

# The fall of man

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] You turn back with me for a short time this evening to the passage we read there in Genesis chapter 3. If you remember last week when we looked at this subject, we looked at Genesis chapter 1, which is an account of the beginnings of the history of mankind and tells us that God created this world not in the way it is now, but that when he created the world, originally the world was good and perfect, and mankind was good and perfect and very, very pleasing to him, and it was very different from what we see today of mankind.

Really good God created man, really good. But when God created man in the Garden of Eden, the picture that we have of mankind there isn't the finished product. What we see in Genesis 1 isn't mankind as he would have remained for the rest of eternity. It's not the finished product we have there because God, having created man, knew that man in his perfection needed to be tested and needed to grow. And if he was maintaining his perfection and the way he was created, then he needed to show God that he was willing to obey everything that God commanded him. And in fact, God didn't command very much. But he did put into Adam and Eve's vocabulary one commandment, one prohibition commandment, something they weren't allowed to do. And it was there as a test.

And the test was that they weren't to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. It was put there as a direct test upon them as to whether they were willing to obey and remain under the conditions that God had created them to prove that they were made in his image and to maintain that image. And if they had succeeded in obeying God and resisting the temptation to break his command, then they would have had their creation and their image sealed in a kind of sinless perfection forever.

And the world would have been very, very different from what is today. And it would have had great amazing effects and amazing effects and almost unimaginable changes. But that didn't happen.

With this prohibitory command, we know that when they were tempted to break it, they did. And they broke the one command God made upon them. And that brought into the world desolation and misery and a whole new ethos and a whole new direction and a whole new emphasis. That is the emphasis that was brought about because of sin. Very unpopular, very untrendy, very uneasy word to use today. We can call badness anything, but don't call it sin. But that is what the Bible calls all that is wrong and all that is bad about this world in which we live in. And it came about because of this initial fall, as it's called, of mankind. And we haven't got time to look at the fall, really. It's a tremendously deep study in itself. There's lots and lots of things in it. Just one or two points to note.

[ 3 : 13 ] We can't examine it, but one or two things here is that the fall of mankind, as we read it there, isn't a myth. It is true factual history given to God, to Moses, and it is his account of the beginnings. It's not a myth. It's not a fairy tale. It's not a kind of symbolic illustration of somehow what every man and every woman is like. It is a history of beginnings, the beginnings of the world, the beginnings of God creating a man and a woman, and how they were created, and how sin entered, and how the world is now the way it is. So it's not a myth. And the serpent that is in this account is not just a beast of the field, but it's Satan working through this beast. And Satan already was a fallen angel, and he was already in the world. Now I can't, and nobody ever in this world will be able to tell you the origin of sin, and how Satan came to fall from glory, because that is not known, and nobody will ever be able to tell you in this world. But the only thing we do know is that God is not the author of sin. So we tend to blame God for a lot of things, but we can't blame him for the entrance of sin into the world. And the other thing is that the fall affects us all. It's something that affects us all because Adam and Eve were the representative heads of mankind, mankind. And what they did affected the whole of mankind, and the whole of posterity since mankind.

So you sitting in the pews and me, we're all affected by this account. We're all affected by this story, because the fall has affected the whole race of mankind, and we'll see how in a minute. And we must also remember it wasn't just a wee tiny insignificant thing where Eve took a bite of an apple, and that was it. Or whatever fruit it was, we tend to think, well I tend to think of it as an apple.

But it wasn't just something insignificant, because it introduced a whole set of alien feelings, and alien relationships, or alien divisions that should never have been between these people and between their God. It began with doubt, and then there was resentment, and then there was unbelief, then there was evil desire, and there was plain disobedience. And remember this was against the God who was completely loving, completely their Father, who'd given them everything, themselves made in His image, a beautiful world. Remember we examined it last week, they were to be in control and over the world, to care for it. It was a lovely world, it was in union and fellowship with them. And everything was good and perfect and holy, yet they still rebelled. So it was a very serious and solemn thing. So that's all we'll say about the fall. But we do see the results of the fall in this chapter we read. And these results affect us all. Not just did it affect Adam and Eve, but it affects us all. And that is why it's so important, because it also affects the image.

Remember we were made perfectly in a good and perfect image of God, and we saw what all that meant. Well we see that the results of the fall has twisted and brutalized and deformed that beautiful image so that it's all ugly and it's wrong and it's tainted and it's perverted. Because with the introduction of sin, the whole order of the world of the universe changed and a fatal disease entered in. Not only entered into ourselves, but into the whole world. And this disease explains a tremendous amount of the hardship and misery we see today. It's a sad story. It's a miserable story we have before us.

It's a story that should give us long faces because it introduced tragedy into the world, desolation, terror and misery, and the destruction of God's image in us. We are introduced in this chapter to pain. Pain wasn't part of God's original creation, but part of the result of the fall, the natural consequence of sin, and also God's judgment upon sin, which is part of the destruction.

[ 7 : 18 ] was the introduction of pain. And initially it was to be in childbirth for Eve, but it is the introduction of pain wholesale into mankind's existence. The introduction of misery, of illness, of disease. A sore head and sore legs remind us of sin, that we are in a world that is under judgment, and that pain wasn't meant to be there in the first place in the world God created. This world is out of joint. This body that we have is out of joint. It was never meant to be pain ridden, and yet it is, because that is one of the results of the fall. But also we have the unnatural domination of the male people in the relationship between man and woman, and the tension being brought in between man and woman, and between society as a whole, where in verse 16 we're reminded that the woman's desire shall be to her husband, and he shall rule over thee, in a way that wasn't meant to be.

There was going to be an abuse of their position of leadership, and we see that that has introduced the tremendous tyranny and domination and oppression of women in a wrong way by a mankind who has fallen, and who has destroyed the original partnership and unity that was meant to be there. And it's introduced the division between the sexes, and the division in society, and the introduction of hatred and strife, and inequality and enmity. All these things that weren't meant to be in society are now there as a result of the fall. But also we have in this chapter the introduction of hard labor in a cursed land.

Remember the original creation was mankind working in harmony with the land, and it was good, and it was wholesome. But God introduces hard labor by the sweat of your brow, by the pain of your muscles, by the exhaustion of your bodies. You will work this land, because the work, the land is no longer on your side. The land is now an enemy to you. The harmony is broken. The labor and the sweat between you and the cursed ground and the weeds is going to make for tension and battles. And that was never there. It was never meant to be there in the beginning. Maybe you don't feel the effects of these particular things in your lives as a result of sin. But most solemnly of all, introduced as a result of sin was also death. And you see, that was never meant to be part of God's creation.

It was not there in the beginning. God made man good and perfect, and death wasn't part of the equation. We didn't just live for a few years and then die, because death wasn't there. But you remember part of the prohibition of the command was, on the day you eat of the fruit of that tree thereof, you shall surely die. It was the introduction of a judgment, of a punishment. If disobedience came in, if there was sin, you shall surely die. Now, they didn't die immediately, true. They didn't die immediately physically, but immediately they died spiritually. Because immediately the bond, the relationship with God was broken. They were banished from the garden. And there was immediate spiritual death. The walking in the garden with God came to an end, and the banishment from the garden was introduced, and there was immediate spiritual death. But there was also physical death to follow. From that day on, Adam and Eve knew what it was to endure pain and to have disease, and to see their bodies slowly becoming more decrepit until they died. Because death is a result of sin.

And it is all part of us. And that makes sin and this account and the fall of mankind relevant. It makes it relevant to everyone. Because we see sin, death is a result of sin.

[ 11 : 35 ] It has been introduced because of the fall. And none of us are exempt from death. None of us can wave our hand and say, well, it doesn't matter to me, because death doesn't have part of my life.

The reality of death for every one of us means that we have the reality of the results of fallen mankind to deal with in our lives. See, death was never meant to be there. It wasn't part of God's plan.

Well, it was part of God's plan in his overriding and overruling. But it wasn't part of the plan in the garden of perfection. It came about as a result of our rebellion.

So we see there briefly the results of sin. And that ought to draw in the whole message personally. I ought to waste it away from being a merely theoretical treatise and bring it down to your level, to my level. Because we all know about hard labour. We all know about the land that is opposed to us.

We all know about death. We all know about enmity that is between us. We all know about broken relationships. But how is sin, how is the fall, how has it perverted the image?

[ 12 : 47 ] Because remember, that is what we're primarily looking at. We're looking at the image of God. We're looking at the image of God in mankind. We saw last week it was so perfect and so good in different ways. Well, how has the fall perverted that image? And maybe we can see more clearly how it affects us today. Because you see, we were made good. But since the fall, every single aspect of our lives has been affected by sin. Our will, our emotions, our relationships, our lives, our conversation, our work, our play, everything, every aspect of us has been tainted by sin. So that the image that God made, which was so perfect, has been tainted and broken and shattered and destroyed, not completely, but destroyed in a great measure. We see it in the three ways that we looked at it last week. Remember, we saw our image in relation to God, in relation to each other, and in relation to creation. And we see that same image this time perverted because of sin.

We see it in relation to God. Because remember, we were made for God. We were created to be one with God, made in His image, representatives close to Him, and all that went with it, a tremendous oneness and love and fellowship with God. We were made for Him. But that has all changed because of sin, so that self has replaced God, and that we now live for ourselves instead of living for God.

And the image has been perverted. We'll worship anything, but we'll not worship God for whom we were created. And I'm speaking generally of the world as a whole under the effects of sin. You know, we'll do all the things that God created us for, but we'll direct it the wrong ways. We were made to worship Him, but instead we'll worship Michael Jackson. We'll worship Max. We'll worship Lenin.

We'll worship the Pope. We'll worship Mary. We'll even go as far as to go into God's Word and worship Mary. We'll worship money. We'll worship sales. We'll worship ambition. We'll worship others. Anything but God.

We were made to serve God, but we'll serve money instead. We were made to obey God, because that is what we were made for. But we'll do anything but obey God. We will obey the state. We will obey the mafia. We will obey the mob, the law of the jungle. We will obey our peers. We will obey the little voice in our heads, but we will not obey God for whom we were created. We were made to defend and stand up for God in this creation that He made for us. But we will defend everything and everyone but God.

[ 15 : 36 ] We will defend women's rights. We will defend trees. We will defend dogs. But don't ask me to defend God and to stand up for God. He has given us gifts with which to serve Him, with which to obey Him and love Him. But we use these gifts to smack Him in the face and tell Him that we have no time for Him.

We'll use the gifts of intelligence He's given us to deny that He exists. We'll use the mouths that He has given us to curse Him. We'll use the brains we've been given to reject Him. The feet that we've been given to walk away from Him. The hands to destroy Him. We are rebels. And all that we were created to do and to make and to see, we use against God. Because we're enemies to Him. And we're rebels.

And in this world in which we live, the harmony and the love that He made for His people to have with Himself is gone. Nobody has any time, generally speaking, for God. God doesn't come into people's equations as fallen mankind. So we see it in relation to God. But we also see it surely in relation to one another. Because remember, God created man and woman to be together, to complement, to support, to strengthen one another. And to show the pattern for the whole of mankind, which was society and fellowship. Love, friendship. And that is gone because of sin, to a greater, lesser degree.

Instead of the society which God created, we have now a society of hate, not a society of love. We have a society of indifference and alienation. And the unity and the helpfulness is gone.

And John Paul sat there, puts it well when he says, hell, this is what people think today, he says, hell is other people. Because we no longer live for other people. And we desire ourselves and our own furtherment. We were made for each other. But we live in a world now which was surrounded by division. There's boundaries. There's walls. There's barriers. There's ethnic cleansing. There's fear.

[ 17 : 54 ] There's rape. There's abuse. There's cheating. There's stealing. There's exploitation. There's bitterness. There's lies. All these words were invented after the fall. Because they shouldn't have been there. And it wasn't part of God's original mandate for mankind. Man was to live together. Mankind together with one another. But it's all changed. You watch the news one day, you'll see it's all gone. It's all changed. You know, these creative abilities we were given, what do we use them for? Do we use them, generally speaking, for the good of one another? No.

We use them to develop means to torture one another, to make weapons of war, to destroy one another, to fraud one another, to scandalize one another, to build empires built on the backs of the oppressed masses. We see the results of sin in the image of God when we see slavery, when we see racism, when we see the destruction of food mountains in order to maintain our standard of living while millions die. We see it when we see fishermen standing and destroying hundreds and thousands of pounds worth of fish to stop other people fishing while millions die to maintain our greedy standard of living. That is where we see the results of sin. That is where we see the injustice, the results of the fall. And the injustice is mind-blowing. We destroy the unborn child because it's inconvenient. And we bow our heads in shame. So we see it in relation to each other.

But also we see the image tainted and perverted and destroyed in a greater way when we see it in relation to creation. Because remember, creation was made by God for us. It was made for us to enjoy.

It was made for us to be blessed in and to get fulfillment from. But we know that the fall brought about a great tension in that relationship and the land is cursed. And our ability as created man and woman to rule over that world is almost gone. Because the world is now at odds with itself and with us.

And we see it in earthquakes and in famine and in floods and in deserts and in barrenness and in storms and in hurricanes and in wild beasts. The world growls at our fallen children. And we see it in the way that we've exploited this world that we were asked to come and care for and look after. When we drain or dry. When we overproduce. When we strip. When we exploit. When we pollute. When we waste. It's all gone wrong.

[ 20 : 55 ] We have put God wrong. We have made the image of God that we had completely destroyed and tainted and miserable. The image of God in us is perverted.

And I wonder sometimes what God thinks when he looks down. And when he thinks back, if he can, it's difficult to say how God thinks in terms of time and dimension. But when God thinks back to the world he made, what must he see when he sees this image that he made us in so perverted? If we can see and explain it, what on earth does God think of it? What on earth does he see in us? Why on earth doesn't he completely destroy this world which we've absolutely taken and raped and abused? Why?

Sometimes leaves us breathless to consider God's patience in result, in relation to the image that he made us for.

What then are the implications, briefly, in conclusion, of this image of God which is tainted and which is perverted and destroyed? The implications are twofold for every one of us. And the first is the seriousness of sin.

The seriousness of sin. We're reminded of the seriousness of sin when we see the image of God tainted so badly in our life, in our society, and in our relation to God.

[ 22 : 29 ] Because what we have here is a disease of desolation and misery. And it's not just against ourselves and things like that. And I don't want to be a prophet of doom. I realize it seems a very prophet of doom type sermon. But it's only really looking at reality and his life as we see it.

Because it's not the end of the story. But we see desolation and misery. And we see it primarily against God. And it's what sin is. Primarily and basically and fundamentally it's rebellion against God. And we see it so serious that it has brought into our existence death and hell and everlasting destruction. That's how serious sin is. That's how real it is. The terrible reality of paradise lost. Not something insignificant. Not something we can cast aside as if it doesn't matter. Because all of us are under the effects of it. And all of us come under the effects of it.

It's the judgment of a pure and living and righteous God that can't be avoided and can't be neglected. It affects us all. The seriousness of sin. For Christians, the seriousness of sin.

We became Christians and we were saved by grace. By Christ's finished work. Saved from what? Saved from a life of sin. Saved from a whole emphasis of sin. Saved from a mentality of sin. Saved from an abyss of sin.

And we have been saved. Taken out of that whole community of sin within our own hearts and within our own lives. And our lives as Christians are to be a crusade. To root out sin. Because sin is rebellion against our loving Christ and our loving Saviour. And we are to root out sin and restore the original image that God gave us in Jesus Christ. That's our privilege. That's our responsibility. And I ask you, is sin cheap? Does sin not matter to you? Have you ever really considered, no, I'm not speaking about corporate sin here. I'm talking about my sin that makes me cry and makes me sick that I even exist as a human being. Do we see that sin or is sin cheap? Something that doesn't really matter. Something that, well, the minister talks about and it's in the Bible, but it doesn't affect me at a daily, everyday level. And my friend, if you're a Christian and if sin is cheap, then so is Christ.

[ 25 : 01 ] And Christ is cheap and worthless to you. And it means that you find it easy to disobey him and you find it easy to go away from him. Until we see sin as it is against God, primarily, yes, against our people, but first and foremost against God. And until we see it in its horror for what it did to his glorious creation and what it did to us and how it tainted because of Satan, what it did to us.

And until we can see that, then Calvary is meaningless. And we're pretending to be Christians and it's a big joke because it means nothing. And we can quite happily sin and think, that's okay, I'll just go back to Jesus in the end and he'll forgive me. My friends, we've lost, we've lost the truth and the reality of God's message. If that is how we regard our salvation and if that is how we regard sin. But also if you're an unbeliever, the seriousness of sin, what price will you pay to cling on to that tainted image? Horrible tainted image in yourself and in society, which is under God's judgment and will face all the results and is at the moment, as every one of us know, facing the results of sin in terms of illness and lots of other ways, but is yet to face even greater and more solemn results of sin. Death, not just physical, but spiritual and eternal death. It's so unbelievably serious. It's just beyond words. Can we see our need of salvation? If you can't see it in yourself, can you not see it in society? Can you not see it in this universe, in this world? The need for a savior, the need for salvation, the need for somebody to give us meaning and a reason for living.

The gospel is vital to every single one of us. It's vital to every one of us because we're immortal and because we live with the consequences of our decision to accept or reject Christ forever. C.S.

Lewis, the great C.S. Lewis, the great intelligent, powerful writer said, and reminding us of this, it is immortals whom we joke with, whom we work with, who we marry and snub and exploit. Immortal horrors or everlasting splendors. That dimension of humanity is what we need to grasp if we are going to come to Christ.

that we are either immortal horrors or everlasting splendors, depending on how we respond to Jesus Christ. Because remember that this isn't the end of the story, this tainted, perverted, horrible image, but that there is hope. You see that in the back of some cars, stickers? There is hope.

[ 27 : 59 ] Because that is the theme of the Christian religion, that there is hope. Because you see, God didn't abandon us in the garden and he didn't and hasn't abandoned us ever since. Every one of us, whether you hate God or whether you love him, whether you're never concerned about him and never think about him, or if you do, we are all recipients of his grace and mercy and love. The very fact you're here with your heart beating means that you're receiving his grace. And he lets the sun shine down on us all. In the garden, even after this great rebellion, yes, there was judgment and everything else with it, but nonetheless there was grace. God didn't take away the gift of children from Adam and Eve. He provided them still with food, although it would be hard to come by. He gave them clothes to put on because he cared and loved them. And what's more, he put a protection up against them eating from the tree of life. Now, many of you think that that is a banishment and a punishment, but I don't think so. Because had they eaten from that tree, which would enable them to live forever, then they would have lived in an eternal hell without hope and without grace. But most of all, in the garden, in the chapter we read, he gave us a promise. In the middle of all the degradation and misery of the whole account, he gave us a promise. And he gave us his promise based on the cursing of Satan. And he said to Satan that he was going to be crushed. And his work and the destruction that sin has brought in was going to be crushed because he was going to send someone who would defeat Satan and would crush his head and would destroy his work. And that is the great result of the promise, the early promise in the garden of Eden in verse 15. And it's a wrong translation there where it says it shall bruise thy head. It's much stronger than that. Christ, who the promise is about, didn't bruise Satan's head.

He crushed him. Crushed Satan. Crushed his work. Crushed his power. Crushed the results of his work for all who trust in him. So you're going to die. You're safe in Christ. Because Christ has won the victory over death and over our own spiritual death. And he's given us all that we need in Christ.

All the effects and results of all the terrible consequences of sin can be reversed and even made more glorious through Jesus Christ. He is the only answer to restore God's image and to destroy the power of death and the power of sin. I ask and plead with you to trust in Jesus Christ and what that means. Not just intellectually from a book and put it aside and yes, yes, I'll just live my life as it is anyway. But to trust the way the Bible commands us to trust with all our hearts, souls, strength and mind.

And we'll see next time how in Christ and through what he has done, that image in each one of us can be restored. Amen. Let us pray.

Gracious God, we ask that you would take your word and apply it to our hearts and consciences and that we would learn from it. We ask for your forgiveness for failing to realize sin, to recognize or to admit to it. We also ask for your forgiveness for failing to recognize your grace and love and how from the very beginning you had a plan which would turn everything that Satan has ever done on its head for your glory. And we give thanks in this world of blackness and misery and obvious results of sin that there is a hope, that there is a Redeemer, that there is a Savior. And in our own personal lives which are not perfect and which would leave us condemned in hell forever for being imperfect and rebellious against God, there is also an answer. And may we all fall in with Jesus Christ. And may the

[ 32 : 26 ] Christians here be utterly and completely convinced of all the requirements following Christ. And may we all recognize the awful solemnity of remaining outside of Christ again. For we ask it in Jesus name. Amen.

Amen.