

### ***Last time we looked at the fall of mankind with the sin of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.***

- ◆ We have talked about how both “love” and “faith” are qualities God will not compromise with in regard to developing a holy people in His image even if it means tolerating evil for a time.
- ◆ We finished last time with Adam and Eve being banished from the Garden of Eden so they couldn't eat of the tree of life after they had sinned.

### ***This again raises the subject of evil.***

- ◆ Evil is a very difficult subject as it goes back to the question, “How can God, if He is holy and righteous, could He create something capable of evil when evil is precisely what God is not?”
- ◆ This question of evil presents theologians with a dilemma and they react in different ways to the question.
- ◆ Some are loathe to broach the subject clasping their hands over their mouths; liberal theologians want to speak about a figurative devil, while others simply start by accepting the reality of evil without any explanation, e.g. Satan in the Garden of Eden, but won't speculate as to how he got there.
- ◆ Jesus, of course, had no doubts about the existence of the devil. We have his own personal account of His temptation at the hands of the devil in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1-11); his accusations against the Pharisees being the children of the devil (John 8:44); and His rebuke of Satan when Peter suggested a way other than the cross (Matthew 16:23).
- ◆ According to Jesus, the evil that was unleashed at the beginning of history will be there until the end of history before it is finally removed.
- ◆ As much as each new generation hopes, history is not the story of gradual human progress where there is less evil and more good.
- ◆ Instead history is littered with and recorded in history books as the progression of the power of evil that threatens the destruction of human civilization.
- ◆ But when we take a realistic look at the world and see this endless procession of evil, the question has to be asked, “Why, if God is all-powerful, doesn't He do something about it, and what is the source of this endless parade of wickedness?”
- ◆ As discussed earlier, we have addressed the first part of that question, as to why an all-powerful God does not do something about the evil in the world?
- ◆ For a holy and righteous God to allow evil to exist, there must be something more important to His purpose besides the elimination of evil.
- ◆ We saw that this something was God's wish is to share His triune love and existence with humanity
- ◆ Love by its very nature involves choice. God will do all He can to *persuade* His creation to respond to His love, but He will not *compel* them.
- ◆ Compelling by force is not an attribute of love and therefore is not a godly characteristic.
- ◆ If the free agent willingly chooses to say “no” to God and His love, the path to God's goal becomes more torturous for both the free agents and for God, but that doesn't mean God abandons His plan.

### ***With that background we now need to go back to the two trees in the Garden and again address the second question on evil, and that is, what is its source?***

- ◆ The source of evil can be traced to three sources.
- ◆ So far we have only spoken about moral evil, an evil that is caused by intentional human will, the inhumane suffering we see imposed on our fellow humans every night on the evening news by other humans.
- ◆ In the last session, we were introduced to the corresponding opposing supernatural will operating temporarily in the Garden, Satan the Devil.
- ◆ His evil too is moral evil as it is caused by intentional will.
- ◆ Now in addition to this evil adversarial spirit, we now have two humans who also have the capacity for evil.
- ◆ And in the same way we saw how the serpent was able to influence Adam and Eve temporarily in the garden, now they had to live in that part of the world dominated and ruled by this supernatural adversary.
- ◆ We will learn more about this later but, it would seem when Satan was cast out of heaven to this earth following his rebellion, he either reassumed a position of authority he had previously been given by God in preparation for the creation of man, or in a further affront to God he usurped it illegally.
- ◆ Either way, during the temptation of Jesus, when Satan claimed he could give Jesus all the authority and splendour of the kingdoms of this world, Jesus did not dispute this claim (Luke 4:5-6).
- ◆ Also the apostle Paul refers to Satan as ***the ruler of the kingdom of the air.***

- ◆ ***Ephesians 2:1-3 As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, 2 in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. 3 All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath.***
- ◆ Paul gives us a very clear indication of the source of evil in the world (2 Corinthians 4:4).
- ◆ Satan is identified as the source behind the dark forces of evil that prey on and appeal to the now dehumanised self-will of humanity.
- ◆ We saw how the serpent sowed the seeds of distrust in the freewill of Eve in the Garden that eventually led to her's and Adam's sin.
- ◆ And if we understand the scenario in the garden correctly, we would have to conclude Adam and Eve were created with a susceptibility to temptation.
- ◆ As we read in Genesis 3:6, Eve was tempted by the ***lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (1 John 2:16).***
- ◆ But now because of their distrust and sinfulness that effectively cut them off from their Creator, even their freewill is compromised and they fell into a condition that scripture describes as being "slaves to sin".
- ◆ ***Romans 6:16 Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one you obey—whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness?***
- ◆ To now argue humans still possess the freewill capacity to choose between good and evil is experientially unrealistic and unbiblical.
- ◆ Our own experience tells us that even Christians struggle to be the faithful, loving, trusting children of God we should be.
- ◆ Like the overweigh Christian who decided to stop going to the donut shop on his drive to work each morning in order to lose weight.
- ◆ A week into his diet, he prayed to God that if a parking space was available in front of the shop, it was God's sign he should stop and have his favourite bear claw.
- ◆ Sure enough, the third time around the block, a parking space became available!
- ◆ Christians too find ourselves driven by all sorts of fears, anxieties, suspicions, hostilities and rebellion, all of which play into the hands of our own self-interest and make us susceptible to the schemes of the devil.
- ◆ But before we raise the objection, "the devil made me do it," we need to recognise we humans too are complicit in the act of sin.
- ◆ The devil may have planted the seeds of doubt in Eve's mind, but it was the human decision that initiated the act.
- ◆ The devil may influence in much the same way other people can influence our behaviour to some extent, but it does not take away the responsibility for the one most directly involved in the decision.
- ◆ That is why Adam and Eve were held accountable for their sin despite the fact the devil was complicit in the decision (Genesis 3:13-15).
- ◆ So we can't claim the "devil made me do it" any more than we can claim, "the television made me do it," nor the scriptwriters, nor the producers of the show although they may bear some moral responsibility.
- ◆ The seductive messages of the serpent and the inquisitive nature of Eve combined to generate evil desires in the human heart.
- ◆ ***Genesis 3:6 When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it.***
- ◆ So humanity does not escape condemnation as it too plays its part in the sordid affair of sin, as we are the ones who ultimately submit to the base desires of our selfish nature.
- ◆ And the more we submit to these base desires, the more difficult it becomes to shake these bad habits.
- ◆ Our choices become our habits, and eventually these habits determine our character.
- ◆ In this sorry state, our choices now choose us and we become addicted to those sinful habits.
- ◆ This also explains why God, in certain situations, chooses to use the wicked characteristics already developed in some human or spiritual instruments to further His divine plan.

- ◆ God used the already hardened heart of Pharaoh to eventually free His people from Egypt (Exodus 7:1-4, 9:34-35), and the already treacherous heart of Judas to betray Jesus (John 13:21-27).
- ◆ The base cravings of our thoughts, attitudes and desires of our hearts exert such a powerful influence on us that they overrule our freedom and determine how we choose (Romans 7:17-20).
- ◆ Paul sums up the hopeless condition humanity found itself in cut off from their Creator and Father.
- ◆ ***Romans 1:21-22 For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.<sup>22</sup> Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools.***
- ◆ Adam and Eve by taking of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil opened up Pandora's Box and released on humanity a terrible brew of knowledge mixed with both good and bad options without the God-given capacity to comprehend the difference.
- ◆ This would be humanity's natural inclination and would remain this way until God provides us with the means to throw off the bondage of sin and instead become slaves to righteousness.

***The source of wickedness we experience in the world today then, can be traced back to the rebellion of these two sets of created beings, one supernatural, the powerful adversary, Satan the devil, the second, creatures of this earth, represented by Adam and Eve.***

- ◆ Both parties wilfully rejected the overtures of their Creator's love and provision, exercised their creaturely freewill and introduced evil into the cosmos.
- ◆ These are the two sources of moral evil at play in the cosmos, a rebellious devil bent on destroying God's good purpose, and a fallen humanity with a now darkened, futile and foolish heart.
- ◆ Instead of a beautiful tapestry of morally responsible free agents interlocking with other free agents to create paradise living with their God, we now have free agents with darkened, futile and foolish hearts with the destructive potential to wreak havoc on each other and God's good earth.

***If these two terrible evils weren't dire enough to contend with, there is another frightful evil waiting for them outside the security of the garden – "natural" evil.***

- ◆ We saw how the two trees were used to present Adam and Eve with the possibility of choice so as to test their faith in God's providence.
- ◆ But there was another important aspect to these two special trees and that was, their choice would determine where they would live.
- ◆ If they chose the tree of life, they would have remained in the garden under God's care and protection, safe from both moral and natural evil.
- ◆ But now as they were being marched from the garden, they discovered they would live in a totally different landscape to the one they enjoyed in the garden.
- ◆ In keeping with their decision to determine for themselves what was good and what was evil, this new landscape would provide them with that ominous prospect.
- ◆ Dark forces in opposition to God ruled this landscape.
- ◆ And instead of having the comfort and security of faithfully relying on their Creator and Father, they would now have to rely on their own wits for survival.