

Genesis: The Grace of Brokenness

Pastor Jim Essian : May 17, 2015

THE PARADOX CHURCH

The Lord God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel." To the woman he said, "I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you." And to Adam he said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return." The man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living. And the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them. Then the Lord God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever—" therefore the Lord God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.
(Genesis 3:14-24)

We said last week that if you want to know yourself, if you want to understand what's broken, if you want to know what's wrong, if you want to know why it is that you do some of the things that you do, that you need to understand the doctrine of sin in Genesis 3. You need to understand Genesis 3, believe Genesis 3, understand what sin is, if you want to understand yourself and what's broken the world. And if we don't believe it, and if we don't hold to it, that we're then hopeless.

That was the argument last week, that if you don't believe in sin you're actually hopeless, that if what you believe is what the relativist believes, and that's "Hey, we should all just kind of follow our own heart, and do what's right for us, and just do what's best, and you do what's best for you and I'll do what's best for me, and nobody can tell each other what's wrong, or that we missed the mark, or that we're offbeat somehow." Everybody just kind of does their own thing. That's relativism.

If you do that, you lose, you have zero hope, because then you look at the brokenness in your own heart, you look at the brokenness around the world, you look at the evil that's in you and around you, and there's nothing you can do about it because everybody's doing their own thing and that's okay.

But if there's sin, if Genesis 3 is true, then actually there might be something wrong, and maybe we aren't doing something the way that we should do, or maybe something is off and maybe we could be rescued from it, maybe we can turn from it, maybe there's a rhythm that we can get back on if we got offbeat. And so we have sin, if we have Genesis 3, there actually is hope because that means that there is a way out.

And what we said last week was that the sin is not primarily your desires, it's not what you desire that's necessarily sinful, right, at the bottom of it we all desire the same things: we don't want to be lonely, we want to be loved, we don't want to be dumb, we want wisdom, we want pleasure and joy and happiness, we want safety, we want relationships—those are good, godly desires. It's not our desires that are the problem, it's where we go to with those desires that's the problem.

The sin is whom we trust in and where we go with the desires that we have, not necessarily the desires that we're wanting to be fulfilled. And sin then would be not running to God, when to love God, and know God, and enjoy God, and obey God is to run to God, even in our desires.

And so if we don't hold to Genesis 3, here's two things that happen inevitably, and we talked about one last week and we'll talk about the other one this week. One is relativism: we just kind of believe that everybody is good, and deep down we're good people, and we sometimes do bad things, and good things happen to good people—which is really good because most of us are really good. Occasionally we do a bad thing, and the bad thing we do is usually because of our circumstance, you know, nature versus nurture—there's a context in which I had to do the bad thing, but I normally do good things. People are generally good. That's relativism. At its extreme, nothing is ever bad, nobody ever does anything bad, everybody can do whatever they want. But at its foundational level, it's “People are generally good.” You understand that?

The problem with that is the Bible would say no, the Bible would say that the people are sinful through and through, and that were actually generally bad, and only by God's grace do we do good things, that we're broken through and through because of sin, we're fractured in our

heart and in our mind and in our understanding of God, and through and through, we are actually selfish and self-exalting, and not generally good but generally bad. And if we don't hold to Genesis 3 we lose that.

And if we don't hold to Genesis 3 we lose that, but then that also inevitably leads to this, and this is what we'll look at this morning: we're surprised when life gets hard. We're surprised when something goes wrong because good things happen to good people, and I'm a good person, and we do good things, and then when something goes wrong—how could that be? How could somebody hurt me? How could somebody do that? How could this happen? We're surprised when suffering hits. We're surprised when things get hard because things are pretty good, people are pretty good, and so life should be pretty good, and we're surprised when life isn't all that good.

Everything is difficult. Have you noticed? Work, family, friends, relationships, money. Everything that you participate in, and experience, and have responsibility over is actually quite difficult. Life is quite hard; have you noticed that? Why? Genesis 3 answers that. Genesis 3 answers that. And so I want to look at Genesis 3. I want to look at what's broken in the world because Genesis 3 answers what's broken in the world. But what I want to talk about is the grace of brokenness.

So Genesis chapter 3. we'll start in verse 14. God's going to start talking; everybody else was talking earlier in Genesis 3 and God's like no more talking, I'm going to talk. And he starts to talk and he addresses his first remarks to the serpent, the enemy, Satan. Starting in verse 14; the grace of brokenness. *“The Lord God said to the serpent, ‘Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring [or seed] and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.’”*

Now this is coming right on the heels—did you like that?—right on the heels of what happened before where Adam and Eve, they sin, they don't run to God, they run away from God—you'll get that on the way home, by the way—and God pursues them, God goes after them, and he's calling for them, “where are you? where are you?”

Now they had covered themselves with fig leaves, protecting themselves from one another; a wall goes up; they're now against one another, they're separated from one another, they're separated from God. God says, “Hey Adam, what happened?” and he's like, “hey, the

woman, the woman, she did it, it was her fault.” He blames his wife. And then God’s like, “Hey Eve, what happened?” She says, “the devil made me do it.” That’s basically where we are this far.

And so God, he’s just tired of everybody else talking, and so he begins to talk to the serpent. Notice, he never lets the enemy say word, right? He asks Adam what happened, he asks Eve what happened, but he doesn’t ask the enemy what happened; he doesn’t ask the serpent what happened. We don’t have good versus evil; it’s not Satan versus God, as if we’re unsure of who’s going to win this battle or this fight.

God just is like “I’m going to preach, I’m going to say something truthful, I don’t want to hear your lies anymore, serpent,” and he begins to talk to the enemy and say “here’s what’s going to happen, there’s going to be enmity, there’s going to be strife, there’s going to be division, there’s going to be conflict between your seed, your offspring, and hers.”

Here’s what that means: those that will continue to not listen to God’s Word, but will listen to the enemy’s word—that we can be our own God, we can do it our own way, we should follow our own heart, that we got this, that we can’t trust God, we need to trust ourselves—those will be in opposition, will be in conflict, to those that begin to obey God and his Word. That those that follow God’s Word, and know God, and love God, and enjoy God, and worship God will always be in conflict with those that don’t.

That’s what it’s saying, which means that at its foundational level, our division, our conflict relationally with one another is not Republican and Democratic, or conservative and liberal, or rich and poor, or black and white, or Protestant and Catholic. It’s not those things primarily, but primarily the conflict is between those who believe God, trust God, love God and those who don’t.

And so here’s what that means for both of you—because I know that there’s Christians in this room and there’s non-Christians in this room. There’s those that trust in God’s Word and those who are not sure yet. And so here’s what that means. For the Christian: Christianity will never be cool enough. Christianity will never be relevant enough. It will never be. It will never be. We’ll never be able to put in a box in such a way that those that don’t quite know God yet, or obey God yet, or believe God yet, that they’re going to somehow look at it and be like, “Oh that’s great, I want that. That’s so attractive to me. That’s so cool to me.” That’s never going to happen. That’s never going to happen. We should stop trying to make it cool. We

should stop trying to make it relevant. We should stop trying to soften the blow on some of the issues, on some of the questions you might get.

You want a hearing with your friends and family? Here's what you do: you radically and ferociously actually really love God; and you radically and ferociously and actually really love one another, like you really love one another. Non-Christians, when you look at the church and you see us fighting, is that a good thing? Are you like, "Oh, I really want to join that family"? No.

So we actually really love one another; we actually really love those that don't agree with us, like actually love them—not a project love them, not, you know, start just arguing with them all the time kind of love them, that's not really good love. Love them love them. And then we hold tight with humility, but with ferociousness; very unpopular ideas.

You just start opening your hand to some of those things and what do they need to be a Christian for. What do they need? Just with humility say, "I know you don't agree with this, but I'm going to hold ferociously to this; but I'm going to love you, and hey, we love one another, and I really love God." And I think you'll get a hearing. You're not going to get a hearing when you just soften it all up and try to make it cool.

And for the non-Christian, for those of you that aren't sure about what, you know, you don't know what you believe, you don't know if you believe in God's Word yet, you don't, maybe you do trust in yourself, you're like "I don't know if I can trust God, I don't know if I can trust you, I don't know if I can trust the church, I've been hurt by you, I have preconceived notions about you." Cool. I understand. And I'm sorry that we've hurt you. I'm sorry that you had those experiences. Here's the thing, Genesis 3:15 is telling you that there's going to be some of that strife; there's going to be some of that conflict; that's going to happen; there's going to be division.

But what we will do as a church is we're going to really actually love God, all right not just kind of temper our feelings for God, and our love for God, and our affections for God, but actually love God. We're not going to make it cool to love God, we're just going to love God, actually. And then we're going to really love one another, and we're going to invite you into that, and we're going to love you.

And we're going to hold tightly to things that you maybe disagree with, but we'll do so with humility. And we hope that you'll give us a hearing that we can walk through with you the

things that you might be wrestling with. But there's going to be strife, and there's going to be division, and there's going to be conflict, and that's always going to happen. We're always going to find ourselves on the wrong side of history. We're not going to be popular. And I think it's actually better that we're moving towards Christianity not being as popular as it once was.

And then, there's some good news in the second part of this verse 15 when he says, "he," note it's "he," "*he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.*" "He." This is a male seed, a male offspring, a male son. Who is this? Who is it? This is Jesus, yeah. Galatians 4:4: "*But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his son born of woman.*" Romans 16:20: "*The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.*" Colossians 2:15: "*He [Jesus] disarmed the rulers and authorities,*"—Satan, demons, bad people—"*and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.*"

This is Jesus here, this is the Gospel, this is Jesus showing up in Genesis 3. And there's a play on words here because the word "bruise" can be translated "crush," and so here's what it's saying: it's saying "Hey Satan, Jesus, you're going to bruise him. It's going to look like you crushed him. You're going to kill him. You're going to bruise him, but he's going to crush you. He gets your head. You got his heel, but he gets your head. And Jesus is going to be victorious, and he's going to win. He's going to end you and he's going to crush you."

The theologians, they call this the *protoevangelion*, the first gospel. God is preaching the first sermon. God was a preacher. He's preaching the first sermon. And he's going to preach the first sermon, and now we're supposed to preach and tell people about the good news of the gospel until Jesus comes back, and then there's no more preaching and I'm out of a job. I'll go back and play baseball or I'll golf or something like that. But we're done. But God preaches; we need to preach as well. God preaches the first sermon here, and he says "Satan, Jesus is going to come, the seed of the woman, he's going to crush your head; he's going to be victorious."

And so, Jesus is going to triumph; God's going to be victorious. We're done, right? Like if we end here, this is great. Adam and Eve sin, God comes after them, he says "where are you?" he turns to the enemy and he's like, "hey, Jesus is going to crush you." Game over; we go back to paradise, right? Everything is good, right? No; no. God then turns to the woman, then he's going to turn to the man, and this is commonly called the curse. No; paradise is still lost, even though Jesus is going to win.

Now this is commonly called the curse; you'll notice that he doesn't actually curse the man and the woman. He curses the serpent in verse 14, he curses the ground in verse 17, but he doesn't actually curse the man and the woman. But there's going to be consequences to Adam and Eve's sin; unbelievable consequences. And there's going to still be suffering and there's still going to be serious brokenness because of their sin. And he's going to curse the serpent and he's going to curse the ground, and Adam and Eve are going to face the repercussions of their sin, even though Jesus is going to win.

So what results from sin is what we're about to see, what is called the curse, this brokenness of everything. Right, just earth-shattering brokenness. Now, when we get offbeat and off rhythm of what God has designed the universe to be, this is what happens. So Genesis 3 is just the macrocosm of your life, which is a microcosm of what's happening here.

When you get offbeat, when God says "Hey, this is how relationships go, here's the rhythm in which money works, here's how work works, here's the rhythm, do it this way," and we don't, we sin, things break. Everything breaks, and we're going to see that here. Everything is going to break. We said last week that wine turns into drunkenness, sex turns into pornography, beauty becomes vanity, work becomes anxiety.

Everything will break because of sin, and it starts with the woman. Women, you ready? Verse 16. Gals? Let's go. "*To the woman he said, 'I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children.'*" If you ever wanted to know where epidurals came from, it's right here in Genesis 3:16. Right? Pain; pain in childbearing. Now I've seen two of these, right, I've got two girls and one on the way. And God in his common grace has given women, mother's, epidurals so that they don't face this type of pain in their childbearing, right? There's going to be more pain, and I'll tell you about it in a second, but now we have epidurals, right?

But my wife, in her common stubbornness, doesn't take the epidural, but has the babies naturally—we had the second one literally in our bathtub. And so I've seen this, like I've seen it up close; pain in childbearing, Genesis 3, I've seen it, I've heard it. I've seen it, and I've heard it, and it looks bad; it looks really, really bad. It just looks like, like you start talking a pain in your childbearing, and women like start shifting in their seat, and their like grimacing—you should see what I see right now, it's like watching dudes when somebody gets kicked in the wrong place and they're all kind of like "oh!" and that's what's happening right now. Pain in childbearing, and women are grimacing, and yeah, it's painful, right? Is it painful? Yes. Why is it painful? Genesis 3. Genesis 3.

Now this doesn't just mean pregnancy and labor. This doesn't just mean pregnancy and labor. This means there's going to be infertility issues, this means there's going to be miscarriages, this means that the pregnancy is going to be uncomfortable, and labor is going to be painful, and children, little babies are going to be colicky, and children are not going to be obedient. It's the whole of childbearing gets cursed, gets broken, is fractured because of sin. All of it; all of it.

Moms, is raising children difficult? Yeah. Why? Because of Genesis 3; because of sin. And then she's going to have problems with her husband as well; I mean the whole home is broken for her, the whole family structure is broken. Her children, that's going to be hard; her husband, he's going to be hard.

In the second part of verse 16, "*Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.*" Let me explain what this means, okay? The wording is difficult, it's interesting; but here is what it means: it basically means that she is going to have an inordinate desire for a man. So not a good, godly desire for a husband, but she's going to have an inordinate desire for a man; a man is what she needs. She needs a man, but she's going to want to rule over him. She's going to want to control him. She needs a man, she has to have a man, she feels like she needs a man, but she's going to want to rule him; she's going to want to control him.

And you know where this starts? It starts with little girls and their daddies. This starts with little girls and their daddies, right? My little girls own me. And I know so because my wife's like, "hey, she's playing you," and I'm like "no, she loves her daddy." "No, she's playing you." And she knows because she's a girl. It starts with daddies, and if you've got a little brother or if you have brothers, it kind of was with them as well.

And then you went to middle school, and you were taller than some of the boys so you started pushing them around, and then you started playing your high school boyfriend like a fiddle, and just kind of on into adulthood. Women, they do this thing. It's like a feminist internship starting at the age of three, where you're just ruling men, owning men, and every man you come across you're going to rule over them. And then you graduate when you get to marriage; graduate when you get to marriage.

And you have very offensive versus; you're going to be offended by these, but this is God. Proverbs 27:15, "*A continual dripping on a rainy day and a quarrelsome wife are alike.*" The

men are laughing, the women are like “What? Did he just say I’m water torture?” Yes he did. Proverbs 25:24, “*It is better to live in a corner of the housetop than in a house shared with the quarrelsome wife.*” God’s like, “Hey, hey, forget going on the couch, get out on the roof. Get out of the house, go on the roof. Forget the couch, go on the roof. You need to get out of there. Yeah. She's ruling you, she's controlling you, she's quarreling with you, she's after you. She needs you, she really needs you, but she wants to rule you.” But God says he's going to rule over you. This is not good.

I spoke about this a few weeks back on the Biblical woman's sermon, Biblical Womanhood sermon, so I won't spend too much time here. But basically what God is saying is instead of the way it should have been, where the man is to lovingly and sacrificially daily lay down his life for you, wash you with the water of the Word, nourish and cherish you, love and protect you, providing and care for you, lay his life down for you daily.

Instead of him doing that in his leadership, he's going to be domineering. Everything just gets broken; everything gets distorted because of sin. You're going to haven't an inordinate desire for a man, and you're going to really want a rule him, and that's not going to be good. And instead he's going to end up ruling you, and it won't be like it should have. It won't be like a good, loving leadership; it's going to be domineering.

And so the woman, she desires a man but she's either going to control him and he becomes the passive guy that no woman wants, or she's not going to be able to control him and he's going to be the domineering guy that nobody wants. The home is broken and the family unit is broken. She desires children but it's going to be painful toil; she desires a husband but he's going to be painful toil. Amen? And because of sin everything is broken.

Then he turns to the man, and he says to Adam in verse 17, “*Because you have listened to the voice of your wife have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, ‘You shall not eat of it,’ cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.*” Anyone think that they’re awesome? You are dust, and to dust you will return. That’s a very humbling, humbling verse.

And so he turns to Adam, and he says, “Adam, your work now is cursed, the ground is cursed.” So God had put Adam and in the garden and said, “Here, I want you to work it and keep

it; here's meaning, here's purpose for you. I'm going to fill the earth with my goodness, and my beauty, and my glory; I want you to join me, you get to join me in doing this great work. Go to work, Adam.” But now Adam’s work is broken, now Adam’s work is cursed. All of it, all that he’s trying to subdue and have dominion over and to cultivate, all of that's going to war against him.

Everything that Adam puts his hands to will fight him. Everything that Adam is responsible for will push back against him. Everything that he's called to subdue and have dominion will war, it’s going to fight him. Nothing’s going to work; everything is going to break; nothing is going to be easy; everything is going to be hard.

The car is going to break down, weeds are going to come up, there’s going to be email in your inbox, there’s going to be notifications on your phone. “Yeah, but Jim, you can turn the notifications off.” Can you? Like really, can you? No, you can't. Why? The curse. iPhone notifications are the curse. Everything is broken. Everything is wrong. Everything is like—you take your car to get an inspection and what do they tell you, ”you need \$1000 worth of repairs before we can give you one.” You have a perfect budget worked out. What happens? Unexpected expenses ruin all of it.

Things break, and when they break, other things break, and everything pushes against you, and people don't do what you tell them to do, and nothing ever gets done the way that it should be, and nothing is as it seems to be. And the man's work is bad, it's hard, it's cursed, it's hard, it wars against him; it wars against him. So before, work was just work. Now, work—it's real work work, and it doesn't work. Everything is broken that the man is trying to touch.

And so the woman desired a family—that’s going to be painful toil. Adam, he desires to eat—that's going to be painful toil. He wants to provide for his family, he wants to make a good living, he wants to try to provide and do the things that he's called to do, but he can't. He’s got to get a second job; maybe he loses his job. Maybe his bachelor’s degree isn't worth as much as he once thought it once was, so he goes to get a master’s degree but that’s not worth what he thought it once was. Everything that he's trying, everything that he’s striving for, everything that he’s pursuing seems the pushing back on him and nothing seems to be working. Why? Because the ground is broken; the ground is cursed.

Romans 8:20, Paul says the same thing: “*For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him [God] who subjected it.*” See, creation is groaning, creation is broken,

creation is futile. It's not doing what it's meant to do; we were meant to subdue and have dominion over it and we can't; now it's pushing back on us. And so everything in the universe is resistant. Right, if left alone things aren't beautiful and well kept, right? Left alone, everything starts to be unkempt, and unsafe, and wilderness, and barrenness. And if there's not a civilization in the place, it's broken, and it's scary, and it's not beautiful at all—that's what happens; it defaults to this; it defaults to just a hard, resistant world.

The world doesn't drift or default to goodness, we don't drift or default to godliness. Things are difficult, and resistant, and hard because of the curse. And so everything is hard. Anything that you pursue—marital peace, and relational peace, and racial peace, and national peace, and financial peace, and vocational peace—none of it works; everything is going to be difficult and resistant. And so the ground is broken, Adam's work is painful toil, Eve's work is painful toil, everything is resisting them—this is the results of sin.

Here's what's interesting. What's interesting—and I think it's unique to our our current culture, perhaps even the younger generation, and I think this is where I would ask some of our older folks to speak into the younger folks on this, but here's what's really interesting—I think we're surprised that life is so hard. We are shocked when we suffer. And Genesis 3 is very clear, you shouldn't be. Tim Keller, he says this, he says,

We are more shocked and undone by suffering than were our ancestors. Most cultures—unlike our own—expect suffering as inevitable and they see it as a means of strengthening and enriching us. Our [current] culture, on the other hand, is perhaps the worst in history at helping its members face suffering . . . Suffering, though painful, can actually help you complete your life story. But in [our] culture the meaning of life is to be free to choose what makes you happy in *this* life. [This life only.] Suffering destroys that meaning . . . [and] so suffering can have no meaning at all. It can't be a chapter in your life story—it is just the interruption or even [worse, it's] the end of your story.

Are you surprised that life is hard? Are you shocked when things don't go your way? Genesis 3 says you shouldn't be. Older folks, am I right? Do the younger folks of our generation tend to look at life much different, aren't they taken aback by life being difficult? Have you seen that as well? But we're just shocked by suffering, overwhelmed by suffering, can't believe that we would suffer.

So we get to college, and things begin to be difficult, and we have responsibilities, and studies are hard, and people, they don't respond we thought. And then we get a job, and maybe we don't get the job that we wanted, we get another job, or we have to enter career that we didn't want to. Or maybe we did get the job in the career that we wanted, but it doesn't pay like we thought it would, or it doesn't satisfy like we thought it would satisfy, or it breaks and everything seems to be resistant. And now I've got to pay for all kinds of stuff, and I've got to worry about all these different things, and I need a budget now, and everything's difficult, and there's suffering, there's difficulty.

And you're around young mothers—you ever seen a young mother? That's hard. Like you see that and you're like oh, that's really hard. I don't know what being a young mother is like, but I follow them on Facebook and it seems really difficult, right? Everything's difficult. They don't know what to do, they don't know how to get kids to sleep, and they don't know what to do with them when they're sick, and they won't be obedient, and all they're trying to do is keep them from everything, right? iPhones, and TVs, and people that have germs, and just everything. It's just difficult. It's hard.

And you look at married people and it's like they seem so happy in their first year of marriage, but they're not, I promise you, they're not; they're not happy. The first year of marriage is not easy. Nothing is easy; it's really difficult. You get married, that's hard. You have a kid, that's hard. You go to college, that's hard. You get a job, that's hard. And everything's really difficult, and young people—they start off—and they said, they're surprised by this. How could this be difficult? How could this be hard? Why this suffering?

And that's just easy stuff. Wait till there's a death in the family; wait till there's a death. Wait till there's a doubting of your faith for the first time—no longer your parents' faith, now you've got to have your own. First big break up. There's real suffering. And we're surprised by it. Have you noticed that? Did you notice that we're surprised by breakups—or by suffering—breakups too.

Older folks: our young moms, our young dudes, they need you to speak into that. This is why our City Group are designed the way they are—our groups of Christian friendship that we have throughout the city—Christian community. We don't have a singles group and a college group; we don't have those types of things. We put older people and younger people together—by the way, older is older than me, younger is younger than me, okay? 35 is, I'm the line of demarcation here. We have older and younger together so that the older folks can speak

into the younger folks. “Hey, it’s okay, that’s normal.” “Yeah, that's normal.” “That’s going to happen, young mom.” “That’s going to happen, young guy.” “Those things are going to happen.” “You should expect that.” “It's going to be okay. Let's endure. I'll walk with you through this.”

And listen, I know if you're older that doesn't mean you're exempt from this, exempt from suffering, for sure, or even exempt from maybe being surprised by it sometimes, and I get that. But we still need you to speak into it. We need you to walk with the younger folks through it. They’ve not suffered enough, they've not lived enough, and they’re surprised by it. We should not be surprised by suffering. We should not be surprised when life is hard. We should not be surprised by these things.

Genesis 3 is telling us why everything is broken. It’s telling us why things are difficult. The ground’s going to resist the man, the children are going to resist the parents, the husband and the wife are going to resist one another, man's going to have pain in his work, women are going to have pain in their work. Everything in the universe is going to resist you until you stop resisting God. Everything in the universe is going to resist you until you stop resisting God.

See when the children are disobedient, that's meant to be a reminder. When the children are throwing a fit because they don't get what they want, that's meant to remind us of something. That's God saying, “Oh, she’s throwing a fit because she didn’t get what she wanted? Gosh that really reminds me of somebody; that makes me think of somebody.”

And when work is pushing on you, and resisting you, and nobody’s doing what you're asking them to do, and you can't subdue it and have dominion over it, God’s saying, “Oh, nothing’s working, nobody’s doing what you asked them to do, and everything seems to be resisting, and nothing’s submitting to you? That reminds me of someone; that reminds me of someone.” And it's meant to be this reminder to us: “Oh, we resist God; we push against God; we fight God; we push against him and we war against him. We’re an enemy of God sometimes, even.”

God has ordained that, he has ordained that this would be difficult. And I’m trying to tell you that that's a great grace of God; that when things are broken it is a grace. This is the grace of brokenness: that God would allow these things to be broken under our feet, because remember Adam and Eve’s sin was not their desire, it was where they went to; it was whom they trusted with their desires.

It wasn't that they desired the things that they desired, it's who they ran to because of it. And God came after them saying, "where are you?" He pursues them, even though they ran away from him, and God, in his wrath, would be to let them go. Romans 1 says to give them over to their desires, to give them over to their way, to give them over to them trusting in themselves—that would be his wrath, to let them have what they want, to let things not break under their feet.

The worst thing that could happen to you is for you to run from God, and run after money, and get a lot of it. The worst thing that could happen to you is for you to think that a man is what will satisfy you, ultimately, and for him to give you that man. Because God knows that ultimately what you need is God, not money, not a dude, not a gal, not even health.

Ultimately what will satisfy is him, and so it's his grace to let things break underneath our feet. It's his grace to let these things be difficult, because every time they are it reminds us, "oh this thing can't satisfy, oh this thing can't fulfill, oh I do this same thing to God—I need to return to him. I need to turn to him, I need to repent, I need to trust in him, this thing ain't going to do it."

One of the worst things that God could do would be to give you what you want. This is grace in brokenness. This is God calling after you, "Where are you? Where are you? I still love you. Return to me. I'm breaking everything that you run into, breaking everything you cling to, breaking everything you hold onto, breaking everything you touch until you do."

The universe will resist us until we stop resisting him. Haven't you seen this in your life? Don't you have a tendency to turn to God in brokenness, sinful brokenness, far more than you do in prosperity? Don't you have a tendency to pray more in suffering than you do in peacetime? Don't you have a tendency to cling to him and turn to him far more when things are hard than when things are easy? Don't you see that drawing you to himself—this is the grace of brokenness.

See right here, in maybe the the worst few verses in all the Bible, here in the latter parts of Genesis 3, right here where humanity loses everything, right, loses paradise, loses shalom, loses the wholeness, and peace, and joy, and pleasure, and satisfaction, loses everything—right here, as they reject God, we see grace. It's all throughout this passage.

It's not just Jesus who's going to crush Satan's head, but it's later, in verse 21, when he clothes them with garments of skin, right? They were improperly clothed—fig leaves wouldn't do. They tried to cover their own shame; they can't. They tried to fix their own sin; they couldn't. They tried to repair what was broken; they couldn't.

What did God do? He sacrificed an animal and covers them properly. He covers them with skins, with animal skins; that's a grace. He casts them from the garden. "*Then the Lord God said,*" in verse 22, "*Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever—' therefore the Lord God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.*"

He cast them from the garden—this is a grace. How? Because sinners can't be in the presence of beauty. Sinners can't be in the presence of holiness. They would die. Genesis 2, if you eat of the fruit of the tree you will "*surely die.*" God says, "I'm not going to kill you; I'm going to cast you from my presence, that you might experience redeeming grace and we might be reconciled again."

There's grace all throughout this passage—the brokenness of grace, the clothing of God's grace, even the patience of God to not slaughter us right now, to not judge us right now. And some of you are like, "How can this be? I don't get this." Right? "My wife is screaming in labor, everything is pushing back on me, there's suffering, there's tears, God cast me from his presence, I don't feel like he's near. How could this possibly be grace? How is this grace? This just seems like a really vindictive, Old Testament God.

Romans 11:22, it says this—it plays with that very tension—it says, "*Note then the kindness and the severity of God.*" You think your de-godding of God, your cosmic treason of the God of the universe, does not have a earth shattering consequences? You think you can stand before a holy God and live? You do not know the God of the Bible.

But note the kindness and the severity of God, because to those that are in Christ, to those that enclosed by his grace, to those whom he is pursued and called out, "where are you," everything that happens to us his kindness—even brokenness, even suffering, because we know that for those who love God and who are called according to his purpose, God works

together all things for their good. *“Note then the kindness and the severity of God.”* This is grace in brokenness for you. Jesus is ultimately God's grace and brokenness for you.

We're told that the serpent's head will be crushed by the woman's seed. That's Jesus. A victory is coming, a triumph. God will win. But then he sacrifices an animal and covers them and he will sacrifice Jesus as well. See, Jesus' victory is inevitable, but it's going to come through brokenness. In fact, he will be broken on the cross. And he will be victorious, and he will crush the serpent's head, but it comes through pain.

See the road to glory is a road through the cross. The road to glory is through suffering and through pain. And where all of our sin has left everything broken, Jesus, God himself, is broken for us. This is ultimately the grace of God in brokenness—Jesus is.

And the rest of Genesis, and the rest of the Bible itself, is this story after story after story of humanity being broken, and the effects of the brokenness of humanity, and the effects of the consequences of sin and all that has this happened because of our sin. And over and over and over again it's also the story of God pursuing the man in his brokenness and offering grace. Over and over again.

Genesis, it ends with the story of Joseph who was sold into slavery by his brothers, and Joseph, he speaks to his brothers at the end of Genesis and he says, “Hey, what you meant for evil, God meant for good; God meant for good.” This is grace in the brokenness, not despite it, but in it, through it. And so the victory is certain and we can endure difficulty and suffering, we can endure pain. Why? Because we know who wins in the end, and we know that it's through pain that we receive glory.

It's through suffering that Jesus was victorious. And so *“we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.”* That *“We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed.”* And *“So we do not lose heart,”* for while this *“outer [nature] is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light [and] momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.”*

1 Peter 4, it says, *“Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you.”* Do not be surprised by suffering. Do not

think that when life gets hard that God has left you. No, no, no. Often that is God in his nearest: breaking things under your feet that you might see that what you ultimately need is him; showing you that it's resisting you because you resist him; him continually calling out to you, "Where are you? Where are you? Return to me. Come to me." The kindness of God, that's good.

Note the severity of God. For some of you, he has withheld his hand; he has not pursued you. You have not called to him; you have objected or rejected his call, and things are going really well for you. Would you tremble at that reality? It will not satisfy.

What you ultimately need is him. Let that be a gracious warning to you, that you would turn right now from prosperity, turn from the health, turn from things being awesome for you, and turn to him. Jesus is God's grace in our brokenness. We can look at a cross, a bloody cross, and we can see that God is gracious in brokenness. We can look at an empty tomb and see that God is victorious in our brokenness.

Let me pray for you.

Father, thank you for your grace to us. There are men and women here who maybe just don't have a category for a God who is better than riches, better than health, better than good relationships, better than things being well. Maybe all we've heard or understood is that God is meant to help us get a good life. Would you just shatter that framework? Would you reveal yourself in glory, and all your beauty and goodness and holiness, and the treasure that you are to them, that they might see that all the riches in the world cannot satisfy, but only you can—that they were made for you, that they were made to know you, and enjoy you, and obey you, and worship you. I pray for those that are in here with great, great, great suffering, great brokenness, they're in deep, difficult trials. Life is hard—maybe they were surprised by it. Maybe they were caught off guard. They thought maybe if they were just a good Christian that things would go well for them. And they didn't read Genesis 3 and they didn't know. Would you comfort them? Would you reveal yourself to them through it? Would you help them? Would this word be a warm blanket to the soul? Would you just meet us where we are, with this word, in your spirit, appropriating it to our heart, that we might be change? Not just knowing different things, but changed. Not just having some sort of different understanding about life. Changed. That we'd be stirred to worship you. We pray this in the confidence of the name of Jesus, who was broken for us. Amen.