

Terrible Judgement

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Date: 27 January 2013

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[0 : 0 0] I would like just for a wee while this evening to turn back to Genesis said last two weeks ago that that was going to be our last study but it made sense to finish off this section before turning to something new and we read for us this evening Genesis 3 from verse 9 and through to verse 24 and I hope that impact will maybe be a little more in discussion about this passage this evening. But it's a really awesome and relevant and challenging section of the Bible. It gets to the very root of our problem, very root of our need.

It's that black box I spoke about before you know when an airplane crashes the black box tries to explain what went wrong. Well this is really God's black box for us. It's explaining what's gone wrong and it's reminding us of our need and why Jesus needed to come really is what it all speaks about and it's hugely depressing. Hugely depressing passage in many ways when we unpack it a little bit. It speaks of the misery of the choices that our first father and mother made, the misery of that and the mindless rebellion that brought them such judgment and brought such turmoil to this world which you know we can just look around us in the world today and we can see it. You can look into your relationships and into your families and you can look into the difficulties sometimes in life and look into the problems and the wars and the struggles and you can sit at the bedside of a dying neighbour and friend or relative and you can know and see and appreciate this is what's going wrong. This is what has happened, this is why Jesus has come. This is our Adam's reality as the head of humanity is ours also. It's not really a theoretical study of beginnings, it is an explanation of where we are in a relationship with God and why Jesus comes to change that and give us great hope in a future and we look at this. I look at this with you as a dying man to dying people although as Christians the sting of the death has been removed and we rejoice and give thanks to God in that. But we look briefly at this passage and one of the really saddest statements in the whole Bible is in verse 9 is it not of chapter 3 but the Lord God called to the man, where are you? Or maybe even before that Lord

God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden but the Lord God called the man, where are you? It's a really sad question and it's a really bleak question and it's not that God didn't know, it's not like hide and seek and that God didn't know where they'd gone and couldn't find them. We knew exactly where they were, it's not that he's in the dark but he is really opening dialogue with them. They've been in a position and he knows this, he already understands this and he sees this that they have, they've rebelled against him and they turn back on him and this is his first act of grace as it were with them where he asks the question, he starts the relationship going again, where are you? He's beginning to open up dialogue and give them the opportunity to repent and isn't that the way of God? Isn't that always the way of God? Isn't that the way it has to be in our own relationships?

You've fallen out with your wife, your husband, your friend, your neighbour, your colleague, your flatmate, someone's got to make that first move, someone's got to make that first act of grace and coming back and opening dialogue and here we have God walking in the garden in the cool of day and he asks the question, he gives them the opportunity to answer and to be in conversation with him again but they're not, it's different, everything has changed in that relationship with them, with God but it's just perfect, good, glorious, beautiful, free, lifelong, blissful relationship that's been completely broken and for the first time there's this great sense of shame in that relationship. I hid, heard you were in the garden, I was afraid, I was naked and I hid, a place of shame, there was never shame but they didn't even know, it's difficult for us I think to understand that whole concept of nakedness because we come from a different position into that whole situation than they did but they didn't even know previously that they were naked and yet all of a sudden there's this knowledge of them being uncovered and I guess that has all the kind of implications of being, they've got something to cover, they're afraid of not physically but even spiritually and in the relationship with God and I'm not quite sure what the physicality and all the nakedness necessarily has to do exactly with that but there's that whole immediate recognition of the complexity of shame and the lust of our physicality and their sexuality is becoming a threat and the innocence is gone. Whatever that means in real terms from the innocence had gone and there was a shame in the relationship and a relationship before God they felt that he couldn't stand before him, they had to be hidden from him and they couldn't bear their humanity before him because of who he was and more than just shame there was a fear. Now again difficult for us to comprehend but in a world where there had been no fear he was for the first time a new emotion in the relationship with God that they'd never encountered before, one of guilt and one of fear and they recognized God's place and they recognized that he had been right in what he had said and they recognized that they had rebelled against that in a huge and in a horrible way and they knew that the relationship before his holiness had been broken and his justice needed to be enacted in world and the love and open relationship had been broken, they were afraid, they'd usurped God, they'd wanted his position, they'd wanted independence and they got their dubious freedom and it wasn't really much freedom at all was it and so there's fear in their relationship with him and often in our lives God's asking the same question, well when are you? When are you? You know sometimes he's asking it because we've just been quiet, we haven't spoken to him for months and maybe he's coming in even through this word, through this message, through church tonight and he's saying well when are you? Maybe you're a Christian and he's saying I haven't heard you, where are you? You haven't spoken to me, this relationship that's been renewed through Jesus Christ and you're abusing that, where are you? I can't see you, I don't know you, where are you spiritually?

And maybe you're not a Christian and you're afraid of that question, you're afraid of God's gaze, you're afraid of his light shining into the darkness of your heart, you're afraid of his holiness or his justice and it's an irrational fear because this is a question of grace, it's a question where he's asking us to come and asking us to come and dialogue with him, though our sins be as scarlet, it shall be as white as snow, he wants us to speak with him and to deal with him, that's what Christ is all about, that's what the gospel is all about, that's what the Bible, that's what Genesis is all about, that's what Genesis, the revelation is all about, it's all about building and knowing a relationship with God that's been broken because of our sin, a relationship that is significant and vital and important and goes on into eternity. So we have God's question and then we have the kind of interesting and very typical ritual of blame and it's one that we're all good at and it hasn't changed really over the centuries, it's a great ritual of blame, you know, who told you that you were naked, have you eaten from the tree from which I commanded you, then the man said, well it's a woman's fault, a woman and it's your fault God, it's not just a woman's fault but you gave me her, so it's your fault as well, so there's this great abandoning of a sense of his own responsibility and he blames the woman and he blames Eve and then he blames kind of, by extension he blames God because God is the one who gave

[9 : 23] Eve to him as a gift and so we have this sense in which we shift blame from ourselves and we blame the person next to us and ultimately we're quite happy to blame God for all the problems that we face in the world and of course the woman does much the same, she said well it wasn't me, it wasn't my fault, it was a serpent, it was a serpent, he deceived me and I ate, so there's this great sense of shifting blame onto others, we can be as guilty as hell itself with our own free will, with our own decisions, with our own choices but isn't that so true in our lives and in our relationships and in our thinking so often when it comes to guilt and mistakes and failure that we are slow to recognise our own responsibility and we will argue strong, we'll argue in relationship but we'll also argue with God, it's not my fault, it's not my fault God, it's your fault, you're the one who's given me the genes that I have, it's my upbringing, it's the society that we're a part of, it's the government, it's the church, it's the minister, it's everybody else and yet the reality for us is that we are the rebels and until we come to the place where we, like you know, isn't that what probably David was doing for long enough when he committed that great and public sin which poor David has been known right through centuries, where he was silent before God and he wouldn't confess what he'd done wrong and he probably was justifying what he did that blaming other people or thinking there was reason for it until he got to that place where in Psalm 51 he could say against you, you only have I sinned and will we stop blaming everybody else and that's a significant reality potentially in our own lives that we stop blaming other people for all the wrong that is going on and that we recognise the importance before God of taking responsibility and of confessing to him ultimately that while we hurt and offend and bruise the lives of others, it is God who's the ultimate judge and God is the one against whom we sin and God is the one that we come to for forgiveness and for hope and then we have this revocable judgment in verses 16 to the end of verse 19 where he speaks about the judgment of God and it's a terrible judgment really upon the people. It's not a curse in our understanding, it's kind of some kind of voodoo curse. It's a judgment, it's a declaration of judgment. He judges the serpent and he judges Eve and he judges Adam as the representative head of mankind. Satan is judged in this strange way is kind of like the serpent is judged. I'm not quite sure of what all it means in terms of the animal itself taking on this form of being judged but we know that Satan himself at this point is judged to be out of God's grace and out of God's kingdom and without any hope because he will ultimately be crushed by the seed of the woman and there's this declaration that until he is crushed there will always be a battle between humanity and between spiritual powers of darkness with God involved and there's this also important

and kind of described as the pre-gospel message of Genesis 3. I will put enmity between you and the woman and between you, Rosping and hers, he will crush your head, you will strike his heel. It's just the first glimpse of Jesus that the seed of the woman, someone from Eve's seed, someone from the genealogy of Eve going right through, eventually this will be Jesus who will come and he will crush Satan's head and isn't that interesting because it begins to put the whole picture of the Old Testament in place, the way God protects the seed or the offspring of Eve right through whether it's through Esther or whether it's in the judges or whether it's in the prophets, they're protected so that eventually Jesus is born and even at that point Herod wants to kill him and they try and destroy him but he comes through and becomes the one, even into the point that we're looking at this morning of the temptation in the desert where Satan wants to destroy the seed of the woman in order that he himself will not be crushed. So we have the beginnings here, even it's called the protangelium, the beginnings of the gospel, the first good news, bad for Satan, good for us. But there's also this kind of judgment specifically on the woman and also specifically on the man and the judgment is, kind of fits the role that they've been given and affects the role that they've been given and speaks about what we sense and what we know and what we experience in the reality of life and the life without Jesus Christ. Kind of in the context, particularly the woman, I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing, your pain will give birth to your children, your desire about your husband, he will rule over you. So it's in this context of her being a mother and a wife, there is wider implications for it.

But in relationships, even in the beauty of birth, there will be for her the reminder in new life, even new life will be the reminder of pain and the reminder of rebellion that will be passed on generationally through childbirth and this recognition that even that isn't as it ought to be, something's wrong, something isn't right, even in that. And a distortion, now probably this has been one of the most written about verses in the whole Bible, your desire will be for your husband, he will rule over you. Very little is known about it, ultimately exactly what it, what exactly is meant within that. But it does, what it does seem to speak about specifically is that there will be the beginnings of tensions within relationship and a breaking of the roles that God had originally given to men and women within marriage and these roles will be challenged and abused. It's kind of the beginning of the battle of the sexes in many ways and there'll be just tension and exploitation and men will exploit and subjugate and abuse women and there'll be illicit desires and there'll be false, all kind of things going on. It's just talking about the kind of maelstrom of struggles that have entered into the reality of humanity and into the relationships, the closest of relationships in that building block of society. And for the man again, the judgment is spoken of in terms of his own role as the kind of, the one who was to work the ground and as the responsibility for that and that there'll be a great, great struggle from great toil, it's the same actual, same word that's used, the toil he will have is the struggle in childbirth. And again, it's the kind of introduction of blood, sweat and tears into our work life, into our ambitions, into our careers, into all that God has given us has, and it's become a battlefield where it was meant to be very different. In other words, he's saying everything's turned upside down, the world isn't as it was meant to be and that is part of God withdrawing in judgment, withdrawing in judgment because of this great, he's basically saying, this is what happens, you have that knowledge of good and evil, you've chosen independence,

I will withdraw in judgment. And of course the worst reality of all is that from dust you are and to dust you will return. That's the ultimate conclusion, is that they were both driven from the garden in that relationship of life with Jesus, with God, but also they lost the life, the fullness of life that was theirs and they were sentenced to die. I'm saying was right, their physical death didn't happen immediately, but there was this immediate spiritual separation and the introduction of decay and destruction and ultimately for all of us death. And that's a dreadful thing, isn't it? Ah, young people, I know you don't think about death very much, most young people maybe don't, they think they're going to live forever, I used to think that, I'm ancient now, so I don't think that anymore, I wake up in the morning and I'm just thank God that I've got another day. And I thank God that I've had as many days as I've had, but we recognize that life is hugely, hugely short and that that isn't what it was meant to be, with all the decay and the aging and the weakening and the vulnerabilities that go with it. And we recognize something far, far deeper, far bigger than sometimes the puny way that we think about spirituality and we think about

God and we think about Him in the context of our own life. It's absolutely fundamental for us that we consider both the reality of the problem and also the wonder of Jesus Christ and I just want to finish just with the hope that even in the midst of this bleakest and darkest of days there was in the whole of humanity that there is tremendous dripping in many ways with grace. God's justice is clearly there, His judgment is solemn and horrific and beyond our understanding has failed and fallen sinners and yet we smell it and see it and sense it all around us and even in our own lives and yet at the same time there's great grace, even in the promise of the coming Savior who will put things right.

[20 : 21] Because basically you know what He says in that is quite interesting what He's saying in that He's saying, you chose to try and become like me and you couldn't do it. See that's what they wanted, they wanted to become like God, remember that? You too can become like God knowing good and evil and that was the temptation, that was the promise that they could become like God and I say you can't ever become like God because I've created you, you're mortal, you're not infinite eternal, you're not God. You can't become like me but He says I am going to become like you, I am going to become human, I am going to become a human being in order to be your Redeemer and Savior so that we couldn't become like God's but in order to put things right again He becomes like us, the seed of the woman, He becomes a Savior of flesh and blood, a Savior like us yet without sin. That is an astonishing reality, we couldn't become like God but God goes to that Philippian space when pouring out Himself, emptying Himself, equality with God, something He didn't need to grasp but it was His and He emptied Himself of that in order to be our Redeemer. If we could only grasp what it must have been like for Jesus to be in the womb of Mary and to live for 30 years and to be rejected, this God to experience all that because He loved us, astonishing. But even in that promise but we also have the fact that life for Adam and Eve goes on, He doesn't just bring it to an end there and then He could have just said well that's it, the experiment's over, humanity's a waste of time, it's no use, judge them all, vanish them, finish it but no life goes on. They continue to live, they continue to have family, they continue to be together and interestingly I think Adam knows that, he doesn't name Eve something else, he doesn't name her the mother of all dying, he names her the mother of all living because he has this hope and this understanding that God isn't finishing it all, that there will be life, there will be a future for them and there is hope, does Adam see that? Does he see that even in the promise? Does he see it in the hope, in the voice of God, in the gentleness of that voice and the forgiveness of that voice, does he hear it? But we know that God is graceful in what He's doing.

And there's also the provision of clothes, God provides them with clothes, doesn't He covers them up, provides them with clothing. Again there's probably a lot of theological realities underneath all of this, people talk about it being the animal clothing that they're given, animal skins, speaking of the first sacrifice for sin that is made and there's an atonement made for them, I'm not sure if that's reading into it but it may well be that it's costly that there has already been the shedding of blood in order to cover them and it certainly would point forward to a greater covering, doesn't it? Covering of the righteousness of Jesus Christ in their lives, their need for God to cover them and we spiritually have that need for God to cover us, to cover us spiritually and He does so in His own presence in what He's done on our behalf. And the last thing there briefly is the cherubim which is sent to guard the tree of life. That's a difficult one as well. Is that an act of grace? They had eaten from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and it had been a huge disappointment. It was just hugely anti-climactic and they were in this terrible condition, been under God's judgment and God banishes them from eating of this tree of life lest they live forever and may there be grace in that because would it have been if they'd taken from that tree, whatever that tree signified or symbolized or whatever physically it meant to eat from it, which they would have allowed to eat from before?

Would it have meant if they'd eaten from it they would have lived forever but lived forever in a lost condition away from God? So was it an act of grace that God sent the cherubim to guard it so that they wouldn't seal themselves into a lost condition but rather they would recognise that the only way for them to live forever would be for accepting God's redemption and God's salvation ultimately through Jesus Christ? Would they have been locked into despair living like that for it? Would it in other words been a hellish existence? And does it reflect the hellish existence of those who will not come to Christ or who die without Jesus? An eternity of being separated from Him? So there's gentle movements of grace even in this most solemn of passages and maybe they remember that and know where we've come from and recognise where we've come from and not as we've kind of mentioned this morning not treat sin lightly or Jesus lightly or the cross lightly but they would give thanks for Him and for what He's done and for what it means for us. Let's bow our heads and pray. Father God we ask and pray that You would help us to understand You. Forgive us

Lord God when we find no interest in these things. Forgive us when we feel it's tremendously distant from our day to day living but when someone treats on us or when someone treats us badly at work or when we feel the welling up of bitterness or grief at being unjustly dealt with or when we feel that we've been looked over and unwisely or necessarily in a promotion or win. People misunderstand our faith or when we see brutality or murder or death or hurt or pain or horrible words being spoken and we sit at the grave side of a friend. Lord God we pray that we would recognise and know Your hand and Your spirit and Your truth speaking to us and that we would seek Lord God to know that this is relevant to us because it speaks of the Redeemer who has come to change our hearts and to enable us to overcome death and the grave and also all that goes with it and to be changed as in a remarkable and glorious change. So may we accept Jesus and accept His importance for us in this week in which we've entered to change our hearts and our desires and our longings so that they may be centred on life and on hope and on future and that we may not remain under Your judgment and far from You and out of Christ. So help us in these things we pray for Jesus' sake. Amen.