

## Drama of Scripture: The Fall (#2)

Today, we continue our series on the Drama of Scripture: Creation, Fall, Redemption, Restoration. We are looking at Act 2 – The Fall. Last week Steve looked at the tragic scene in Genesis 3 where Adam and Eve disobeyed God and brought sin and its consequences into the world. In just that one chapter of Genesis the impact of their sin is vast. Shame entered the world. They started hiding from God. They began blaming each other for their sin. And they began living in exile away from the presence of God. The fall was devastating. And as you get out of Genesis 3 into the rest of Scripture you see how Adam and Eve's sin infect everything.

This morning, as we continue to look at the fall, I want to look at a number of Scripture that help us see more clearly the big picture of the fall. This is vital, because, as Steve said a couple of weeks ago if we are going to live well, we need to understand the story in which we are living. If we don't really understand the breadth and the depth of the fall, we will not make sense of our lives and the world around us. We will not live with wisdom.

Obviously, if we were to examine every passage that illustrates the effects of the fall, we would need a REALLY long sermon series. I want to look at just a few highlights that help give the big picture of the fall. After we do that I want to offer a few thoughts about how we can respond to the problem of the fall.

### I. The Big Picture of the Fall

Let's look first at **Genesis 4 – 11**, which are the chapters immediately after Adam and Eve sin. The very first story we read after Adam and Eve are sent out of the garden is about their sons, Cain and Abel. We are told that Cain and Abel both bring offerings to the Lord (4:3-4) and that the Lord was pleased with Abel's, but not Cain's. As a result, Cain becomes jealous and hatred fill his heart and he murders his brother (v. 8). Jealousy, hatred, murder. Effects of the fall.

In chapter 5, this is a genealogy from Adam to Noah. After each person is mentioned with the length of his life and the name of his first born, it says, "and he died." Over and over again – and he died . . . and he died. (v. 5, 8, 11, etc. The exception being Enoch, v. 21ff). This was never God's plan. But this is a result of the fall – death.

In Genesis 6 we read this:

*<sup>5</sup> Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. <sup>6</sup> The LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart.*

*Wickedness . . . was great on the earth. Every intent of the thoughts of [mankind's] heart was only evil continually. That's what God sees and He is grieved. A few verses later we read:*

<sup>11</sup> Now the earth was corrupt in the sight of God, and the earth was filled with violence. <sup>12</sup> God looked on the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth.

Remember what God declared after each day of creation? This is good! But this is now a very different world. It is filled with corruption and violence.

It becomes so bad that in chapters 7 and 8 the Lord decides to bring a flood to destroy humanity. Noah and his family alone are spared because of Noah's righteousness (6:9).

Once the flood subsides, Noah and his family make a new start. In Genesis 9, God gives Noah the same command that He had given Adam and Eve: "*be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth*" (9:1). We see Noah beginning to cultivate the ground again. He farms and plants a vineyard. But the fall affects righteous Noah. In 9:21 we read about how he became drunk and something shameful happened in his tent when his sons discovered him.

In chapter 10, we are given the descendants of Noah. The earth again is populated. But then in Genesis 11, we read about how the peoples of the earth gather together to build a city and a great tower. They say in 11:4:

*Let us make for ourselves a name; lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the earth.*

There is arrogance and vanity in this desire to build such a city and tower. But as well God had commanded them through Noah to "*fill the earth*" (9:1). Their impulse was to stay together in direct disobedience to that command.

The fall affects everything! We could go on and look at the history of God's people in the time of the Patriarchs, or the Exodus, or during the time of the judges and kings. It all continues to reveal the devastating effects of the fall.

If we had time to look at the Psalms and the rest of the wisdom literature of the Bible we would see the effects of the fall, but I want to jump forward **to the prophets**, because they address a unique aspect of the fall. I'm going to read just a couple of passages. First, Ezekiel 22:

<sup>6</sup> "*Behold, the rulers of Israel, each according to his power, have been in you for the purpose of shedding blood.* <sup>7</sup> "*They have treated father and mother lightly within you. The alien they have oppressed in your midst; the fatherless and the widow they have wronged in you.*

Ezekiel 22:6–7

The rulers of Israel, her kings, ought to be used to advance God's good purposes, right? But Ezekiel says that the rulers of Israel are involved in shedding blood. They took advantage of the

helpless. They oppressed the alien among them. The fatherless and the widow they have wronged.

Or in Micah 3:11 it says:

*<sup>11</sup> Her leaders pronounce judgment for a bribe,  
Her priests instruct for a price  
And her prophets divine for money.*

Micah is addressing corrupt civil and religious leaders. Judges give verdicts for a bribe. Priests and prophets teach for a price what the people want to hear rather than what God wants them to teach. Prophets, priests and kings were all roles in society meant to express godliness such that shalom, and justice and good might flourish. And yet, each of these was corrupted by the fall.

Yes, the fall has deeply impacted the human heart, but it has also created deep brokenness in society – government, economic systems, rulers and leaders, all of this has been touched by the fall. None of this works like God intended. We see the reality of this every time we pick up the newspaper, right?

From Genesis 3 to Malachi, we see the effects of fall. But to continue our survey of the Scriptures let me jump forward to **the New Testament** and look at a couple of passages.

In Romans 1 Paul describes the effects of the fall this way:

*<sup>21</sup> For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. <sup>22</sup> Professing to be wise, they became fools, <sup>23</sup> and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures. <sup>24</sup> Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them.*

Not honoring God. Futile thinking. Foolish heart darkened. Fools. Worshipping the creature rather than the Creator. This is the result of the fall.

Verse 28:

*<sup>28</sup> And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper, <sup>29</sup> being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips, <sup>30</sup> slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, <sup>31</sup> without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful; <sup>32</sup> and although they know the ordinance of*

*God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.*

Paul is describing the utter spiritual and moral bankruptcy of mankind. We see this behavior all around us right? We see some of this in our own hearts at times. This is the effect of the fall. We are deeply broken by the fall.

But the fall did not just affect mankind; it also affected all of creation. Paul says this in Romans 8:

*<sup>19</sup> For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. <sup>20</sup> For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope <sup>21</sup> that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.*

Creation itself is affected by the fall. It was *subjected to futility*. It experiences *slavery to corruption*. People have different understandings of what this means and how this happens, but one thing is clear – the Bible teaches that the fall reaches to all of creation. Everything is affected by the fall!

I want to look at one last passage in Romans 5. Up to this point in Romans, Paul has been making the point that all men are sinners AND that Christ is the one who died to redeem them. In this discussion he explores the question of how it come to be that all men are in fact sinners. He says:

*<sup>12</sup> 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—<sup>13</sup> for until the Law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. <sup>14</sup> Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come.*

In verse 18, he goes on:

*<sup>18</sup> So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men. <sup>19</sup> For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous.*

Paul looks back to Genesis 3 and explains that the sin of Adam affected all of mankind – you, me, everyone! Because of Adam's sin, sin entered the world and death through that sin. And this death spreads to all men because all men sin. And so the result is that all men are under condemnation.

And so if you add it all up, the fall was devastating. Inwardly, we have hearts that are inclined toward evil. We are rebels; we are lawbreakers. Morally, we are guilty. We are not “basically good.” Spiritually, we no longer have fellowship with our Creator. Relationally we are cut off from each other. And socially, things like jealousy, hatred, envy are our bent. And all of this affects society such that the systems and structures that ought to be used to bring about God’s shalom on earth oppress and do injustice. And though we didn’t look at it much, environmentally, all of creation was subject to futility. The fall was devastating in every way!

And so that’s the big picture of Act 2. Act 2 says that we have a problem – a VERY big problem. If this were the end of the Drama, it would be a depressing story. But there is an Act 3 (Redemption) and there is an Act 4 (Restoration). God does not want to leave us in this scene – that’s the core message of the Bible. And so please come back next week as we begin looking at the good news found in Acts 3 and 4.

But let me take a few moments to talk about some ways that we can respond to the reality that we live in a world deeply marred by the fall.

## II. Four Ways to Respond to the Problem of the Fall

First, **understand that the answer is not in you.** Act 2 tells us that the starting point for all of us in this life is alienation from God. It doesn’t matter if you are born into a Christian family. It doesn’t matter if you have done a lot of good things in your life. The starting point for all of us is alienation from God. We are sinners – by nature and by choice. We are flawed and broken and sinful people. Every one of us! We are separated from God. We are spiritually dead and we have zero capacity on our own to change any of this. And in this state, we are looking at a future of eternal separation from God.

The consequences of the fall mean that each of us has a huge need. We need to be saved out of this situation. And here’s the important point – you do not have the ability to work yourself out of this predicament. You can’t be good enough. The answer is not in you.

The answer is in what Paul talked about in that passage in Romans 5 that we looked at earlier. Paul tells us that it is *through the obedience of the One* (i.e. Jesus Christ) *the many will be made righteous*. The answer is not in you; it is in Christ. That answer is what Act 3 is all about. And so trust Him. Trust Him alone.

Now, most of us here this morning have trusted Jesus. We’ve experienced the reality of being made righteous in God’s eyes through Jesus’ obedience. We’ve experienced Act 3. And yet, this point that that answer is not in you is still relevant for us as we continue to struggle with the effects of the fall.

We all continue to struggle with areas of sin and brokenness. And sometimes we can tend to think we just need to work harder; we just need to be better. As we struggle with anger or

greed or pride or lust or some kind of addiction, we must remember that the answer is not in us. The answer is in Jesus. Trust him. Trust him to change you. If you think you can pull this off by yourself you are underestimating the effects of the fall. The answer to all of our brokenness is not found in us; it is found in Jesus.

Secondly, understanding the effects of the fall should cause us to **live with compassion**. Live with compassion towards yourself. You are not yet who God created you to be in Christ. You will be . . . one day. That is certain! But in the here and now, there are still residual effects of the fall. You make mistakes. You continue to sin. You don't always live like you know God wants you to. Be compassionate to yourself.

Now, I'm not saying that when it comes to our sin, "Oh don't worry about. It's no big deal." We are called to increasingly become like Jesus. But, because of the fall, we will not fully arrive in this life. And so have compassion towards yourself. When you stumble, don't judge yourself so harshly. Be compassionate towards yourself and throw yourself on the grace of God.

But we should also live with compassion towards others – your spouse, your parents, your kids, your neighbors, your friends, your enemies, your classmates, other church members, that guy driving next to you. We can have such high expectations for each other sometimes. We can demand perfection. But if we remember how deeply the fall has affected all of us, we are in a position to have compassion on each other. We can release our expectations that others should be perfect or at least do way better than they are. Just think about how Jesus treated broken people. He was so full of compassion for them. We are all broken because of the fall. And being reminded of this, we should live with compassion towards one another.

Third, **live with urgency**. A couple of weeks ago we watched as hurricane Florence hit the east coast and brought devastating flooding. And as the flooding hit and lives were in peril, we saw first responders taking action like they always do. They weren't sitting at home watching Jim Cantore on the Weather Channel as they ate their breakfast. No, they were out taking risks to save people. They were living with urgency, which is exactly what the situation called for.

If we rightly understand the fall, we know that lives are in peril. Every man, woman and child has sinned. And as a result if they are without Jesus, they are alienated from God. They are lost. Their spiritual lives are in peril. Jesus has called us to live like spiritual first responders. We are to live with urgency. We are to love and care for people and help point them to the answer – Jesus Christ and the forgiveness that He offers. We need to live with urgency regarding this.

Finally, **pray for God's kingdom to come**. As I've looked at the news and the world around me this week through the lens of the fall, I have felt a sense of sadness that things are not how God created them to be. It has created in me a deeper yearning for God's kingdom to come and change all of this. It has given me greater urgency to follow Jesus' instructions to pray, "Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10). The answer to all of the brokenness in our world is for the kingdom of God to come.

And so this week when you read or hear stories about abused and neglected children, pray, “Your kingdom come.” When you hear about hunger or poverty or homelessness; pray, “Your kingdom come.” When you hear about girls and boys, women and men being sexually abused and trafficked; pray, “Your kingdom come.” When you see broken political systems or read about war; pray, “Your kingdom come.” Pray as Jesus told us to pray.

Well, I don’t know about you, but I’m glad that Act 2 is not the end of the story. It is an important part of the story. It is an important part of our story. It has affected everything about us, but it is not the end of the story. Thankfully, it is not the end of the story. The Drama of Scripture continues next week as we turn the page to Act 3: Redemption.

Amen.