

# Man's Fundamental Problem

By Ty Blackburn

sermonaudio.com

**Bible Text:** Genesis 3  
**Preached on:** Sunday, March 5, 2017

**Providence Church**  
2146 Buford Hwy  
Buford Hwy, Duluth, GA 30097

**Website:** [www.providenceduluth.org](http://www.providenceduluth.org)  
**Online Sermons:** [www.sermonaudio.com/providencechurch](http://www.sermonaudio.com/providencechurch)

Genesis 3. We are continuing sort of a topical theological study of the subject of discipleship. We gave out a couple of weeks ago or actually not a couple of weeks ago, last week during the business meeting a book "Discipling" by Mark Dever which we have a copy for every family in the church and you don't have to be a member. If you're just attending Providence and you're considering this place as a possible church home, we invite you to have a copy free of that book. It's "Discipling" by Mark Dever, a blue book, and I'm sure we have some in the foyer and if you'd like to get one today, get one before you leave. It's an excellent little book. It's one of those nine mark's book, kind of the small bite-size kind of books, not a big treatise or 400 page book, but it's very richly packed with God's word and God's truth and particularly the importance of us being about the business of discipleship.

So last week, I began this topical series by really looking at man's high calling. I don't think I gave it that title but I think that's what I would re-title it now, last Sunday's message, "Man's High Calling," our high calling, which is to be the image of God. We're created in the image and likeness of God, remember, and so we talked about that in Genesis 1:26-27 last week. The image and likeness of God means that we were called and created to be a reflection, to represent, to be like and represent the living God who is a Triune God and so that we are called to manifest his likeness; we're to manifest his glory in the way that we relate to one another. And we saw that we're called, the four points I mentioned last week, I'm not going to go over them other than just real quickly so don't worry. Be together, work together, delight in one another together and worship together. It's about relationship. This is what he made us to do because the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, are always delighting in one another, working together in every they do and so he makes man to be the same way, to work with him and to work with one another. So discipling is a key part of what God has made us to be, we're to help one another glorify God and follow him and discipling simply is defined in that book as doing intentional good to someone to help them follow Jesus. That's discipleship. We're all called to do that all the time, to be intentional about doing good to others to help them follow Jesus and when the other people are helping us follow Jesus.

So that's the high calling, to reflect the glory of the Triune God in our relationships, the quality of our relationships and yet today we're going to look at, last week was man's high calling, today is man's fundamental problem because there's an obstacle to us, a great

obstacle, humanly, an impossible obstacle to us fulfilling our calling. Man's fundamental problem when we go to Genesis 3 and, of course, we see that that fundamental problem is sin, where we see the first act of rebellion by mankind, where man falls from his hitherto glorious calling and is marred, seemingly irretrievably marred, and yet then we see God's great plan of salvation unfold. So this morning we're looking at the subject of man's fundamental problem.

I'm going to read the entire chapter because we're going to talk really kind of through the whole chapter, not in a very broad way but to try to get the main point of this chapter as it relates to our subject, the high calling of God to discipleship. So "Man's Fundamental Problem." Genesis 3:1,

1 Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden'?" 2 The woman said to the serpent, "From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; 3 but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.'" 4 The serpent said to the woman, "You surely will not die! 5 "For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." 6 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 desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate. 7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings. 8 They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. 9 Then the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?" 10 He said, "I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself." 11 And He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" 12 The man said, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate." 13 Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" And the woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate." 14 The LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, Cursed are you more than all cattle, And more than every beast of the field; On your belly you will go, And dust you will eat All the days of your life; 15 And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel." 16 To the woman He said, "I will greatly multiply Your pain in childbirth, In pain you will bring forth children; Yet your desire will be for your husband, And he will rule over you." 17 Then to Adam He said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat from it';

Cursed is the ground because of you; In toil you will eat of it All the days of your life. 18 Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; And you will eat the plants of the field; 19 By the sweat of your face You will eat bread, Till you return to the ground, Because from it you were taken; For you are dust, And to dust you shall return." 20 Now the man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all the living. 21 The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them. 22 Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever"-- 23 therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden, to cultivate the ground from which he was taken. 24 So He drove the man out; and at the east of the garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim and the flaming sword which turned every direction to guard the way to the tree of life.

Let's pray together.

*Our Father, we ask now that You might grant us Your grace to see, to understand, to obey, to submit to You, Your word and Your Son. We pray in his name. Amen.*

We're looking at the subject of man's great obstacle, the obstacle to us being what God has created us to be, a reflection of his glory in harmonious relationships and victorious living. It's something radically wrong with us and it goes back to this is the beginning, this is the point at which everything changed, the fall. What I want us to do in considering this topic and this message, this chapter, is consider under three points, there are three main points and the first point is: what sin is. What sin is. What is the nature of sin? So what sin is, that's what we're asking right now and we see a lot of information about the nature of sin in this passage at this very first sin. It helps us to understand this so that we can hate sin, hate it for what it is. We're going to look next at what sin does. That's going to be our second point. So before we know what sin does though, let's look at what sin is.

What sin is. Verses 1 to 6 really give us a description of what sin is, sort of the way that the serpent deceived the woman, we see it. And I want to call out seven sort of subpoints. We're going to hit them quickly so 1A-G basically, okay? What sin is.

A. Sin starts when you begin to doubt God's word. That's the first point in the downward pathway to destruction. Satan says, "Indeed, has God said?" there in verse 1. He casts doubt on the word of God. He casts doubt on the veracity of God and his word and this is his strategy from the beginning and it remains his strategy today. He is always seeking to cast doubt on the word of God. This is why you can count on at Christmas and Easter, there are new specials on those cable channels to try to undermine the authority of the Scriptures. Whenever you watch them, just realize what you're watching, you're watching stuff that's from the world system and just get ready.

Now, as I say that, I want to make an announcement: there are some exceptions. The Lord is doing great things and occasionally it happens in a movie theater. Occasionally. You don't go there expecting to find it. But last week, a week ago Thursday, a number of us went to see a movie at Sugarloaf Mills, the mall formerly known as Discovery Mills, and we saw the movie, "Is Genesis History?" It's a movie that came out, it's not really by Answers in Genesis but we heard it was endorsed by Answers in Genesis. Todd had mentioned that to me and so we got tickets and we went and it's an outstanding movie. It's really well done and it's one of those things that is going to give you a lot of confidence in the biblical view that Genesis is history and the whole of Scripture is founded. If you take out the foundation of Genesis 1 to 11, the Bible basically falls, it collapses, and the reality is this is told as history because this is what happened. There was a man, Adam, there was a woman, Eve. They were the first people God created in a six day creation and this is what happened. Anyway, you can go and see that. Just Tuesday night only, "Is Genesis History?" You can check and see. It's select theaters, just Tuesday night only. It was there a week ago Thursday and then this past Thursday and then Tuesday. That's it. Now, I'm sure we'll be able to get it on DVD but anyway. Okay, that's the commercial announcement is over.

But Satan's strategy has always been to cast doubt on God's word and that's where sin, the genesis of sin and the fuel of sin, comes from, down in God's word. The second subpoint, B is he then casts doubt on God's goodness. So when we doubt God's word, then he tries to get us to doubt God's goodness or his character. He says, "Indeed, has God said," that's doubting his word but what does he say? "Has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?'" The word that's translated "any" here, the Hebrew word means "all; the whole; the totality." He's basically saying, "Hey, has God really said that you can't eat from a single one of these trees in this beautiful garden? Isn't that what God has said?" Do you see how he's casting doubt on God's character? "God would put you in the middle of this incredible garden with these incredible trees and say you can't eat from a single one of them? I mean, God would treat you worse than you're supposed to treat," we find out later, "to treat our ox." In Deuteronomy they're told, "Don't muzzle the ox while he's threshing the grain." So the ox is threshing the grain, "Don't muzzle him. Let him eat while he's working for you." Satan is saying, "God is worse to you than you would be to your ox." He's casting doubt on the character of God.

So that's the second downward step, just sowing that doubt about God's word, is God's word true, is God really good. Then he leads to the next step is to deny God's word. After she reports to him, "No, listen, that's not right. He didn't say you can't eat from any tree, he said you can't eat from the one in the middle," then the serpent says in verse 4, "You surely will not die!" He directly contradicts the word of God and to sin, you have to go through this basic pattern: you doubt God's word, you doubt his goodness, and then you deny his word. You contradict it. Every time we sin, we actually do that. Any time that we do something God says don't do, essentially what you're doing is, first of all, you're doubting whether the word really applies in this circumstance. If it applies, God's withholding something from me that I need and I'm going to do this.

So the third, C is: you deny God's word. And fourthly you deny God's goodness because Satan then gives a reason for it. Listen, the reason the serpent says, "The reason God is not wanting you to eat from that tree," now he just asserts, "God is not good. It's because God know that the day you eat of it," verse 5, "your eyes will be opened and you will be like God knowing good and evil. God told you not to eat from that tree. He told you that you would die." Satan is saying, "He lied to you. You will not die. In reality, you will become all that you really ever could want to become. You'll be like God." That is a blasphemous claim for which there was no basis, of course. All God had done was to be good to them, bless them, and yet this is the claim and this is the pathway down to seeing what sin is. It really was a denial of God's goodness. She accepted the fact, "Yes, you may be right."

So that's the fourth step: you doubt God's word; doubt God's goodness, the second step; deny God's word; deny God's goodness. Fifthly, sin is the assertion of one's own independent thinking. This is what we see happen now in verse 6, "When the woman saw that the tree was good for food," you see, the woman saw. The woman had God's word. God's word said, "Don't eat from that tree." Satan brings it into question, calls it into doubt, casts doubt upon God's character and the woman says, "Yeah, I need to investigate this," and so she stops submitting to the word and she starts investigating for herself. She begins to think independently of the word of God.

This is actually the moment when the rubicon is crossed. When you go from not submitting to the word of God to independent thinking and rationally deciding apart from God's word, when you set yourself up as the authority, you are on the road to rebellion and it's irretrievably so. The only thing you can do is repent at that moment and stop and submit to the word of God because if you think independently about it, as she does, look what happens. There is a threefold statement about three things that she does or that she thinks, that she sees. "When the woman saw," first, "that the tree was good for food," secondly, "that it was a delight to the eyes," thirdly, "that the tree was desirable to make one wise." She looks reason A, reason B, reason C. Good decision. She took from the tree and she ate.

This independent thinking, what we see for us and that leads us to the sixth point, F: you independently, when you think independently you will independently reason to wrong conclusions every time. Proverbs 13:12, "There is a way which seems right to a man but that leads to the way of death." It seems right to a man but it leads to death. You look at it, you weigh it, you examine it. It seems right but every time it leads to death. A refrain in the book of Judges, remember the terrible refrain in the last five chapters of the book of Judges, 17 to 21 where it's just devastation, moral devastation, social just destruction, spiritual darkness. In those last five chapters of Judges, there is a refrain that runs throughout, "There was no king in Israel," no authority, "everyone did what was right in his own eyes." This is what happens and it goes way back here to Genesis.

When you think independently, you will reason to wrong conclusions and then you will defy it. Seventh: you will defy God's authority. You will find yourself in open rebellion and insurrection. This is an act of cosmic treason. That's what sin is. It is an act of

betrayal of the highest order. It is insanity on top of everything else and yet it seemed reasonable. Once you stopped submitting, you can make treason, you can make insanity seem reasonable and you and I, then, come into this world with a sin nature, a bent to thinking exactly the same way. We doubt God's word. We naturally find it easy to doubt his character. Then we find ourselves denying his word, denying his goodness, asserting our independence, reasoning to bad conclusions and defying his authority. You don't have to be taught how to do it. You can find a toddler, he's going to learn how to do it on his own. It comes in the wiring. Isn't it amazing how much defiance you can see in the eyes of a little, I mean, something like 14 month old. Maybe even younger than that. I think it's younger than that because when they're sitting there and screaming and screaming and screaming in the middle of the night, what's motivating that? It's this wickedness of sin.

Jess's father-in-law, our Associate Pastor Jess Arnds, they're out in California right now, went out for a Shepherd's Conference, spending time with them. Dr. John Street calls babies vipers in diapers. Now, there is more to it than just that, they are also in the image of God but the image of God is marred and sin is real and everyone needs a Savior.

So that's the way sin works. Sin is an act of cosmic treason and you can sort of summarize it really in three basic, those seven points as we follow the text, we come up with those seven steps, but you can say that sin really is the doubting and rejection of God's word, it is to doubt and reject God's goodness, and it's to choose to live independently of him. That's the essence of what sin is. It's to live independently. It's to be the master of your fate, the captain of your soul. And we see that wickedness of man, they glory in that. I mean, what sin really is is like, it's insanity because to go against what God says is like trying to operate some machinery by not doing it according to the owner's manual.

Now, most of us don't read owner's manuals and thankfully, I mean, who really does read an owner's manual? There probably are a few of you that do. You don't have to raise your hand. We don't want to embarrass you in front of everyone else. No, but seriously, but you do want to know a couple of things that are important. Like, I have a weed eater and it's the only piece of equipment I have that is a gas/oil mix. Now, if I forget that and I just put gas into that weed eater, how long is it going to last? Not long. There is a certain ratio you have to go with if you're going to use that because the manufacturer made it to operate on a gas/oil mix and if you want to ignore that, fine. Do it according to what seems right to you. "Hey, everything else I pour gas into, it works fine." Well, just find out how smart you are.

That's just a tiny little evidence. And think about the complexity of the human soul and now say, "Do it according to your own inclinations." That's insanity and that is what sin is. It is insanity. It's worse than insanity because insanity focuses on what it does to us. It's treason. It's rebellion. It's like a dog that has been rescued and the owner loves it, cares for it, takes it to the vet, gets it all taken care of, gets the shots, feeds the dog year after year and one day the dog just goes at the owner's throat and just rips his jugular and kills him. A dog wouldn't do that. Sin is worse than that. Sin is as if saying, "God, I want

your place. I want to cast you down from your throne in my life. I want your place and I want to pull you down." That's what sin is.

Now, that ought to make us hate it and know how much we need a Savior but it's not just that that we find in this passage. Secondly, the second major point is: what sin does. What sin does. Verses 7 to 13, we see what sin does and essentially sin separates, sin divides. That's what it does. It disintegrates. You know, the word "disintegrate, integrate, dis-integrate, to break apart." It breaks apart our relationship to God. It breaks apart our own internal, the functioning of our own soul. It disintegrates us. It messes up the way our mind and our will and our affections, our emotions operate. It causes internal disintegration and it disintegrates our relationships. That's what we see happening right here in front of us in Genesis 3.

What sin does. I'm going to have seven subpoints here too. We're going to kind of follow through the text and then we'll kind of summarize. What sin does, point 2. The first thing is it kills. Sin kills. Now, it's interesting the half-truths of Satan and the half-truths of sin, of temptation. It's interesting. He said in verse 5, "God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." Your eyes will be opened and you will know. That's what Satan said.

Look at verse 7, when they ate, "the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew." Do you see that? It's a half-truth and this is how Satan operates, in half-truths. This is how he kills. This is how he murders. Jesus said, "You're like your father, the devil. He was a murderer from the beginning." He looked at the Jews who wanted to kill him and he said, "The reason you want to kill Me is because you are like your father. Your father was a murderer from the beginning. He is a liar and the father of lies." How did Satan murder? He lied. He's always lied. This is how he kills. He lies, he deceives and he kills but his lies are cleverly disguised, made attractive, because they so often are half-truths. "Hey, you're gonna have your eyes opened and you're gonna know some things you don't know right now." And he even said, his first lie was, "You surely will not die!" But there's a half-truth in that, even. They didn't die that day physically, though it's true that at that moment they really did begin to die physically, didn't they? Adam would have lived forever. There was no reason for death. Death had not entered the world until sin. So when sin entered the world, death came. So they ended up to be 900+ years old but they died. And then when you read Genesis 5, it goes through the line and the key refrain in Genesis 5 is, it talks about Adam, it talks about Seth, it talks about Methuselah, how many years they lived, and the refrain that's repeated over and over is, "and he died." And he died.

But what Satan didn't tell them is that the death that would happen instantaneously is the greatest kind of death of all and that is spiritual death. The moment they ate from the tree, they were separated and death really is separation from life. You think about when you look at the corpse of a dead person, a person who passes away, their body is separated from the animating principle of life. You can tell they're no longer there. The person you know is not there. You are separated from them. There has been a separation and it's a picture of the separation that really is, death itself, real death, ultimate death, the

definition, the essence of death is to be separated from the one who is himself life and that's what happened to Adam and Eve at the moment they sinned. They were separated from God, separated from life.

It's illustrated and shown to us in a graphic way in the Lord driving them out of the garden. This thing about them, they can't now, if they hold forth their hand, they might stretch out their hand and take from the tree of life, the Lord is saying, "Listen, in their fallen state if they eat from the tree of life now, they will be like the demons who have rebelled against me. They will live on indefinitely in a state of death and they will be irredeemable." So he drives them out from the garden so they can't eat of the tree of life so that they will die, so that they'll know they need to deal with the spiritual problem they have, sin, so that they can become made alive again through the Redeemer.

But being driven out from the garden, the place of God's presence, the place of paradise, is an illustration that sin kills. That's the first subpoint, A: sin kills. What sin does, it kills. Now, I mentioned it brings guilt. That's the second thing it does. Sin brings guilt. When he says their eyes were opened and they knew that they were naked, verse 7, "they knew they were naked." They didn't know this before. Nothing happened. They didn't lose their clothes when they sinned. They were naked already. In fact, this recalls the last verse of chapter 2. In paradise, the man and the wife, verse 25, chapter 2, verse 25, "the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed." They had such a level – this is hard for us to conceive because we now are conceived in sin, brought forth in iniquity, we can't understand this but it's talking about a level of relationship in which there was never a sense or a fear or the possibility of being exposed.

First of all, the climate must have been perfect in Eden. You didn't need to wear clothes. It wasn't like the Lord would put them there in wintertime and they're sitting over there, like, "I don't know what we need to do about this. This is not good." No, everything was good in Eden. Perfect temperature all the time. They never thought, "I'm getting a little warm. I'm getting a little cool." Now, they had to work but the work was delightful, the way it is for us occasionally when things go the right way, fits like it's supposed to when you're putting it together, the dish comes out right.

Everything was like that in Eden so they didn't need clothes for warmth. Theologians speculate that maybe there was a sense of glory that sort of enveloped them. They're reflecting like Moses. Remember when Moses saw the Lord and his face shone? I think that's a reasonable possibility. So there was no need for even to think about that but they could delight in one another and there was no sense of vulnerability because what does vulnerability mean when there is no sin? How could you be vulnerable? There was this perfect unity. Mutual delight. But when sin came, guilt came. That is, a sense of deep conviction, to be naked, to be exposed. And I think the essence of this is that they now had, this disintegration that was happening in their soul, they knew they were wrong with God. There was this overwhelming sense that they had committed cosmic treason. Something is radically wrong with me and since something's radically wrong with me, I want to hide.

The third thing that we see happens, it's interesting, I think that really what's going on is like Ed Welch mentions in his book, a very helpful book he wrote, "When People Are Big and God Is Small," about the fear of man, he said that basically sin makes us, the fact that we're born into this world with a sin nature, we go on sinning, the biggest problem we have is our guilt and our separation from God and the fear of being exposed and seen for the wickedness that's in our soul. So we feel that but yet we don't even understand it and we sort of explain it away because most unbelievers won't tell you, if you ask, "What's your biggest problem?" they won't say, "I'm afraid I'm guilty before God and I'm afraid he's going to find me out." That's just not going to be what they say. Very rarely. If somebody says that, the Spirit is working in them in a major way. That's not their biggest problem. They think they're going to heaven. They think everything's fine yet in their heart of hearts they know it's not but they cover it up.

So Ed Welch says what happens is this generally manifests itself, this guilt, as an overwhelming anxiety in relation to other people; that they begin to fear man. They ought to fear God, they begin to fear man, being exposed. What's the first thing that they do when their eyes are opened? They knew they were naked. They are exposed. What do they do? They hide from each other. "They sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings." "I need to hide from you and you need to hide from me. I don't want to be exposed to you." Do you see how sin is already driving them apart? This is what sin does, it makes it impossible for there to be true communion because I know something's so wrong with me that I cannot be truly transparent and I don't even understand that. I'm blind to that as an unbeliever. And as a believer, my eyes are open now but I still find pockets of this blindness and insanity.

So the third thing they did, the first thing, sin kills, sin brings guilt, sin makes you want to hide from others, that's the third thing we just talked about in verse 7, they sewed fig leaves together. Fourthly: sin makes you hide from God. This is really the big spiritual problem they had that the third problem was talking about. We want to hide from others because we think we really want to hide from God. But we see them hide directly from God when the Lord shows up. Verse 8, "They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God." The most tragic words we could read, especially when you think about what this means. What was it like in Eden before sin? Everything was perfect. Everything was perfect. Perfect relationships, delighting in working together, delighting in one another, laughter, joy. And not only that, God would come down and walk with them in the cool of the day. God would make himself known in some way that they understood, whether it was visibly somehow. They knew the Lord was walking with them in the cool of the day. Isn't it neat when you can go for a walk with somebody? Sometimes you go for a walk because you've got that crazy watch and you're trying to get your 10,000 steps or whatever, but other times you go for a walk where you're just like, "Let's go for a walk." And you talk and you share, you laugh, and you get exercise at the same time, maybe you're looking at the beauty of the creation. This is great. They did that with God himself. That was an everyday occurrence. It was so unimaginable for us but for them it was no big deal, it was just to be expected. "Oh, the Lord's here. Time to walk." Isn't that amazing?

But now the one that they used to delight to be with now they're running and hiding from. How ridiculous to try to hide from God in the first place. Isn't it amazing how the Lord just condescends to us because he calls out, "Where are you?" like he doesn't know. The Lord has a way of doing this. When you look at the mystery of Jesus, you just see this is... he said, "When you see Me, you see the Father." Jesus is constantly asking people questions that you know he already knows the answer to. Why does he ask them? Because there's something about asking a question that makes the person face the reality themselves in a different way. "Hey, Adam, where are you?" "Here I am hiding. What is wrong with me? What has happened?" "Who told you that you were naked?"

So, fourthly, they hid from the presence of God. But sin kills, sin brings guilt, sin makes us hide from one another, sin makes us hide from God. Sin brings great fear is the next thing. He says, "Where are you?" He says in verse 10, "I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked." For the first time he was afraid in a bad way. The Bible teaches there is a good kind of fear, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. To fear God is to understand that he's God and we're not. To fear God, they had a good fear of God when they would have said, "It doesn't matter what Satan says, God has said this. His word is all that matters." That's the fear of the Lord. It doesn't matter what I think or what I might want to be true, it's what God says. Why would I think that I know better than God?

So they became afraid. There was terror. They wanted to run from him and this is what animates the unbeliever until the Lord gives them a new heart. They are afraid of God. Truly in their deepest part of their soul, they are on the run. It is pictured in just a very graphic way in the judgment when Jesus comes back, people will be saying, asking the rocks to fall upon them and to hide them from the presence of the Lord. Now, there is a rational sense to which you should be afraid if you aren't right with God, yes, but it's not a fear that should drive you away because how can you possibly get away? How can you possibly hide? But it makes you afraid.

The sixth thing it does is it makes you blame. When he says, "What is this that you've done? Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" He asks the man because the man is the head. The man was the head before the fall. There was authority before the fall in the same way that there's authority in God. And one of the wicked things of Satan is to hate authority and to undermine it in the family and to say that it's evil for a man to be the head of his wife because how can two people who are equal in glory and honor be in a different role of authority? To say that is evil is to say that God is evil because the Father and the Son, the Son lives in submission to the Father from all eternity and that is the way God is and that is good and that is glorious and that is beautiful and it is Satan's lie that is wicked and evil. And it doesn't diminish the glory of the Son or the Spirit. In fact, as we talked about last time, the Father delights to give glory to the Son. The Son delights to give glory to the Spirit. That's the way it's supposed to work and in Eden it did. The man was the head, the woman was his helper suitable, but there was perfect harmony and mutual delight and

there can be by God's grace in the Christian home. There can't be in the unbelieving home.

But there is the blame shifting. This is what happens. Sin makes you blame somebody else. What did the man do? He comes to the man and says, "What have you done? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" "The woman whom You gave me." You see, that's a double blame shift. "It's the woman. It's her fault. To really get technical, Lord, it's Your fault. You gave. I wasn't asking for her. I had nothing to do with it. I was just tending those animals, tending the garden, happy as a lark, and You come along with the idea of giving me that woman." That's what he's saying. We laugh but that's our wicked heart, isn't it? Isn't it amazing how quickly we blame others? I catch myself doing this. It just could be something so silly, something just nothing, and I'm thinking it's somebody else's fault automatically. I can't even think of an example. It's like the cereal box is not in the right place. "Who did that?" I turns out it was me. I'm learning to catch myself when I start to even think that. I don't say anything usually, I'm just dealing with my own heart. Oh, no, and then I'm like, "Oh, wait a second. Here I go. Oh yeah, I'm the one that moved it there." And even if I'm not, I don't need to be blaming, right?

So we blame others. And then what does the woman do? The Lord then says, "What is this you have done?" And she said, "The serpent. He deceived me and I ate." No one is taking responsibility.

So we lose the ability to take responsibility for our sin therefore it just keeps us divided and the seventh thing is actually in the pronouncement of judgment. We see that there's going to be ongoing relational conflict. Verse 16, when he says to the woman, "I will greatly multiply Your pain in childbirth, In pain you will bring forth children," what should have been not a painful circumstance, it obviously would have been something profound but pain was not a part of the original plan of God in childbirth. The most delightful thing in the world naturally is to have a child. It wasn't going to be painful until sin.

So it shows us there's something wrong now in our relationships, there is going to be pain and the husband and wife relationship is now in conflict. It's a contest for power. When it says, "Your desire will be for your husband," it's not talking about sexual desire, it's talking about a desire to control. You will have a desire to control your husband to meet your needs but he's going to rule over you and the word "rule" isn't a gentle rule, this is a word of authority and abusive power; that the basic now relationship is so wrecked that the way I set things up has been undermined by sin. This is why the world looks at it and says, "Hey, it's not a good idea," because they don't understand grace. Apart from grace, yeah, this isn't going to work very well. But it's still the best and you'd be better off to follow this system than any other system, even in sin. But, man, when you see it with the Spirit of God working in a husband and a wife, man, that's Christ and the church.

So what sin does. It divides. To summarize what we've talked about. Sin makes you want to run from God and to run from one another in a way; to run from transparency; to hide

yourself; to wear masks. At the same time, though, the irony is because we need relationship, we don't really, we think we're running from God but sometimes we act like we're running toward God. False religion. We're running from real relationships, transparency, but often we're pursuing relationships with an incredible intensity but it's a lust driven intensity. I don't just mean sexual lust, I'm talking about desire to be approved, or desire to be loved, or desire to have someone else affirm you. You see, it's all self focused rather than other centered now. And when you're self-focused pursuing relationships, you're actually running away from relationships. You're creating more distance because sin divides. It makes the chasm wider and wider. Now relationships are characterized by envy and jealousy, bitterness.

We make the love of others an idol, the acceptance of others an idol. We worship relationships as that which is ultimate. We don't love and worship him first and so we worship other things. We bow down before them and we find nothing. We become less and less relational, less and less human, less and less connected. The fear of man begins to dominate us.

He talks about this in his book, Ed Welch. Interesting quote, tragic quote. He says, "So it is today in our unbelief we both oppose God and we avoid him." We do those two things: we oppose God and we avoid him. What is the result of this? It's people idolatry. If you're not going to worship God, you're going to worship the creature. So you turn away from God and you worship the creature. It's people idolatry. You make idols out of people. And he says, "As in all idolatry, the idol we choose to worship soon owns us; the object we fear overcomes us. Although insignificant in itself, the idol becomes huge and rules us. It tells us how to think, what to feel, how to act. The idol tells us what to wear. It tells us to laugh at the dirty joke. It tells us to be frightened to death that we might have to get up in front of a group of people and say something. So the whole strategy of pursuing relationships like this backfires. We never expect that using people to meet our desires will leave us enslaved to them."

Listen to the story. He says, "Sarah was a three sport star at one of the best colleges in the country, not only that, she was the sophomore captain of all three teams and she had just been named co-winner of the college's best female athlete award as a sophomore. With such ability and recognition, you would think that she was feeling pretty good about herself but she was already worried about next year. The expectations of others were going to be even greater. How could she top what she had already accomplished? 'She said she wanted to be the best girlfriend, the best athlete, the best student,' relayed a good friend. She wanted to quit one of her sports to alleviate some of the overwhelming stress in her life but she was afraid to disappoint her teammates. Saying no to any friends was out of the question. 'She wanted to please everybody and couldn't stop,' another person observed. She could only think of one way out. Sarah took a .22 caliber rifle and shot herself in the chest."

You see, sin is insanity. It's craziness and it all leads to death and it all starts to turn around when you realize that your fundamental problem is not with people, your

fundamental problem is with God, the guilt that you have. And the only thing that really matters at first is to get right with him.

That brings us to our third point. Not only what sin is, what sin does, thirdly: how sin is overcome. Here it is in this chapter right here, the third chapter of the Bible, the first book of the Bible. In the curse upon the serpent, the Lord gives us what is called the proto-gospel, the first preaching of the Gospel. Ironically when he's judging Satan, talking to Satan, he pronounces or proclaims Christ and the cross.

Look with me at verse 14, "The LORD God said to the serpent, 'Because you have done this, Cursed are you more than all cattle, And more than every beast of the field; On your belly you will go, And dust you will eat All the days of your life; And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel.'" That's the Gospel. There is going to be a seed that's going to come, the seed of the woman. It's so interesting, the word choice here. The Hebrew word means the seed that comes from the man. You see it even more clearly when you think about the Greek word. When this is translated into Greek, the Septuagint, it says, "her sperma." A woman doesn't have the seed, the man does.

But here a seed is coming, a descendant normally thought of as Abraham's descendant or David's descendant, but here we're told it's the seed of the woman. What's that about? That's the virgin birth, the one time in history that a young man will be born, a child will be born apart from a male human father. Mary gives birth to Jesus. The virgin gives birth to Jesus. He is the seed of the woman, the only person in all history that fits that description and he is the one that Satan was waiting for to try to crush and he did crush his heel, he worked all throughout his whole earthly life to crush him, and finally he succeeded in crushing him on the cross but in crushing him, he was crushed. In crushing Jesus and giving him the death blow on the cross, it's the same as the picture of a serpent biting the heel of a man, biting the man and having his head crushed and defeated forever. That's what happened at the cross. Jesus' defeat was Jesus' greatest victory. Satan's victory was his ultimate defeat forever.

Now what does this mean? In the context of what this is saying, listen, what sin is and what sin does, it means how do you deal with sin? You go to the one that God has appointed, the one Savior of men, the Lord Jesus Christ, and you go to him in his cross and his resurrection, his finished work. You trust in what he did in coming and living a perfect life and dying an atoning death, having our sins credited to his account, and experiencing the wrath of a holy God against our sin. He experienced that in the cross. All of it was poured out upon him and he said at the end, "It is finished. Into Your hands I commit My spirit." He paid the sin debt in full and because he paid for that sin, those who believe in him will not have to pay for their sins. They're already covered. Your guilt has been taken away.

The enmity we read about earlier has been taken out of the way having been nailed to the cross. He's our peace. So not only our relationship with God is the cross, our relationship with one another is the cross. That's where the enmity is destroyed. When you and I

realize that our guilt is taken away, we don't have to run from God anymore, suddenly we're able not to run from each other anymore. It's a learning process to apply it but I don't have to run from you, you don't have to run from me because we're right with God. We can start to be transparent again. We can start to recover some of the glory of Eden. We can start to say, "Look at my life and help me." There are pockets still that aren't right like they should be but I can open up to you because I know that Jesus' blood is sufficient to cover what we're going to find together.

And it just makes sense anyway because I can't hide anyway from God. In fact, I want to mention this. I want you to look at this passage and we'll talk about it next time. I can't do that. We're going to stop here. Let me just say this: what God has called you and me to do is to help each other follow Jesus and we have a great barrier to that. Even as believers once you come to know Christ, sin still dwells in you, the flesh, the sin nature, there is still this tendency to want to run from God and to want to hide from one another, and we have to realize by grace we're not going to buy the lie. We're going to submit to the word of God which says not only that we need to trust in Jesus but we need one another. I may feel like I don't need somebody else to help me with this problem. I may think I've got it covered. I just need God and the word. I just need God, the word and the Spirit. Well, if you could read the word carefully, the word's going to tell you you need other believers. So you're going to submit yourself to God on that or not? Do you see?

And then, "Other believers are imperfect. They may hurt me." Well, yes, and you're imperfect too but the Lord can take crooked sticks and hit straight blows. He said this is the way we're going to become like Jesus, is walking through life together, helping each other with the word, speaking the word to each other, letting the word uncover sin, expose the areas that are still problems, the nakedness that's still there, and always the answer is: go to the cross. Go to Jesus. Like that song says, "I will arise and go to Jesus." That's always the message, go to Jesus. Let's help each other with our issues and let's keep helping each other go to Jesus. We go to Jesus and we find in him everything that we need. His blood is more than able to cleanse us. His grace is more than able to make us new. His power is more than we need. And that's how we walk together through life but we have to realize we still have sin, we still have this old baggage and we've got to keep going to the word so that we don't forget. But if we do, we're going to look more and more like him together.

Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

*Father, we thank You for the wonder of our salvation, the greatness of our Savior. We confess, Lord, we are still proud people who sin still blinds us at times, so often, Lord. Help us to help each other. Help us to truly follow after You with everything that we are and to engage in life together. Teach us what that means more and more every day. And help us to know that You're going to be faithful to work through the means that You've appointed: Your word, Your Spirit, and the body of Christ, to form us into the image of Your Son. And to Him be all the glory. We pray in His name. Amen.*