

January 19, 2020

—The Gospel Changes Everything—

The Sabbath in the Fall

Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-13; 22-24

What did we see last week?

Last time we were together we began a new mini-series on the Sabbath. Sabbath most fundamentally means rest. We began by pressing Sabbath through the over-arching Biblical storyline of creation-fall-redemption-glory. So we first looked at Sabbath in creation. We asked why the Sabbath is such a blessing? Why is the Sabbath *necessary* for a fulfilled life? We saw that the Sabbath is the chief end of man. To rest and rejoice in the presence of God is *why* God made us. Humanity cannot live fulfilled lives apart from this. Intimacy and fellowship with God is what separates us from every other creature.

We also saw three things in particular. **First**, that Sabbath is a creation ordinance. God ordained it before He gave the law to Moses. Which means it, like marriage, belongs to all of humanity. Sabbath is a human thing, not merely a Jewish thing. **Genesis 2:3** “So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.” **Second**, Sabbath is the greatest gift because it is impossible to conceive of a reality that surpasses dwelling in the presence of God. **Psalms 27:4** “One thing have I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to inquire in his temple.”¹ **Third**, Sabbath is a profound mystery because it points to the Lord of the Sabbath, our true Sabbath the Lord Jesus Christ in whom is all rest, and outside of whom there is no rest. “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (**Matthew 11:28**).

¹ As John Piper said it so well: “When I say *God Is the Gospel* I mean that the highest, best, final, decisive good of the gospel, without which no other gifts would be good, is the glory of God in the face of Christ revealed for our everlasting enjoyment.” John Piper, *God Is the Gospel: Meditations on God’s Love as the Gift of Himself*, (Wheaton, IL.,: Crossway, 2005), pg.

The poison that God does not love us...

This morning we are looking at what happened to the Sabbath in the fall of man. So we are asking: Why is the Sabbath so *hard*? So frustrating? Why is the Sabbath often a victim of legalism or of antinomianism? Here's the answer: Sabbath is hard and frustrating and legalistic and antinomian *because* we don't believe in the love of God. John Know the Scottish Reformer said that "... Satan first drew mankind [away] from the obedience of God...by pouring into their hearts that poison, that God did not love them."² That was why our first parents fell, because they stopped believing that God really loved them.³

Dear congregation this is at the root of all of our problems. Our natural disposition—meaning the suspicions we are born with⁴—is that we don't *really* believe that God's love can be trusted. You can test this immediately. What is the hardest prayer to pray? "God do whatever it takes in my life to draw me closer to you, to make me like your Son." Why is that prayer hard? Because we don't trust that God's doing whatever it takes is actually loving. We naturally distrust God's heart.

The Sabbath in the fall

Therefore the *very idea* that God wants to pour out His love on us every Sabbath as we worship in His presence, fellowship with the saints, show mercy to the downcast, bind up the brokenhearted, disciple and teach, sing, and pray, rest and rejoice is dismissed out of hand. Our distrustful hearts will find reasons to dismiss the Sabbath. "The Sabbath has nothing to do with the NT, we are now under grace." What is that saying? That God's heart was restrictive and harsh in the OT, but now it's generous and loving. Or we'll ask "Ok so as long as I spend a couple hours at church, then I can do *whatever* I want, right?" What is that saying? "That worshipping God is like swallowing bitter medicine, and

² Iain Murray, *The Old Evangelicalism*, (Carlisle, PA.: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2005), pg. 157

³ And I don't mean a superficial, sloppy, weak-spined sentimental hallmark type of love that our culture is drowning in. I mean an infinite, eternal, abiding, invincible, unchangeable love.

⁴ due to Original Sin

the sooner you get it over with the better.’ Why do we have these attitudes? Because we have been poisoned by sin. Adam and Eve believed Satan’s lie that God did not really love them, and we have been believing that same lie ever since. So let’s look at where this lie originated and what God has done about it.

The Big Idea...

Sin has poisoned us into believing that God doesn’t love us, therefore Sabbath (resting and rejoicing in God’s presence) has become a burden

- ☆ The Test of God’s Presence
- ☆ The Exile from God’s Presence
- ☆ The Return to God’s Presence

I. The Test of God’s Presence

All God’s commands are blessings

Please look with me at **Genesis 2:15-16**. The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. **16** And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden...” In the Bible all of God’s commands are always blessings. Without exception. Consider this command here. ‘Adam, Eve, I command you to eat and enjoy and delight in every tree that you see in the garden. I’ve carefully created everything for your happiness and my glory.’ You see this same truth, in **Genesis 1**. After God created them, we read in **v.28** “And God *blessed* them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it...” Those are all commands. Yet they are inseparably joined to blessing. God blessed them by

commanding them. That's the first thing you must see. God created man to exist in a state of blessing and happiness and joy. And the commands that God gave were just an extension of that same blessing. So ask yourself: what has changed since Genesis 1-2? Has God changed? No! "...I the LORD do not change..." (**Malachi 3:6**). No God hasn't changed, man has. Which means everything that God commands of us is *still* a blessing, *still* a joy, *still* the path of perfect happiness. It was said by a saint of old: 'the best restraint for you dear Christian is to believe that you are loved by God for Jesus' sake, and that there is nothing better than to obey His commandments.'⁵

If you don't understand this test...you will never understand sin

But God's blessing not only includes what they are to do, but what they forbidden to do. He continues in v.17 "...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." First, the tree was not poisonous. He didn't forbid it because it would harm them physically.⁶ It wouldn't turn them into gods like Satan suggested. It was simply a tree.⁷ But that is what makes this command not to eat it so glaringly conspicuous. So we have to ask: *what is the big deal?* Let me just say this: if you don't understand what's going on here, then you will never understand sin.

⁵ A loose paraphrase from Calvin's commentary on Genesis 3:6 "For, indeed, their best restraint was the thought, which entirely occupied their minds, that God is just, that nothing is better than to obey his commands, and that to be loved by him is the consummation of a happy life." John Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries Vol. 1*, (Grand Rapids, MI.: BakerBooks 2009), pg. 154

⁶ I would argue that God didn't make poisonous plants in the beginning. Rather they came as the result of the fall (Genesis 3:17-18). Yet even these thorns, thistles and poisonous plants are an expression of God's love to a fallen world. See <https://creation.com/understanding-poisons-from-a-creationist-perspective> Accessed January 16, 2020. Also the frustration that we find in the fallen created order is what helps point us back to Christ. That's what the book of Ecclesiastes is about.

⁷ The Reformers liked to call it the first sacrament much like the Lord's Supper and Baptism because it points to something else.

The world's infinitely reductionistic definition of sin

How does the world understand evil or sin? Well, evil or sin is harming someone else. Our government punishes people who assault and harm other human beings. And rightly so of course. Thank God for that. But the problem is that they reduce the definition of sin to *just* that. Modern culture has reduced the definition of evil, and it's captured in a slogan that nearly goes unquestioned: "I am free to do what I wish *as long as* I don't hurt anyone else."⁸ If that is your definition of sin—*merely* hurting someone else—your definition is not Christian. Ask yourself: what human being would have been harmed by Adam eating of this tree. No one. And that is *precisely* the point.

Listen to how theologian Geerhardus Vos answers the question: why is *this* the test? "Because by this tree the essence of evil was...*objectified* for Adam. The essence of evil...[became most clear] when it was rid of all...harmful consequences, [to others]."⁹ Imagine if the test was "Adam don't beat your wife...or Eve don't gossip to others...or treat the animals will..." If these things would have been the point of the test, then sin would have been completely obscured. Dear congregation, The essence of sin is *not* the *harm* you bring to others—although that is sinful.

⁸ Timothy Keller, *Preaching: Communicating Faith in an Age of Skepticism*, (New York, NY.,: Viking, 2015), pg. 129-133

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We were talking about this in our sermon analysis class this week, and one of the guys said that he generally responds to people who say this by asking "...if you cheat on your wife and she never finds out about it, is it wrong?" Greg Koukl also pointed out the problem with this reductionistic ethic by pointing to the dentist who, while his patients were under with anesthesia, molested them. But if they didn't find out and were not physically harmed, then where was the evil?

⁹ "In the usual transgression of law, the seed of evil is always more or less covered over with other things...If God had commanded Adam to treat the animals well and had made this the point of [testing], then in the ill-treatment of the animals, evil would have revealed itself as cruelty to animals and not so directly as transgression against God." Geerhardus Vos, *Reformed Dogmatics, Vol. 2: Anthropology*, (Bellingham, WA.,: Lexham Press, 2012), pg. 48

TREE: “I am God and you shall have no other gods before me.”

The essence of sin is putting yourself in God’s place. God made man to have dominion over the earth, but that tree represented God’s ultimate dominion. The tree says “I am God and you shall have no other gods before me.” And that includes *you*. You and I are not our own authority. You and I are not, as the poem *Invictus* says “...the master of my fate... the captain of my soul.”¹⁰ God is. **Isaiah 45:5** “I am the LORD, and there is no other, besides me there is no God.” And being God means that we honor and love and delight in Him as God. God was saying through that tree: “I want you to obey me, simply because of who I am, simply because you love me and trust me more than anything.”¹¹

Objection: “What about the good people?”

Perhaps you’re thinking to yourself: “But I know good people who don’t lie or steal or cheat. Yes they’re not Christian, but they are moral and kind. How can you say that they are sinners? Because they are *eating* from the tree. They are living life as though they are beholden to none, as if they were their own god. But the Scripture says “There is one God, the Father... *for whom we exist*, and one Lord, Jesus Christ...*through whom we exist*” (**1 Cor. 8:6**).¹² Anyone —you, your neighbor, President Trump, Hollywood bigshots—anyone who act as if they exist for themselves and not for God are great sinners in the eyes of God. That is the very essence of sin—to put yourself in His place.

And I would simply add this: everything that has gone wrong in this world—in their lives, in my life and in your life—has come as the result of putting ourselves in the place of God, from eating of that tree that belongs to God alone.

¹⁰ by William Ernest Henley

¹¹ Tim Keller, *Every Good Endeavor: Connecting Your Word to God’s Work*, (New York, NY.,: Penguin Group, 2012), pg. 84

¹² “...none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself...whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord’s” (**Romans 14:7-8**).

That's our **first point**. The test to stay in God's presence, was to lovingly and happily agree with God that He is God and that there is no other.

II. The Exile from God's Presence

The first temptation: flippancy

So what happens next? They eat from the tree. Let's look how this develops. Please look with me at chapter three starting in v.1 "Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, 'Did God *actually* say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?' Another translation¹³ says "Did God *really* say...?" The effect is the same. The devil is *not* asking if she heard God rightly. He's turning God's words into the punchline of joke. He's using flippancy. "Did ol' God actually say that? What a hoot!" "He is not denying God said it; he's mocking it. He's trying to get Adam and Eve to laugh at it."¹⁴ Dear congregation, you *know* how powerful this is. Most of us would rather sit down and have to defend the faith against serious objections, then being mocked at with laughter.¹⁵

¹³ NIV

¹⁴ I was helped with this line of argumentation from Tim Keller. Source: <https://www.monergism.com/paradise-crisis> Accessed January 16, 2020

¹⁵ In C.S. Lewis's *Screwtape Letters*, *Screwtape* teaches his demonic nephew *Wormwood* how to properly use humor. He divides it into four categories: Joy, Fun, the Joke Proper and Flippancy. He tells *Wormwood* to avoid the first two because they will do no real good in leading humans astray. He admits that the Joke Proper can be of some use, but he says that Flippancy is where the real power is at. He says this, with flippancy "...the Joke is always assumed to have been made. No one actually makes it; but every serious subject is discussed in a manner which implies that they have already found a ridiculous side to it..." You have seen this repeated a billion times since the garden. What is the assumed unspoken joke among the sophisticated elite of the world? Christianity. God. Sin. Jesus. When the movie *The Passion of the Christ* came out, Jack Nicholson, an atheist, said to Gibson who was getting a lot of heat for his movie "How's Jesus treating you?" Flippancy. The joke was assumed. [C.S. Lewis, *The Complete C.S. Lewis Signature Classics*, (New York, NY,,: Harper Collins, 2002), pg. 148]

The second temptation: 'God doesn't love you'

How does Eve respond? v.2 “And the woman said to the serpent, ‘We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’” But the serpent said to the woman, ‘You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.’” Now we’ll deal with Eve’s addition to God’s Word in our application but for now let’s just carefully consider this second temptation. What is Satan saying here? We hear what he’s saying on the surface. But what is he saying below the surface? **First** notice what he’s not saying. He’s not tempting them towards atheism. He’s not saying “What God are you talking about, there’s no such thing as God.” That’s foolish. Everyone knows God exists.¹⁶ Clement of Alexandria (150-215 A.D.) demonstrated that all the great pagan philosophers—Aristotle, Plato, Cicero, Seneca—believed in one supreme God.¹⁷ Just look at the history of the world. All the nations of antiquity, all the nations in the world today are not *prone* to atheism. If anything they are prone to idolatry and superstition and polytheism.¹⁸ Why? Because creation screams the existence of Something greater than man, Something glorious. “The heavens declare the glory of God” (Psalm 19:1).¹⁹ Satan doesn’t bother with atheism. **Secondly**, he doesn’t tempt them by saying “God *doesn’t*

¹⁶ “The only form of atheism combated in the Bible is practical atheism.” W.G.T. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology 3rd Edition*, Ed. Alan W. Gomes, (Phillipsburg, NJ.,: P & R Publishing, 2003), pg. 185

¹⁷ *ibid*, pg. 189

¹⁸ “...we shall always find all nations of the world more prone to idolatry than to atheism and readier to multiply than to deny the deity.” *ibid*, pg. 187

¹⁹ It’s not just creation that screams that God exists, it is the longings of our own heart. As Lewis said “If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world.” God has put eternity into our hearts (Ecclesiastes 3:11) and nothing can satisfy them but the eternal God. Or as Augustine said “Thou hast made us for thyself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it finds its rest in thee.” [C.S. Lewis, *The Complete C.S. Lewis Signature Classics*, (New York, NY.,: Harper Collins, 2002), pg. 76; <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/42572-thou-hast-made-us-for-thyself-o-lord-and-our>]

care what you do.” That would have been a temptation to deny God’s holiness. **Thirdly**, he doesn’t tempt by saying “God *didn’t say* you can’t eat of the tree.” That would have been a temptation to deny God’s law. So to sum up: Satan doesn’t deny the existence of God or the holiness of God or the law of God.²⁰ So then what does Satan deny?

The love of God.

‘Eve, God is holding out on you. If you obey Him, you’ll never be happy, you’ll never be fulfilled. He doesn’t really love you. Take things into your own hands.’

How viciously wicked! God created the whole universe for man—the sun, moon and stars, the mountains and the seas; and He made man alone to be His own image bearers; He gave to them alone the inconceivable privilege to be His friend, to fellowship with Him, to worship Him and to dwell in His presence *and yet* because God reserved the one tree for Himself only, Satan told them God didn’t love them. And that was the temptation that ensnared their hearts. As Knox “...Satan first drew mankind [away] from the obedience of God...by pouring into their hearts that poison, that God did not love them.”²¹

The fall

What happened? Look at **v.6** “So when the woman saw 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.”

Now what you need to remember is that God told them that on the day that they ate the fruit, they would surely die (**2:17**). Did they die? Any small child can understand that they did not. They lived. They left the garden. They

²⁰ I was helped with this line of argumentation from Tim Keller. Source: <https://www.monergism.com/paradise-crisis> Accessed January 16, 2020

²¹ Iain Murray, *The Old Evangelicalism*, (Carlisle, PA.: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2005), pg. 157

had lots of children. They dwelt on the earth for another 900 years. They didn't die. *Unless* God meant something else.

What sin does to the human heart

Is there another kind of death? Yes spiritual death. Paul speaks of this in **Ephesians 2:1** when he says "And you were dead in the trespasses and sins..." Isn't that interesting. People who are alive physically can be dead spiritually. What does that mean? How you answer that question will determine how much you value and treasure saving grace. There are two main camps within Evangelicalism today. One camp says that being *dead in sin* means *merely* that you are guilty before God. In terms of righteousness, you have none, you are dead to it. That's the Non-Reformed position. The other camp, the Reformed agrees with all of that. But we say more. It's not just that we are guilty before God, it's that we are totally corrupt. Not only are we dead when it comes to righteousness, but we are dead when it comes to loving God. Sin kills our delight in the presence of God.

Which one is correct? Well let's see how Adam and Eve respond when God shows up. Please look with me at **v.7-13**:

Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that 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 God 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 fruit of the tree, and I ate." 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."

Man's three-fold ruin

Three things you can immediately see. **First**, sin ruined man's relationship to himself. He was now ashamed of who He was, so he clothed himself. **Second**, sin ruined man's relationship to others. Adam blamed Eve and was willing to sell her out to avoid punishment. **Third**, sin ruined man's relationship to God. When they heard the Lord walking in the garden, what did they do? They hid themselves from His presence. They no longer wanted to be near God. But more, Adam accused God of evil. **v.12** "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate." What is Adam saying? God this is your fault.

Dear congregation do you see why we cannot accept the position of our non-reformed brothers and sisters? It is *not just* that man is guilty before God. It's *not just* that man is dead when it comes to righteousness, *man is dead when it comes to love*. Man has made himself God's enemy. **Romans 8:7** "For the mind that is set on the flesh is *hostile to God*..." The whole world of men is just like Adam—they have swallowed the poison that God does not love man, therefore they hide from Him, and blame Him for everything that is wrong in the world.

Exiled

This account tragically ends by God exiling them from the garden. Picking up in **v.23** we read "...therefore the Lord God *sent him out from the garden of Eden* to work the ground from which he was taken. *He drove out the man*, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life."

Test Cases: How has the fall effected the Sabbath for God's people?

This explains why the Sabbath is so hard and so frustrating. The essence of the Sabbath—the resting and rejoicing in the presence of God—is *precisely* what has been destroyed in the fall. Let's consider a brief survey of Sabbath practice in light of the fall to see how this has been a hardship in every age.

The Sabbath in Nehemiah

First please turn with me to **Nehemiah 13:15-18**. The context is that the Jews have been brought back to their land after the 70 year Babylonian captivity. Nehemiah was the leader who oversaw the rebuilding of Jerusalem. One of the things he discovered was that once again his people were breaking the Sabbath. Picking up in v.15

“In those days I saw in Judah people treading winepresses on the Sabbath, and bringing in heaps of grain and loading them on donkeys, and also wine, grapes, figs, and all kinds of loads, which they brought into Jerusalem on the Sabbath day. And I warned them on the day when they sold food. Tyrians also, who lived in the city, brought in fish and all kinds of goods and sold them on the Sabbath to the people of Judah, in Jerusalem itself! Then I confronted the nobles of Judah and said to them, “What is this evil thing that you are doing, profaning the Sabbath day? Did not your fathers act in this way, and did not our God bring all this disaster on us and on this city? Now you are bringing more wrath on Israel by profaning the Sabbath.”

So what’s going on here? It’s certainly not that God forbids all work on the Sabbath. Jesus is going to make clear in the NT, that works of mercy and necessity ought to be done. But that is not happening here. So what is happening? They were believing the lie from Satan, that God the Father does not love them enough to take care of them the other six days. They were believing the lie that money – not God – would secure them true rest.²²

The Sabbath in Amos

Secondly let’s turn to **Amos 8**. Amos was one of the minor prophets during the time of King Uzziah. He prophesied against Israel, the northern kingdom right before their fall to Assyria in 722 B.C. Amos was lamenting over

²² This is an example of antinomianism

Israel's abuse of the poor and their empty worship towards God. Look at v.4-5 "Hear this, you who trample on the needy and bring the poor of the land to an end, saying, 'When will the new moon be over, that we may sell grain? And the Sabbath, that we may offer wheat for sale...'" What's going on here? First, just notice that v.5 is what the people of Israel is saying in their hearts 'When will the Sabbath be over so that we can return to our business?' You see this was slightly different than the example in Nehemiah. Here they gave lip service to the Sabbath, but it was wearisome to them. It was a burden—a bitter medicine.²³ They believed the lie from Satan that God is not loving Father—but a harsh master who forced them into His presence.

The Sabbath in Matthew Pt. 1

Thirdly, let's go to **Matthew 12:1-4**. Here we have Jesus encountering the Pharisees on the Sabbath. Only this time the tables *seemed* to be turned entirely. Jesus and the disciples are 'working' and the Pharisees are not. So the Pharisees bring a charge against Jesus. Picking up in v.1

"At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry, and they began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. But when the Pharisees saw it, they said to him, "Look, your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath." He said to them, "Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, and those who were with him: how he entered the house of God and ate the bread of the Presence, which it was not lawful for him to eat nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests?"

What's going on here? Some would be quick to say that this is the NT and that Jesus is here abolishing the Sabbath. But actually He's correcting the Pharisee's wrong interpretation of it. They were legalists. They had added their own

²³ "But you say, 'What a weariness this is,' and you snort at it, says the LORD of hosts." Malachi 1:13. cf. Thomas Manton Vol. 9 pg. 206

traditions to the Sabbath so that works of necessity *like eating* were forbidden. That's why Jesus rebuked them in **v.3** by pointing to David who when he was hungry ate some bread from the house of God that was reserved only for the priests. His point was God's care for man transcends mere ceremonies. They didn't believe that. They believed the lie from Satan that God is not loving Father—that He cares more about the letter of the law than the hunger of man.

The Sabbath in Matthew Pt. 2

For our last example please look down at **v.9**.

He went on from there and entered their synagogue. And a man was there with a withered hand. And they asked him, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?"—so that they might accuse him. He said to them, "Which one of you who has a sheep, if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not take hold of it and lift it out? Of how much more value is a man than a sheep! So it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath."

Again the Pharisees were adding their legalistic traditions to the Sabbath, so that they condemned works of mercy to be done. Can you imagine that being applied today? "I'm sorry you're 3-year old is choking to death Mam', but it's the Sabbath." That's not who God is. He loves to show mercy through hospitals and medical personnel and policeman and firefighters. These Pharisees believed the lie from Satan that God is not a loving Father. They believed the Sabbath was a day to pull-yourself-by-your-self-righteous-bootstraps religion instead of a day to show compassion and mercy.

Experimental Sabbath

These four examples really illustrate why the Sabbath can be so hard and frustrating. Not because there is anything wrong with the Sabbath. But rather because there is something wrong we us. We have swallowed the poison that God is not a loving Father. Think about these examples. Where does your

heart tend to gravitate. Do you tend to be like those in Nehemiah (the antinomians)—who flippantly cast off the Day because business is calling? Have you believed the lie from Satan that the Father does not love you and will not take care of you? Are you like those in Amos (the fakers)—who force themselves to observe the Day, but it's so wearisome? Have you believed the lie from Satan that the Father does not love you, that's why He forces you into His presence? Or does your heart tend to gravitate towards the Pharisees (the legalists) who made laws in order to make themselves feel justified before God all the while judging others and withholding mercy? Dear congregation, the truth is, we are all on this spectrum somewhere. That is what the fall has done to us. The Sabbath has been ruined for us, because we have been cast out of the garden.

III. The Return to God's Presence

How do we know the Father loves us?

So how do we demonstrate that Satan was lying? How can we know that the Father really does love us? Please turn back to Genesis and let's consider three things.

1. The Father's questions²⁴

First consider the first glimpse we get of the gospel. Many of us have concluded that **Genesis 3:15** is the first gospel word—that promise that God would send the great Serpent Bruiser. But that is not the first gospel word. The first gospel word is found in **v.9**. Adam and hid from the presence of the Lord,

²⁴ God asks three questions: 1. "Where are you?" 2. "Who told you that you were naked?" 3. "Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" Luther writes, "All the indicate the love of God towards the whole human race; showing forth that God will seek after man and will call him back after he has sinned...All this was a sure announcement of grace. For although these words of God, spoken to Adam and Eve, were legal and judicial words; yet they set before them a hope by no means obscure, that they should not be condemned forever."

and the Father called out to them “Where are you?” This is *not* a question of ignorance. It is a question of relationship. “Loved ones, why are you hiding from Me?” Adam and Eve do what you and I do, and what all mankind does—we hide from God. Satan’s poison is so deep. We don’t trust Him, we don’t love Him. We hide. But what is He doing? He’s seeking us. He had every right to judge and condemn. But that’s *not* what He does. And this is a picture of how any soul ever comes to God. If you find God, it’s not because you went looking for Him, it’s because He came looking for you. There’s an old hymn that goes like this:

'Tis not that I did choose thee,
 for, Lord, that could not be;
 this heart would still refuse thee,
 hadst thou not chosen me...
 My heart owns none before thee,
 for thy rich grace I thirst;
 this knowing, if I love thee,
 thou must have loved me first.²⁵

Or as the Apostle John said it “In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us...” (1 John 4:10)

2. The Father’s flaming sword

Secondly consider how much the Father loved them by sending them into exile. Look at v.22. “Then the Lord God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. *Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever...*” Then v.23 says “therefore the LORD God

²⁵ “Tis Not That I Did Choose Thee” Author: Josiah Conder (1836), Source: https://hymnary.org/text/tis_not_that_i_did_choose_thee Accessed January 19, 2020.

sent him out...” and then v.24 intensifies this “He drove out the man...”²⁶ And then he places this angel with this flaming sword at the entrance so that man could never reach out his hand and eat from the tree of life. What’s going on here? God by His pleasure and will made this tree a seal of sorts. If Adam would have eaten from it, it would have sealed him in his sin and misery forever.²⁷ God sent man out of His presence not *merely* as a judgment (which is was); but as a demonstration of His Fatherly love. It was an unbearable thought to God that all of man should be in such a state of misery. Dear congregation, this is how all of life works. God is infinitely wise and He is always able to join his love and mercy with His discipline and judgment. Any dark providence that you face in life is always (even if mysteriously) a demonstration of the Father’s love. There is simply no action that God performs that is not an expression of His Fatherly love.

3. The Father’s only Son

But consider the last and greatest evidence of the Father’s love for humanity. How do we get back into the garden of delight? How do we get back into the presence of the God who walks with His people in the cool of the day? Well it’s not through Sabbath-keeping. That’s what that angel with the flaming sword represents. If you try to earn your way back into the garden through keeping the rules, you will be struck dead.

Scripture tells us of another another garden, and another Adam—the One whom the Scripture calls the Second Adam.²⁸ And just like the first Adam, this

²⁶ I love how the ESV Study Bible renders this: “God begins a sentence in v.22 and breaks off without finishing it—for the man to live forever (in a sinful condition) is an unbearable thought, and God must waste no time in preventing it (“therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden”).” *ESV Study Bible*, (Wheaton, IL.,: Crossway, 2008), pg. 57

²⁷ “It is indeed certain that man would not have been able, had he devoured the whole tree, to enjoy life against the will of God; but God, out of respect to his own institution, connects life with the external sign, till the promise should be taken away from it; for there never was any intrinsic efficacy in the tree; but God made it life-giving, so far as he had sealed his grace to man in the use of it...” John Calvin, *Calvin’s Commentaries Vol. 1*, (Grand Rapids, MI.,: BakerBooks 2009), pg. 184

²⁸ (1 Corinthians 15

One was faced with tree. What did God tell the first Adam? ‘If you obey me regarding this tree, you will live.’ But God told the second Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ, that ‘if you obey me about this tree—the cross—you will die.’²⁹ The Father has done everything unexpected.

It was we who have put ourselves *in the place of God* by eating from that tree. But it was God who put His Son *in our place* by cursing Him on that other tree. “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree’” (**Galatians 3:13**).

It was we who have disobeyed God—putting ourselves in His place; but it was Christ who obeyed God—putting Himself in our place. Oh dear congregation this is the gospel—the great exchange. “For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (**2 Cor. 5:21**).

It is we who have often treated the Sabbath—the resting and rejoicing in God’s presence—as a bitter medicine; but it was Christ who drank the bitter cup for us and for a time was entirely cast out from God’s presence—“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (**Matthew 27:46**). And He did this for our sake.

What greater demonstration the Father’s love do you need? “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life” (**John 3:16**).

Perhaps you’ve hear this morning, and you are still hiding from God. You haven’t answered His call “Where are you?” because you are afraid that God could not forgive a great sinner like you. Dear friend, you are great sinner, but

²⁹ Help with this gospel allusion came from Tim Keller Tim Keller. Source: <https://www.monergism.com/paradise-crisis> Accessed January 16, 2020

Christ is a great Savior. That's the story of the whole Bible. Don't listen to the lies of Satan! God loves you. How can you be sure? Because He sent Christ, the friend of sinners, into the world. No sin is too great that He will not forgive. No life is too black that His righteousness will not cover. No sorrow too deep that He cannot heal. No rebellion too wicked that He cannot overcome. Come to Him this morning. Trust His promise "All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out" (**John 6:35**).

Dear congregation, that is how we have are restored to God's presence, *not* by our Sabbath keeping, but by Christ taking the flaming sword into His own soul for us.

Application

1. Like I mentioned last week, our plan is to launch a Sunday night service at the end of this series. We had an elder's meeting this past week and discussed how this is going to effect this body. Dear congregation I understand if for some of you, a Sunday night service is a threatening idea. Perhaps you have regular plans on Sunday night and you don't want to give those up *but* you don't want to be judged for not coming. Or perhaps you feel overwhelmed about the idea of leaving the house again with your already busy schedule. Or perhaps there's a hundred other objections that many of us could name. For now, please here just two things. **First**, we've added a couple more sermons to this series so that God-willing we can address all these concerns. So please send me your questions so that we can search the Scriptures together. We desire to walk through this together. That's what families do. **Secondly**, please make sure you listen to all the messages in this series. I would say that about every Sunday. Every Sunday God has prepared a gospel feast for your hungry soul. But in this series, if

you miss a message, please make sure you listen to it later on Youtube or on our website. I'm building an argument—an argument of delight, and if you miss a part, it's like vital corner of a treasure map. Without that piece, you might not find the treasure.

2. Lastly, let's remember what Eve did when Satan tempted her. Do you remember? She added and subtracted. **First** she *added* to God's Word. She responded to the serpent: "God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die'" (**Genesis 3:3**). God didn't say they couldn't touch it. Why is this important to point out? Because God didn't say it. I'm not saying I know what was going on in her soul. But I am saying, whenever we add to God's Word, we are always distorting God. God's Word cannot be improved upon. The Sabbath is often seen as such a burden because men have added to it, have added to God's Word regarding what can and cannot be done on it. We must avoid that.

But the **second** mistake that she and Adam made was subtraction. They *subtracted* the love of the Father. They believed the devil's lie. Will we? Did God give us this day as the greatest gift in our calendar or as a weekly burden to be endured? How you answer that depends on how you view the Father's heart.³⁰ That's why we sing:

Come behold the wondrous mystery
 Christ the Lord upon the tree
 In the stead of ruined sinners
 Hangs the Lamb in victory...
 See the true and better Adam
 Come to save the hell-bound man
 Christ the great and sure fulfillment
 Of the law; in Him we stand. (Matt Boswell, Michael Bleecker, Matt Papa 2013)

³⁰ The Devil is perfectly pleased to either with either error of addition leading to legalism or subtraction leading to liberalism.