

Life and Death

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[0 : 0 0] We can turn back to Genesis chapter 3 and we can read again in verse 20.

Genesis 3 in verse 20.

The man called his wife's name Eve because she was the mother of all living. And the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.

When you were young I'm sure that you were not always the perfect young boy or young girl and perhaps from time to time you would get into trouble and you would be summoned by your parents because you have disobeyed them in some way.

And once they had found out they would summon you to the kitchen and you would receive a mighty wallocking from your mother or father or whoever it would be.

[1 : 1 4] And they were probably justified in the discipline that they gave you because they were so disappointed in you and would then send you to your room or perhaps you do this to your own children. And your parents or you were right to punish your children but they would never leave you punished indefinitely.

They would not let this episode define your relationship with them from now on. Rather after a period of time one or both your parents would come to your room see you bawling your eyes out and put their arm around you, around your shoulder and tell you that it's going to be okay. It's a trivial example. It was not a matter of life or death. Nevertheless you had done wrong and you needed to be punished.

But there was also love and there was forgiveness for you in the end. We see here in our chapter in Genesis chapter 3 Adam and Eve being summoned not before an angry parent but before Almighty God. They had severed and disobeyed and broken the relationship with the Lord. We have read of the judgment that's poured out in them in verse 14 to 19 to the serpent to the woman to the man. As we will see tonight's they are driven away not just to their bedrooms but they are driven out of God's presence. And yet in this bleak and seemingly endless context of judgment you actually find hope. We find God placing his arm around them. Because from all eternity there has been this plan of redemption. There has been this eternal counsel of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit and now it is in motion. So I want to consider these final rushes of chapter 3 and not three things. Our sin, our standing and our substitute. Our sin, our standing and our substitute. First of all then our sin. We know how to spell the word sin. It's such a small word but right in the middle of that word is the letter I. Is the letter

I. And it's right in the middle of our sin is ourselves. It is our desire and we don't want to please God but we want to please ourselves. There is not one sin that you do. Not one sin that you commit in your whole life that is actually selfless. That is for anybody else to gain from. It's always for our own satisfaction and for our own gain and advantage. In verse 21 to 24 we see at least two consequences to our first parents sin. And in that moment the ripple effect spreads not merely just to them, not merely just to their children but to every single human that is born in this planet thereafter. The two consequences are there is lost fellowship and lost life. There is lost fellowship for Adam and Eve and we need to emphasize how devastating sin is. We tend to play down this fact and perhaps especially in Christian circles saying well we're all sinners but Jesus's blood has cleansed me from all my sin. That's absolutely true and but I know we don't think of it as flippantly as that but

Satan is going to try and get you to believe just like he got Eve to believe. This sin, the one that's in your mind right now that you think about that's so close and precious to you, he's gonna tell you that it's not going to hurt anybody. In fact it may benefit everyone in some strange way. The result for Adam and Eve disobeying God's law and committing this one sin was catastrophic.

[6 : 15] The devil is wrong, he is so wrong when he tells us that it's not going to hurt you when it's not going to hurt anybody else when nobody else is going to find out because your sin disrupts at greatest relationship that you have. It disrupts the relationship that you have with your God. We were created in God's image, we were designed to glorify God and now we see the sorry sight of Adam and Eve losing fellowship, being driven out of the presence of God. This is the greatest tragedy of all time. Just think about Genesis 2 if you have any recollection of Genesis 2 and 3. Think about the bliss and the tranquility and the potential that there was in chapter 2. Then think about the fatality that we've just read of in chapter 3 as Adam and Eve are removed from God. In of themselves they can never have a relationship with the Lord again. Now for the woman there's going to be a great pain in childbearing. There will be strife in the marriage bond. The man will now labour in agony and he is told in no explicit terms that they are now going to die. So the next time that you are tempted to sin, if it's tonight, if it's tomorrow, remember what it cost Adam and Eve as they were tempted to sin. Remember what it cost our God when they sinned against time. In chapter 1 Genesis 1 31 God saw all that he had made and it was very good. It does not break your heart as you look at the scene in chapter 3 now. Our loving God, he created such a beautiful, peaceful and orderly world and he set mankind over it all. But just like the Roman soldiers will eventually strike

Jesus on the face at his crucifixion. Man had already done this to God in the Garden through his rebellion and disobedience. We come to verse 24 and you see that verb drove and it's quite striking. God did not just show them the door but he ensured that they were removed from the glory of the Garden of Eden. That same verb is used elsewhere in the Old Testament and usually within the context of the battlefield. The nation is driven back, the people are driven away.

In other words they could do nothing to prevent this action from happening. What a sad picture it is in Genesis chapter 3.

There Adam is with his head bowed and covered in shame. Eve with her head bowed and full of shame crying out in anguish. But this is not merely the case for two Old Testament figures that we find in our Bible but this was the case and this is the case for all of us and I fear is still the case for some of you.

Driven out from God's presence fellowship with the Lord has been lost. They've lost their fellowship. They've also lost their life. In Eden our parents they never knew sin. They had never tasted it. They were sinless. We can't really understand that but it's something that drives us forward as we think of glory and we think that there is going to be no more sin. But Adam and Eve never knew sin. But now they've drunk sins, poisoned and they have not only lost their location but they've lost their lives. They had anticipated an eternity with God. God who is the source of life but now that was all gone. They knew that God had said that if anyone eats of the forbidden fruit then they will die. So they may have asked the question and you may be asking the question why are they not dead? Why are they not dead yet? Why did they not die straight away as soon as they took of the fruit? I'll buy God's mashy. It was not immediate. Adam lives for 930 years. The verdict of death for them was to be cast out of the garden and barred from the access to the Tree of Life. Tree of Life it stands as we read in verse 24. It stands guarded now by cherubim. We don't have time to do a study on cherubim but they are God's awesome throne bearers. You can read about them in Exodus and Ezekiel and Isaiah. They're mentioned around 65 times in the Bible but only one of these times in the New Testament. But the cherubim wherever we read of them literally or symbolically they refer to the glory and to the presence of God. And here in verse 24 the cherubim we have the cherubim with the flaming sword. Gardening the way to the Tree of Life.

[12 : 39] Gardening the way to the presence and to access with God. To put it simply God was ensuring that evil and sinful man could not re-enter. The way back was not merely blocked for them but it was prevented by God Himself. If somebody is barred from a building, whatever building or shop then they must have committed some crime. They've done something wrong and now the big muscly men of the door will ensure that they do not re-enter. They've all done something wrong. They've all sinned against the Creator God and by nature we are barred from His presence and from eternal life with Him. What a sad picture as we come to Genesis chapter 3.

But moving on we come secondly to our standing. Look at verse 21. The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and he clothed them. What did Adam try to do immediately after? He sinned to try and cover his shame. When God found out when God was calling him what did Adam try and do? Well he did three things.

He covered himself with fig leaves. He then made excuses and finally he blamed God for it all. You gave me this woman after all. Any effort that we do ourselves as Adam proves expertly in this passage it's not going to be enough.

It's inadequate and the world is still using fig leaves today and trying to make themselves acceptable to God. They try to cover themselves with good works.

This is very common we see it in many other religions but we also see it in this church, in our church. I don't misunderstand them. Being good to your neighbour and doing nice things and being a good husband or being a better husband or a better wife they're all good things. It's not that good works are without value from a human point of view. It's just that they are no good in and of themselves from God's point of view because they do not deal with our basics and problem. Have you ever consciously tried to work for your salvation?

[15 : 38] It's like my hat off to anybody who thinks that they can stand a chance of getting through one day and never mind a lifetime without making error. Because even on my best day if there was such a thing even on my best day my efforts are littered with sin. There is nothing that I can do. I dare say there's nothing that you can do to make yourself right before God. God's conclusion is that man's good works are fig leaves. But you say I've turned my life around from being a drunk.

Fig leaves. But I read my Bible every day. Fig leaves. But I give to the church and to this charity fig leaves. None of these deal adequately with your sin. Ephesians 2 verse 8. But it is by grace that you have been saved. By grace. By grace you have been saved through faith. This is not from yourselves. This is a gift of God. Not by works. So that no man can boast. One of the core elements to come from the Reformation five centuries ago was justification by faith alone.

I'm going to consider who our God is. That he has set every star in place. That his strength lights up the sky and it darkens the night. That he has the power to place a rainbow in the sky over the whole world. He has the power to bring down the wicked to pour out fire to consume a sacrifice on the top of Mount Carmel. He alone rules the nations. Though man may rise for a period of time God is eternal and will never be mocked. Who then? Who then of us in here this evening is going to stand on the day of judgment and present before the Almighty and Holy Tribunal of God is going to claim to the money that they gave to this church. To the amount of times they attended this building or the scabby efforts that you made in your life it is not going to earn you entrance into the Kingdom of God. On the last day only justification by faith alone answers the Almighty's question. And so we must confess on that day nothing in my hand I bring but simply to the cross I cling. How will you stand before God on that day with fig leaves or with Christ? We have noted our sin, our standing and finally our substitute. Back in verse 20 we see the first glimmer of hope. The man called his wife's name Eve because she was the mother of all living. You may have noticed as we read through these verses this evening that the narrative seems to be going in one direction as you come through verse 17 and 18 and 19 when you come to verse 20 and it seems like it shouldn't really be there. It doesn't seem to fit. You seem to have to change direction as you come to verse 20.

Here Adam names his wife Eve. What's so significant about that? Well there is depth here but it'll suffice us to say this. Adam is giving his wife here a title. He's given her a title because Eve means life in the sense of being the life giver, the mother. Yet we know that at this point Eve was not a mother. She had no children yet. So why does Adam name his wife mother when she was not even pregnant? I'll think back to God's judgment to Satan in verse 15. What does he say?

And I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your offspring and her. You will crush your head and he will strike your heel. It was clearly told to Satan not only was the woman going to have a child but one member of that offspring was going to crush Satan's head. We cannot stress this too hard but perhaps this was an act of faith by Adam. Having heard he believed God's word that there will be faith. Having heard and believed God's word he believed that there would be a redeemer and he is going to come from the seed of the woman. There was hope. Eve is going to be the mother of all the living. But after and because of the fall there was more work for God to do. We see that in verse 21 the Lord God made garments of skin. Our man-made efforts are not going to do.

[22 : 00] They're not going to suffice but God must provide a covering. So he provides skins. But where do the skins come from to clothe Adam and Eve? Where do the skins come from to hide their nakedness? Well an animal had to die. You see our first parents did not immediately die but we know from scripture that there needed to be death if there was to be any redemption. Romans 6 23 the wages of sin is death. Hebrews 9 22 without the shouting of blood there is no forgiveness.

But death did not come upon Adam and Eve. Death did not come upon the guilty man's head but it comes upon the innocent. If the guilty was to live the innocent has to die. If they possibly could have. It must have been a wonderful realization for Adam and Eve when they tried to put the pieces together. God said that the penalty would be death. We didn't die. That serpent didn't die. But now this animal is dead. One of the most devastating pages of the whole Bible we actually see God's mercy poured out here in Genesis chapter 3. Perhaps these two thoughts would have gone through the minds of Adam and Eve. They're actually the sheer horror of death. One of my friends is a police officer and maybe many of you in your own professions can relate to this but he tells me from time to time some of the incidents that he has to attend where a fatality has occurred. He never goes into detail but even the sketch that he gives it's enough to make me squirm sometimes and to resist from hearing anymore. But for him he has had to get used to it if that's even possible. But working in the city he faces this on a daily occurrence. Adam and Eve had never seen death in their lives.

It heard its mention. They knew it was the consequence of sin but never had they experienced it in any form whatsoever. And now here is death lying in front of them. Life has been taken so that their life could be spared. We're not told how they got the skins but likely they saw the animal lifeless on the ground perhaps smelt it noticing the blood pouring from it. This was death and all as a result of their sin. But perhaps they also thought positively and they grew in their wonder of the mercy of God. With their eyes fixed upon this sacrificed animal the dawn in realisation that this animal has died in their place.

They discovered the God who created them who they had a relationship with who had full justification to punish both of them yet he spared them because he loves them because he loves us. You know it was not this animal's death that took away the sin of Adam and Eve nor the animal sacrificed on the altar throughout the Old Testament that permitted God to forgive sins and proclaim sinners just.

The only death that could possibly do that was Jesus's death and the only blood that could possibly cleanse you from your sin was his. Lay down your fig leaves come and put on Christ's robe of righteousness. Amen. Let's pray.

[27 : 06] Heavenly Father we thank you as we have pondered for a short while this evening on the mercy of God that you have provided a substitute and as we come now to take of the elements thinking of the substitute that has gone in our place Jesus Christ Lord as we think of our own lives we think of our own faith we realise nothing nothing in my hand I can drink but simply to the cross we cling so go before us in Jesus name we pray. Amen. We're going to sing again in Psalm 31 in the Scottish shelter Psalm 31 and sing from verse 3 down to verse 7 because thou art my rock and thee I for my fortress take therefore do thou me leading even for the non names sake. Let's stand and sing to God's presence.

In for the own names sake and send the word my strength therefore hold me out of the net which is subtlety for me so freely myself.

Into thy hands I do call it my spirit and thy mercy O thy Jehovah God of truth that has redeemed me those of good life humanity regard I have a whore but as for me my confidence is fixed on the Lord

I lead thy mercy gladly jarred for thou my miseries consider hath love hath my soul no man adversities.

When we come to partake of the Lord's supper we do what we customarily call fencing the table we highlight who should be at the Lord's table and who should stay away when we join together for communion like this this evening we see with our eyes a distinction within this community a distinction should not come as a surprise to onlookers but tonight it will be so clearly evident as each believer makes a public statement declaring that you love the Lord there's a 90 year old man in my village in Hilton his name is Huey and he's always been a church attender he very often would come and he would help out in different ways when he was able but he was never a communicant member two years ago though he summoned my colleague Alastair to the house and he indicated of his desire to sit at the Lord's table

[32 : 45] Huey could not really put a time or a place to conversion to a change in his life and so Alastair was trying to ask him some more questions and he eventually came down to this question and said why now why now at the age of 90 years old do you want to profess faith?

Huey speaking about his soul said I've realised I'm not getting any better I'm only getting worse there are great testimonies for anyone to come and to take their place because the reality is you're never going to get better because it is only through Jesus Christ that we take our place Huey sat at the Lord's table that weekend but he's never been well enough to come and to take his place again but I visited him just last week or the week before in the Cable and Huey is struggling in his health just now and his communication is limited but I said to Huey, Huey do you know the Lord is with Huey?

and he said that's the only thing that keeps me going you know there is two statements being made tonight those who declare that they love the Lord and that they obey Him and they're taking their place at his table and the second statement is those who are declaring with their silence whether they are present or whether they are in their homes this evening that they will not have Jesus rule over their life come and take your place at the Lord's table to remember what the Lord has done for you as we prepare we're going to sing again in Psalm 118 from verse 15 in the Scottish Salt Psalm 118 from verse 15 in dwellings of the righteous is heard the melody of joy and health the Lord's right hand doth ever valiantly let's sing to God's praise in dwellings of the righteous is heard the melody of joy and health the Lord's right hand doth ever valiantly the right hand of the mighty Lord exalted is on high the right hand of the mighty Lord doth ever valiantly

I shall not die but live and shine the works of God discovered the Lord of which has died its own but not to death get over O steady open unto me the gifts of righteousness then will I enter into them and I the Lord will bless this is the gift of God by it the trust shall enter in then will I praise for the meaner and has my safety been on the occasion that we've been thinking of here at the end of this chapter

God was showing that it was possible for one animal for an innocent substitute to die for the sin in individual one substitute for one individual but later at the time of the Exodus the Exodus from Egypt God commanded each Jewish family to take a lamb into their house to kill it and to then spread its blood on the doorposts and the lintel this was a sign to the angel of death to pass over from this home because the angel of death was going through and he would slay the firstborn of every home that was not so covered like this the innocent substitute could now die for one family but later on the day of Atonement the high priest would kill an animal and then sprinkle its blood on the mercy seat of the Ark of the Covenant within the holy of holies in the tabernacle on behalf of Israel it is now the innocent substitute on behalf of one nation and at the last the day came when John the Baptist was standing at the Jordan and seen Jesus he pointed him out and said in John 1.29 look the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world one substitute for one individual one substitute for one family one substitute for one nation but now one substitute Jesus Christ for the whole world this is God's covering your fig leaves they're not going to do your works will atone for nothing because there has been no death throw your fig leaves aside and accept the clothing that only God offers only God's perfect provision through the life and death and resurrection of Jesus Christ will do and then the nakedness of your sin will be covered and you will know that loving arm of your heavenly Father around you and telling you that it's okay and we'll be able to sing and we can know these words to be true in our own heart my hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness from here go to the end of that hymn and know these words when he shall come with trumpet sound all may I then and him be found clothed in his righteousness alone faultless to stand before the throne not because of your fig leaves not because of what you have done but because of the blood of Jesus Christ you will be faultless before the throne we read our warrant for coming to the Lord's Supper 1 Corinthians chapter 11 and we read from verse 23 to 26 but I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you and the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread and when he had given thanks he broke it and said this is my body which is for you do this in remembrance of me in the same way also he took the cup after supper saying this cup is the new covenant in my blood do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me for as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup

[42 : 45] you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes let us follow the example of the Lord and pray Lord our God we come confessing our unworthy nets confessing that our efforts are but fig leaves that they will not do that they will not atone for one sin in our lives and yet we come thanking you O gracious God for the provision of salvation that we are able to come and take our place at the large table because we have been washed in the blood of the Lamb O may we be reminded of our own conversion of the change that has taken place in our own lives we who once were not a people were now the people of God and so we are here in this church part of this congregation living in this community and on this island we are God's people, God's representatives the lights of the Gospel and are we shining

O gracious God we thank you for the opportunity to shine because you have brought us out of darkness and into your marvellous light Father we pray that we would reaffirm our trust in you that we would think and be reminded of what you have done for us and may that propel us to stand for you to stand strong in our workplaces and in our homes but we may tell others of the greatest news that Jesus Christ is offering to save them from their sin O go before us in Jesus name we pray, Amen we read that when he had given thanks he took the bread and he broke it and said this is my body which is for you do this in remembrance of me in the same way he also took the cup after supper saying this cup is the new covenant in my blood do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me but as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes we said there were two statements that were made this evening those who love the Lord and those who have said that they will not have this man to rule over their life consider your statement consider your standing on the day of judgement but consider Christ as these men and women profess they love the Lord Jesus Christ because of them and because they have done anything but because Christ has done it all and brothers and sisters as you rise from the table as you go back to your homes and you go to your workplaces and you go into the world where there is much darkness where there is much challenge be encouraged, be strengthened and be a community of believers where you are faithful you are clinging on not to what you can do but to what Christ has done and you can remember the words that we have looked at in His scriptures and you can cling on to the facts that Jesus has paid it all and it is all to Him I owe those sin has left a crimson stain

He washed it He washed it quite a snow Let's conclude by singing together in Psalm 72 in the Scottish shelter and sing the last three verses together His name forever shall endure last like the sun it shall men shall be blessed in Him and blessed all nations shall uncall now blessed be the Lord our God the God of Israel for He alone doth wondrous works and glory that excels and blessed be His glorious name to all eternity the whole earth that is glorified Amen So let it be Let's stand and sing to God's praise His name forever shall endure last like the sun it shall men shall be blessed in Him and blessed all nations shall uncall now blessed be the Lord our God the God of Israel for He alone doth wondrous works and glory that excels and blessed be His glorious name to all eternity the whole earth that is glorified

Amen So let it be Neme, Grace, Mercy and Peace from God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit Rest in Abide in each one of us both now and forevermore Amen