

God's Design And Sin's Corruption

Genesis 2-3

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Well, it's good as always to see you here to worship our Savior together. Several of us are just returning from the Shepherds Conference this past week in Los Angeles. Had a great time there of listening to good teaching and preaching and excited to be back with you and in the word of God together.

Turn with me to Genesis chapter two this morning. Genesis chapter two. I don't know how much you have thought about it in recent days, but I've been thinking on the fact that modern medicine is really astounding.

The things that God has allowed us to do, even in this fallen world, it really is mind boggling. I was struck by that several years ago in a powerful way when my dad had to undergo quadruple bypass surgery. If you think about that, a doctor was able to open up his chest, disconnect his heart from its clogged arteries, then take new arteries from his leg, reattach them to his heart so that fresh blood flow could continue.

It's amazing that a person's able to live through that because of modern medicine and then go on to live a healthy life from there. It's really incredible. But if you think about that, to be successful, a doctor first has to understand and be thoroughly educated in God's design for the heart.

He has to understand how the heart works. And then secondly, a doctor has to study all the things that can go wrong with the human heart so that he's very aware with the different maladies and sicknesses that he may encounter in surgery. And then he has to be trained in how to restore that heart to health so that it can function again in accordance with the design that God has made.

So he has to understand the design, the disease, and the solution if he's going to be an effective surgeon. And when it comes to God's covenant of marriage, the same thing really is true. If we're going to have God glorifying marriages, we must understand God's original design, then the current state of corruption, and then God's glorious and gracious solution.

Two Sundays ago, if you were here with us, then you know we started a series on **Marriage To The Glory of God**. And what we've discovered is that the beginning of a healthy marriage is personal godliness. And personal godliness depends on our understanding of why God made us in the first place.

We discovered together that we literally exist on the planet for the purpose of glorifying God and enjoying him forever. And we started at this macro level, the 30,000 foot view of marriage, and now each week progressively we'll begin to bring that down to the micro level to understand the nitty gritty details of what we need to know to have marriages that bring glory to God in the way that He's designed.

And today, as we take one step in from that large macro view, we need to understand the purpose for which God created marriage itself. We understand that God's glory is the

reason, but how is it that God gets glory through marriage specifically? And what we'll see is that glorifying God means that we agree with and submit to His design for really anything. In this case, marriage. For God to be glorified through marriage, we have to submit to His design for marriage and seek to walk that design out in our daily life.

And so this morning, the theme that we'll be unpacking is simply this. **The enjoyment of marriage requires our understanding of God's design, sin's corruption, and God's solution.** God's design, sin's corruption, and God's solution.

To do that, we're going to go back to the beginning, back to Genesis chapter two and chapter three. And let me just remind you that Genesis, of course, is part of the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible given to Moses after the people exit out of Egypt. And it's important that we understand that Genesis is not a book of poetry. It is a historical narrative. These are real events that occur in the way that God says they occur. That means that we have to take what we read today as history.

In fact, if we don't take it as history, it won't impact us in the way that God intends for it to. Really, our lives are daily impacted by our history in Genesis chapter two and Genesis chapter three.

Now, you know, in Genesis chapter one, we have creation. But in Genesis chapter two, we have a reiteration of the creation account, specifically honing in on the creation of mankind. And that's what we'll be looking at to begin this morning. What we're going to see are three scenes, partially in Genesis chapter two and partially in Genesis chapter three.

And the first scene that I want us to look at is **Scene 1: God's Design For Marriage**. God's design for marriage. Now, we're going to be in large portions of text this morning. We won't be able to dive into all of the details, but I hope that by the time we're done, you'll have a good overview, a good refresher on why marriage matters and how God created marriage to function.

So God's design for marriage. Let's read first of all in Genesis chapter two, beginning in verse four. We'll read all the way down through verse nine:

"4 This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the Lord God made earth and heaven. 5 Now no shrub of the field was yet in the earth, and no plant of the field had yet sprouted, for the Lord God had not sent rain upon the earth, and there was no man to cultivate the ground. 6 But a mist used to rise from the earth and water the whole surface of the ground. 7 Then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being. 8 The Lord God planted a garden toward the east, in Eden; and there He placed the man whom He had formed. 9 Out of the ground the Lord God caused to grow every tree that is pleasing to the sight and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil."

So in verse seven there, we have the record of the creation of the first man, Adam, taken from the dirt, from the ground, and God breathes into his nostrils the breath of life and Adam then, based on that, becomes a living being. He begins to live and breathe.

But in verse nine, God creates, of course, this special garden made just for Adam and eventually Eve, a perfect place for him to live and to carry out God's design for him. There's something else that's placed in the garden and here at the end in verse nine, we're not told the significance of this but of course there are these two trees that are now famous trees, the tree of life on the one hand and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Both of those play a significant role in our history because of the role they play in this narrative. Now down in verse 15, if you skip down to verse 15, we see that God gives Adam a job:

"15 Then the Lord God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it."

This is his role, this is what he's to do. He's placed there with the express purpose of keeping the garden and cultivating the garden. This is really a localized expression of the larger purpose for man that we saw back in Genesis chapter one. We haven't read it today but I trust that you know it's there. Genesis 1:28:

"28 God blessed them; and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.'"

In verses 15 to 17 here in chapter two, God gives Adam the ground rules for life in the garden. If he's going to live in a way that honors the Lord in the garden, it's going to look like this. After giving him the mandate in verse 15 to cultivate and keep it, verse 16:

"16 The Lord God commanded the man, saying, 'From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; 17 but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.'"

Rather than a vast legal code of things that Adam has to keep, He gives him this one simple command. Adam, you can eat from any tree in this garden, they're given to you freely except for this one. Do not eat from this tree, that's it. He has a job to do, he has the capacity to do it, perfect provision, everything that he needs, abundance in the garden, one thing you cannot do, you do not eat from this tree. And the punishment clearly is death. ***"...in the day that you eat from it you will surely die."***

Now in his sinless state, you have to put yourself back in Adam's shoes. I know this is a familiar passage from Sunday school, we've learned it from our earliest days. But understand, put yourself there in Adam's shoes. If you really had perfection, nothing yet has ever died, he doesn't fully comprehend the significance of that statement, but he will. In the day you eat from it, you will surely die.

Now, we ran through that quickly because I want to get to verse 18. In verse 18, something happens that is unique.

"18 Then the Lord God said, 'It is not good..."

Now that should strike you. If you know the account of Genesis, the word "not" here seems out of place. He's just given us repetition after repetition in chapter one, six different times, God says, and it was good. And it was good. The end of chapter one, He says, it was very

good. And now we come to chapter two, verse 18, and God says, it is **not** good. What's not good?

"It is not good for the man to be alone;"

Something remains to be done. When He says it's not good, He's referring to the fact that He's not done. The creation is not complete. It's not as if God created everything and He sees Adam there in the garden doing his role. And He says, you know, just, we need something else, as if He forgot something. No, that's not the intention at all. This was always God's plan. He waits to create Eve on purpose in order to teach us something. He teaches Adam here, it is not good for man to be alone. And then He says, I'm going to solve the problem.

"I will make him a helper suitable for him."

Now, notice a couple of things here. This is all instructive for us. Remember, this is history. He doesn't just say, I'm going to fix the problem. He says, specifically, I will create, first of all, a helper. I'm going to create a helper. She will be one whose role is to come alongside, to help Adam in the fulfillment of the divine role that he's been given from God. Her role will help him flourish and succeed in the cultivation and keeping of the garden, as well as the other mandates given in chapter one.

Kyle and Delitzsch say it this way in their commentary, "of such help the man stood in need in order that he might fulfill his calling, not only to perpetuate and multiply his race, but to cultivate and govern the earth."

So what I want you to see here is from the very beginning all the way back in Genesis chapter two and verse 18, as God highlights the need of the man, He begins to clarify what His designed purpose and role for the man and woman would be. Adam would be the leader of his home. Eve would come and be a helper to him.

This is prior to the fall, prior to the entrance of sin. This is the way that God intended for things to be, and He still does today. Not only would she be a helper, it says, but I'm going to make a helper suitable for him. The word "suitable" means corresponding to. She will have a different role than Adam, that is true, but she will not be inferior to Adam in personhood.

She too will be made in the likeness of God. She too will be an image bearer of God, a perfect counterpart to Adam in every way. No other created being on the planet at this time in Genesis two corresponds to Adam. He is unique as a human being, but here we're told God will fix that problem.

Now in verses 19 and 20, this may be a section of your Bible reading each year as you read through Genesis that's a little bit confusing because it seems out of place. God says it's not good for him to be alone. I'm going to make a helper for him, and then in verse 19, He says: *"¹⁹ Out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the sky, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name."*

So he gives names to all the animals continuing on to verse 20. That seems to be out of place until you come to the end of verse 20 when He says, "...but for Adam there was not found a helper suitable for him."

It's not out of place. God has Adam name the animals here to show him of his need. We have to say Adam in his perfection in this beautiful perfect garden, I'm sure he didn't feel that he was lacking anything. This was news to him that it was not good for him to be alone. So God shows him why it's not good for him to be alone by passing by him every animal that had been created at the time. And he names those animals and realizes none of these correspond to me. None of these fit the bill of a helper suitable for me.

And so God graciously solves the man's need in verse 21:

21 *So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh at that place. 22 The Lord God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man.*

Again, the way that this is written is instructive for us. God's already proven in the creation account that He doesn't need raw materials to make anything. He made the entire world out of nothing. He began with nothing and He made everything. And yet here He chooses to make Eve not from nothing, but from a piece of Adam. It's instructive to us. It's symbolic. Again, He didn't need Adam's flesh to make someone like him. He chose to do it that way. Why?

I think several reasons. One, it illustrates the fact that she will be like you, Adam. She will be an image bearer. She will correspond to you like I told you she would. But also He takes her from his side to make Eve. This is going to be an intimate relationship, side by side, working together for life.

Notice verse 22, God *"brought her to the man."* God brings her, presents her to Adam as if to say, there she is, here's the one. You've just had all these animals pass by you. None of them fit the bill. Here is the one that I've made for you to correspond to you in a perfect way.

It's impossible to know the joy and the wonder that Adam must've felt in that moment. Try to put yourself in his shoes if you can, but we simply can't understand what he must've felt as he beholds Eve for the first time. He must've felt inside, this is good. This is exceedingly good. God's design is, in fact, perfect, a companion made especially for him.

Here we see other things that are instructive for us in the way this is described. God's design for a companion for Adam was very specific. He gives Adam one woman. It's instructive, not multiple women, not another man, but one singular woman made in the image of God, brought to him. That was God's solution to man's need for a companion. And this is God's perfect design for marriage today. One woman with one man, united in a lifelong covenant relationship.

Now immediately we get an insight into Adam's thinking as he beholds Eve for the first time because he begins to speak. And what he says in verse 23 is also instructive:

"23 *The man said, "This is now bone of my bones, And flesh of my flesh;"*

Remember this is in the context that after seeing all the animals, this is bone of my bones, she's like me.

"She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man."

There's a wordplay here, just like in English, notice the word "man" is contained in the word woman. The same thing is true in the Hebrew language. Ish is the word for man, Isha is what he names Eve, the word for woman. He takes his name and he adds a feminine ending. She's like me and yet she's wonderfully different at the same time.

The similarities are striking, they are obvious, they're unique to every other created being and yet our differences compliment one another.

Now in verses 24 and 25, we have these famous words, and what I want you to understand is that when we read verses 24 and 25, what we're reading here is not God speaking to Adam, but Moses the author speaking to us. This is Moses responding to the narrative that's been given to him by God and telling us what we should think about it. Verse 24:

"24 For this reason (that is because of what God did here) a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh. 25 And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed."

Now there are passages in the Scriptures that are merely descriptive, that is they're not meant to be a pattern that we're to follow, they're just a story that we can learn implications from but we're not to pattern our lives after them.

Then there are other things in the Scripture that are prescriptive, they tell us not only is this how it happened, but it's also instructive for how you are to live and that's what we have here. By adding verses 24 and 25, Moses says, because God did it this way, it should forever affect the way it's done. The covenant of marriage, now, for this reason should always be done in accordance with this pattern.

So in the garden, this is why we have this grand display. Otherwise, the creation account could have easily ended after chapter one. We don't need chapter two, unless there's more information.

Chapter two tells us God did it a specific way when He made Adam and Eve, and that's to affect every other covenant of marriage that would follow after it. So, in short, marriage as a permanent human institution between one man and one woman, began in perpetuity on the sixth day of creation and it was good, it was perfect.

Verse 25 gives us a glimpse into that perfection because it says *"the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed."* In their sinless perfection, unmixed with any perversity whatsoever, they didn't even notice that they weren't wearing clothes. There's nothing impure. This is perfect purity.

And here's the takeaway. Marriage is a gift from God and it's good. Marriage is a gift from God and it's good. It's important for us to understand that. In fact, it's glorious, it's precious, it's valuable. And it's important for us because we live in a world that's not a perfect garden. It's not untouched by sin. Every single person in this room has been either directly or indirectly affected by the pain of a broken marriage. We don't live in the garden. We see brokenness around us. We see destruction. We see painful, hard marriages around us, even in our own family, perhaps under your own roof.

And if we're not careful, we can take on a jaded view of marriage. Though we have to discipline ourselves to take on the view of marriage given to us by Moses here, a high view of marriage. Marriage is a gift. It's made by God's design. It's given to mankind by our Creator on purpose for our good. What that means is marriage is worth fighting for.

Christian, your marriage is worth fighting for. It's worth giving your maximum effort to have a godly marriage. Don't fall into the temptation of believing that because you have felt the pain of brokenness in marriage that the institution itself is hopeless. It is not. We'll see that more and more in the coming weeks. It most assuredly is not hopeless.

Now, when we take Genesis one and Genesis two and we mesh them together, we start to see several purposes for which marriage was given to mankind. Three specifically, number one, marriage is given **for the accomplishment of God's mandate to rule over and subdue the earth**. And that's still true today. That was given to mankind uniquely. We are the stewards of the earth. We are to rule over the earth for the glory of God.

Secondly, it's given to man **for the accomplishment of God's mandate to be fruitful and multiply**. In marriage, you're given the oneness, the one flesh union of marriage, and from that come legitimate children that then fulfill God's mandate to fill the earth.

And then finally, **the gift of companionship**. Marriage is given as a gift of companionship, and you know that when you get married. I always do, after I marry a couple, I do a follow-up session with them and counseling at six months after that, sometimes then again a year after that. And without fail, when I say, what's your favorite thing so far about being married? It'll be some description of companionship, living life together. And that's what God made it to be.

Now, as the scriptures are progressively revealed, we'll find there are other purposes for marriage as well. We'll get into those in the weeks to come, but so far, Genesis 1 and 2 reveal these three primary basic purposes for marriage.

Now, if you've been in church any time at all, this is a refresher course for you. You know these passages, perhaps you've taught them in Sunday school. In fact, I read a portion of Genesis 2 in every wedding that I perform.

And that's because in every Christian wedding ceremony, there is this sense in which this marvelous scene is being reenacted in some way. As the bride comes walking down the aisle on her father's arm, and the groom stands there overwhelmed with her beauty as she approaches, there is this inkling, the tiny inkling of feeling inside of what it must have been like when God brought Eve to Adam.

And the music plays, and the crowd stands, and all eyes are trained on that bride as she walks down the aisle. And there's a collective sense, this is good. This is right. This is a gift. It's good to go to weddings with your spouse. It reminds you of the gift sitting next to you. The goodness, the kind intention of God are on display. Everyone has a sense of anticipation.

And the truth is, most if not all Christian young couples stand before their family and friends and take the covenant of marriage, and they do so hoping and believing that they're going to have a Genesis chapter 2 type of union. And in fact, I distinctly remember a feeling of a sense of completion on my wedding day. We did it. We made it across the finish line. Now we're married, and all that's left to do is live happily ever after.

The problem is the Bible doesn't end with Genesis chapter two, does it? It doesn't. It turns out there has only been one couple in human history that's ever had a Genesis 2 marriage. And then they didn't have it very long, unfortunately.

And if we're going to understand why it is that marriage is the way it is today, we have to keep reading. We have to read into chapter three. But I do want to say before we enter into chapter three, you have to keep in mind Genesis chapter two.

Marriage itself is not the problem. It's not the covenant that God gave. It's what sin does to marriage, and that's what we'll see together.

Genesis chapter three, **Scene number two, Sin's Corruption of Marriage**. Another familiar scene from Scripture, Genesis 3 chapter one, down through verse seven:

"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."

Here we're first introduced to God's great enemy, our great enemy, Satan. Unbeknownst to Adam and Eve, there has been this heavenly rebellion in which Satan, along with many other angels, have rebelled against God. They've been cast down out of heaven. Satan could not overthrow God's rule, not even close, and so he seeks to do what he can to thwart God's good design on the earth.

And what Satan does here, what you have to notice, is that he flips God's created order on its head. It's a sinfully masterful approach of deception. Remember, God had designed the union to go this way. Adam was to be the leader, and then Eve came as his helper, and then they too, as mankind, would rule over the rest of creation. That was the order God gave.

And yet, what does Satan do? Satan comes as an animal to Eve, and Eve then to Adam. He completely reverses God's order. Satan, of course, draws Eve's attention to the one thing that God cannot have. This really is a picture of how sin happens to us over and over again. We stand in the abundance of what God has given, and all we can see are the things we

don't have. That's exactly what Satan does. He calls her attention to that one tree she can't eat from in the midst of a lavish garden.

He calls into question the character of God, saying the reason that God has withheld this tree from you is because He doesn't want you to be like Him. That, of course, is blasphemy. He calls God a liar and says, oh, when you eat of this, you will not die. She, of course, gives in to temptation. She rebels against God. She eats from the tree, but unfortunately, she's not alone. Verse six explains that she gave some of the fruit to Adam, who then joined in her rebellion and ate the fruit himself, but there's more.

Notice specifically how this is described to us in verse six. It says, at the end:
"she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate."

Those two words, "with her", are haunting. Just moments ago, we read that God gave the mandate to Adam. Adam was the first to receive the mandate of the rules of the garden before Eve was created, and then Eve is created and also comes under that restriction, but Adam was to be her leader. Adam was to be her protector.

It's not as if Adam was busy, distracted on the other end of the garden and missed out on the conversation. It says he was with her. What it means is he stood idly by, listening to the conversation, watching as his wife takes the fruit and eats of the fruit, and he doesn't say a word.

He neglects his responsibility to lead her well, and mankind is plunged into sin. And what we read, what we know experientially, what we read in Scripture is that their sin was representative, and therefore, it affects every single one of us every single day. Romans 5:12:

"12 Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned"

Adam stood in our place as our representative. He failed to obey, and he plunged the whole human race into sin. And what we have to understand this morning is that the consequences of that are ongoing today. I know you know that, but it's easy to read Genesis chapter three like it's a fairy tale or like it's just a Sunday school story, but this is our history. This is why we are the way we are today. It affects everything that we do every single day, and certainly, it affects the covenant of marriage.

As a result of their sin, you remember, God gives specific punishments to Satan, to Eve, and to Adam in that order, and as He comes to the punishment for Eve specifically, we get a glimpse at how this sin will affect every marriage henceforth, Genesis 3:16:

"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."

The two primary responsibilities that God gave to the woman would both be dramatically impacted and affected by this sin. First of all, it was her role to help Adam to perpetuate the human race, but now as they fulfill that mandate, childbirth will become exceedingly painful, and as we know from history, even life-threatening in certain cases, as many women sadly have passed in the process of giving birth.

But the second mandate that she had to come alongside and be the helper of Adam in stewarding the earth and ruling over the earth is also affected here. The once perfect and loving and harmonious relationship that the two of them were to have together that they had in the garden would now be greatly impacted by sin.

God's already defined the role prior to the fall that the husband would lead and that Eve would be his helper. That's not what changed here. What changed here is these roles would now be strained. They would now be difficult. They'd be a hardship.

Just as with Adam's sin, he was to work before the fall. Work was given as a good gift of God before the fall, but after the fall, work became difficult. In the same way, the roles in marriage were not created as a result of the fall. They're now difficult because of the fall.

Prior to the fall, Eve would have fulfilled her role as a helper to Adam with eagerness, with delight. It would have seemed like the most natural thing in the world, but not now. Now it's difficult. It's hard, even offensive, we might say.

"Yet your desire will be for your husband and he will rule over you", it says. The word "desire" there is a specific Hebrew word. It's used again in chapter four of when Cain is angry and envies his brother and God tells him to be careful because sin's desire is for you, Cain. That is, it pictures sin like a lion coming after you. That's the same idea here. Your desire will be for your husband.

I think that word is multifaceted, but I think it describes this rift now in the relational roles of marriage in which the woman would desire the role of the husband, or if not his role, certainly to use his role to get her way.

Once this role would have been seen as a gift, now it's seen as an obstacle to her happiness, a role to be envied. It will not come naturally. It will not be easy to be Adam's helpmate, both because of his sin and because of hers. It will not be easy to submit to his authority. It won't come natural to her. Selfishness and pride will plague both the man and the woman and those sins will cause conflict between the two and she will be tempted to try and subvert his leadership either by force or by manipulation, but despite her efforts, the text is clear. He will rule over you. She will not succeed. The roles will not ultimately change and in response to her, I believe captured in that phrase, *he will rule over you* is really a summarization of the ways that we've seen sin taint the husband's leadership in human history.

There are two primary ways that the husband will be tempted to fail in his leadership and we see this play out all the time. The first is more of an aggressive sin in which he responds to the wife trying to have her own way by forcibly trying to put her back into a place of submission. This is why we see all across human history and even across the world today, sadly, women treated sinfully as if they're second-class citizens and slaves.

That was never what God meant from the harmonious relationship of a lovingly leading husband and a loving submissive wife and yet on the stage of human history, we've seen

that play out over and over again as women are forcibly put back in that place of submission.

But secondly, the second temptation that we also see play out all the time is to fall into the sin of Adam and to become a passive observer. If she's going to make it difficult for me to lead, if she's going to constantly be questioning me and pushing me, then fine, you just do it. And I'll just sit back even to the point of not speaking up when the husband knows she's making a decision that would be in rebellion against God as Adam did. Adam was not deceived. Adam knew this was wrong and he said nothing.

This is why God says to Adam, when it comes to Adam's punishment in Genesis 3, he says *"Because you have listened to the voice of your wife,"* He's not saying it's wrong to listen to the voice of your wife. In fact, man, it's one of the wisest things you can do. He's saying you listened to the voice of your wife to lead you into sin when you knew full well it was sinful.

So the once harmonious marital relationship in which a woman delighted in her design and the man delighted in his design and they lived out the marriage that God intended is now turned into an internal power struggle in which conflict will ensue. And my point is to remind all of us, even as Christians, that we have marriages affected by Genesis chapter three. We still live in a fallen world. And I say that not for your despair, Christian, but for your encouragement. Because some of you think your marriage is doomed in ways that everyone else's is not.

You come to church and you look around and you say, wow, they look so happy together. Look at how she's so gentle and submissive to his leadership and look at how he adores her and he loves her so sacrificially with such kindness. And then you get on social media and that only throws gasoline onto the flame. There they are with their smiling faces and perfect pictures and well-behaved, happy children all around them. Even their dog seems to be patiently smiling next to them.

And then you think about the argument that you and your spouse had on the way to church and you say, you know, I guess we're just different. We just must not have what it takes. Maybe I married the wrong person. But the truth is every marriage in this room right now and across the world is affected by the consequences of Genesis three, every marriage.

Now hear me, a happy, healthy, godly marriage is possible but it will always require the grace of God and intentional effort towards personal sanctification. Always, that's the recipe in a nutshell. The grace of God and intentional effort towards sanctification.

The couple that you look at in the church as the model couple may indeed have a great marriage. I pray that they do. But if they do, it's because of God's grace and it's because of consistent day in, day out, intentional effort. That is the recipe.

And even that happy couple, that model exemplary couple will be able to tell you of painful moments in their marriage, of difficulties they've had to struggle through, of times they've had to ask for forgiveness and extend forgiveness, times when they've failed miserably in their role. This is marriage in a fallen world.

Understand that no matter how hard you work at your marriage you will never have a Genesis two marriage. And I fear that sometimes we have an idealistic view of what marriage should be. Maybe it's a view based on Genesis two before the fall, maybe it's a view comes from Hollywood, maybe it's just something you've created in your own mind, but you have this image of what marriage should be and you're striving towards it and in every area of your marriage where it doesn't line up, you're tempted to be discontent, depressed, bitter and angry.

But the lesson of Genesis three is that none of us should be surprised when we have to work through difficulties in marriage. It should not be shocking. This is the norm. This is what it's like in life in a fallen world. You should not be surprised when your flesh doesn't want to do what God says you should do. When you don't want to be the kind of wife God says you should be and you don't want to be the kind of husband God says you should be. That's par for the course. All of us have to walk in spite of that by God's grace with all of our effort to honor the Lord.

Sin is the problem. Sin is the problem in you. Sin is the problem in your spouse. Sin is the problem in marriage. But listen to me, there is hope. There's such hope for your marriage. So much hope. Even in this fallen world that's been devastated by the effects of sin, there is hope and the hope comes to us just quickly with a third scene that we're just going to touch on from Genesis three, **Scene Number Three, God's Remedy For Sin.**

This is God's remedy for sin. And this is so gracious of God. Before God even gives the final consequences of sin to Eve and to Adam, we have this promise in Genesis 3:15. Let's read beginning in verse 14:

***"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 (that is strife, conflict, war) 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."*

Now that verse, that is a crucial verse, underline it, circle it, highlight it, whatever you do to remember things, do it to that verse. This is the first presentation of the hope of a redeemer. This is the gospel in seed form. Right here, after the first sin, still in the garden, God says, He's going to put enmity between the seed of the woman and Satan.

What's He talking about? Well, notice He says, He uses here a masculine singular pronoun. He shall bruise you on the head and you shall bruise him, one singular Son. This is not to say that all of Eve's seed will fulfill this promise. It means one specific man from her offspring will fulfill this prophecy.

And what will he do? It says that He will bruise you, Satan, on the head, you will bruise Him on the heel. This is an explanation of the coming redeemer, that God has a plan. He's always had a plan. He had this plan before he created the world, that through the seed of the woman would come one who would crush the head of the serpent. Yes, He would be bitten on the heel, but He would give a death blow, a conquering blow to the enemy.

This is the first hint at the gospel message in Scripture. We know from the rest of Scripture how this would go on to be played out. We know who that singular masculine pronoun he refers to. This is the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, who would be born of a virgin, but born of a woman, who would conquer Satan, who would be our new representative.

Later, go read Romans chapter five, as it describes how Adam was our representative in the garden and he sinned, and so sin came to us, but Christ now is our representative and His righteousness is given to those who are in Him. Christ became the seed of the woman. He crushed the head of the serpent on the cross. He took on himself the wrath of God, the punishment for sin, and He rose from the grave.

This is the hope for you. This is the hope for your marriage. If you will repent of your sins and put your faith in Jesus Christ, you will be redeemed and made new. You'll be given a new nature on the inside that now desires God, that now desires to walk in accordance with His word, that loves Him, and you'll have the ability by God's grace in growing measure to walk in obedience to Christ.

And as you do that by His grace, your marriage will begin to reflect more and more and more what God designed it to be. What we have to understand this morning is that we can't have a Genesis 2 marriage, that's done. We do have marriages affected by Genesis 3, that's unavoidable. But in Christ, we can have marriages that reflect Ephesians chapter five, marriages that are reflective of our relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. And it's to Ephesians five that we will go next week.

But what I want you to take away this morning, two things just quickly. Number one, let me encourage you to **Take Heart**, take heart. If you're here and you're discouraged in your marriage this morning, understand there is hope for you and your marriage or some other marriage in your life that you're discouraged about. There's hope for that marriage too in Christ, in Christ alone. Don't put your hope in your spouse. Don't put your hope in yourself. Put your hope in Christ. Turn to Christ for salvation if you've never turned to Him for salvation. And if you're in Christ, keep turning and looking at Christ as Hebrews has told us that you might be conformed to His image, but take heart this morning.

And secondly, **Be Intentional**, be intentional. If you're here this morning and you've been married for six months or 60 years, your marriage will only be a healthy, godly marriage by the grace of God and by your intentional daily effort towards sanctification. Again, that is the recipe. I'm calling all of us who are married this morning to recommit ourselves to that, to dependency on the grace of God and striving after Christlikeness with all of our might.

Put in the hard work. What is the hard work of marriage? We're going to get to this in a specific detail, but just quickly put in the hard work of forgiveness. Forgive your spouse, the hard work of confessing your sin, not whitewashing your sin and not blaming it on her or him or someone else, but just confessing and owning your sin, asking forgiveness and then extend that forgiveness.

Do the hard work of being patient with your spouse. Don't wait until your marriage crosses the finish line, so to speak, in your mind of what is a happy, healthy marriage, but start showing patience to your spouse today as they are, even in their brokenness and their

fallenness. Cultivate a warm, loving companionship with your spouse. Do the hard work, whatever it takes.

And if you find yourself in a place this morning where your marriage just needs some outside help, some outside encouragement, we're here. Our church is here. Our elders, our staff are here. Reach out to us, contact to us, catch us in the hall. We'd love to come alongside and to help you with the Scriptures to walk in the way that God has called us to walk.

Now, in the weeks to come, each week moving forward, we will get into more and more specifics of exactly how to walk, but today I want to encourage all of us to commit to one primary commitment.

If you're married today, I want to ask you to commit to this. It's really two things in one, but will you choose to believe that marriage is a good gift of God, first of all? Regardless of what you've seen modeled or what's happened even to date in your own marriage, will you choose to believe that marriage is a good gift of God? And then secondly, because it's a good gift, will you believe it's worthy of your effort? It's worthy of your effort to see your marriage become the kind of marriage God has given to us.

And if you're single this morning, you're not married at this time, I want to encourage you to avoid two temptations as you look at marriage and look at the marriages of those around you. Number one, I want you to avoid the temptation of adopting an idealistic view of marriage, sort of this fairytale idea of what marriage will be like. But secondly, I want to encourage you to avoid the temptation of adopting a cynical view of marriage, of looking at only the worst images of what marriage is like. Instead, what we need is a biblical understanding of marriage understanding that marriage is good. It is affected by sin. We should expect that. But God has a plan in Christ and it can be a marriage that reflects our Savior.

Let's go to Him in prayer and ask for that now. Lord God, we come before You grateful for Christ, for what He's accomplished for us, for what He's accomplishing in us, for those of us in Christ this morning.

And God, I pray this morning for every marriage in this room, including my own, that You would help us, Lord, to have marriages that reflect the gospel of Christ. None of us will have perfect, spotless marriages because we're not perfect, spotless people. But God, help us to, by Your grace, in increasing measure, give effort towards godliness and sanctification. Cause that then to bear much fruit for Your glory. We ask it in the name of Christ. Amen.