

The Fall and Evangelism

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[0 : 00] Just before we pray, I want to introduce the topic a little bit further. I've given you a handout, which is, it's not original, in that the vast majority of the text is, in fact, from Genesis chapters 1, 2, and 3.

And I'll be speaking and teaching from this text for the bulk of my time with you this morning, and then we'll attempt to make some connection with evangelism as it relates to what we've learned from Genesis 3 in particular.

And I want to start, and again, we are going to pray, but I want to begin by looking at Genesis 1, verse 1. It's a good place to start. It does say, in the beginning, and that God created the heavens and the earth.

And any examination that we do of the fall or of sin must be in relation to God and his good creation.

So we need to understand what isn't sin before we can understand what is sin. And that's why I've spent a little bit of, I've taken a selection of scripture before we get to Genesis 3 just to set the stage, if you will.

[1 : 23] And there's two things I want to say in terms of our aim this morning. First of all, the aim of defining sin in the Christian gospel is repentance.

We're not doing this as an academic exercise only. It's not just a fascinating study of Genesis chapter 3. But the aim is that as God, through his word, reveals the shape of sin to us, that we would come to repentance and repent for that sin.

And that's the basis on which I would like to pray this morning. So let's pray together. Our Lord Jesus Christ, we praise you and we give you glory.

And through you, our Father, the creator of everything, the creator of us who has breathed life into us and who has called us into relationship with you.

We ask, Father, that as we study your words this morning, that you would call us to repentance, that you would help us to understand ourselves better and you better, and how all of these things impact evangelism.

[2 : 37] And that we ask, Lord, that you would speak to us by your Holy Spirit today. In Jesus' name, amen. Well, I'm going to begin here.

I'm just one other piece of introduction that Bill didn't tell you. And at least I think there's one person in this room that's intimately familiar with this, is that I have an undergraduate background in geography.

I don't know if you can guess who that person is in this room. He shall remain silent, though. And the thing that I think is helpful in looking at the shape of temptation and the shape of sin is that it gives us a kind of a landscape of the human mind, and more particularly the fallen human mind. And again, I don't want to end up there, stuck in the muddle of a fallen humanity, but it is helpful for us to have God work in us to reveal the ways in which we've gone astray.

And so I just, I like the sense of looking at the landscape of this, and I think Genesis 3 gives us that. It's both revealing and it's disturbing because it reveals all too painfully who we are and how our motivations have been adjusted through sin.

[4 : 00] And it's disturbing because it describes me. It describes my tendencies to want to replace God as the center of my life. So that's kind of big picture stuff.

So back to your sheet here in verse 1, in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. There's some things that we need to remember as we head into the story of the fall. First of all, that God is the chief actor in this drama or drama.

I lived in the United States for nine years, and they say drama, so I might say that. God is the chief actor. Here, humanity enters in as created by God, as you know. But it's his drama. And this exposes something of the perversity of our culture and our human tendency, which is to say that we are the masters of the universe. And there might be a place for some sort of divine presence in my view of the world or in my understanding of myself, but not necessarily. And so in that sense, the understanding of the world is a horizontal understanding, and we don't see the sense that we have been put into emphatically God's creation.

[5 : 20] We have been created by God, and we're living in God's creation. It's very important to get that straight from the beginning. Verse 26 I've put in here, and also Genesis 2, verse 7, to remind us of the fact that humanity was created in the image of God.

Verse 26, Then God said, Let us make man mankind in our image, after our likeness. Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the heavens, and over the livestock and all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.

The sense there is that God has created us, and so therefore we're dependent upon him. And again, making the connection to our society around us, there's a tremendous sense of independence, not just from God, but from one another.

And we'll explore that a little bit more when we get to chapter 3. The other thing here, when God creates us as dependent creatures, he creates in us a need and a capacity for communication with him.

And not just communicating with him, but responding to him as he reveals himself to us. So there's very much this two-way relationship that God has designed into us.

[6 : 42] Genesis 2, verse 7 is a bit of a repeat. Then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life.

I love that phrase. Again, it's easy to grow up in our culture and think that we got here by accident. My parents got together, things happened, I was born, and in a sense I'm an accident of life. It's a biological random act. And I have a feeling that that is being taught in the schools, even in the elementary school level, which is slightly disturbing because it runs completely counter to this sense of God breathing life into us.

That's where our life comes from. It's God giving us life. In other words, everything we have is from God. Everything, including the life that we live.

And when you're speaking with people in an evangelistic way, often the conversation ignores this fact that even the fact that you can have conversation and even the fact that you exist to have this conversation about God, you can't divorce that from the fact that God has given you those abilities in the first place.

[8 : 03] It's very central. Everything we have is from God. There was... I'm doing a Bible study in Richmond with our group of people in Richmond in the new campus that we're building there.

And we're studying Romans at the moment. And one of the questions in our Bible study deals with Romans chapter 3 and God's righteous judgment against the sin of humanity.

And one of the questions in the Bible study is... It has something to do with what would you say to a person who says, when I die and meet God, he's going to have a lot to answer for.

Very interesting. And of course, Romans 3 puts that completely in the reverse. And it's connected here with Genesis. Now I'm moving on to the stage.

The stage. We've got the setting. Just some big picture ideas there. The stage itself is the garden. God planted a garden in Eden in the east. And there he put the man whom he had formed.

[9 : 13] And out of the ground, the Lord God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. And the tree of life was in the midst of the garden. And the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

So the garden in Genesis is a place separated from the rest of creation, from the rest of the earth, where God invites humans to be in a state of bliss founded on harmony between God and themselves and themselves and one another with animals and with the land.

Sin and death is excluded from the garden. Now I find it very interesting here. Again, we'll come back to this. In verse 9, God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food.

Let's look at verse 16 for a minute. Just skip down the next paragraph. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, You may surely eat of every tree of the garden. Now I found that surprising. When I came back to this text, I mean, I've heard this over and over again over the years. And I think I got caught in the trap of focusing in on the one thing that we weren't allowed to do, which was to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. [10:40] But you see, what God does here is He creates this garden and allows humans to eat of every tree in the garden.

Everything is good for food except for this one tree. It's a wonderful gift. He gives us, in a sense, trees which are pleasing to the eye. They're practical for us. And it's representative of the banquet of this incredible gift that God gives us of life. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil, in verse 9, speaks about knowledge and power that's appropriate only to God, which is this wisdom to discern good and bad apart from God. And of course, what we see in the fall is that we take that for ourselves and we decide what is moral or right apart from God and outside of relationship with God. And that gets us into all sorts of trouble. Skipping down to verse 15, the Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and to keep it.

[11:52] So there's a dual responsibility that we have to shepherd, to take care of the land. In a sense, and we've read verse 16, just go to verse 17, of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.

Verse 16 of chapter 2 are the first words that God speaks to humanity. And the first word is it's both a command and a gift, right?

The gift is you may surely eat of every tree and the command is you shall not eat of this tree. So again, every tree is good. This tree, don't eat from it. And in a sense, God puts us on probation. He puts humanity on probation. Now the implications of putting us in the garden and giving us this command are the following.

There's some things that we can draw from this. First of all, God gives us a moral capacity and that's built into humanity before the fall. He confronts us with His rule.

[13:04] This is very important. God is setting the stage here that He is the one that is to rule us. We are under His rule. He gives us sustenance graciously.

He asks us to exercise active faith and obedience to keep His commands. faith in God's Word, not in our knowledge or our self-sufficiency.

And hopefully that's familiar to you because the case is still the same today. Nothing has changed in that regard. The Word of God requires obedience and submission. And this is the first time we see humanity put to the test.

I'm going to move on to verse 25 right at the bottom of the page. This is selective, obviously. The man and his wife were both naked and not ashamed.

God says in verse 18 it's not good for them to be alone or for man to be alone so we have the whole story of the creation of the woman. And again, there's a picture here. The ideal, what is good is that we're created for a relationship and intimacy both with God and with one another.

[14:17] So that's where we are with the setting and the stage. And if you turn your page over, you will see on the top here we're getting into chapter 3 now.

And what I've done here is I've put some categories on the text. These categories are not original to me. They come with great thanksgiving from Bruce Waltke, a professor at Regent College.

And these were very helpful for me in coming to terms with this text. And so I want to share that with you. So that's where these come from. So we have in Genesis 3, first of all, the shape of the tempter.

Verse 1, Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. So there's some things that we need to know here about the tempter, about Satan, about the evil one, the adversary, the devil.

The serpent is an incarnation of Satan in the garden. And the serpent, Satan originates in heaven, not in earth.

[15:21] And I'm relying here on biblical theology. I'm looking through the Bible as a whole. It's important for us to recognize this because Satan is more, we're not a match for Satan.

It's not just a serpent on the ground. The serpent on the ground is a manifestation of a very powerful spiritual being who is in opposition to God.

And of course, who is triumphed over by Christ. We know that from our perspective now. The intentions of the tempter are malevolent.

They're not good. If you look at verse 4, the serpent said to the woman, you will not surely die. And of course, that's a lie because God had said you will surely die if you eat from that particular tree. The intentions of the serpent are malevolent. He is interested in our death. He's not interested in making us wiser. He's interested in killing us, in destroying us.

[16:29] The other point that we can draw from verse 1 and from context is that the serpent is wiser than humans. He's crafty. You see the word crafty there?

Subtle is another word that comes up for this. So he's crafty. He's subtle. In verse 6, which we'll read in a second, but I'm jumping ahead.

Verse 6, under the shape of sin, the woman saw that the tree was good for food. Why did she see that the tree was good for food? It's because the serpent had brought her under his rule.

He had changed her mind. And so his interest is to get into her mind and change it, to bring us under his rule. Another thing that happens here, we see this in verse 1, and the rest of verse 1 is under the shape of the temptation in the next section.

He said to the woman, did God actually say, you shall not eat of any tree in the garden? Now, if you look at this, first of all, he does two things here.

[17:35] Did God actually say what the tempter is doing is he's using speech to introduce confusion? Did he really say that? Is that what he really said?

Right? And in some ways, he's acting as a really bad theologian. Did he, you know, what did he really mean by this? And it's a dangerous thing to teach the Bible in some ways because we're in a position of saying, well, here's what God means.

Here's what God means. Satan is taking that in the worst possible direction and casting doubt upon God. Is this what God really said? But the other thing that the serpent does here, you see what he says?

This is what he says that God said. You shall not eat of any tree in the garden. Okay, flip back to verse 16 and 17 on the other side of your page.

God actually said, you may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of this tree you shall not eat. Okay? And then again, the serpent says, did God say you shall not eat of any tree in the garden?

[18:49] You see what he's done there? You see the difference in that? It's very interesting. He casts doubt and he twists the word of God. We're going to come back to that.

This is very important in this discussion. The other thing about the tempter is that he knows divine matters. We read in the Gospels about Satan's interaction with Jesus and the temptation and also Satan through the demons who recognize exactly who Jesus is.

they know exactly that he is the son of God and that he's authoritative and powerful. The only difference is they refuse to submit to him. So Satan understands divine matters.

He knows what's going on. And of course, the final fact about the tempter is that the tempter, Satan, will be, we see in Romans 16, 20, he will be destroyed by Christ.

and we live on the other side of the cross where Satan has, the destruction of Satan has happened and will be completed at the end of time.

[19:53] So that's something about the shape of the tempter. Devious, crafty, wise, subtle. Okay? Very important to know. Now, the shape of temptation, here we are the second half of verse 2, we've already started to look at it.

Did God actually say that? And then in verse 2, And the woman said to the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden. But God 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.

But the serpent said to the woman, You will not surely die, for God knows that when you eat of it, your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil. So the question here is, How does Satan tempt people?

How does temptation happen? What's the shape of it? We can see from these verses a few things. First of all, what Satan does is he emphasizes God's prohibition.

Now remember what I said earlier. He said you can eat of every tree in the garden, except for this one. I don't know how many trees there were in the garden, but I'm assuming there were many. And they were, the fruit was good to eat, they were nice to look at.

[21 : 05] They were pleasing. Every one of those was good, but it's one that you can't. And so what Satan does is he emphasizes the one that we can't. And he doesn't, in other words, he doesn't honor the provision that God has made, just the prohibition.

Now I don't know about you, but as a child, and I think even still, if somebody says, don't go there, or don't take that, or don't eat that, it increases my desire.

Is that right? I think that's pretty universal. We have this sense in us that we want what we can't have. What we most want is what God prohibits me from.

And you can hear the refrain in our world that talks about self-fulfillment. In order to be who I am, I must have this, or I must do this, or I must be allowed to do this.

And for a lot of people, God and the church just get in the way of fulfilling themselves and actualizing who they think they're supposed to be.

[22 : 13] Very interesting. We're constrained by God. We're not free. And that's, so that's emphasized. The second thing is that the temptation, it reduces God's command to a question.

So did God actually say, did he really mean that? Reduces God's command to a question. It's easy to do this, by the way, in the Christian life. If you don't know the scriptures well, it's very easy to slide into doubt, almost an innocent doubt.

You can say, well, I don't know. I don't know what God would say about that. And he reveals his will to us. And the deficiency is that we don't, we're not that strong, I don't think, on what the word of God says to us about things.

So it's easy to be doubtful. Did he really mean that? Third thing is that doubt is cast on God's sincerity and his motives. So God is not good to us.

He wants the worst for me. He doesn't deserve my allegiance. God is malevolent and uncaring.

Why would he do this to me? What does God do for me?

[23 : 25] It's a kind of a consumerist attitude, isn't it? What have you done for me lately, God? You know, forgetting the fact that we exist only by his goodwill and pleasure. So God's sincerity and his motives are cast into doubt.

Fourthly, Satan, in the temptation, denies the truthfulness of the threat. Look at 3 verse 4. The serpent said to the woman, you will not surely die.

And God has said, specifically, you will surely die. Satan says, no, absolutely not. So he denies the truthfulness of the threat. And there is a vein of theology that says that humans are essentially good.

God's standard is lowered pretty much to where I'm at. I meet the standard of God.

When I die, I'll be okay because I'm a pretty good guy. And of course, that's the common refrain in the world around us for people that aren't connected with church or with the Christian faith.

[24 : 33] People live under this understanding of themselves as being all right. I haven't murdered anybody. I'm not a bad guy.

But you see, what they've gone into is a theology, is a view of humanity. That's not a theology, an anthropology that says that humans are basically good.

And it's a view of theology, of God, that says that he will not judge us on his standards. And that if we're going to be judged at all, it's going to be judged on my standards, which I meet because I know myself and I'm a pretty good guy.

It's a very, it's a lie. It's a big lie in our culture. In verse one, sorry, the second half of verse one, under the shape of temptation, the serpent says, you shall not, did God say, you shall not eat of any tree of the garden?

We already talked about that, but you see what he does there is he uses half-truths. And again, the only reason that I can tell a lie is if there's a truth to base it on.

[25 : 41] Right? The only way I can convincingly tell a lie to any person in this room is if it sounds truthful. And the serpent is brilliant at this. He makes it sound truthful, makes it sound good, makes it sound right.

We really have to be, I mean, it's a mind game. It's a mind game. Is this really what he's saying? Finally, fundamentally, I think what Satan does, what the serpent does, is casts God's word into doubt and places humans in a position of judge over the word of God.

So, we enter into what God says to us and reinterpret it. Yeah, yeah.

So, again, you can see how that flips it right upside down. That's not the way it's supposed to be and Satan very craftily brings it around so that we're sitting in judgment over the word of God.

Let's move on to the shape of sin starting with verse 6. The woman gradually yields to the serpent's denials and half-truths.

[26 : 57] So, here's what the woman does. It's fascinating to look at this. The woman has more faith in the reliability of the serpent than the reliability of God at this point.

She disparages her privileges. Look at, let's see, 3 verse 2. The woman, back and up, I'm up here in the previous paragraph. The woman said to the serpent, we may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden.

But she's disparaging her privilege. she's not seeing all that they are allowed to eat from. She's only seeing, she's beginning to only see the one thing that they can't do. So, she adds to the prohibition. If you look at verse 3 again, God said, you shall not, oh, wait a minute, I'm sorry, I've got this, I'm flipped over the wrong side. That's what my, that's what my problem is, in the wrong place.

All we see is what we can't do. That's what we've been talking about, is the prohibition. The other thing that the woman does is she minimizes the threat and she minimizes God's command. If you look at verse 6, let's read this out.

[28 : 05] So, when the woman saw that the tree was good for food and that it was a delight to the eyes and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise. Now, I'm going to stop there.

You see, her decision, she has not yet taken the fruit, but her decision gives priority to practical values, good for food.

It gives priority to aesthetic appreciation, it was a delight to the eyes, and to spiritual drives, it will make me wise.

You see that? That's what's providing the basis for her decision. The word of God, in this case, becomes, in a sense, harness to sinful humanity's desire to serve our felt needs, our own needs. That's what's going on. I was told yesterday of a magazine, no, it's a book, sorry, it was a book, some of you may have heard of it, called A Summer in Provence.

[29 : 13] Does that ring a bell? I think it was quite popular a few years ago. I haven't read it. What's that? Okay, all right, yeah. And apparently, it has to do with France.

Oh, you're in Provence, thank you. But somebody was telling me last night that there was this whole chapter in there, I haven't read it, but a whole chapter on truffles. Is that right? Yeah. And so it's this, you know, a wonderful kind of embrace of the sensory delights of food and the smell of the food and the taste of the food and the visual appeal of food.

And it's very epicurean and physical. And I'm not saying that there's anything wrong with that necessarily, but again, in our culture, especially in wealthy Canada, you look, you read the magazines, you read what comes in the newspaper, there's so much emphasis now on what is attractive to the eye and what is tasty.

And so it's, you know, there's the food section and there's the travel section and the home section. And it's all very, it's all very, it has to do with our felt needs and not our real needs. sin fundamentally, then, is a breach of trust based on a lack of faith and a doubt of God's character and his word.

In this whole picture, up until the middle of verse six, God has been systematically dethroned for humanity.

[30 : 41] Now, I want you to notice one thing that's quite remarkable. Right in the middle of verse six, at the comma after desire to make one wise, up until that point, has there been any external sinful behavior?

None. None. So all of this that's going on has been a dialogue in between, between the humanity and the tempter that has dethroned God in their mind.

They have not, there has been no unethical behavior yet. So then we have the act, and that's the second half of verse six. She took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her and he ate.

So that's the act. But you see, the fall began happening long before then. And this is very important in terms of evangelism, I think, and what the problem of sin is.

We'll get to that in a minute. Finally, I want to look here at the shape of sin's consequences. Then the eyes of both were opened and they knew that they were naked, and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin cloths.

[31 : 58] And they heard the sound of the Lord 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 among the trees of the

garden. But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, where are you?

And he said, I heard the sound of you in the garden and I was afraid because I was naked and I hid myself. And then skipping to verse 13, the Lord God said to the woman, what is this that you have done?

The woman said, the serpent deceived me and I ate. As we look at this a bit more deeply than we may have looked at this in the past, I hope what's becoming apparent to you is that there's a process by which sin has happened.

And there's the serpent acts against us in our minds to create a climate where the sinful act of disobedience actually happens.

So it's not just plucking the fruit from the tree that's the fall of humanity, it's the whole lead up to it. But here are the consequences. They are alienation. And of course we've got alienation from one another and that's where we have the fig leaves sewed together in a sense as a technology of separation between ourselves.

[33 : 21] Our culture, I think, I mean we live in a world that is masterful at protecting ourselves ourselves from one another.

The fact that we come together on a Sunday morning around the word of God and around the gospel is so contradictory in some ways to our culture which wants to divide and separate and cocoon and to keep people at a distance.

And there's many, many different ways where that happens in our society. humanity. So we've got this alienation. Then there's alienation from God where the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees.

So not only are they hiding themselves from God, they're hiding themselves from God behind things that God has created for their benefit. Which is interesting. We could go into that a bit more.

And generally, humanity becomes exposed, vulnerable, untrusting. And we get to the place where we cannot give ourselves either to God or to another person without a lot of pain actually.

[34 : 36] Finally, the shape of the consequence of sin is that we don't want to hear the word of God. In verse 9, the Lord God called to the man, where are you?

And the man said, I heard the sound of you and I was afraid. So it's this fear of God and this distancing from God. And I would say that, again, talking evangelistically with various people over the last few months, there are two reactions that you get when you tell people the gospel.

One is that they open up to you. And they say, oh, this is good news. This is good news. The other reaction is that they will shut down and they will distance themselves.

And they say, I don't want to hear this. I don't want to hear this. Right? And both of those reactions occur when the word of God is preached. And we shouldn't be surprised at that. It goes right back to Genesis 3.

We don't want to hear the word of God. So I'm going to summarize what we've done by making two comments. First of all, that in kind of the big picture of the fall, there are two problems that I'm going to pull out.

[35 : 47] First of all, there's a mental problem, a problem of mind. A problem of the mind where the whole temptation happens in a conversation in the mind.

Right? It's, it's, there's deception going on. There's twisting of God's word going on. There's the doubt of God's word going on. There's the defamation of God's character going on.

But it all happens up here. It all happens. And again, you know, what is sin? Right? And people say, well, I sinned. I drove over the speed limit.

That's, that's, this is so much deeper than that. It's so much more basic to us than this. So there's this mental problem in a sense where Satan attacks our mind, if you will.

The second thing, well, let me give you one other example if I could. This, this manifests itself in different ways. There's a, in second Corinthians, Paul writes that the God of this age has blinded the minds of the unbeliever so that the mind becomes darkened.

[36 : 56] And ultimately, you get into the state where people say, well, there is no such thing as sin. There is no sin. You're just, you know, that sin is discounted. I was having a conversation, actually my wife was with a neighbor who is a Muslim.

And she was saying, a penny was asking her about the Islamic understanding of sin. And, and this woman said, oh, she said, she said, if you sin, you don't go to heaven.

And she said, and so I don't sin. I have not sinned. I mean, that was, that was, it, she had to say that because that, I mean, in the Islamic view, there, there are things that you can do to, to accommodate, to account for your sin, to make up for it. But effectively, her, her take home message was, I don't sin. Otherwise, I wouldn't go to heaven. So, you know, sin, sin gets discounted in a system like that. Another illustration of this, and this is not exactly right, but it, it does show something about how the mind is changed in the way we think about evangelism.

Again, a conversation with a woman, we're running a Christianity Explored course in Richmond as part of our Richmond campus. And one lady came to the course from a mainline denomination that is not Anglican.

[38 : 17] I won't name it. But she came from a mainline denomination in Richmond. And Penny was asking her something about this course and evangelism and, you know, you guys, how do you do evangelism at your church?

And this woman said, well, we don't, we don't evangelize. We don't evangelize because it would be arrogant to other, other religions. In other words, the assumption there is that all paths to God are equal.

So why would you need to evangelize? Right? So that's one example of how things get twisted.

Now I'm about to, okay, the second problem is, is a problem of the heart.

It's a spiritual problem or more accurately, a volitional problem, a problem of, well, let's leave it at volition and you'll understand what I mean when I explain it.

It's a problem of disposition of disease. So sin is characterized here in Genesis 3 as a disease. It's an infection that's in us. We're helpless against it without the power of God.

[39 : 22] And we see this at its basic level in the fact that the result of this rebellion against God is death spiritually.

Remember what God said, if you eat of the fruit of this tree, you will surely die. And the death he's talking about is primarily a spiritual death. So we will die and the climax of that is our physical death. In John 5, 24, I'll just read this to you. John 5, Jesus makes it very clear what's going on.

He says, truly, truly, I say to you, those who hear my word and believe him who sent me has eternal life. They do not come into judgment, but have passed from death to life.

So the ultimate issue in Genesis 3, of course, is death. Is that our spiritual condition of being under sin, under the rule of sin, is a life and death predicament.

[40 : 33] I used to think that there was a middle ground in the Christian faith. I don't know when this started changing for me, but I used to think that there was kind of a spectrum of belief in the Christian faith.

So you were either, you know, you were a strong Christian or you were maybe a Sunday morning Christian, a cultural Christian, and then maybe that you believed in God at some basic level.

And all of those things, you know, you're okay with God. Maybe even that you were a good person and that you were okay with God. And then if you were just a really naughty person, you wouldn't be okay with God.

But Jesus makes it clear that there is no middle ground, that the view of God through Scripture on humanity is binary, that there is, you are either dead in your sin or you're alive through Christ.

It's, there is, there's no sitting on the fence on this one. And it took me a while to realize that. And Jesus is very clear on that. And that, of course, is the ultimate impact of the fall, is that humanity is living in death.

[41 : 44] That's the default condition of the human race, is we're dead under the judgment of God for our sins. So that's a, I think that's a pretty healthy view of sin and how sin happens and what the implications of sin are.

But this view of sin requires a robust solution. And that solution, of course, is the gospel of Jesus Christ. And evangelism means taking seriously sin.

And so I want to make a few points here just to end up with about evangelism and the implications of Genesis 3 for us on evangelism. And just as a side note, let me say this, that evangelism in the New Testament is primarily an individual activity.

It's people talking to people about the gospel of Jesus Christ. People testifying to the apostles' teaching about Jesus Christ to other people.

Secondarily, evangelism is a church activity. It's an institutional activity. But primarily it's each one of us in this room in our networks of people speaking to other people the good news of Jesus Christ.

[43 : 05] That's an aside. But there's three things that come out that I understand from looking at Genesis 3 when we think about evangelism.

The first thing is that evangelism has to be a prayerful activity. It has to be a prayerful activity. Because the fall impacts us spiritually to the point of death, it requires a spiritual solution. There's a spiritual battle that is taking place, if you will. And any time that you or I have the opportunity to talk to somebody about our faith in Jesus, or if we're involved in a program at the church like Discovering Christ or a Christianity Explored course, any time that we're involved in conversations that have the possibility even of going to the direction of the gospel, we need to be in prayer at the moment in the back of our mind.

We need to be praying about that. And I also think that if we're to be communicating the gospel in a way that's effective and powerful, we need to be praying about it regularly.

Praying about who is it that we're going to talk to today or this week. Thinking of names of people, people that we know that are living under the judgment of God and who have not heard the good news.

[44 : 37] Who are those people in our lives? We need to pray for them. Pray that they will come to a knowledge of Jesus Christ. And pray that we might have opportunity to share with them in a natural way.

In a natural way. So prayer is critical. As a congregation, we pray. We pray every month together on Tuesday nights. We pray frequently in the life of the parish for people to come to know Jesus Christ. And that's important as well. So prayer is the foundation of evangelism. The second reality of evangelism that comes out of this is evangelism must be focused on the word of God.

If it's true that what Satan does is cast into doubt and twist and malign the word of God, then it should be true of evangelism that we place the word of God back in its rightful, that we take a rightful attitude for the word of God in how we speak it in our belief in the word of God, in our trust in the word of God.

So it needs the word of God is to be trusted. It's no accident, I think, that in the Bible, it's no accident that over 700 times in the Bible, the phrase comes up, God said or the Lord spoke or something about God speaking.

[46 : 06] God speaks. He communicates with us. And he uses words to do so. And the word of God is very, very important in the shape of the Christian life and in the shape of God's revelation of himself to us.

I have several scriptures that we could look at. I'm going to move on from those and we might have a chance in question time to look at some of these. But I do want to read for you an example of evangelism in Colossians chapter one.

Paul writes to the Christians in Colossae. And I want you to notice the terminology that he uses. For those of you that have a Bible, I'm looking at Colossians. He understood the grace of God in truth. There's quite a dump truck load of words here that have to do with hearing, understanding, and truth. And again, it's no accident, right? The gospel is a particular message given by God to us. And the manner in which the Christians in Colossae were evangelized was that they were told the word of God. They were told the word of God. We see that all over the place in the New Testament.

[47 : 16] I have other examples that we can look at. One other point I wanted to make about this is that famous verse that we all know. I'll do it from memory. Romans 12, 1 and 2. Therefore, I'm just going to quote a part of it.

Be transformed by the renewing of your mind. So there is, and I think David Short mentioned this last week in a sermon. I don't, I can't remember if I was at that service or not.

But from what I had heard around the halls of the church, David said something to the effect that we are not, that the Christian faith has, it's a thinking faith.

There is an intellectual component to the faith. Not to deny that there is a spiritual component that God speaks to us through his spirit. But that the word of God and the transformation of our mind is crucial in the New Testament.

And that's crucial for evangelism. And it goes right back to Genesis 3. Because Genesis 3 is where it all got messed up, if I can put it that way. There's one myth that's out there, which I want to

counter at this point.

[48 : 19] It's a myth that I heard in the churches that we were involved with in New Mexico when we lived there. And I found a quote. I've probably lost the quote now.

Yeah, I've lost the quote. But it went something like this. It's a quote from St. Francis of Assisi, is who it's attributed to. And I have a feeling it must be taken out of context.

But you hear this all the time. People say, preach the gospel without words. I'm getting this slightly wrong.

But only use words if necessary. What's that? And if necessary, use words. So preach the gospel. The idea is that you preach the gospel through your actions, through your love. All good things. But use words only if necessary. And I'm not sure that St. Francis meant what most people take that to be. Which is an excuse not to talk about Jesus Christ to people.

[49 : 17] And it's amazing. In many, many churches, that is the de facto vision statement for evangelism. Is we don't use words. We only use them if we have to.

We're going to let our love tell the story. Well, you know what the problem with that is? Is that there's no content to our love. There's no guarantee that our love is going to be Christ-like or biblical. And there's no actual preaching and declaring of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Which is what saves people. It's not my love for people that saves them. It's the gospel of Jesus Christ that saves them. And that's what people need to hear. So that's my second point. The first point was that prayer is critical.

The second point is that the word of God needs to be honored in evangelism. The final point is that Jesus is Lord. And the response that's required is a response of repentance.

In Acts 20, Acts 20 verse 21. I'll just read this out for you. Paul is speaking to the elders at Ephesus.

[50 : 27] And he says to them, he says, I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable and teaching you in public and from house to house, testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance to God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

And what he's done is he's connected the promise of salvation with confessing Jesus as Lord. And in the New Testament, you never have Jesus being presented as Savior only.

And again, a common mistake in many churches, Jesus saves you. Jesus, you know, we preach Jesus as Savior. But that's mistaken. It's only half the story. It's true that he's the Savior, but he's presented in the New Testament as Lord.

Why is that relevant to Genesis 3? Because the careful deconstruction by the serpent of the place of God in the life of humans is what we read about.

The serpent undermines the authority of God, undermines the commands of God, and in fact, undermines the kingship of God, if you will, in the lives of people. So God is dethroned in Genesis 3 through sin.

[51 : 49] The task of evangelism in the biblical model is to speak of Jesus as the rightful Lord. In a sense, it's putting God back on his throne, declaring that that is the case, and that we must repent and submit to him as Lord over our lives.

That's an essential component of evangelism. Many churches and movements in the church talk about proclaiming the kingdom of God, and that's good and right, but to stop there makes it sound like all you have to do is say that God is now king over the universe.

Well, he always was king over the universe, number one. But number two, it's important that we understand that there's a repentance that's required, and that's, again, the model that we see in the New Testament. Repentance is required, that we would believe and repent.

When I was 17, I grew up at St. John's, and I started hearing the gospel preached when I was, I think, 14.

And by the time I was 17, I came to realize that the big issue for me was, do I trust God?

[53 : 02] Do I trust him? And the implication of that for me was, do I put him as Lord over my life? So there was this whole summer when I was 17 where I was thirstily, greedily reading all this material about trusting God and what that meant.

And it was wonderful for me. It was food for me. Because what it meant was, I can trust you, and I ought to trust you.

And, of course, repentance is a part of that. Final thing, and then we'll go for questions, is how we begin is how we should continue. If evangelism declares the word of God about the gospel, about Jesus Christ and salvation through him, and if the action required, the response required is

repentance to Jesus as our Lord and Savior, that, what starts in evangelism, if we come to faith at that point, ought to continue for the rest of our Christian life.

So every day, I repent, and I confess Jesus as Lord and Savior. I mean, it's the same thing I did the first day that I made a conscious commitment to him.

And it's what I do from day to day now. There's no difference between what you say to people evangelistically and what you say to people when they've been Christians for 40 years. And that's very helpful, I think, for each of us.

[54 : 36] So I'm going to leave it there and open up for comments and questions, acknowledging that I may not be able to answer all of your questions.

But I would love to hear comments as well, and if this has been helpful for you. So, Ryan. Can you talk about the relationship that maybe is an apologetic and that's what you say?

Yeah. Yes. Apologetics is the, it's the act of using argument, in a sense philosophical argument, to undermine or to confront the mythological views of the world around us.

So it can be, apologetics can be used as a tool in evangelism, but apologetics by itself is not evangelism. It's an aid.

It's an aid to evangelism. It's really important when we are talking to people about the Christian faith that we understand where they are coming from. So if I'm having a conversation with somebody, I'm going to want to listen pretty carefully to their ideas.

[55 : 47] What's their worldview? What's their, what do they think about life and death? I mean, everybody's going to die. What's their, what do they think about that? Why is that happening? What's the purpose of life? In doing that, you can then use apologetic arguments, which, I mean, there's an infinite number of them, but there are also some core ones, to, in a sense, confront them with weaknesses in their arguments.

And Paul does this in the New Testament. Again, in Romans 3 that we've been studying in Richmond, he actually has these conversations where he says, like, here's Romans 3, 1.

He does this all over the beginning of Romans. Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the value of circumcision? And then, and he's, those are questions that he hasn't been presented with in person, but that he, he understands his audience well enough to know what their questions are going to be.

And he addresses them. And I think that's the role of apologetics. But it's not, it's not the full body of evangelism. Good question. Yes? I, I think, I mean, I wasn't there, so I can't answer conclusively.

It was, let's put it this way, it was hard enough for them that they were taken in. They were, Eve said, I was deceived by the serpent. And, it's interesting that she actually had a conversation with a serpent and that that seemed natural.

[57 : 15] There's no indication that that was unusual in the text. In terms of, is temptation, I do, I agree with you that temptation is, it's more of an issue for any Christian who is attempting to lead the new life with the help of God's spirit.

Because we are, because we are aiming in that direction, we are going to be held, pressure is going to be put on us.

Definitely. I absolutely agree with that. If you talk to somebody and they say that the Christian life is simple and easy, it may be that they're not yet growing in the faith.

I mean, that's a very general statement. But, the other thing that you mentioned is deceit. And, the way that Satan deceives Adam and Eve and the way that Satan deceives me are pretty much the same.

You look at the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness. He was tempted on the basis of the word of God. Right? The word of God was, he replied with the word of God, but Satan tempted him mentally, in a sense.

[58 : 27] And, the temptation to not trust God, to not trust his word, to increase the prohibitions, to look at what we shouldn't do rather than what God has given us.

Those things are all just as common now as they were then. I think that this section in Genesis 3 is absolutely relevant to the world that we live in today and to humanity in general.

Absolutely relevant. So, yeah, I don't know if I can answer your question directly, but my sense would be that this is very instructive for us. That's right. The amazing thing about temptation and sin is that it is self-deceptive.

So, the whole, sin is working well if you don't know that you're sinning. Right? Temptation is working well when you don't think you're being tempted.

And that's part of it. And Eve didn't think she was doing anything wrong, I don't think. I mean, honestly, I think most people that do things do things because they have a good reason to do things.

[59 : 40] I don't think there's that many people that do deliberately bad things just because they're doing a deliberately bad thing and they're having a good time with it. They're doing what they think is the best thing to do. Now, but that goes back to the mind and the God of this age has clouded the minds of unbelievers.

I mean, we don't, we, and Christians are still, I mean, we are still fallen people. We still have to struggle with thinking properly and correctly based on the word of God about the world around us. But yeah, it's very deceptive, very, which is why living in Christian community is so important, isn't it? I can't live the Christian life without people around me who know me and who I can be accountable to and who can correct me.

Yes, that's an excellent question. If they, if they don't, I mean, there are several assumptions that have to be made when you're talking to somebody and one of the, the most common assumptions that you can't assume is that we who trust in God's word and so all of our information in a sense is from the Bible.

People we're talking to, that's not a given for them at all in this culture and in many churches too. So then you have to, I think, I mean, there's probably, and I'd love to know what other people have to say, but my instinct would be that you've, you've got to, you've got to talk to them about, about their sin, not in terms of sin, but in terms of are they living up to everything that they think that they should be living up to?

[61 : 10] Because everybody has a standard. Everybody's trying to live in a certain way. Are they meeting that? Even their own internal standards. And probably they're falling short. The other thing is, it's a biblical concept, but you can use this word, is shalom.

And so the picture of creation and intimacy with God and each other is a picture of shalom, where we're connected with the environment, connected with God, connected with people. And it's a fair question to ask people, do you think that the world is working properly the way it should?

And of course the evidence is there to say that actually no, it isn't. And then you have to, then this is where you push them. You need to get them to answer a few questions because often Christians are put on the defensive.

I think lovingly, it's very important to ask people hard questions themselves. So for instance, somebody might say to a Christian, how do you explain all the evil and suffering in the world? It's a classic question. A good response to that is, how do you, an atheist, explain all the good in the world? They have nothing to base it on, really, other than chance.

[62 : 21] And you see, so their argument is a lot less tighter than the defense that you have from scripture. Is that, are we, we're getting the handshake, so I guess that's it. Well, thank you.

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

Yeah. Yeah.

Yeah.