go back now to picking on everyone not just the men the big picture of Genesis 3 is that we are not just victims who need therapy we are rebels who deserve punishment and need a pardon and we are we are people who who are hiding and running from God hiding from divine accountability God turns up in the garden in chapter 3 and he calls out and he calls to the man actually that again shows you where the responsibility lay you know the wife will get her punishment but the responsibility primarily lay with the husband he says where are you calling to Adam where are you husband where are you and Adam and you can hear yourself in this here's the excuse making that we all indulge in to cover our own sin they're hiding in a bush and he comes out of the bush and says

I was naked so I hid myself because I was afraid God says who told you that you were naked have you eaten from the tree it's a yes or no question Adam says actually it's her fault in fact he goes worse than that he says the woman you gave to be with me so last week she was God's gift to him this week she's his problem and he blames God for her again these patterns are very common today not only in marriages blaming each other blaming God but also in relationships where sin separates us and makes us defensive rather than be like the prodigal son who just comes and says father I've sinned against you I'm not worthy to be called your son please have mercy on me that's what Adam ought to have said and then God speaks to Eve and she says well it was the serpent's fault in effect the first line of the devil made me do it and you can see already that doesn't work in Genesis 1 2 and 3 we cannot say the devil made us do it we have to own the fact that we are rebels and Adam and his wife have to own that reality they are hiding from God's accountability as we all do none of us likes to be in the light of God's judgment but that's the only place you can find mercy is through coming to Jesus and confessing your sin and so finally we have the punishments and there are two curses two punishments and these are very important for understanding the world we live in today firstly there's a curse on the serpent on your belly you go eat dust says God you're going to be at war with humanity indefinitely and there's sort of this hint of victory in that her offspring will strike your head and you will strike his heel and if you're in a fight with a snake and you get the head you probably kill the snake even if he's bitten your heel you'll make it so the idea is that a man will come there will be a seed of the woman who will come who will be able to resist the temptation which of course is our Lord

Jesus Christ and then God God very interestingly he doesn't curse the man and his wife he punishes them so he curses the snake he curses the ground but he doesn't curse these people because he's not giving up on them they are disciplined they are punished but they are not cast out or cursed they are not destroyed so to speak they are not God is still with them in a way but there is some serious punishment not least the pains of childbirth and the tension of marriage so he says to the woman your desire will be for your husband and that that's a negative connotation that she in a marriage will now want to desire to control him and manipulate him the same way in the next chapter God says to Cain sin desires to have you sin wants to master you so Eve will want to master women will want to master their husbands is what he's saying and he shall rule over you that also is negative that because of the cursed marriage husbands will instead of protecting their wife and bringing the word of God to them and nurturing them in it they will want to rule them and be aggressive and hurt them and we've seen much evidence of that and finally he gets to Adam and this is Adam's punishment and again it's a punishment for us as well we live in this world he says to Adam two things because you listen to the voice of your wife and have eaten the tree which I commanded you not to eat that is

[23 : 57] Adam's done two sins he's eaten of the tree and he also has sinned by listening to his wife that is by not standing up for his wife by not by acquiescing by being cowardly by being silent that's how he's sinned as well you've failed as a leader and so God says the ground is cursed so the serpent is cursed and the ground is cursed because of Adam's sin notice how they are punished by God in the spheres of their responsibility she is punished like last week in a context of marriage and of family and he's punished in the sphere of work and because of you work will be hard you'll sweat all day and maybe just get a piece of bread out of it and there'll be thorns and thistles before in the garden work would have been pleasant and fruitful and carefree now work is hard yakka for not much fruit and this is why none of you can ever find the perfect job and even while

I don't have the perfect job every job carries with it inbuilt frustration because the ground is cursed because of Adam and so we'll never find that perfect job in this world we'll always be frustrated even though we're made to work work's a good thing there'll always be frustrating elements and so that's the punishment on Adam and Eve and the serpent and then there are some acts of grace they are evicted from the garden because God says we don't want these sinful people to reach out and eat from the tree of life we don't want to have a sinful person becoming immortal and sinning indefinitely death has now entered the world to dust they will return they now must stay out of the garden away from God's holy presence and away from access to immortality if there's going to be an eternity for them they have to find it another way which God will give later on in the Bible and there's a flaming tree and they're cast out from Eden oh and of course there's the act of grace of the skins where God is sending them out into the cold and he kills an animal to give them skin to cover them and again that's a symbol

I think of the beginnings of a real big theme in the Bible of a sacrifice to cover sinners and later on Abraham is given a sacrifice from God for sin and then in the temple system there are sacrifices from God to cover sin and the death of Jesus is a sacrifice from God that can cover us we can't sneak our way back into Eden but there is a new way forward through God's sacrifice that he provides in his son so the ground is cursed we now live in a world where there is tsunami bushfire flood cancer heart attacks that is now our world that is now our lot because our our head our representative Adam did this we are now born outside of Eden we are we were there with him in a sense and we are all caught up in it and each of us is now born outside of the garden in a world where death reigns so what is

God's answer well God is not opening the doors to Eden God is not inviting anyone back to Eden Eden is shut it seems for good but what God is offering is a new heavens and a new earth with Eden like qualities but even better because what God has given us in Jesus is one who has beaten death death came in through Adam Jesus has beaten death in his resurrection in Jesus we have one who never sinned Jesus never rebelled against God never sought independence never doubted God's word never doubted God's goodness that is Jesus Satan tempted Jesus Jesus wielded the word of God against him and won and he didn't give in any ground as Adam and his wife did friends this story screams out for Jesus this story screams out and explains our reality and shows that Jesus is the only way forward for the whole world why is it that people long for justice why is it that people long that corrupt governments would see justice that's because we live in a world where

God is the judge on the other hand why is it that people hide from justice for themselves why do people hide from God why do people cover their sins it's because we are all sons and daughters of Adam see Genesis explains how people act it explains how the world can be so good because it was created that way and can be so bad because it's fallen and there is a curse on the ground it explains how people can be so good because we're made in God's image to worship him and be like him and yet we've become fallen and tainted with sin we are the glory and the garbage of the universe and I think finally it does explain the problem we have between men and women between the war we have in our marriages and the war between men and women because of Adam and Eve's sin they sinned together and they sinned in different ways and Adam's sin in particular is a real temptation for our men today that we acquiesce that we are cowardly that we are just sloppy in bringing our family to worship God bringing the word of God to our wives why we are slack why we tinker in the shed or hide behind our work because we are sons of Adam yet we ought to be more like

[29 : 57] Christ who laid down his life for his wife who nurtures his church in the word of God that's the sort of men we ought to be in Christ and as women it challenges I think to not give in to the curse of the fall in terms of trying to manipulate and control our husbands but actually to respect and work with them and honour them and honour their leadership Genesis 1-3 is not the end of the story we are looking forward to a new heavens and a new earth a heaven where we cannot sin where there can be no fall because once we are redeemed and made like Christ cleansed by his blood and transformed our bodies to be like his body we will be immortal forever made in God's image worshipping him so that's what we're looking forward to but we need to in the meantime trust God's word never doubt the goodness of God and stay faithful to the Lord Jesus Christ living like him and not repeating the sins of our first parents let's pray that we would do that

Lord God I thank you that you did not give up on us thank you that you are a just God and that this rebellion is not your fault but it's our fault that you are sinless Lord God we confess we long for a world where there is no crying or mourning or pain or suffering and we're sorry that we cause the world to be like that please forgive us through your saviour through our saviour Jesus Christ your son and please help us to live with integrity as men and women husbands and wives as a redeemed people being transformed in his likeness Amen