

The Fall

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[0 : 00] Great. Let me pray for us as we start. Let me pray. Father, we want to ask for your help now as we come and look at your word together. We are conscious that it is the end of a busy Sunday. And yet, Lord, these are important truths. We don't want to rush over these. And we want to give them our due care and attention.

But we also recognize that we are sinful people and we need your help. And so we pray that you might bless us and be at work in us by your spirit. In Jesus name. Amen.

Now, on Sunday evenings, we've been working our way through the Baptist confession of 1689 and looking at how it answers some of the questions that we have today.

We have not worked our way all the way through it, but we have covered quite a lot of ground. In fact, we have covered so much ground in the 1689 Baptist confession that I got a phone call from the Baptist.

So the Grace Baptist publications people asking how it was going, which I said it was brilliant. I'll ask them to ring you guys next time and you can tell you can tell them the truth.

[1 : 13] But anyway, there you go. You might remember way back in March that we discussed free will and what the 1689 boys had to say about that. And in tonight's session, we're going to cover a little bit about that again.

But chapter six, which is where we're up to the next chapter, is all about the fall of humanity, sin and its punishment. And so that's where we're going to spend our time this evening. But before we dive in in detail, I want you to ask the person sat next to you the answer to this question.

What do people think is wrong with the world? Now, I'm not asking for you to ask the person next to you what they think is wrong with the world. I'm asking you to think, you know, the imaginary person on the bus or the person that you bump into in the street, you say, what do you think is wrong with the world?

There's obviously something wrong with the world. Not everything is perfect. But what do you think is wrong with the world? What do you think are the answers that they are going to give you to that question of what is wrong with the world? Have a little go at that. See what you come up with just for a minute or so.

OK, let's just feed back some of those answers. What do people think? What would people say is wrong with the world? Billionaires. The problem is the rich.

[2 : 33] Wow. Well, we all feel exonerated. Yeah, that's right. Anything else? OK, yeah. So they might blame a certain group of people.

Anything but myself. Yeah, yeah. Yeah, yeah. They blame a group of people or a nation or a political policy or something like that.

Yeah. Yes. Migration. Yeah. Yes. An absence of love. People are very unloving and kindness.

Yeah. Poverty. Maybe lack of education. Lack of job opportunities. Eating the wrong food.

Climate change. Climate change. You see, there's a whole list of things. Robert Strivens, in his book on the Baptist Confession of Faith, gives you six things that the Baptist Confession says are wrong as a result of the fall of humanity.

[3 : 34] And we're going to work through a sort of adapted list of those because I've changed the wording of them slightly. So let me take you through. The first thing that the Baptist Confession will tell you is wrong with the world is that this is no longer Eden.

Now, in a sense, that is obvious, right? We don't live in the Garden of Eden. This is not paradise. But that's not really what the confession means. It means that you and I no longer live with the privileges of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.

In other words, they were in a unique position. They fell from a unique position. And in them, all of humanity were exiled from Eden and lost its privileges.

Chapter six, paragraph one starts like this. God created man upright and perfect. He gave them a righteous law that would have led to life if they had kept it, but threatened death if they broke it. Yet they did not remain for long in this position of honor. Paragraph two carries on. By this sin, our first parents fell from their original righteousness and communion with God.

[4 : 39] We fell in them and through this death came upon all. All became dead in sin and completely defiled in all the capabilities and parts of soul and body.

Now, really, they are just quoting, aren't they? Romans 5, 1 Corinthians 15. Adam in the Garden has all of humanity on his shoulders.

Humanity, if you like, is on probation in the Garden with Adam. He is there with a privilege that we no longer have. He is there with a relationship with God that we don't have by nature.

Adam was righteous in a way that we are not. He was without sin and was in a relationship with God with whom he walked and talked. And he has a freedom that you and I don't have, right?

So he has a freedom to choose sin or righteousness. Whereas now we sin by nature. And we'll talk more about that in a moment. But Adam didn't have to.

[5 : 38] Two futures lay before Adam. And he sinned and all is lost. And humanity is excluded from the Garden. Righteousness and communion with God fell with them.

We lost the privileges of Eden. Now, this is significant, isn't it? And really important. It means that every single human being is in trouble from day one.

Regardless of who they are, where they were born or what they are like. And that trouble is not just of our own making. It is our inheritance. We are not, says the Bible, we're not blank sheets of paper. Everybody born is not born as a new Adam or a new Eve. Our relationship to sin is not the same as Adam and Eve in the Garden. Our privileges are not the same. We are counted in a lost humanity, having fallen from Eden.

So we've lost the privileges of Eden. That's the first thing. The second thing that the confession points out is that we die. Again, that is in paragraph two. Death came upon all.

[6 : 44] But the point is not just that Adam and Eve died physically in the way that we also will one day die physically. Rather, the point is that spiritually they died to God and we are born dead to God.

So paragraph two again. All became dead in sin and completely defiled in all the capabilities and parts of soul and body. It's just exactly what God promised would happen.

Genesis 2.17. But you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil for when you eat from it, you will certainly die. Separated from the God of life.

And so you will die spiritually and inevitably also die physically. Paul picks up the idea in Ephesians 2. As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins in which you used to live when you followed the ways of the world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.

We are dead in sin, says Paul. Just like Adam and Eve died in the garden, so we too are born dead in sin.

[7 : 58] That's why Jesus says to Nicodemus that he must be born again because by nature he is dead in his sin. The problem with all humanity stemming back from the fall is that we're born dead to God.

Now that doesn't mean, does it, that everyone is as bad as they could be. That is not what the point is. It means that we are incapable of responding to God on our own.

We do not hear the call of God to follow him. We are completely unresponsive on our own. It doesn't mean that we don't ever have any thought of the divine. And it doesn't mean that we are incapable of doing anything that is morally good.

But the point is that we are unable to follow the Lord. There is nothing that we can do. We're no longer capable of the righteousness of pre-fall Adam. And so it's right, isn't it, that we understand that everybody that we meet, ourselves outside of Christ, are not neutral to God.

We are dead to him spiritually and we are dying physically. We are dead to God. Thirdly, we are guilty.

[9 : 06] Paragraph three of the confession, which is on your handout, puts it like this. By God's appointment, they were the roots and representatives of all mankind. That's what we were saying

before, isn't it?

Humanity is on their shoulders. They're in probation in the garden or humanity is in probation in the garden in there. Because of this, the guilt of their sin was accounted and their corrupt nature passed on to all their offspring who descended from them by ordinary procreation.

Their descendants are now conceived in sin and are by nature children of wrath, the servants of sin and partakers of death and all other miseries, spiritual, temporal and eternal, unless the Lord Jesus sets them free.

It's hard stuff, isn't it? But it's true. And they are representing what Paul is saying in Ephesians 2 as well. And Robert Striven, again in his book, just has this really helpful paragraph about guilt that we assume guilt is essentially a feeling, right?

So we imagine guilt is that sort of sinking feeling that we have in our mind. I don't know whether you, you know, I sit on my bed at night thinking, oh, I can't believe I said that.

[10:25] Are you like that? That's what we sort of imagine guilt to be like, right? But actually, we feel that guilt is like that because of our kind of modern way of thinking about it. But he says, because of this, the answer is said to lie in therapy.

We are to deal with feelings of guilt by talking through the possible underlying causes and trying to unpick them and do away with it. This is not the way in which the confession or more importantly, the Bible speaks of guilt.

Guilt in the confession and in the Bible is objective. It's not a matter of feelings, but of judicial condemnation by God. So here it is.

In the fall, through Adam, all of humanity might not feel guilty, but are guilty. And we are objects of wrath because we are all in Adam guilty of turning away from God.

We will, if you like, maybe this would work as an illustration. We have been born onto a spiritual Titanic that is condemned to sink. And we are all on it.

[11:26] Now, perhaps you balk at that, right? Maybe you're sitting there thinking, well, how goodness me, this seems a little unfair. I accept that I might be morally guilty for my own sin. But why would I be guilty of Adam's sin when Adam performed it, not me?

And I wasn't there in the garden. Now, I think the Bible would give you perhaps three answers to that or three suggestions of answers to that. You could maybe shout out something else if you've got something better.

One that it would say is that essentially you are no better than Adam, right? So don't imagine, you know, oh, if only I was in the garden, I would have performed way better, right?

Don't think that. I don't think the Bible gives us any indication that we would have done. But really, judgment as well. The second answer is that judgment in the Bible does take into account what we do, right?

Divine justice is justice. It does bear a correlation to our actions. It's just by nature we're all condemned. You know, on your speed awareness course that you may or may not have ever been on, you are all speeders on your speed awareness course, aren't you?

[12:30] Some of you are worse than others, but you are all alike like that. And so we are all guilty before God. Some of us will be guilty of things that others are not guilty of, and that will be reflected in divine justice.

But we are all in the guilty camp. And the third thing that I think the Bible would say is that this condemnation is received in the same way in which salvation is received.

So if you object to this manner in which condemnation is received, you also object to the way in which salvation is received, right? So we are counted in Adam's guilt in the same manner in which we are counted with Christ's righteousness.

So the manner of our condemnation is also the manner of our salvation. And we seem to have less problem with it in our salvation. It is how God works, and it is how he is allowed to work, as he works through our representative head.

Either Adam, in which we inherit his guilt, or Christ, in which case we inherit his righteousness. So we are guilty, number three. Fourthly, we are corrupted.

[13:39] Paragraph four of the confession goes like this. All actual transgressions arise from this first corruption. By it, we are thoroughly biased against and disabled and antagonistic toward all that is good, and we are completely inclined toward all that is evil.

Again, it's difficult to take, isn't it? But he's not saying, or they are not saying, that we are as bad as we could be. Rather, he is saying, there is no part of my life, my will, my desires, my motives, my emotions, that is unaffected by sin.

Sin has gotten into every part of us, and we are corrupted toward sin. You will know, if you've ever worked with children, that you do not have to teach a child how to sin.

They know how to do it already. All of their actions, all of our actions, motives, and desires are shaped by the corruption that is ours in Adam. We are bent in towards ourselves, turned in towards selfishness, so that everything we do, we do, essentially, because we're acting out of self-interest. And I'm going to come to sort of think about how we apply some of this personally in a moment, but I don't know whether you've ever seen that by yourself. Peter Gregg, or Grieg, I don't know quite how you say his surname, the guy from the 24-7 prayer movement posted something about this this week, I don't know whether you saw this, that he was a young Christian at the time when he was traveling in Hong Kong, when he became very conscious that almost everything that he did, he did to prop himself up, so that people would think well of him.

[15:19] And he just had this sort of overwhelming awareness that everything that he was doing was selfishly driven. He called it, rightly, conviction of sin.

And that's it here in the confession. That realization that sin has corrupted us at a very deep level, twisting our desires and our motives. I said yesterday in a throwaway comment around our table, which was sort of haunting me this afternoon as I was preparing this.

We were talking about Kayleys. Like Kayleys? And I said, do you know what a Kaylee is? You don't know what a Kaylee is? You're not really missing out.

It's like a dance where someone is telling you what to do, right? So they're calling out the different dance moves. And you're... Sorry? A barn dance. You might know it's a barn dance. Kind of like American line dancing.

We were talking about this around our dinner table. And I said... What's wrong? Steve likes Kayleys. And I said, I hate Kayleys. Because I don't like someone standing at the front telling me what to do all the time.

[16:28] It seemed like a perfectly reasonable thing when I said it. But then I was realizing as I was looking at this this afternoon, oh my goodness, it's just because I'm selfish and I don't want someone telling me what to do all the time, isn't it?

And that's it, isn't it? Our selfishness, our desire to do what we want to do has corrupted every part of who we are. It's like when you... Maybe you've...

Maybe you don't do this. But if you work on a bicycle or a car and you get grease on your hands and then you come in and you try and wash your hands and then you try and dry your hands and all of a sudden the grease...

It just gets everywhere, doesn't it? Or maybe you are baking and you've mixed the mixture with your hands and then you try and turn the tap on and you open the drawer because you need to get something out of it and then you go to the other...

And then you can literally trace where you've been by seeing the marks of the things that were on your fingers, right? Or if you've got a housemate who's particularly mucky, you can trace where they've been by the muck on their hands.

[17:26] And it's like that with our sin. You can see its effects in everything that we do. Even some of the very good things that we do. You know, even the most noble things that we do, we can see how selfishness has touched and marked and corrupted all of our actions.

We are corrupted by sin. Next, the confession talks to the fact that we just... We do sin, right? We do stuff that's wrong. It's perhaps obvious from what has just been said and doesn't need saying. But paragraph four, if you go back to it, notices that transgressions, all of our transgressions, come out of this one corruption, essentially. Now, that doesn't mean that we're not morally responsible for them, but rather this corrupt nature that we have inherited becomes the source of all the other offences in the world.

They are the stains on the cupboards and the dirty handles, if you like. And that's traced out in the Bible, isn't it? Cain kills Abel.

Lamech marries two women. You know, by the time of Noah, every inclination of their heart was only evil all the time. Then there's the flood. And then even after the flood, every inclination of their heart was only evil all the time.

[18 : 37] Noah gets drunk and naked. Babel, the Tower of Babel is not very far behind, as sin bears the fruit of more sin and more sin and more sin.

And so it has been ever since. And finally, we keep struggling. We keep struggling. In paragraph five, the confession is clear that even for the Christian, this struggle with sin continues.

It says this, during this life, this corruption of nature remains in those who are regenerated, even though it is pardoned and put to death through Christ.

Yet, both this corruption of nature and all actions arising from it are truly and actually sin. So our experience as Christians is essentially that we're given a new nature, and we'll think about that a little bit more in a moment.

But we still have this old nature, though it is pardoned and put to death through Christ. Yet still, we keep struggling with it. Sin and selfishness are still with us, although we are saved by Christ and our sin is forgiven.

[19 : 49] Now, those six things kind of summarize, I think, what the Bible talks about when it talks about the fall and what the confession talks about when it talks about the fall. So I want you to get back into the group that you were in before and think about this question.

How does this compare with the other diagnoses of the problem in the world? So maybe there's some of the things that you were thinking out before. How does this compare with other diagnoses? Go for that in your groups for a little moment, and then we'll feedback our answers before thinking about some more applications.

Okay, what do we think? How does that compare? How does that compare?

What do we think? Those are symptoms, not thoughts.

And so you've sort of the symptoms. Right, okay. Yes. Okay. Yes.

[20 : 56] That's, yeah, that's really helpful, isn't it? So lots of the things that we think are wrong with the world are really symptoms of a deeper problem. And you cannot educate sin out of the world. Our problem is not ignorance.

Yeah. Yeah, it's really helpful. Anybody else? Well, no, don't, now's a good time to look at your feet if you don't want me to, yeah.

Anybody else? Yes, Amy. And often people say the problem is the other thing to look outward and the world's absolutely clear. Yes. And it's saying that it's absolutely clear.

Yeah. Thanks, Amy. Yeah. When we try and diagnose the problem with the world, we're looking for problems out there. And the Bible says, no, the problem's in here.

Yeah. Yeah. Anything else? Right. Yeah.

[22 : 10] Yeah, so it's hard to engage people with it because it's kind of hopeless, isn't it? If you've got no solution to it, to engage with the darkness within ourselves is a really difficult thing, isn't it?

Even how the Spirit convicts us and wants that comes alongside with the positive solution. Yes.

Yeah. Yeah. Yes. So when the Spirit convicts us of our sin, he turns us to Christ who is the solution.

We're going to come and talk about Christ as we finish. Otherwise you could go through the system.

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yes.

Yes. Yeah. So I think that is perhaps a really helpful place to end that little discussion is to say we need, the Spirit needs to convince people of the depth of this problem.

This is not a diagnosis that people will come up with for themselves. That's why the conviction of sin that the Spirit brings is the persuasion that the problem is that deep and it's that personal.

[23 : 11] And that comes along with the opening our eyes to the person of Christ. Robert Strivens, again, in his book, says this about the fall and engagement with sin.

He says, many of our difficulties in life stem from an inadequate grasp of this biblical teaching on sin. Because we do not see how deeply sin has gripped the human race, we misunderstand what is needed to put it right and so fail to appreciate the biblical doctrine of salvation by grace alone.

We do not see the gravity of our sin and so fail to understand why anyone should suffer forever in hell for it. We do not see that our plight is so bad that only Christ can save us.

So we underestimate what he has done for sinners and think that we can contribute something to our own salvation. We do not understand the terrible grip that sin has on our hearts and so fail to apply with trembling hearts to the Lord for the help in, sorry, for help in temptation.

I want to end just by turning our attention to the Lord Jesus Christ. I do think it is pastorally unhelpful to consider sin without considering Christ. Robert Murray McShane, the 19th century Scottish pastor, had this pastoral advice for every one look at your sin, take 10 looks at Christ.

[24 : 40] And that's helpful. And so we do need to see, don't we, that Jesus Christ takes us to a state that is even better than just winding the clock back before the fall.

He takes us somewhere better than Eden. Right? So Christ in the gospel not only solves all the problems of the fall, but also brings in us a new life by the spirit that is ours in him that cannot sin, that does not want to sin and that will not sin.

So that we experience God not only in the sort of righteous neutrality that Adam had in the garden, we know God as the redeemer of our sin and we want to live our lives for him eternally.

And so redemption is even better than winding the clock back. So we know, don't we, in Christ we've been made alive. We've been given a new nature. New birth has come into our dead hearts. Our guilt has been laid on Christ. He pays the penalty for our guilt on the cross. His righteousness is transferred onto us. So now, as we were guilty in Adam, we are now righteous in the Lord Jesus Christ.

[25 : 55] We are no longer counted as in Adam. We are in Christ. And this new life by the spirit moves through us, doesn't it, expelling the darkness and the corruption in the corners of our hearts, transforming us bit by bit.

It will not be completed until we meet the Lord, but it will definitely be completed when we meet the Lord. Every bit of darkness will be chased out of us.

And one day, we will be with the Lord and we will be like him for we will see him as he is. There is a day coming, Christian brother and sister, when you will no longer, when I will no longer struggle with sin.

I mean, it's just incredible, isn't it, to think of it? When I want to and will live wholeheartedly for Jesus. But it also means, doesn't it, and this is the other application, not only does it help us see the beauty and the wonder of Christ, it also helps us see the urgency of the message of the gospel, which is where Nathan was starting out with us this evening.

The gospel is super urgent. People need the Lord. They are in perilous danger without the Lord and in a danger that they are largely unconscious and unaware of.

[27 : 13] A danger that is there simply by being part of the human race, which is corrupted and in sin. And Jesus is the only answer because Jesus, like we were saying, is the only one who can transform us from the inside out.

So with those things in mind, let us leave this evening rejoicing in the Lord Jesus Christ and committed to speaking of him to others. Let me pray. Second, please.

Heavenly Father, we confess before you our sinfulness, that this selfish, sinful nature that we have inherited in Adam has corrupted us in every corner of our lives and that we are by nature guilty before you and just find flowing out of us sinful actions that sometimes even horrify us.

And we pray and plead with you for your forgiveness and we know that your forgiveness is freely given in the Lord Jesus Christ. We thank you that in him we have been given new natures.

We thank you that in him we are counted righteous. We thank you that in him you are at work in us with a work that you will carry on to completion, chasing all sin and darkness out of us that one day we will be with you in something even better than Eden where our relationship with you is closer and richer and more enjoyable than even Adam and Eve's in the garden before the fall.

[28 : 53] And Lord we long for that day and we look forward to that day and we pray please that with a new sense of urgency and clarity and compassion you would help us to share this good news of the gospel with those around us knowing that we were at one point just like them and just as lost as them.

So give us great compassion for the lost we pray and send us out from this place with the good news in Jesus name. Amen.