

The Fall and Redemption of Marriage

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[0 : 00] Adam was the head of his wife and he is intentionally undermining God's ordained hierarchy here. He bypasses Adam's leadership completely and inverts God's structure of authority in the marriage by seeking out Eve instead of Adam.

Now, commentators don't always agree about the extent of Adam's knowledge regarding what was happening here. Some believe Adam was there for the entire conversation between Eve and the serpent.

Some believe he showed up later and that's when Eve offered him the fruit. Regardless, we see the devil driving a wedge between the man and his wife.

He not only approaches Eve rather than Adam, but he also manages to move Eve into a position of leadership here. While Adam merely, though willingly, follows her lead rather than stepping in to intervene and protect his wife.

Verse 6 says, Maybe he heard the conversation between Eve and the serpent.

[1 : 29] Maybe he didn't. But he was certainly present when she ate that fruit. Then he followed her lead. And he ate some as well.

So the created order, specifically within marriage, gets turned upside down here. Adam was told to work and to keep, that is to cultivate and to protect what God had given him.

But regarding his wife and marriage, he willingly jumps in the back seat and he lets Eve make this fatal error. And even worse than that, he joins her.

He follows her lead right into sin. Now, at this point, we might be curious as to what Adam was thinking here. Why did he let this happen?

What could possibly motivate him to reject God's word, to neglect his wife, to neglect his responsibilities to her, and to commit this open rebellion against his creator?

[2 : 32] Well, the Bible doesn't provide us with a psychological narrative behind his decision. Obviously, we can't really blame a sinful nature because Adam didn't have a sinful nature.

We also cannot interpret this as Adam being ignorant, as though he didn't know any better. Just the other day, I was watching a cartoon about Adam and Eve with my kids.

And I had to pause at one point to clarify a few things because the cartoon depicted Eve as taking this forbidden fruit to Adam, offering him a bite, and he takes a bite without knowing what he's eating from.

And then all of a sudden, the sky gets dark, and lightning begins flashing all around them, and Adam looks at Eve and says, What is this? What did you give me? They portrayed him as being completely ignorant.

But that's not true. In 1 Timothy 2, Paul very explicitly says, Adam was not deceived. But the woman was deceived and became a transgressor.

[3 : 36] Adam knew what he was doing was wrong. He may not have fully understood what the consequences would be, but he knew he was disobeying God.

The question is, why? What motivated him here? Well, in the masculine mandate, Richard Phillips points to misplaced affection.

I believe John Calvin shared this view, and I'm sure there have been many others. In other words, when Adam faced a choice between God and his wife, he chose his wife.

He made an idol of his wife. Perhaps he thought, Well, I'm supposed to love my wife. What choice do I have? She wants to eat the fruit, so I have to let her, and I have to eat with her, right?

But as Paul would later write, love does not rejoice with wrongdoing. It rejoices with the truth. If a husband allows his wife to fall into sin, or if a husband joins her in that sin, by definition, it is not love.

[4 : 47] It is not love. It's idolatry. It's choosing what God has given, a wife, a marriage, over God, the giver. I don't know whether that thought crossed Adam's mind, but at the very least, he failed to be the leader he was supposed to be in this covenant relationship.

He was supposed to guide her, lead her, protect her, but instead he passively followed her. Again, he was not deceived. He knew what he was doing, but he went right along with her without, as we see, making a single argument.

We see no hint of resistance on his part. And we could point to other potential motives here. Maybe he did hear the serpent's temptation, either firsthand or secondhand, and he aspired to be like God.

I remember one preacher making the case years ago that since Adam did not have a sinful nature driving him to sin, maybe he was just motivated purely by intellectual curiosity.

Maybe he thought, I just want to know something I currently don't know. Other commentators, and even Richard Phillips hints at this, have suggested that Adam was just trying to avoid conflict with his wife.

[6 : 00] And maybe that was built into it. I don't know whether that was the case, but some conflicts are necessary. Some conflicts need to be engaged in, even with our wives, as unpleasant as it can be.

Before I got married, my brother-in-law gave me some advice. He said that once I was married, I would often be tempted to stand my ground and argue with my wife when we didn't see eye to eye.

He suggested, though, that I stop myself whenever I feel tempted to argue and ask myself, is this truly important? Does this really matter?

And he said, if you do that, you'll find that in 99.9% of cases, we're prone to argue with our wives, but it's over something that really doesn't matter. He said, you might want to save those fights for the 0.1% of the time when it's truly important.

Well, I don't know whether the math is accurate, but I agree with him to a point. However, when those 0.1% of cases do arise, when the issue is truly important because it's a matter of God's Word, it's a matter of obedience, husbands must insist upon what is right.

[7 : 23] He should not passively let his wife fall into sin, and he should not passively follow her into sin. No one wants conflict, but every now and then it becomes necessary.

So, whatever was going through Adam's mind, he and Eve ate the fruit, they disobeyed God here, and some of the consequences were immediate.

Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths. 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 among the trees of the garden.

But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, Where are you? And he said, I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked, and I hid myself.

He said, Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat? The man said, The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me the fruit of the tree, and I ate.

[8 : 28] Then the Lord God said to the woman, This is what you have done. What is this you have done? The woman said, The serpent deceived me, and I ate. So you'll notice a stark contrast here between this and the last verse of Genesis chapter 2.

Before sin, Adam and Eve, they were both naked, yet unashamed. Now for the first time ever, they know they are naked. For the first time ever, they feel shamefully exposed, and they quickly try to cover themselves.

Now obviously, there's the larger issue here of their guilt and their shame before God. But, let's focus on their relationship to one another. They feel guilt and shame before one another as well.

So they're not only covering themselves before God, they're trying to hide their shame before one another. And even after, they desperately try to cover themselves, they run and hide. Then what?

As soon as the Lord finds them, and He begins to expose their failures, the blame shifting begins. Adam blames Eve.

[9 : 41] Eve blames the serpent. Now technically, according to Paul in 1 Timothy 2, Eve is telling the truth here. She was deceived by the serpent. But Adam? Adam, on the other hand, knew exactly what he was doing.

And though he is supposed to be the head of his wife, leading and protecting her, he immediately throws her under the bus. He goes from rejoicing over her in the last chapter, this at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh, to blaming her for everything.

It's her fault, he says. There's a subtle indictment on God here too. It's the woman you gave me. According to Phillips, Adam becomes the first in a long line of male blame shifters.

You see, the fall not only alienated man from God, it alienated husband from wife. As marriage goes, so goes humanity and vice versa.

And this shows just how clever the devil really was. Put some cracks in marriage and the foundation itself crumbles. Next in Genesis comes God's judgments.

[10 : 58] Adam and Eve, they've already blown up their marriage in a sense and God essentially reveals the natural consequences of that. Now, we'll come back to this in a moment, but when God passes judgment on the serpent, you'll notice the seed of hope embedded in it.

He says, 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. Of course, this promise points forward to a redeemer who would utterly destroy the works of the devil.

He would make right what the devil has ruined. So, instead of casting Adam and Eve into hell immediately, which God had every right to do, He shows mercy and He offers this promise of His grace and even though this problem of sin started with the woman, it would be the woman's offspring who would restore life.

By the way, Adam, he doesn't name his wife Eve until verse 20. You know what Eve means? Life giver.

life giver. And Paul seems to allude to this in 1 Timothy 2 when he says, the woman was deceived and became a transgressor, yet she shall be saved through childbearing.

[12 : 26] Though it was the first woman who started this mess, by God's unmerited grace, it would be a woman through whom God would bring life by way of the Redeemer, Jesus Christ.

However, as God tells Eve here, childbearing would now be very painful. But I want to focus on the latter part of verse 16. Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you.

The NIB, I believe, says your desire will be for your husband, and even the ESV has gone back and forth about how best to translate this. I believe the straightforward rendering of the text is something like, your desire shall be toward or for your husband.

But that does not mean a wife's desire will be for the good of her husband. Think of Genesis 4-7 where God warns Cain, sin is crouching at the door.

Its desire is contrary to you. This is not a desire of affection, but a desire of dominance and control. Yet, the husband's headship remains.

[13 : 46] You see, God says, he shall rule over you. So what is being described here is really the tension between husband and his wife. Matthew Henry says, if God had not sinned, he would always have ruled with wisdom and love.

If woman had not sinned, she would have always obeyed with humility and meekness. But since Adam failed to lead and Eve failed to submit, this disorder between them became a permanent fixture of marriage.

This is a curse that is ongoing. It's a perpetual struggle between husbands and their wives. Now, to be clear, this is not prescriptive.

This is descriptive. We are simply learning why we have these struggles. We are not being told, yes, go out. These struggles are normal.

Keep at it. And next, God passes judgment on Adam. Verse 17, 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.

[14 : 53] 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 were dust and to dust you shall return.

Now, notice that first line. Because you have listened to the voice of your wife. Because you failed to stop her. Because you failed to lead as her head.

Because you chose her over me. Now, at first glance, it may seem that these curses have nothing to do with marriage. But, let's think about this.

The injection of sin into our world made work considerably harder. It's harder physically, it's harder mentally, it may require more time than it did before the fall.

So, this puts a greater strain on husbands and consequently, a greater strain on marriages. The most common complaint I've heard from wives regarding their husbands is, he doesn't give me enough time, he doesn't give me enough attention, he's consumed by his work, he's consumed by his hobbies, he seems to have little left for me.

[16 : 12] Conversely, the most common complaint I've heard from husbands is, my wife wants too much from me. She demands too much of my time, too much of my attention, doesn't she understand how hard I have to work?

I don't have much left to give. Does any of that sound familiar at all? I think we're all very familiar with the struggle that began with Adam, Adam's sin in the garden.

As husbands, we are prone to be distracted, we're prone to be consumed by our work and by other things. We then, we unfortunately pull back from our wives and from our families, leaving our wives to basically run the household.

Meanwhile, our wives are then prone to assert autonomy, if not authority, and they want to take charge, yet it's still built into man to lead and it's still built into women to be led and to be nurtured, so we're left with this tension that creates perpetual conflict between us.

Now, you may be disappointed to learn that I won't be providing a whole lot of practical help today. That'll come probably next time as we looked at the God-ordained roles of husbands and wives, but I do want us to see the hope that we have.

[17 : 40] Again, the curse is descriptive, not prescriptive. Just as Christ redeems fallen man, He redeems fallen marriage. Even here in Genesis 3, we have what we call this proto-gospel in verse 15.

The woman's offspring shall bruise the head of the serpent, and the serpent shall bruise his heel. And then we see a hint of Adam's hope in the promise when he names his wife life-giver.

And then God takes it a step further. He takes their inadequate coverings of fig leaves and He better covers them with garments of skin. The Lord is mercifully helping to cover their shame and their guilt before one another.

And then you'll notice it's not only Adam who walks out of the garden. He leaves with Eve. He leaves with his wife.

It's not as though God says, you know what, you've destroyed this covenant of marriage that I've given you. You can't have it anymore. No. The blessing of this covenant continues.

[18 : 45] Yes, it is harder than it was. But the covenant remains. Now, when we move into the New Testament, Christ our Redeemer is very intentionally referred to as the second and better Adam.

We've heard about this recently. The Bible really wants us to see this contrast. So Romans 5, for example, says, for by one man's disobedience the many were made sinners.

So by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous. In other words, where Adam failed, Christ triumphed.

Or we might say where Adam failed his bride, Christ will never fail his bride. The first Adam, he grasped equality with God.

You will be like God, the serpent said. The second Adam, though he is equal with God, humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death.

[19 : 56] Philippians 2. Where Adam led his bride into sin, Christ laid down his life to save his bride. Where Adam blamed his wife to cover himself, Christ bears the blame of his bride to cover her with righteousness.

Ephesians 5, Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her that he might sanctify her so that he might present the church to himself in splendor without spot or wrinkle or any such thing.

I don't want there to be the least bit of shame on her. So, every faithful husband now lives under this banner, love your wife as Christ loved the church.

And of course, that command is impossible apart from the gospel, apart from grace. But, because we are in Christ, the impossible becomes possible.

The curse is being undone. Through Christ, we are able, even now, to love our wives as we should. We are able to overcome the temptations to be distracted or to neglect our wives or to let those inevitable tensions between us irreparably harm the covenant that we have with our wives.

[21 : 27] We don't have to let the curse conquer our marriages. In Christ, we can do better. In Colossians 3, Paul writes, for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

You see, because you are in Christ, because your life is hidden, or we might say covered by Christ, you are enabled, as Paul goes on to say, put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, think about this in context of marriage, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, bearing with one another, and if one has a complaint against another, forgiving one another, as the Lord has forgiven you, so also, you must also forgive.

And above all these, put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. this is possible within a marriage.

This is more than possible within a marriage through Christ. Listen to what Richard Phillips says. Remember how sin caused Adam to condemn his wife in order to cover his own sin?

But now, forgiven and sanctified by God in Christ, a Christian man is able to have compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience toward his wife. Conscious of having been so wonderfully forgiven through Christ's blood, I now have the ability to forgive others who sin or let me down just as my wife now has forgiving grace for me.

[23 : 03] He goes on to write, I do not have to wait until I fully understand my wife in order to love her. In Christ, I have no warrant to withhold my love until she changes according to my self-serving agenda.

I am free in Christ through the resources of God's redeeming grace for me to love my wife. Because God has forgiven me, I can truly forgive her.

because God has given to me, I can gladly give to her. With God's compassion for me, I have compassion to give. With God's grace, I can show grace.

And with God's word dwelling in our relationship, my wife and I can grow in this grace so that we learn more and more to love one another while drawing more and more from the well of God's saving love for us.

So in summary, though marriage was in fact cursed through Adam's sin, Christ has redeemed us.

[24 : 11] He has redeemed our relationships. And He has even redeemed our marriages to His glory and praise. Let's pray.

Let's pray. Father, we rejoice that where Adam failed, Christ has triumphed.

Thank You that through Your Son the curse is being undone. Thank You that our shame is covered and our marriages can be restored by the power of Your grace.

So Lord, help us to be men who lead as we should with humility, with love, with sacrifice. Help us to be men who forgive as we have been forgiven.

Lord, help us to be men who reflect the steadfast love of Christ toward our wives. We pray this in the precious name of our Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ.

[25 : 08] Amen. Amen.