

How Humanity Lost the Good Life

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[0 : 00] One in our study, based on that book, Jonathan Edwards on the Good Life, and follow up last week as we took a look at what the foundation of the good life is.

We saw Adam and Eve, as they lived in a world that displayed the glory of God, they experienced a real goodness of life in that world.

And only they, as humans, who were made in the image of God, had that consciousness or that awareness of God. So they weren't living in that world as mere reflectors of the glory of God or as mere individuals who recognized, say, the glory of God.

But they experienced a real joy and a pleasure as God praising active participants in the world that he had designed, willingly living out his glorious design for them and their relationship with him as God.

That was something special that they had as human beings. They loved him. They talked to him, listened to him, followed his wise counsel for life in the world.

[1 : 28] Even as human beings in that innocence, they still needed his counsel for life, and they needed to listen to it as they did. They enjoyed the pleasures and joys of living in such a beautiful place and in their relationship with God, the creator of all that they were experiencing.

But they also enjoyed that good life with each other. They loved each other, and as they filled their roles as husband and wife, as I said last, that we have limited revelation of their life together there in the garden before the fall.

But I'm sure they enjoyed many of the riches that God had designed for them to enjoy as husband and wife there in the roles that they had.

She as Adam's helper, and he as the leader, provider, protector, and on and on. And then they also enjoyed the pleasures of living in right relationship with the rest of creation, able to exercise careful stewardship and dominion there in the garden that they were placed in to enjoy and to live and to care for.

So at that time, Adam and Eve, and really, they were enjoying the good life. And as a quote from the book says, they and all life that existed really within them at that time were invested with potential of the richest kind, the potential to live in perfect harmony with God, experiencing his goodness and grace forever and ever.

[3 : 16] What a great prospects that they had in front of them. And in fact, I came across a verse this morning, Psalm 1611, that reflects this. As the psalmist said, You make known to me the path of life.

And that's what he was doing there with Adam and Eve, as they came into existence and God revealing to them little by little information they needed for the path of life that they were going to walk and the enjoyment of that in their relationship with him, each other, and the rest of creation.

So the psalmist says, You make known to me the path of life. In you, in your presence, is the fullness of joy. Again, that's what they were experiencing, the fullness of joy in God's presence as he came to them and talked to them and counseled them.

He says, At your right hand are pleasures forevermore. Forevermore. Forevermore. So that's what was ahead of them as they continued in enjoying that kind of relationship with God.

Pleasures at his right hand forevermore. Wonderful things to look forward to. And it was indeed a beautiful scene. God was abundantly, abundantly good to them.

[4 : 31] Good to them. In fact, as he said, everything that he had made was very good. And that was their situation. God was that beginning point or that foundation and ongoing source, really, of the good life that Adam and Eve were privileged to live.

And that really was ahead for any that would come from them. But, as we're learning this morning, that which they, and again, potentially all people would have, and that would come from Adam and Eve, enjoyed it didn't last.

The good life they enjoyed for a time came to an end. And so Jonathan Edwards addressed this issue in at least two of his works, one titled Original Sin and the other one Religious Affections.

And so we can, from these, we can learn and be reminded, at least from Jonathan Edwards' writings, how humanity really lost the good life.

And in his writings, he explains something of Adam and Eve's inner person design, God's design of Adam and Eve, their inner person prior to their sin.

[5 : 55] And he used the terms inferior and superior principles, something I had not come across before either. He described Adam and Eve's condition with those terms.

He suggested that God had created them with these two different principles that operated within them as human beings. The inferior principles, these were spiritually neutral principles, that included man's natural appetites, his passions, and the activities that flowed from those.

The natural self-love that they had for themselves, the instincts, the pleasures that motivated them to care for themselves, their desire to eat, to reproduce, to work, and on and on.

And all those desires that made up Adam and Eve, just that were essential for life. They're in the garden. Inferior principles.

And then the superior principles, those principles were spiritually holy and divine. Those characteristics and part of their nature that oriented them toward God and made them alive and aware and conscious toward God.

[7 : 12] That's what made them different from the rest of the creatures there. We talked about that last week, that awareness, consciousness that they had of God that lifted their enjoyment of living in that creation to a higher level because ultimately the greatest pleasure can be in knowing God, knowing him as that creator.

Well, how did they work together? Quote, from Edwards, these superior principles were given to possess the throne and maintain an absolute dominion in the heart. The other, the inferior principles, those natural appetites, were to be wholly subordinate and subservient.

And while things continued thus, all things were in excellent order, peace, and beautiful harmony in their proper and perfect state.

So while the superior principles were in domination and the inferior principles were subject to those superior principles, while all of those natural appetites were expressed in ways that would glorify the maker, it wouldn't be put forth in sinful, selfish ways because they were flowing out of this God consciousness, a heart that was oriented toward God and living for his glory in everything that they did.

But things didn't continue in that state. The way I describe it, that love orientation of the inner man changed in Adam and Eve.

[9 : 09] The inferior principles of the inner man gained dominion in their hearts. Instead of living in love for God and in faith, living by his wise and loving counsel for faith indeed was essential even at that time, as God had given them counsel for how to live, certainly in their relationships with each other and how to live in relationship with him as God, but then also with the rest of the creation.

They had to believe in their hearts, well, this is all good, wise counsel. I will go in this way and live the good life, put it in our terms of what we're studying here.

But instead of living in love for God and in faith, living by his wise and loving counsel, they followed the voice of another. In this case, it was Satan, who brought counsel of a different kind to their ears and introduced this to, in the case that we're looking at here, with Eve.

And something different was presented to her. And they followed Satan's counsel and that of their own heart's self-dominating desires.

And how it actually happens, difficult for anybody to understand, explains for how could Adam and Eve in their sinless condition sin against God.

[10 : 40] Well, we do have to remember that even though they were sinless, they did have the potential to sin. We see that in Genesis 2, 16 and 17, after God had placed Adam and Eve in the garden, he commanded Adam, you're free to eat from any tree in the garden, but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it, you will surely die.

So a command isn't given unless the one commanded really has the potential to obey or to disobey. So we recognize that that potential was there with Adam and Eve, even in their innocence at that time.

And as we think that through further, after sin was committed, well, with a sinful nature, man doesn't have the capacity now not to sin. He has that sinful nature.

Prior, he had the capacity to sin. After sin, now he's in that state or condition where he has the capacity not to sin.

That's his bent now, the orientation of his heart. And we follow that through. Once a redeemed person is in, once a person is redeemed, now he has the capacity both not to sin and to sin.

[11 : 57] We've seen that in Pastor John's messages on identity. In the past, we were slaves to sin. Now sin doesn't have mastery over you. You can yield yourselves, your members as instruments of righteousness.

Now you can go either way. Now once, taking that a step further, once a person is in the presence of Jesus Christ, or he or she is in that state of that condition of not being able to sin.

Now we're delivered from that presence and the power of sin completely. So you see those four different, I'll call them stages, but Adam and Eve were in that first stage where they did have that capacity to choose to disobey God.

And indeed, that is what they did. So the unblemished good that Adam and Eve had in the garden was lost. Again, when they turned from that life of love for God and faith in his wise and loving counsel and really loved themselves more and disobeyed him.

God was worthy of their total love. He was worthy of that. Just because of who he was, he was worthy of their total love.

[13 : 19] But something else was presented to them through Satan that turned their love away from God to self and they sinned and disobeyed God. We recognize that, again, that different counsel, that different voice that came in Satan when he contradicted what God said.

God had laid out for them, this is the path for the good life. Satan came with a different message, saying, well, you will not surely die, the serpent said to the woman, for God knows that when you eat of it, your eyes will be open and you'll be like God, knowing good and evil.

Pretty much saying, life will be better for you. So, again, questioning that doubt that began to enter their minds of living this life of faith, love, and faith for God and what God had said, this is the path for your flourishing.

And Satan coming along and saying, well, no, that's not quite right. There's something God's holding back from you and actually things will be better.

You won't really die, but in fact, your situation will be better. You'll become like God, knowing both good and evil, if you set aside his counsel and rather pursue and do the counsel that I'm providing you right now.

[14 : 45] And that's indeed what they did. Another quote from Edwards about God and his excellency.

If God be infinitely excellent in himself, then he is infinitely lovely on that account. Or in other words, infinitely worthy to be loved.

And doubtless, if he be worthy to be loved for this, then he ought to be loved for this. I mean, he's worthy of that kind of love because he's infinite in beauty in and of himself.

So because he is that way, well, he's worthy of that kind of love. And if he's worthy of that kind of love, then he ought to be loved because of who he is.

And he's worthy of that. And tis manifest, there can be no true love to him if he be not loved for what he is in himself.

[15 : 46] And so that's what should have been in the mindset and before Adam and Eve. Not losing sight of the infinite worthiness of their heart's orientation of love toward God because simply who he is.

And that's how they should have continued to love God. But again, Satan did cast a different version of God as someone who was withholding something good from Adam and Eve.

You see how that was happening there. God really isn't worthy of your full heart's devotion and love because he's really not who he's presented himself to be.

He's holding back on you. So lower this vision of the worthiness of God and love for him and now their hearts can be oriented in a different direction.

That's the very importance of why it's, again, important for us to keep a proper biblical perspective and understanding of who God is.

[16 : 55] Because in any temptation, that really is what is at stake. Am I going to really believe who God is as he's revealed in his word as someone who is worthy of my full heart's love and devotion or am I going to believe that he's something other than what's revealed in his word and therefore my heart can go someplace else?

And so that's what was happening as far as we can understand in Adam and Eve's heart instead of loving God as he revealed himself to them, they longed for and went after what they thought would be better.

Another quote from Edwards. For if we love him not for his own sake but for something else, then our love is not terminated on him but on something else as its ultimate object.

If we love not God because he is what he is but only because he is profitable to us, in truth, we love him not at all.

If we seem to love him, our love is not to him but to something else. Now when I was reading this quote, man, that is really a challenge to me and what is the level of my heart's love for God?

[18 : 19] Is it truly for who he is in and of himself or simply because of what he brings to me in my life? Adam and Eve loved God when they became convinced that God was withholding something good from them.

It was more, quote unquote, profitable for them to disobey God and go their own way. They didn't love God simply for who he was but only for what he gave them.

And I got the question for myself and all of us, is that what our love for him is like? We only love him for what we gain from him and not simply because of who he is.

When we lose what we think is profitable to us, what we think we must have in this world to live, we'll say the good life, and we turn from God, then we see that our love was not for God alone but for who he is, but for something else.

And I'm willing to love God as long as what? What would you fill in the blank there? You recognize that your love and devotion for God is strong until something is withdrawn or something is threatened.

[19 : 39] And then we begin questioning. And I'm recognizing, you know, that struggle happens within us as we're dealing with sin. Are you telling me I don't love God? Well, I'm telling you, you need to be careful.

We need to be careful. And those can be really revealing times, which is important for us to learn about ourselves. What is the level of my love for God who is worthy of all my love at all times, in all circumstances?

Well, that comes to light when the threat is there of certain thing that I enjoy, which nothing wrong with enjoying it, but what's the level, the degree to which I enjoy that?

To come to the degree that it's greater than my love for God so that when it's removed or threatened that now I'm no longer willing to follow him.

I'm accusing him and cursing him for the way life is now. That's why I hope you're getting what I was struggling with as I was reading this and seeing this and examining my own heart's love.

[20 : 58] Another quote from the book, humanity transgressed against God by not doing what he desires. True. By not respecting as he deserves. Yes. But most damningly, by not obeying him out of a heart justifiably filled with love and adoration for who he is.

Though mankind had every reason to trust and love God, he chose not to in the wake of Adam's fall. Choosing to love lesser things and live a lesser life, he resigned himself to sadness and death.

And so that is the life lived apart from a heart truly devoted to God. And sometimes you might say people want to, well, I know unsafe people that are very happy in life and they don't love God.

Just a couple thoughts and points on that as kind of a parenthesis. If we're making that point, it's kind of like Asaph was doing.

These people don't love God, they don't honor God, and they're living the good life. Well, it's kind of a picture of helping us understand, really, I've come to the wrong conclusion of what the good life is.

[22 : 14] If I'm concluding that the good life is a good life, even though it does not include God, I've got the wrong understanding of what the good life is.

The good life is a life, only a life that is lived in loving adoration of God and in faith in his wise counsel and living that out in all that I do, in all aspects of my life.

That is the good life. So an unbeliever cannot live in reality what the good life is because they're living it apart from the one who designed and created the good life, the one who is ultimately beauty in all ways, in all aspects.

So they can't live and experience the fullness of the good life. So they may say that they're happy and make like they're wonderful and enjoying life and happy, but they're still living far less when they could be if they had that heart orientation toward God.

So don't fall into that trap. Don't let that be set before you as something, well, I can live like that and have a good life.

[23 : 40] You can't. Don't listen to that temptation. Don't let your heart's desires go there and deceive you into thinking that such a thing is even possible.

You'd be giving up the greatest treasure that makes up the good life. And then the second point, thinking of unfathed living the good life.

Well, even if they do live a good life for 60 years, 70 years, we know the verse, what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world but lose his own soul for eternity?

So just a couple points to think on and meditate on when that temptation comes to your own heart that they're enjoying the good life. They're not enjoying the good life.

Well, Adam and Eve lost those pleasures of the good life when they sinned. There were immediate and ongoing effects. Adam and Eve and all humanity certainly acquired that sinful nature.

[24 : 47] Another quote from the book, every person stands guilty before God. As a result of the representative role Adam occupied before the Lord, he actually passed on his apostasy and guilt to all people in an organic, holistic way.

So every person born of an Adam and Eve, there would be that God-defined nature of sin that exists within our hearts.

We see that throughout the scriptures. I just selected a couple scripture passages. Ecclesiastes 7.20, There is not a righteous man on earth who does what is right and never sins.

It affected all human beings. Romans 5.12, Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man and death through sin, and in this way, death came to all men because all sinned.

sin. So all lost that capacity for the good life because of the change within his nature. That love orientation of his heart followed his nature.

[25 : 52] This new nature, new nature of sin that was his inner man. It's that dominating direction. Now it was towards self instead of God.

The heart inclination of love oriented toward self instead of God, now man's whole being instead of being directed toward loving and obeying God was and continues to be directed at loving and satisfying self, living a life independent of God.

God is not necessary now in life in their thinking. Another quote from Edwards, the inferior principles of self-love and natural appetite which were given only to serve, being alone and left to themselves, of course, became the reigning principles.

Having no superior principles to regulate or control them no longer had this awareness, this love orientation toward God to act as supreme and guide the rest of these principles, desires, in a human being.

The inferior principles became absolute masters of the heart. Man did not, man did immediately set up himself and the objects of his private affections and appetites as supreme and so they took the place of God.

[27 : 23] And the darkness, the heaviness, the weight of sin now ruling in the life of man and looking for expression in a variety of ways.

It could be into the deepest recesses of expressions of sin that we would characterize, whether it's murder, sexual immorality, so on and so forth, or in self-righteous acts, both being independent from God, seeking to live life apart from God, setting themselves up themselves as masters of their lives and seeking to orient their lives in whatever direction they would decide is best that would make them happy in life.

well, the immediate effect certainly we can see from Genesis 3 with God instead of running to God when they heard him in the garden coming, however form it was that he was there prior to sin, how they would enjoy hearing the voice of God.

They saw God as the one that gave them the counsel they needed for their relationship again with him, with each other, and the rest of creation, and as they heard this sweet counsel and did it, oh, the pleasures of life were wonderful and good, but that all changed now.

Now when God came in the garden, they ran from him. What a situation for them to experience nothing like that before in their life there, in their relationship with God, they're always going to him, now running from what's going on, what a sad picture that presents.

[29 : 17] Instead of continuing to thank God for the expressions of his goodness in the case of Adam in providing him a wife, now Adam is blaming God for his sin because it was God who gave him Eve.

It's because of you, the woman you gave me, she gave me this, and this is why this is happening. Wow. Instead of going to God and confessing their sin and seeking his help and salvation, they tried to provide their own solution for the guilt and shame they were experiencing, covering themselves up, what were they experiencing?

Again, the first time they experienced the shame of guilt, that's what we are reading about or memorizing in that verse, the heaviness, darkness that the psalmist is experiencing there, why need to find some deliverance from that?

Of course, now in their darkened understanding, they're trying to find out how do we deal with this? What is this that I'm experiencing? Cover myself with these leaves, thinking that that would solve it, but it wouldn't bring back what they lost just by trying to come up with their own methods.

They didn't run to God, but ran from him and tried to think of their own ways to solve this problem, and in the end they had to leave the garden, were separated from God's presence, but also with each other.

[30 : 42] Instead of enjoying an openness with each other, the guilt and shame of their sin moved them to cover their nakedness, no longer this openness and freedom with each other. After Eve was deceived and sinned, Adam didn't lead her to God, but willingly followed her lead and offer and ate the fruit.

I mean, a lot of hypothetical things here. If he was going to be the true man of God, that he should have been to Eve when she fell into her sin and was deceived, being her loving protector, he should have taken her and led her to God, but he didn't.

He very openly, knowingly gave in and took the fruit and ate it. Even for Adam and other men that would come after him, instead of loving leadership, the inclination of their sinful hearts would be to rule over their wives with a domineering spirit.

Instead of being Adam's loving helper to help Adam love and obey God, Eve ate the fruit and then gave him the forbidden fruit. Was that helpful to Adam? It wasn't helpful, but in her darkened understanding, now she was operating in that realm and didn't do, didn't come alongside as a loving helper, but gave him the fruit and let him down that path.

We're seeing the expressions, the effects of this fall and we continue to see it in our world today, even in our own lives.

- [32 : 16] For Eve and other women after her, they would desire to rule over their husband instead of living the good life as reverent, submissive helper to him. Even in the environment, instead of being able to have dominion over and manage creation with a refreshing soul satisfaction, the ground now is cursed and would produce thorns and thistles and his work would be with painful toil by the sweat of his brow.

So as that satisfaction of the good life escaped Adam and Eve, as I said, it still escapes people today who build the good life on something other than love.

forgot, still escapes us. All this leaves us with an answer to that question of man's unhappiness and inability to find satisfaction.

The flesh, as Edwards would call the inferior principles, now rules that sinful nature within without that heart orientation toward God, now that other part rules man.

Another quote from Edwards, when man sinned and broke God's covenant and fell under his curse, these superior principles left his heart. For indeed, God then left him that communion with God in which these principles depended entirely ceased.

- [33 : 53] Therefore, immediately, the superior divine principles wholly ceased, so light ceases in a room when a candle was withdrawn. And thus, man was left in a state of darkness, woeful corruption and ruin, nothing but flesh without spirit.

You see, it described in the scriptures in different ways, Ephesians 2, one, dead in transgressions and sins. Romans 6, again, we heard from Pastor John in this message a few weeks ago, described as the body of sin, slaves to sin, sin had the mastery over the people.

You continue to draw out these descriptions of man in this condition. You see the darkness, the heaviness, the burden.

What are you doing? We just had Christmas. We're supposed to be happy here. Next, we're going to take a look at the restoration. So the restoration will only be as treasured and valuable as we see the darkness of what was lost in sin.

Man did not lose his conscience in this instance, conscience in this instance, but he did lose his ability to obey his conscience consistently. In this awful condition, he could glimpse at a higher, better way of life existed than that which he chose, but he could never lay hold of it.

- [35 : 24] And he often did not want to, preferring the filth of his natural, sin-driven lifestyle. Instead of loving what was good and true and beautiful, he ran wherever his sinful, selfish appetites drove him and still drive him.

So sin disordered our affections, dead and trespasses, and confused them. Deceitfully motivates us now to love sin, to hate God, to forsake his good design for our lives.

Even with the law of God written on their hearts and their consciences bearing witness of what is right, they still, as it says in Romans, suppress the truth of God and follow their own hearts desires.

As they said, Romans 1.18, the wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness men who suppress the truth in their wickedness.

They do not want to submit and admit that God should be worshipped and loved above all. The orientation of their heart is still toward having that good and life, a life of pleasure and joy, but only according to their design.

[36 : 50] It's still there, drawing them in that direction, but they will have it only by their design. They still have to come up with some answers, some standard, some direction to go in, but in the darkness of the heart, it's excluding God as supreme, the one to be loved above all, and that will direct me in the right way.

follow, they were gratifying the cravings of sinful nature, following its desires and thoughts, Ephesians 2, 3.

So the outworking of original sin is what we see throughout scriptures. You go throughout the scriptures, that's what's going on there. And in our world today, it's this that necessitated the coming of Jesus into the world to deliver us from the power of sin that prevents people from desiring and enjoying living for his glory and adoration of who he is.

As I said, even we as Christians, even though we're at that stage where we don't have to sin, we still have the capacity to sin, we still recognize that those desires, those principles within us that seek to draw us in that direction.

As a result, there's a conflict going on within us. The flesh lusts against the spirit, the spirit against the flesh. 1 Peter 2.13, Peter came to the people and encouraged them, abstain from sinful desires which war against your soul.

[38 : 33] So those principles still exist within us, even though we're free from their mastery and dominion, we can choose to go in the right way.

And there is hope. for people once again to live the good life and hope revealed in God's word as our verse said last week.

And I hope in your word, how does it go? And in your word I put my hope. Hope revealed in God's word and that's what we'll take a look at next week.

The good news for the restoration of the good life. We thank God that he still continues to exist out of his nature as God.

And he's still the merciful God, the God to be feared, who does grant forgiveness of sin. Let's pray and thank him for that. Father, this morning we do give thanks for who you are.

[39 : 34] I would say what I need and probably what all of us need is a growing understanding of who you are as God.

Our eyes, our heart, and our understanding would be open in such a way that in our affections, our love, the orientation of our hearts would certainly be toward you because we see the worthiness of your person.

We need your help to see that, to understand that, and even to move in that direction. Thank you for what you've done already in the hearts of many. And our hope is that you'll continue to be true to yourself, drawing us more and more toward Jesus Christ and helping us to send this good news out to others, that they too would know your beauty and love you for what you're worthy of.

In Jesus' name, amen. Thank you.