## Man's Fall and God's Plan

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[0:00] Well, last week we did start a new Sunday School series. We're going through this book. I brought it this morning. It's The Christian Life, a doctrinal introduction by Sinclair Ferguson.

! It is for life.

It is for experience. I hope I was able to convey at least a little bit of that last week. Paul wrote to the Philippians. And remember at this point, he's having this internal sort of debate.

He's torn inside of himself about whether he wants to go and be with Christ or to stay in the body for now. And he came to a conclusion.

And what was his conclusion? Anyway, it's better for me to stay. Remember, it's better for me to to stay.

[1:11] God's going to keep me in the body. Why? And this is what he says. I'm going to continue with you. For your progress and joy in the faith, so that through my being with you again, your joy in Christ Jesus will overflow.

On account of me. Paul wanted to stay in the body because he thought it was so necessary for the growth, the progress and the joy of the Philippian believers in their faith.

He didn't want them to stay stagnant. So that's the opposite of growth. It's either decline or being stagnant. He didn't want them stagnant or declining.

He didn't want them joyless. He wanted to see the Philippians growing and growing and joy. And joyfulness. And I want to say that's what I want, too.

That's what I want for you. That's what I want for myself. I have no interest, no interest at all, in teaching a sort of sterile seminary class where we learn about these truths, but they're not connected to our hearts.

[2:25] That they don't have any sort of impact on our faith and our confidence and our assurance and our joy and our comfort. So I want to see you growing.

I really do. And happiness and strength in Christ Jesus. Paul talks about them shining like stars. He talks about them being encouraged in Christ, comforted in his love, fellowshipping with the Holy Spirit.

Those are experiential words. Those are not merely intellectual words. He wanted them to experience this comfort and this joy and the strength in the Holy Spirit, knowing Christ, he says, and the power of his resurrection.

That's real, vital Christian living. So it's not just head doctrine. It's heart doctrine. It's life doctrine.

I'm sure you have seen sterile, intellectual, rigid, right doctrine. And it is powerless. And it's unattractive.

[3:37] We want warm hearts. Full of love for other people, for God. We want warm hearts. And we also want keen minds.

Warm hearts and keen minds are not enemies of each other. They should be the best of friends. They should be holding hands as we walk through life. One without the other isn't pretty.

Warm hands, zeal without knowledge is not good. No, these two friends need each other. These two friends bring out the best in each other. These two friends keep each other from the worst of the evils that they can carry around with them, the worst of their faults.

And so that's what we want. We want warm hearts. Warm hearts. Burning hearts. And also keen minds loving the truth, walking in the truth.

And so today we're going to start at the beginning. We're talking about the Christian life. A doctrinal introduction. So at the very beginning, we're going to talk about two things today.

[4:42] Man's fall and God's plan. Man's fall and God's plan. Now, J.C. Ryle in his book, Holiness.

Incidentally, if you've never read J.C. Ryle, you should stop what you're doing and read him. He's very easy and he's very heartfelt. He's a wonderful author.

J.C. Ryle said this in his first chapter in his book, Holiness. He that wishes to attain right views about Christian holiness must begin by examining the vast and solemn subject of sin.

He must dig down very low if he would build high. So if you're building a skyscraper, you have to dig down really, really deep.

And a mistake here is most mischievous. Wrong views about holiness are generally traceable to wrong views about human corruption.

[5:44] The plain truth is that a right knowledge of sin lies at the root of all saving Christianity. Without it, such doctrines as justification, conversion, sanctification are words and names which convey no meaning to the mind.

So you've heard those words. But if you don't understand sin and what those words mean in relation to sin, then they don't really mean anything. And so I want to say Ryle is completely right.

Not only doctrinally. We don't understand conversion. We don't understand sanctification. We don't understand justification. We don't understand God's love. We don't understand anything about the Christian life intellectually if we don't understand sin.

So it's not only doctrinally, but it's also experientially. He's right about that on practical Christian experience.

We don't understand. We don't understand anything about Christianity if we are under the delusion that we are not sinful.

[6:57] If we don't understand the depth of our sin and our helplessness. If we don't get even now, Paul can say, oh, what a wretched man that I am.

Now, I think it's very common. This is something that we're continually learning.

That we are more sinful than we first realized. The Christian life begins with this burst of light. And we see it for the very first time.

Oh, I am guilty. I am sinful. I am weak. I am helpless. I am guilty before God. I am, I am, I am messed up. The Christian life begins with this great burst of light.

So we don't live in ignorance anymore. When we see something of ourselves. But we're continually learning this. We're continually learning something about, oh, I thought I was okay in this area.

Well, it turns out maybe I'm not so okay. I'll just give you some personal experience here This week I've realized that there's a lot more greed in my heart Than I ever thought A lot more stinginess and not so much graciousness That's something that God taught me just this week In some experiences of my life Five years ago I wouldn't have said that, yeah, that's a problem But now I'm starting to see it Well, let me just put it in another way It's very common for even new Christians to be saved They see their sinfulness, they come to Christ, they are forgiven They have new life in Jesus Christ And things do really change But they can be under this delusion Or this confusion That their sin is somehow manageable now

It's somehow tameable They think that maybe they can talk sin out of being not so sinful Or something It can be tamed, it can be controlled And now that they can somehow be and do good things without Jesus Christ He's what I needed then, but not really so much now I'm set now And now I can live this life that I'm supposed to live And so let's say a Christian couple They get married And what do so many young Christian couples Or Christian parents What do they think and what do they do?

They have all these expectations for themselves They have all these ideas of what they're going to do And be And they say to themselves I'm going to be this perfect husband And the wife says I'm going to be this perfect wife We're not going to do what our parents did We're not going to do what other people did We're not going to mess up in all the other ways that people mess up We got this We can do this And you admire their zeal You admire their earnestness They are serious But in one area They're mistaken And I'll tell you what happens Is One or both of them sin In a really substantial way Not one of those tameable sins Not one of those little easy to cover over sins But not so bad sins So to speak And there are the sins that we just have That just allow us to keep this

Good opinion of ourselves No, we're talking Big sin happens And in harsh Stringent Painful grace God says I'm not going to let you continue In that self-righteousness That proud opinion You are desperate for me And this proud Balloon that We're not going to be like everyone else We're not going to have the same problems We're not going to sin That balloon is popped And only when that proud Self-righteousness Is popped Does You know Can growth And holiness And happiness And humility begin Where it changes The complexion Of their life Now instead of Just being full of expectation

They're They're full of Humility And they're full of trust And they're They're depending on the Lord And so That isn't An academic misunderstanding About sin That is the problem It's an It's an experiential Misunderstanding About sin That is the problem That I Am the center Without real sin It's impossible To get to see Real grace As long as our sin Is minimized And tame And easy To deal with And it leaves our Our pride intact We don't have Very much room For grace We don't sing Amazing grace Because grace To us Wouldn't be that amazing So in the words Of Ryle The right knowledge Of sin Lies at the root Of all saving Christianity Everything else Is just words And names Until you understand It So that's why We have to begin With the fall

We are not going To begin here And stay here And this is all We're going to do And focus on But you have to Begin here So what happened In the fall And we just want To talk about Four things Very quickly And there are Going to be Four things That you already Know But I hope And I pray That the Holy Spirit Would show you Oh this is what Happened to me This is where I was This is what I'm recovering Out of This is what God has saved Me from So four things Very quickly The first is The image of God Was defaced The image of God Was defaced In man We are going To talk about This Lord willing More this evening But the image Image of God Was the special Way that God Made you He made you Different from Animals He made you In his image He created us As his image Now an image Is always in

Relation to Something else So you have A portrait And it's an image Of a person And so in the Same way We're in Relation to God We're a Reflection Of him We're no Longer We're meant To live Face to face With him We're meant To walk With him We're meant To be his Royal son In this world If you look At the word The way the word Image is used Throughout the Whole bible It has this Very strong Connection to Being the son Of someone So Seth Was in the Image of Adam He was his Son He was like Adam And so in The same way We were meant To be God's Royal son In this Created world We were meant To rule And have Dominion But we were Meant to do It as As the sons Of God As the eternal Son in some Way Like just

Like Jesus Does But what Happened in The fall Is that Image is Defaced We no Longer live Face to face With God Your children Aren't living Face to face With God In this Loving Son Father Father Son Relationship We no Longer walk With him In the cool Of the evening We no Longer see Him Or understand Him We were Meant to Live this Face to face As this Image And to Live in Relation to Him And know Him And to Be known By him And now What we Talked about In our Memory verse There's just Ignorance And we're Blind to him And we're Running away From him And instead Of being Like God In righteousness Holiness And happiness We become Something Totally Different Something Very Unlike Him Unrighteous Unholy And miserable

And so When God Looks at Us In our Fallen Condition He no Longer Sees a Son Who loves Him And who Is like Him And who Wants to Follow Him Who Reflects Him And shows Him To the World He sees A Prodigal Son Who Isn't Like Him Who Doesn't Reflect Him Who Doesn't Rule His Way And we Don't See Him We Don't Know Him The Relationship Is Severed We're Lost Lost To God And Lost Even in Our Own Selves We Don't Know Where We're Going Or What We're Supposed To Be Doing So Isn't That What Happened And this Is The Most Devastating Thing About The Fall Is God Came To Adam In The Cool Of The Evening To Walk With Them To Have Fellowship To Be A Friend And Adam Is Now Hiding Adam

Doesn't Want Anything To Do With God Adam Feels Guilty And He Feels Ashamed And His Relationship With His Wife Is No Longer What It Used To Be His Relationship With God He's Is Is Afraid And That's What Sin Has Done To Us This Is What We Have Done To Ourselves We Have Walked Into The Darkness And Because We're So Now Hostile To God We Love The Darkness Because The Darkness Covers Us The We Think It Covers Us From His Eyes We Love The Darkness And So We Ecclesiastes Says We Wander From Scheme To Scheme We're Not Thinking Right We're Not Living Righteously All We Have Our Schemes So We Don't Know God And We Don't Know The Way To Go That's That's What We Mean That Image Of God Is Defaced In Us We Aren't Like

Him Anymore And Our Relationship With Him Is Cut Off And We Have Become Instead Of The Sons Of God We're Now The Sons Of The Devil And We're Like Him We're Proud And We're Disobedient And We Are Miserable The World Thinks That The Devil Is A Comical Figure He Is The Most Miserable Of All There's No Laughing Devil There's Only A Proud Isolated Miserable Devil And We Reflect Him We Reflect Him So Now When We Gain Power When Sinful Men Gain Power We Dominate And We Lord It Over Others And We Abuse That Power And We Use People And So We're Just Like Him Instead Of Ruling Sacrificially And Lovingly Instead Of Living In Our World With A Gracious Attitude Now It's Nothing But Hostility

We Want What We Want And We're Going To Lord It Over Everyone So The Devil Has Taken Us We're Cut Off From God But Now We're In The Grip Of The Devil I've Asked Stan Heaney To Read Ephesians 2 1 Through 4 And Just Listen To Our State And Our Fallenness Can You

Actually Finish That God Who Is Rich In Mercy Made Us Alive With Christ Even When We Were Dead In Transgressions It Is By Grace You Have Been Saved So We Were Enslaved To The Devil We Were Doing What We Wanted But What We Wanted Was The Evil That The Devil Wanted For Us And So We Were Like Obedient Children Weren't We Obedient Children To Our Father I Don't Know If We Give This Enough Do I Know Sometimes I Forget John Calls Him The Prince Of This World Second Corinthians 4 4 Paul Calls Him The God Of This Age He Takes Men Captive And He Has All Of Them Captive Except For Those Who Are In Christ And

So This Is The Traged We Think We're Free We Think We're Doing What You Know Is Good For Us But We're Slaves To Satan He's Taken Us Captive To Do His Will So Do You See The Complete 180 Degree Change In Our Relationships So We We We Were Me To Live As Obedient Children With God As His Image Bearers As His Royal Sons We Were Me To Reflect Him Into Our World And Now Instead Of That We're Cut Off From Him And Our Father Is The Devil And We Just Do What He Wants And We Live In This Darkness And We Live As Slaves Instead Of Sons That Leads Is Our Third Point What Happens Is We're Guilty Before God We're Not We're Not Only Miserable We're Guilty And I'm Not Talking About The Feelings Of Guilt I'm Talking About The Real Liability To Judgment

You Can Feel One Way Or Another You Know There Are Criminals That Are What The World Call Psychopas They Have No Conscience!

[22:00] done. But they are still guilty. And that's what we're talking about. We can be like that. We can be guilty and we don't even see it as a problem and we don't care.

And that's where we were. God judges the world. He judges it in righteousness. He judges it according to the truth, not by appearances or anything else. And so in accordance with our works, he repays men for what they do.

And so, yeah, the Bible does talk about the judgment is tempered by how much light we have. So if we have very little light, the judgment takes that into account.

The more light, the more guilt, the less light, the less guilt. But that in no way says that any of us are innocent. So here we are. We're guilty and we don't have anything to justify ourselves. We have no argument. We have no excuses. And on the last day, Paul says in the book of Romans, every mouth will be closed. Shut. Without a word to say. People have lots to say now, but that day is coming when every mouth will be shut and he will declare men guilty and no one will be able to say a word.

In their defense. And so this is our fall. We're ruined. We're enslaved. We're guilty. And we're also under the dominion of sin and death.

[23:42] So not only are we slaves to Satan, we're slaves to sin, to the very thing that destroys us. And because we're slaves of sin, we're in chains to death.

We're powerless. We can't escape. And our own worst enemy is ourselves. Our very problem. Sin is our master.

We're not somehow free. There's no freedom. There's no freedom of the will. That's just a proud delusion. We're enslaved to the acts that lead to death.

And so we're ruined. We're enslaved to the devil. We're guilty before God. We're totally hopeless. We're doomed. Have you felt that in a while?

Like my sin would leave me doomed. Unrighteous. Unable. Unworthy. Trapped. Helpless. Hopeless.

[24:48] Miserable. Dead. Dying. Doomed. That's the fall.

That's where we begin. And so. That's our situation. So we're at the bottom of a bottomless pit. And now what.

Is our only hope. What's our only hope is. Our only hope is someone else. Our only hope is someone else could come and rescue us.

Our only hope is God. Our only hope is Christ. And so now. Now that we have. At least. An idea. Of the situation. That we.

Are finding ourselves in. Apart from Christ. Now what. Well here's the glorious thing that the Bible talks about.

[25:46] God. Has a plan. God has a plan. And it's a plan to save. It's a plan to do us good. And so. After the fall.

After the fall. In the garden. One of the very first things that we find out. Is that God. Has a plan. There's going to be another son.

That comes. Not like Adam. Another son. And he's going to crush. The devil. The one who holds us captive.

And so God has this plan. And he has this plan to save us. He isn't caught flat footed. He isn't caught unable. He isn't caught. Wondering what to do now. No.

God. This is the glorious truth of the gospel. And this is our assurance. And this is our hope. That our God is a thinking. Planning. God. God has a plan to make everything sad.

[ 26:43 ] And everything ruined. He has a plan to reverse it all. So everything. Every sad thing is going to come undone. And so. At the end. He says. Behold. I am making all things new.

And that was the plan all along. And so this is our great comfort. In mercy. God has a plan. And he's going to carry it out. He's the saving God.

And he has an agenda. And he's going to carry out that agenda. So. Romans 8. 28 through 30. I'm going to read this for you. It's a very common. Very familiar verse.

But in light of what we just talked about. About everything that we lost. About all of our ruin. And our misery. And our sadness. Listen to how everything that we. Up to that point.

Have. Have been experiencing. In our sin. Listen to how it all comes undone. And. And so this is why we can have hope. The big question of Romans.

[27:39] Five. Six. Seven. Eight. Is what. How can we have hope. While we're still waiting. Romans 8. This is why we can have hope. And this is it. And we know that in all things.

God works for the good of those who love him. What is that good. That he is working for us. Who have been called. According. To his purpose. That's a planning word.

I have a purpose for my day. Do you wake up. And you have a purpose for your day. And you write a to-do list. You're making a plan. You're acting like the image of God. Well God has this purpose.

His plan. For those God foreknew. He also predestined. That's a planning word. He's predestined to be conformed. To the likeness of his son.

There's that image. Again. Those image words. And again. What is he restoring us to? What image are we going to carry? We're going to carry the image of his son. Sons of God again.

[ 28:40 ] That he might be the firstborn. Among many brothers. Do you see. We lost it all in the fall. But God's saying. I'm going to bring them back.

And they're going to be sons and daughters. For me again. Those he predestined. He also called. And those he called. He also justified.

And those he justified. He also glorified. God has this purpose. And so these words about. Calling. And justification.

And glorification. And predestination. Those are not. Barren. Sterile. Doctrine words. That we're meant to like. Draw our sword. And fight with other people. Needlessly about.

There are truths to maintain. There are truths to hold. But what I'm saying is. That's not the purpose. In Romans 8. 28. The purpose is. I can have hope. Hope. I can have hope.

[29:36] Because my God. Is planning something. And this is what he's doing. Here it is. And it ends with my. Being in the image of God. Again. Being glorified. This is a.

These are marching. Band. Doctrine words. These are not. Just sterile. Words. There's a rhythm to this. God is doing it. God has planned it. He's marching forward.

God knows how to start. And he knows. He's going to finish it. So image restored. Sonship regained. Guilt reversed. Misery turned to glory.

That's the plan of God. Now how is that going to happen? How is that going to happen? I don't know that we have time to read all of it.

But Ephesians 1. 3 through 14. Again and again. There's these two words. That crop up. There's a lot of the same words.

[30:31] As Romans 8. 28 and 30. There's predestined. And things like that. But again. These two words happen again and again. In Ephesians 1. 3 through 14. And it says. In Christ.

Here's the plan. Here's the plan. I'm going to put them. In Christ. I'm going to connect them. So in him. We have redemption.

The forgiveness of sins. In him. We have every spiritual blessing. In him. We're predestined. In him. We have hope. In him. We're made. We know the truth.

In him. We have this new standing of being holy. And blameless. In his sight. So Romans 8. That. Is like a. A link chain.

The doctrines are. Are interconnecting. They're lying right next to each other. And they're all connecting up that way. So one reality. Leads to the next reality. But in Ephesians.

[31:28] The doctrines are presented in a different way. Now they're a wheel. And inside. The hub of the wheel. Is Christ. And all the other doctrines. Are attached to him. In him.

We're predestined. In him. We're going to be made holy. And blameless. In him. We're forgiven. It's all in him. So. How is God. Going to save us? This is his plan.

How is he going to save us? Not by our works. Not by the things that we have done. Not by our strength. We don't have any of those things.

We can't produce those things. We can't summon them up. We can't somehow. Magically create them. We don't have them. We're not going to have them. In our own strength. It's not by our willpower.

It's not by our love. It's not by our obedience. It's not by anything in us. And this is what he says. In Christ. In Christ we have the Holy Spirit. In Christ we have life.

[32:28] In Christ we have forgiveness of our sins. So we died in Adam. I hope. That's what. That's the main point. What does it mean to be dead? It's like. You're cut off from God.

We live in Christ. We were guilty in Adam. We're justified in Christ. We were. We had. In Adam all we had was.

The law. Which says do this and live. And we couldn't do it. It was just the demand and the expectation. And we were powerless to meet those demands. But now in Christ. Paul says that we live under.

Grace. With his life. Alive in him. And so that's God's plan for us. That's what he has actually. Carried out.

In your life. Christian. You were all of that. All of that sin. And all of that fallenness. And he lifted you up. And he put you. In. To Jesus Christ.

[33:34] And so now he's your light. And he's the vine. And he's your shepherd. And he's your king. And he's your priest. He's your righteousness. Holiness. Everything. That's. That's God's plan.

Put them in Christ. Put them in the Savior. Put them in the hero. Put them in the Redeemer. And in him. Everything is going to be undone. So we're born again.

We're adopted. Into his family. We're welcomed home. In the words of Luke 15. We're. We're invited into the party. Into the party at the father's house.

That's God's plans for us. And he does all. His holy. Will.

This is where his. His great power. And his great wisdom. And his great righteousness. Are so wonderful for us. Because now. All that he is.

[34:36] Is now working. To carry out this plan. His plan. His plan is our good. And nothing. And no one.

And not even you. Can stop. Him. From carrying out his plan. Now. We can go on. But. What do you.

How do you. What should you. What should you be. Taking away from. From this lesson. Of our fall. And God's plan. Two things. The first.

This should lead us. To deeper. Humility. Humility. And I want to be careful here.

I'm not talking about. Being morose. And being sad. And being a depressed person. That's not what I'm talking about. I'm talking about. A real. Understanding. Of. Who we are.

[35:32] An accurate. Understanding. The state. And the dread. And the doom. Of our condition. Outside of Jesus. Should.

Shock us. To deep. Humility. Humility. And that humility. Should work itself out. In our relationships. With other people. When you see.

That sinful. Person. Over there. When you see. That blind. Ignorant. Person. Hurting. Themselves. You should. You have. No room. I have. No room.

To scorn them. Because. But by the grace. Of God. There go. I. And I'm not. Those aren't just words. That's.

The reality. The mercy. And kindness. Of God. That rescued us. Should lead us. To humility. So not only.

[ 36:27 ] How sinful. I was. And how bad. My condition was. But just. The mercy. Of God. Should humble us. Without Christ. I am nothing. But praise.

The Lord. Praise. The Lord. He. He does. Care for me. He does. Love me. He does. Help me. So.

My sin. And his grace. Should make. Us. Humble. And it should. Work itself out. In your life. With your children. With your spouse. You want to know.

The degree. That you understand. These things. Is. How do you. Treat those people. Compassion. Patience. Kindness. Gentleness. Is that how you're acting. Or is it pride.

Is that I'm better than you. Is that I'm. I'm smarter than you. That's just what you're thinking. And you have no room for pity. You have no room for mercy. You don't understand grace.

[37:23] And your sinfulness. So humility. That we are so loved. So sought. So helped. That he would notice me. That he would love me. That he would have a plan.

And he would carry it out for me. But not just humility. Great. Assurance. Great. Assurance.

A lot of Christians. Wrestle with this area. This lack of assurance. Is generally caused. By getting trapped.

In ourselves. We have two eyes on us. And maybe one eye. On. On Christ. And so real assurance. Doesn't depend on me.

The. The unsure. Christian. The unconfident. The un. And what I mean by that. Is confident in the Lord. Is always a Christian.

[38:21] Trapped in herself. In herself. She's always. Disconnected. At least emotionally. Or at least. At this deep spiritual level. She's disconnected. From Christ. She's not really. Disconnected. I'm not saying that.

She is intimately. Connected. And the great. And the. The thing that. We need to do. And that needs to happen. In her life. Is that she needs to see. How connected she is. But. She doesn't see.

Or feel that. And that's the sad part. She's not really. Disconnected. But. She still. Feels. Like she.

Doesn't quite belong. Or he doesn't quite belong. So she doesn't understand. The greatness. Of God's love.

The wonder. Of God's plan. But. She is a dearly loved. Child of God. That's what she is.

[39:18] He loves her. He loves him. And she is a fully. Forgiven. Saint. That's God's plan. That's what God is doing.

In her life. And he. Loves her. He loves him. And so real assurance. Comes from. Comes from what God has done. Samuel Rutherford wrote. A letter to one saint.

And it's a word for us. And it's a word for you. He said this. Your rock. Is Christ. And it is not the rock. Which ebbs and flows.

But your sea. What he's saying is. You're the sea. He's the rock. You ebb and flow. He doesn't ebb and flow. He doesn't change.

So we ebb and flow. Our feelings change. Our love changes. Our faith grows. Our shrinks. Our obedience. Our energy. They're all waxing and waning.

[40:16] Throughout our entire life. We're the sea. And he is the rock eternal. And so all of our blessings. Are in Christ. And so.

Assurance comes from saying. Looking down at our feet. And saying. On. Christ. The solid. Rock. I stand. I'm not. Falling.

I'm not stumbling. I'm standing. And underneath. Are the everlasting arms. So this is. Just to sum this up.

Brothers and sisters. Where sin abounded. Grace much more abounded. It's super abounded. It means.

It went to a whole nother level. Went to a whole other level. So if sin sunk us to the basement. Grace reached all the way down.

[41:10] Into the bedrock. And pulled us out. We didn't sink beneath. His grace. And if sin abounded. To the very top floor. Well.

His love. Reaches. To the skies. It goes over. It abounds. So grace reaches. And grace. Swallows up. Sin. So.

That's man's fall. And that's God's. Plan. He has a plan. He's carrying it out. He's going to put us in Christ. And over the next few weeks.

We're going to see how God unfolds this plan in our lives. And what we have in him. But I. I want you to go away from here. With strength in your heart.

Take heart. Yes. You're more sinful than you ever thought. But you are. You are loved. Dear Christian. More than you could realize. While we're dismissed.

[42:09] Thank you.