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## FALL: GOD JUDGES

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### Part 1 of Doctrine

Pastor Mark Driscoll | April 27, 2008

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All right, lecture number five, “Fall: God Judges.” Thus far have looked at who God is, Trinity. We’ve looked at how God speaks, revelation. We’ve looked at what God does, creation. We’ve looked at how God has particularly imbued us with dignity, value, and worth as his image bearers, and now we’ll look at the human response. God’s been so gracious and so good this far in the storyline of the Bible and now we look at our response, which we call the fall.

This comes from Genesis 3, and the story there is tragic, that Satan, the serpent, the dragon—Revelation 12:9 and 20:2 say that this serpent who showed up in Genesis 3 is, in fact, Satan—that Satan arrives on the scene. In Ancient Near Eastern and Babylonian literature, the serpent was symbolic of chaos. I do believe there was a literal serpent, but he most assuredly brought chaos.

Let me tell you about who he is. Satan was a created being, an angel. He’s not equal to God. He’s not all knowing, all powerful, all present, sovereign, eternal. He’s not a physical being, so don’t think of horns and hoofs and fangs and a tail. He’s a spirit being, an angel, who in heaven—Ezekiel and Isaiah say—became proud in his heart, became arrogant. Rather than honoring God, he wanted to be God. Rather than obeying God, he wanted to be his own God and in so doing, he started a rebellion. The Bible says that with him there was a third of the heavenly hosts, that a third of the angels participated in this rebellion, that Satan was originally an angel, and through sin and defeat, he was cast out of heaven. With him came a third of the angels, we now call them demons. The result is that the spirit world is not all good. When some people say spirituality, what they really mean is demonism.

He shows up in Genesis 3, and he has a conversation with our first mother, Eve, while our first father, Adam, sits idly by, and he misquotes and maligns and misrepresents God’s word. “Did God really say that you cannot eat of any tree that is in the garden?” No, God said they could eat of any tree but one. Eve then adds to God’s Word, and says, “Well, God did say we could not eat of it, and we could not touch it.” God didn’t say that. So Satan twists God’s Word.

See, in places like Hebrews and Ephesians, God’s Word is called a sword. Well, Satan shows up and tries to take God’s sword and use it to kill Adam and Eve. Eve doesn’t handle the sword well. Paul says twice in the New Testament she was deceived. And what she chose to do was sin against God by partaking of that which God forbid, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Adam was there with her as a coward, passively saying and doing nothing. Eve handed some to him, he partook. They both sinned against God. This is cosmic treason, this is rebellion, this is evil. That’s how we responded to God: sin. Sin.

Now, without Genesis 3, your life makes no sense at all, and the earth as we know it makes no sense at all. Something has gone terribly wrong and everyone knows it. But it doesn’t matter how many wars we fight, how much blood is shed, how many dollars are spent, how many elections are held or how many organizations are initiated, sin, death, injustice, tyranny, evil, oppression, judgment, bloodshed, and weeping continue unabated. Why? It’s because of the Fall, that we sinned against God.

And it wasn’t this way in the beginning. In Genesis 1:31 when God was done with all of his creation, it said that it was, quote, “Very good.” There was no sin, no evil, no sickness, no tyranny, no oppression, no lies, no death. We did that by participating with Satan rather than imaging God. We see this today: the effects of sin and death, suffering and justice, injustice, boredom, annoyances, miseries, fears, illness, pain, sorrow, grief, despair, nuisances, and tragedies. The Bible uses a large constellation of imagery and language to explain sin. It is rebellion, folly, self-abuse, madness, treason, death, hatred, spiritual adultery or whoring, missing the mark, wandering from the path, idolatry, insanity, irrationality, pride, selfishness, blindness, deafness, a hard heart, a stiff neck, delusion, unreasonableness, and self-worship.

I need to explain sin for you. It’s been a problem since Genesis 3. First of all, sin includes omission and commission. Commission is where you do what you’re not supposed to do. That’s what Eve did when she partook of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Sin of omission is where you don’t do what you’re supposed to do. That’s what Adam did by not lovingly leading his family, protecting his wife, and rebuking their enemy. Sin is omission and commission.

Sin is also your thoughts. God knows your thoughts. Your thoughts count. That’s why Jesus says in Matthew 5 if you commit lust in your heart, it’s adultery. It’s your words. The Bible says we’ll be judged for every word we speak. It’s your deeds, what you do and it’s also your motives, why you do what you do. If you’re trying to be nice to manipulate someone to use them, that’s a sin even though it looks like you’re being nice.

Number three, sin is godlessness. It’s ignoring God. It’s living as if God were not God and you were God.

It’s founding your life on anyone or anything other than God, the great Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard rightly describes. It is idolatry, this is loving something or someone more than God. It’s founding your life and pursuing your joy in someone or something other than God. This can mean that your spouse or your kids, your job or money or fame or power or pleasure becomes more important to you than God.

It is not just crimes. Number five, it’s not always illegal to sin. Like if you commit adultery, you won’t get arrested, but it’s a sin. So sin and crime sometimes are distinguished.

Number six, it is the breaking of the law. First John says that it is the breaking of law, sin is. This includes the breaking of your conscience, of parental authority if you're a child, of pastoral authority if you're a church member, of governmental authority if you're a citizen. It includes the breaking ultimately, however, of God's laws. It's living as if you were a law unto yourself.

Number seven, it is perversion, which is taking a good thing and using it for evil. God made love and relationship. If you're single and dating, you start living and sleeping together, you're taking something good and you're perverting it.

It's also founding your identity on someone or something other than God. See, our image is to be marked by the fact that we're created by God. Sin oftentimes comes down to trying to declare and create for ourselves an identity. What gives me dignity? Value? Worth? Significance? Glory? My success? My beauty? My achievements? My possessions? What the Bible calls boasting in what I have and do. That's the ultimate underlying issue of sin, we're imaging, mirroring Satan, someone else, our fallen hearts, our worldly culture. We're mirroring, imaging, reflecting. We're living in light of someone or something other than God.

We are sinners, importantly, not just by choice. We choose to sin and we do. "All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." We're also sinners by nature. People don't believe this. You'll hear people say, "Oh, they have a good heart." I was talking to a friend of mine recently. His house was burglarized by a woman. She would show up at the house, have her kids play outside so that all the neighbors would assume there was a play date, while she broke into the home and stole everything. She did this from lots of families, ripped them off, had her little children as part of the thievery. Finally got arrested, was on trial. My friend had to go and testify, and all of her friends and family got up and said, "She's a good person. She has a really good heart," which is a lie.

"Out of the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks." Proverbs 4:23, "Guard your heart, it's the wellspring of life." Whatever you say, whatever you think, whatever you do, it comes out of your heart, the seat, center, sum, total, essence of who you are. You can't say, "I say, do, think bad things, but they come from a really great place." It's like saying, "I get dirty water from the fresh well." Well, if it's a fresh well, it will have fresh water.

Theologically, we call this Pelagianism. There's a man named Pelagius who basically said, "We're born as blank slates. We're all like Adam and Eve. We're just made neutral." The Bible says, no, we're born of corruptible seed. We're sinners by nature. Because Adam was our father and head and representative, we inherited from him a sin nature. Romans 5:12-21 says that all of humanity can be broken down into two categories: those who have a sin nature by their birth under Adam and those who have a new nature by their new birth under Jesus Christ. There are no good people with a good heart.

I mean, I heard this recently dealing with a guy who committed adultery on his wife. He looked at his wife and said, "Deep down I'm really a good person." No, you're not, and you just proved it by lying. Suppressing the truth because of the unrighteousness of your deeds, Romans 1. Suppressing the truth that you're a sinner by nature and a sinner by choice.

I'll give you some verses on this. Psalm 51:5, "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." Psalm 58:3, "The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray from birth, speaking lies." In your mother's womb, you have a sin nature. That's why Ephesians 2:3 says we are, quote, "By nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind." By nature, children of wrath, born of corruptible seed, the Bible says. There is a fundamental problem deep down in the essence of who we are.

You can't just try harder to be better. I had a guy recently say, "I just need to pull myself up by my bootstraps." You don't have any bootstraps. That's the point, that you can't take the old nature and live a new life. You need a nature to live a new life. That's the big idea. All other religions will tell you how to get the old nature to live a new life. Christianity says the old nature needs to die with Christ and the new nature needs to come by the power of the Holy Spirit. So people sin because we're sinners by nature and choice.

And how does God deal with the first sin? It's amazing. How would you respond? That's the question. If you made the earth, if you created the man and the woman, if you brought them together for love and marriage, if you set up the Garden of Eden as the perfect home, if you spoke to them graciously, if you walked with them in the garden in the cool of the day, if you bestowed on them your image and likeness, if you let them do anything they wanted, save one thing and they did it, what would you do?

Here's what God does in Genesis 3: he pursues them. He actually comes for them. This is the essence of what we call Reformed theology. God pursues us. No one is seeking God. Adam and Eve weren't wandering around the garden, "Where is God? God, where have you gone?" God's not lost, they are. They don't need to go looking for God; he comes looking for them. Our God is a God who pursues his enemies to make them his friends.

He comes looking for them. He speaks to them. "Adam, where are you?" Adam's responsible as the man. He speaks to them. He judges their sin. "Eve, this is your sin, here are the consequences. Adam, here's your sin, the consequences. Eve, you're gonna want to rule over your husband like sin rules over Cain." The language in Genesis 3 for Eve is the same as the language for Cain in Genesis 4. "Adam, your job's gonna get real hard now, thorns and thistles. Satan, because you did this, Jesus is coming. You will strike his heel. He will crush your head. He's gonna destroy you for this, and he's gonna save sinners."

God teaches them, God covers them, clothes them. He covers their nakedness and their shame in love, and he sends them away, he casts them away from the tree of life. He kicks them out of the garden. Why? Had they partaken of the tree of life as sinners, they would have lived forever in sin. God in his grace is going to allow them to die, which is the penalty for sin. He's going to resurrect them later under the grace of Jesus so that they can live forever as his perfect image bearers as he intended for them to do. This is how God responds to sin.

Now you think about this: cosmic treason. God pursues, speaks, loves, covers, teaches. Even though he deals with the sin, he does so in a way that is incredibly gracious and kind. And he promises, Genesis 3:15, that Jesus is coming to undo all that has been done through sin. That's how God deals with sin. We call this the doctrine of total depravity, that all of who we are is now marred, stained, tainted by sin. Your thoughts, your words, your deeds, your motives, your body, creation, it's all implicated; that sin is pervasive. There is no part of us or part of creation that is not touched by sin.

This doesn't mean utter depravity. We're not animals. We don't lose the image and likeness of God. Again, Genesis 5, Genesis 9, James 3, following sin, fall, the curse, all say that we still retain the image and likeness of God but it is bent, it is marred, it is broken. To use Calvin's analogy from Colossians 3, the mirror is thrown on the ground, that it is shattered, and now we are sinners and we are broken and we do not image God as we ought, but we're still his image bearers nonetheless. What we need is salvation. We need God to put us back together, and he will do that through Jesus.

So how should we deal with sin? Two things, when we sin, we should repent. "God, I've done, said, thought evil." We should repent to others. "I'm sorry for what I've done." Secondly, when we see others sin, we should confront it. We shouldn't excuse it. "Oh, that's okay. That's their personality. Their dad didn't hug them. They've had a rough life. It was a stressful week so therefore they get to hit their kids." We don't excuse it. We don't blame them. That's what Eve did, "Oh the devil made me do it." We don't blame anyone or anything. We give people the dignity of holding them responsible for their own sins and transgressions. We do this because we're not animals, we're people bestowed by God with dignity, value, and worth as his image bearers, and when we sin against him, it is good to hold us accountable because it retains our dignity and it allows us to repent and to change by the grace of God through the cross of Jesus, and that's how God deals with sin.

*Note: This transcript has been edited for readability.*