

Good morning. Thanks for being here this morning; so happy to see all of you.

If you ever get in a conversation on spiritual things, and in the course of time and life I know you do, you have been in a conversation where the person has looked at you and says, “Okay, so if there’s a God, if God, then why evil? If created everything good, if God is all-powerful, all-knowing, then why doesn’t He just get rid of all this bad stuff that’s ruining our lives? At the heart of the question is really an attempt to impugn God—but—I’m not saying that when the person asks you or you even threw that out that that was what you were up to except that there is just this desire to know the answer to the question. We’ve heard it, a little bit uncomfortable, not sure what to do with that, and so we want to spend the next few weeks just talking about it.

So I want to invite you back, we’ll continue next week. Then the two following weeks we have guest speakers coming in; both absolute wonderful people, experts on this. Two weeks from now the gentleman that will be here will be speaking at it from the angle of the justice system. And then the week following the gentleman is an incredible apologist and this is the kind of stuff they think that he’s written a book on it. So make sure that you’re here.

Right after the service today, if you go out these doors [*motions to his right*] and straight across, there’s going to be a discussion group on the other side of the Café there in the room there; love to invite you to join us there. By the way, if you haven’t ever been to our Starting Point class, that’ll be right after this service today in the glass classroom over there [*motions to his right and back*]. So be involved with all that’s going on here. If you’re in a small group, I hope that this is an ongoing conversation that you have.

You think about evil. It has impacted everything. It is why there are certain things going through your mind this morning—death, murder, cancer, hatred, depression, war, poverty, sickness, suicide, yelling. I mean, you name it, these things come as a result of the evil that is in the world. Here’s how I want to address the question this morning because I feel like in order to understand the answer to the question—If God...why evil?—we really need to understand the whole story. What’s great about the conversation we can have here, we have Bibles and these Bibles tell us what’s happened way, way, way, way at the very beginning. Most of the time when we have this conversation someone takes us back to Hitler or something like that, so we don’t go back very far. I want to take you back all the way to the very beginning of the world.

Here’s the other cool thing with the Bible. It takes you all the way forward to a time not yet happened yet and tells us what’s going to happen and how this whole thing’s going to wrap up. So, in other words, you get to see the whole story in-between the covers of this Book. If you don’t have one of these, we have stacks of them on the back tables back there. Grab one, take it. If you know someone that’s need it, grab it, give it to them. If you have a Bible today, I would love for you to open up to Genesis chapter 3.

Now, let me review the story. It’s really simple. You’ll remember the opening words, “*In the beginning God.*” He was existing into eternity before that. So in the beginning, God creates. He creates this beautiful world that we enjoy. He creates man, He creates woman, and He says, and you’ll remember this, “It is good.” There’s no evil. It’s this amazing, absolutely pristine place and the way things work is that man and woman get the opportunity to be with God in this garden, this perfect place where everything is right all the time. They can walk with God and



they can talk with God and ask any questions they want. There's this perfect relationship, which we were made for.

In the midst of that experience, if you have your Bibles, open to Genesis chapter 3, verse 1. With absolutely no announcement entering into the scene is a serpent; Satan himself enters into the scene. Chapter 3 of Genesis, verse 1 says:

*<sup>1</sup> Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made.*

— and he speaks to the woman —

*He said to the woman,*

— no explanation, just talks to the woman and says this —

*“Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of **any** [emphasis mine] tree in the garden’?”*

~ GENESIS 3:1



Well, we ask ourselves the question, “Well, what did God say?” Because out of the blue the serpent, Satan, is talking to the woman. He says, “Did He say you can’t eat from any tree in the garden?” If you have your Bibles open, just glance over to chapter 2, verse 16, because there was where God sort of laid out the plan. He’s God. He gets to do that. And here’s what He says in Genesis 2:15-17:

*<sup>15</sup> The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. <sup>16</sup> And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of*

— what’s that next word? —

*every tree of the garden, <sup>17</sup> but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”*

~ GENESIS 2:15-17

A very clear, simple command, and what I like about it is eat anything you want, eat of every tree here in the garden. Enjoy it, it was made for you, it was made for your pleasure, go ahead and go eat anywhere you want. By the way, there’s a tree there in the middle, stay away from that. Just one. All the rest are fine, but there’s this one tree, don’t eat of it. If you do, death is going to come. In so many ways it’s such an absolutely simple, easy thing. Eat whatever you want, just stay away from that one. Got it? You gonna do it? The answer would be, “Sure! Why not?! God said it, this place is great, there’s just one tree I’m not allowed to eat of, I’m out. I’m not gonna do it.”

So Satan all of a sudden comes up to Eve as a serpent and says did God actually say you can eat of any tree? Well, that’s not what He said. He says you can eat of every tree, but there’s one you can’t eat of, and what Satan does in that moment he starts to do what he does even to this day—he starts to try to confuse things, mess with your head, try to get you so that you’re questioning, “What did I hear?” “What was really said?” “What’s really going on here?” And in that moment as Satan twists and confuses, what he’s doing is questioning God’s provision; really causing us to ask the question: Is God good? Really? There’s a tree here you can’t eat of? And then he messes with it and says, “Did He say you can’t eat of any tree?” Why would God be holding out on me—and that’s the little noise that he puts in your head.

By the way, speaking of Father's Day, we have a good God. His very character is that He's a good God. In the book of James, and I just marked it in my Bible real quick here, 1:17, it says this:

*<sup>17</sup> Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. <sup>18</sup> Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.*

~ JAMES 1:17-18

I read that and I'm just reminded what we should know: We have a good Father who loves us. By His very nature He's good. On this Father's Day we should pause to say happy Father's day to the best Father, to Father God, a good Father today.

But what Satan is constantly doing is causing us to question: Can God provide for me? Why is it that He's holding out on me? Why is it that that one tree in the center I can't go to?

Remember, in chapter 2, verse 16, when He gives that command, He goes if you do this, if you eat of this, you'll surely die—separation from God. Satan, when we look in verse 4, chapter 3, verse 4:

*<sup>4</sup> But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die."*

~ GENESIS 3:4

Wait a minute, God said you will die, now the serpent's saying you will not die. And here's what I hear: A moment ago he said *is God holding out on you*, and now the serpent's saying *God doesn't really mean what He says. You're not going to die*. Are you serious? That's not what God's trying to say. After all, God would want you to be happy and He's telling you that you can't eat of *that* tree of all the trees? Look at that thing! You want to eat of that. God's holding out on you. Does He really mean what he says? Maybe this isn't quite as black and white. Maybe that was sort of metaphorical, maybe—you're not *really* going to die.



Here's the response at that moment that they have. God said it, He's a good God, He loves me, He created me, He made this great thing and says you can eat everything but you can't eat of that. And they have one choice: I either do what God says—or I don't. Which will it be?

Verse 5 of chapter 3, here's what Satan says:

*<sup>5</sup> For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened,*

— *Oh! There's MORE! God's holding out on you!* And he says when your eyes are opened —  
*and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."*

~ GENESIS 3:5

You don't have everything right now. Getting the same line today—you're not good enough, you're not successful enough, you're not recognized enough, you're not sexually fulfilled enough, you're not rich enough. And the lie is really simple: There's something more! That tree in the middle, I know He said don't touch it, I know He said don't eat of it—*go for it!* Your choice: Obey or disobey. The voice in the head says there is something more—and that's the lie.

Here's the deal; God created us for relationship with Him. That's why He talks there in the beginning of Genesis of how mankind walked with God and talked with Him in the garden. There was this awesome relationship. But when I buy the lie of Satan, I look and I say this out loud, I say, "God is not enough. There must be something more." And isn't that the struggle that we have all week long every week? We can truly sit here and go, "I love God. He is a good Father." And then that voice comes and says, "*But if...*" And you go [*reaches out his hand to receive*], "Aaaah! I want that! I want more." And in that moment we choose. Adam and Eve chose. We choose. Look at the result of their choice—and by the way, talk about the darkest moment in all of history—chapter 3, verse 6, it says this:

<sup>6</sup> *So when the woman saw*

— that's the first thing that happens, to see —

*that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.*

~ GENESIS 3:6

And it was in that moment that we refer to as "The Fall" when mankind fell into sin. Listen to Romans chapter 5, verse 12. I'm hoping maybe we can pop that up here onto the screen. Capture these words because this explains what took place there, and this explains why we're having to deal with evil right now.

<sup>12</sup> *Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man,*

— what we just read —

*and death through sin,*

— remember He said that if you take of that tree, if you eat of that, you will surely die. So because that one man took and ate, death came to that man, and then it says —

*and so death spread to all men because all sinned—*

~ ROMANS 5:12

Now here's what happens next. We're told as a result of *that* sin and *that* Fall, that all of mankind from there on out fall and sin. What I find shocking as I look at this is how fast this sin spreads. When you start looking at it in Genesis chapter 3, verse 21, it says this:

<sup>20</sup> *The man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living.* <sup>21</sup> *And the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.*

~ GENESIS 3:20-21

Now, right after they fell in verse 7 it says they grabbed fig leaves and covered themselves because they all of a sudden for the very time realized that they were naked. Up until that point there was no understanding of that. Verses 8-9 of Genesis 3 says:

<sup>8</sup> *And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.* <sup>9</sup> *But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?"*

~ GENESIS 3:8-9

This is the first time there's any hiding going on. Our whole world is about that today; all sorts of stuff being hid everywhere. And this was his response, and notice the "I's" here:

<sup>10</sup> *And he said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid,*

— so all of a sudden fear comes into the world —

*because I was naked, and I hid myself."*

— capture these words "I", you're going to hear those three times. And God says to him —

<sup>11</sup> *He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?"*

— And then the man does the whole blaming thing, *Hey, that woman You gave me, God, you know, she gave me the fruit of the tree and I ate it, it's her fault.* And now you have the blaming. —

<sup>12</sup> *The man said, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate."* <sup>13</sup> *Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?"*  
*The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."*

~ GENESIS 3:10-13

The fact, what I was starting to say a moment ago, you go from this moment where they put these leaves on themselves to cover themselves up because they're naked and they're afraid and they're trying to hide and all this kind of stuff, and they're blaming. And then God, in verse 21, takes skins of animals and puts them on them. And what we read earlier in this was Adam has this opportunity of making friends with all the animals in the garden. And you remember, he names them all. I don't know about you, there's something awesome about when you name something. You get this personal relationship with that thing. We named a tree in our yard recently and it rotted out and fell, and I said, "I wish we wouldn't have named it." [Laughter] Because I grieved its loss and it's just like stupid. But if I hadn't named it, it would have just been a tree, but now it's got a name and it's got, you know, tops and stuff like that. [Laughter]

These animals were named by Adam and he loved these animals. This is, you get it, you have animals. You named those animals and they're like really, really personal. All of a sudden because of Adam and Eve's choice, death comes into the world and these animals that they loved so much start dying and God takes one of these dead animals and takes the skin and makes it into clothes for Adam. You see how quick the results of death start having that impact and you go, "Aw, it's killing me." Oh, but it doesn't stop there. And I'm not going to go into this in great depth, but if you want to just page to the right in your Bible, just go one chapter over to chapter 4 and there in verse 8 it says:

<sup>8</sup> *Cain spoke to Abel his brother. And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him.*

~ GENESIS 4:8

You have your first murder. I mean, one chapter later. And you don't have to go much further until you get over to chapter 6, verse 5:

<sup>5</sup> *The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.*

~ GENESIS 6:5

And all of a sudden you see that we've gone from this perfect environment, this perfect world, to a choice that is made where we choose evil and all of a sudden things get desperately wicked.



Here's the question that we asked at the beginning: If God... why evil? That's why. God gave them a choice. It never had to go there. They would have lived in the garden, they would have continued in the garden, all would have been perfect. If they could have just stayed away from that tree and obeyed God and believed God for what He had to say.

I hear people all the time, "I want a drama-free relationship." Then why is it that there is so much chaos, confusion, and crisis in your relationships? Result of this Fall. I hear all the time, "Oh, wouldn't it be just nice to have peace?" And we're always talking about world peace and you look around and you don't see it. You say, you know, wouldn't it be nice if we weren't divided? And you look out and everyone's constantly – you don't have to talk to many people right now, "Oh, there's so much divisiveness and so much division." And yet we're longing for and wanting peace. You want peace, but why did you slam the door so hard yesterday? Why was all that cursing taking place? Why were you demeaning so strongly if you want that kind of peace? Why are you self-medicating? Why are you drinking? Why are you taking those drugs, and they're never enough—hoping somehow to find that peace that doesn't exist. Why?

So that's this question of evil that gets answered when we see it all goes back God said I want you to do it this way; we chose and said, "God, no. You're holding out on us. You're not good. I'll do it my way. I think I'll get better results." So we spend our lives just longing for wonderful relationships, longing for peace.

And people say to me all the time, "Family matters." And I want to—they're in the office talking to us about, "Well, after work he never comes home for a couple hours because he goes to the bar to settle down." Or, "He comes home from work" —you know, family's first, but he comes home from work—"and he's gotta unwind in front of the video games for a couple hours and no one's allowed to come in and bug him." Why? Checked out, choosing, saying, "I need 'me' time," you know, "I need my decompressed time" —but family's first. Why? It all goes back to this Fall. And if we don't understand THAT day, that Fall and why that took place, God said here's how it's going to be, and we chose, "I don't buy it, God. I don't want to listen to that. I don't get it. I don't wanna buy it." And as a result that Fall has continued. He said surely you will die. That death—you will be separated from each other, you will be separated from God, and sure enough, that's what we're experiencing today. If God...why evil? We chose.

In Genesis chapter 3, verse 15, and you can take a look at it when you get a chance,<sup>1</sup> immediately after this takes place, God says death came, but I love you, and so I'm going to do something for you. I am going to provide you with a Savior, a Messiah who, even though Satan has had the ability to nip at your heels and create this separation, I am going to provide you with One that's gonna crush Satan's head. I mean, right after this, right after man makes this absolutely ridiculous decision, God chooses to show love and to show grace to us because He loves us so much. So we chose, we chose to do it our own way. He chooses to say I'm going to send One that's going to do something to fix this.

Romans chapter 7, verses 24 and 25, I'm hoping we can pop this one up on the screen because last week we talked about the Apostle Paul, and the Apostle Paul wrote, he said [INAUDIBLE 0:11:25.4] I'm a wretched man. I'm a mess. Most of us in this room would agree. You know, you read that the

<sup>1</sup> *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.* ~ **GENESIS 3:15**



intentions of the heart are wicked<sup>2</sup>—we like to think we’re good and we try to do really good things and then we look deep inside and we’re like, “Yikes!”

<sup>24</sup> *Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?*

— this separation that my stupidity causes between me and other people; the separation that my sins cause me from God —

<sup>25</sup> *Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!*

~ ROMANS 7:24-25a

I want you to know that He chose to solve this problem. Again, it goes back to the question that I said in the very depth of the question “If God...why evil?” There is this tendency to want to impugn God when in point of fact, He entered into our pain that we created because we didn’t listen to Him, we didn’t obey Him, we chose to go against Him. He entered into our pain. He entered into our darkness. He took this evil seriously; so seriously that He leaves Heaven to enter into that evil to defeat it. That evil was so dark and wicked that the very people He came to save would hang Him on the Roman cross, the very worst that mankind could do at that time, to kill the very worst of society. That’s what they do with God Himself. But He steps into that pain and there He goes to that cross to take our pain, our punishment on Himself. And He says this: If you’ll trust that My shed blood will bring about atonement, it will atone for sin. It’ll take the penalty for your sin and my sin.

Up until that point they were sacrificing animals as a symbol of this atonement but it never was finished. Jesus would go to the cross to be the atonement for our sin, to take our punishment, to take all of our guilt, to take all of our sin, to substitute on our behalf so there could be atonement for our sin so that we could be at one with God. And He says if you’ll trust in that cross [that is, the atoning blood that Jesus shed on the cross], you can have the grace of God and the forgiveness of sin so that He will look down on you and see you and me as the righteousness of God.

Now, think with me for a moment. Did we learn anything in the garden? God says hey, listen, eat anything you want, but don’t eat of that tree. We go, *Uh, I’m not sure, God, if You are right.* [We] Try it and we see it go downhill. God says I want to make all things right. I want to make atonement. I want to turn this around, and He says, I’ll give you a cross, I’ll die on that cross, all you have to do is trust in Me alone for your salvation that I will forgive your sins, that I will make all things new. And our answer to that is—and it’s back to **we choose** at that moment.

Some of you have heard and read the writings of C. S. Lewis. C. S. Lewis wrote an essay called *God in the Dock*, where Lewis says that we have reversed the roles and somehow we think that we are the judge and that God’s on trial. Listen to what he says:<sup>3</sup>

The greatest barrier I have met is the almost total absence from the minds of my audience of any sense of sin... The early Christian preachers could assume in their hearers, whether Jews, Metuentes, or Pagans, a sense of guilt. Thus the Christian message was in those days unmistakably the Evangelium, the Good News. It promised healing to those who knew they were sick. We have to convince our hearers of the unwelcome diagnosis before we can expect them to welcome the news of the remedy.

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<sup>2</sup> ...the Lord said in his heart, “I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the intention of man’s heart is evil from his youth. ~ GENESIS 8:21a

<sup>3</sup> C. S. Lewis quote retrieved from <https://www.goodreads.com/work/quotes/1241712-god-in-the-dock>

The ancient man approached God (or even the gods) as the accused person approaches his judge. For the modern man, the roles are quite reversed. He is the judge: God is in the dock. He is quite a kindly judge; if God should have a reasonable defense for being the god who permits war, poverty, and disease, he is ready to listen to it. The trial may even end in God's acquittal. But the important thing is that man is on the bench and God is in the dock."

— C. S. Lewis, *God in the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics*



We have reverse roles with God. We have put God on trial. And despite that, despite the fact that we think we are God, despite the fact that we want to rise to that level and we want to say, "I'm God. I know better," He still opens up [*opens his arms wide to receive*] and He says, "Listen, I came to forgive you. I love you. I have beat death. Your choices got us here, but I have come and I have overcome that and I love you."

Knowing what we know about the garden, here we sit and we have to ask ourselves a question. They didn't believe then; they did their own thing and death came. We have a choice now and we want to get it right this time. Are you going to believe or not?

And we'll end with this. Remember I told you we know the whole story? We know the beginning, and we know the end. At the very end of your Bible, next to the last chapter in Revelation 21, it tells us how this whole thing wraps up and so I'm just going to read this. I'm going to close with this. So now you're getting to look into the future. Okay? Revelation 21:1:

<sup>1</sup> *Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth,*

— [*he chuckles with excitement*] This is a spectacular ending! —

*for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. <sup>2</sup> And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. <sup>3</sup> And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.*

— So we're back all the way to the way God originally intended it to be. God's in this process of making all things new again. The question is, are we going to step into that? Listen to what it says:

<sup>4</sup> *He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."*

<sup>5</sup> *And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." <sup>6</sup> And he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end."*

~ REVELATION 21:1-6a

There is coming a day where there will be no more tears, no more sickness, no more death, no more racism, no more abuse, no more sexism, no killing, no wars, no tears—and God invites us in because He loves us. He made it possible. And now it's back to we choose again, just like there at the garden. We chose; we got the results. He chose to make it right again and here we are again today, we choose. Will you choose life? Or will you choose death? Will you choose to believe Jesus? We understand that God



doesn't want this evil and He went to incredible cost to give us a way out, and I want to invite you into that. And I'd love to have us even as I invite us into that, celebrate that.



I'm going to pray for you.

*Lord Jesus,*

*I pray for each person in this room that's making a choice right now to say, "Yeah, God, that doesn't make sense. It doesn't. That's not me." And we sort of go back to exactly what Adam and Eve did there in the garden, we bought the lie.*

*Others in here are saying, "No, this is the explanation. This makes sense." And I ask that your Holy Spirit would convict our hearts and our minds and cause us to say yes to You and put our faith and trust in You alone. That the finished work of Calvary's cross, that blood that was shed to forgive us of our sins, and that incredible seal of approval by You, that You brought Jesus out of that grave victorious over death would cause us to say, "Yeah, I'm so done with this evil and I'm going to trust in Jesus who has overcome evil."*

*So Lord, for everyone in here right now that wants to put their trust in You, I pray that this would be a moment they'll just quietly in their head cry out and say, "Jesus, I believe in You and I trust in You, would You forgive me of my sins?" And your Word says that it's a new day in that moment, all things become new, old things are passed away<sup>4</sup> and we celebrate that with each person in here on this Father's Day. Lord, we think of You, the good, good Father, who would give your own Son to be sacrificed on our behalf.*

*We love You, Jesus. It's in your Name we pray. Amen.*

Vimeo: <https://vimeo.com/275500769>

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<sup>4</sup> Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. ~ 2 CORINTHIANS 5:17