

Seed

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[0:00] You guys open up your copy of the scriptures to Genesis chapter 3. Last week we covered this chapter and we did it what felt to me to be very quickly, but maybe to you didn't feel like we went through it very quickly.

But we covered the whole chapter and so now we're going to sort of pause and we're going to back up to the middle of the chapter and focus on just a couple of verses here right in the middle of Genesis chapter 3 because they are so crucial for us in understanding the gospel.

So I want you to take a look in verse 14 and I want you guys to stand with me as we read together. We're going to read verses 14 and 15 here this morning. Moses writes that the Lord God said to the serpent, because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field.

On your belly you shall go and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. 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. Father, help us by your spirit to see great and wonderful things in this portion of your word.

[1:13] We ask in Christ's name. Amen. You guys can take a seat. I originally had it in mind for us to move forward in Genesis because we've got 11 chapters to cover before we take a major break from Genesis to move to the New Testament for a while and cover one of Paul's epistles.

But I decided rather than moving forward that we needed to linger here on chapter 3 for at least one more week, maybe even two more weeks. And not by my own planning, but by God's providence, it just so happened that we decided to linger over Genesis chapter 3 this Sunday, which has been declared the National Right to Life Sunday.

It is the week when pastors and churches are encouraged to engage with the issue of abortion, to talk about it, to think about it, to pray about it, to see what the Word of God might have to say about it.

And this text, whether you realize it or not, has a great deal to say about the issue of life at its earliest stages. It has a great deal to say about the issue of abortion and everything else that surrounds it.

Because when we take a step back from getting frustrated about sort of the culture wars and the culture battles, and those things seem to be kind of in our face a lot of times, and then sometimes we get in the face of those who disagree with us on those things, and things get kind of murky and difficult to see when you're in the midst of it.

[2:42] But when you begin to sort of take a step back from engagement in the culture wars, and you begin to ask bigger questions, things become clear. And probably one of the most important questions you can begin to ask about any issue is the why question.

And one of the things that I always want to do when I disagree with someone, or when I want to engage with someone in some sort of debate or exchange of ideas, is I want to understand why they believe the way that they believe, or why they're committed to the position to which they are committed.

What's at work? What's going on behind the scenes? Because it's easy to point to surface level things. Well, this person is affiliated with this party, and this party has this particular platform, and so that's obviously why they do that.

Or, well, this happened in this person's past, and so that's obviously why they feel that way, why they hold that view. Or they run in these crowds to hang out with these people, and these people hold to these views, and so obviously, usually we're going to hold the views of people that we're around the most often.

But those are surface level answers, true answers perhaps to the question of why, why is the issue of abortion even on the radar? Why is it so important?

[3:53] Why is it at the forefront all the time? But it doesn't get beneath the surface. And I think that if we understand what God says here to the serpent, whom last week we identified as Satan himself, if we understand really what he says here to the serpent, and then we can follow through the promise and the judgment that God declares here upon the serpent, if we can follow that through the Bible all the way to the end, to the book of Revelation, we can see a pattern forming that will inform our understanding of why.

Why is it an issue? The truth of the matter is, I don't really like Right to Life Sunday. I don't really like it.

Not because I don't want to talk about it, I do. Not because I don't think the church should be engaged in that issue, I do. But because I wish that we didn't need to have a Right to Life Sunday. I wish it wasn't necessary.

I wish that we could reach a point to where abortion wasn't an issue that we discussed, or it wasn't something that we debated, but it was just something that was in the category of an unthinkable action.

And nobody really did that. Nobody went that route. Nobody took that course. I wish that that were reality, but that's not reality. And so we have to address it.

[5:13] And this passage will go a long way to helping us to get behind the issue itself so that we can see what's really happening. So I want you to take a closer look and see exactly what's going on.

Before we do that, though, we need to be reminded of the broader context of everything that's going on here. Because we began this study back in chapter 1, verse 1, and we've been slowly sort of working our way up to this point in the book of Genesis.

And one of the most crucial events that takes place in these opening chapters of Genesis is found at the end of chapter 1 and expanded upon in chapter 2.

And that is the creation of man and woman in the image of God. So look back, maybe you have to turn back a page in your Bible to Genesis chapter 1. In verse 26, we're told this, that God said, Let us make man in our image after our likeness, and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over the livestock, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.

So God created man in his own image. In the image of God he created him. Male and female he created them. You cannot really get your bearings about the issues of life and death unless you understand who people are, what people are, and what we are are beings created in the image of God.

[6:37] That stands out clearly in this passage. And although last week we looked at the devastating effects of the fall, of the consequences of Adam and Eve's decision to disobey God, and how that affects all of their descendants and the entire creation, devastatingly so, nevertheless, the effects of the fall do not include an erasing of the image of God in mankind.

We are still, even as fallen, broken, sinful, depraved creatures, we are still creatures created in the image of God. Turn over just a couple of pages in your Bibles to Genesis chapter 9, which occurs after Genesis chapter 3, which means after the fall.

And in Genesis chapter 9, God gives a warning to Noah and his sons and everyone who would come after them after the flood. He says in verse 6, He says, Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed.

So don't kill people. And here's why. For God made man in his own image. We are still, even as fallen creatures, we are still made in the image of God.

And the ending of a human life is wrong fundamentally, not because we're so great in and of ourselves. It's wrong because it is a slight, it is a sin against the image of God in man.

[8 : 03] In fact, James tells us that it's a tragedy. In his letter, he tells us it's a real tragedy that with our mouths, with the same mouths, we will bless God and then turn around and curse those who are made in his image.

So that how we treat our fellow human beings, how you treat your neighbor or your boss or your irritating co-worker, how you treat to them and how you respond to them ought to be grounded in the reality that they, like you, are in the image of God.

And if you sin against them, it's not merely a sin against some other person, it is a sin against the image of God in them. And murder is wrong precisely because you're striking out against the image of God.

So when you come to the issue of abortion and you talk about, can you end the life of a child before it's born? You're asking a question about, how do you deal with someone who is created in the image of God?

It used to be that the debate over abortion centered around whether or not that which was in the womb was really a human person. That used to be the, that was sort of the center of the debate about abortion and that was what people argued about.

[9 : 24] Whether or not a fetus could really be considered a full human person or was something less than that. Because if it's something less than that, then no big deal. And so that's where the debate centered. That's really not where the debate is centered anymore because it's passe.

We have ultrasounds. We can look and we can, we can see that there is a baby developing in a womb. More than that, we, we know we can look at the DNA of an unborn baby and it's the same DNA as when they're two or three or 30 or 40 or 50.

It's, that's a person. It's a real human being. So that's, that's established. That's a fact. And so the debate is no longer over whether or not, in reality, you're dealing with a human being in the womb.

The debate now centers upon, is there an occasion, are there reasons for which you might end the life of some humans and value the lives of some over the lives of others?

To which the Bible will answer, no. They're made in the image of God. Do not harm them.

[10 : 37] And yet, here we are in a world in which we have to talk about this issue. And the reason why traces all the way back to these verses here in Genesis chapter 3.

Notice what God says to the serpent. who is ultimately to blame for the fall, though Adam and Eve suffer their punishment and bear their responsibility as well. He says in verse 14, because you've done this, because you have misled, you deceived the woman, you led the man into sin, because you've done that, you're going to be cursed.

And then there's some details, but the fundamental, the fundamental curse that Satan receives is found in verse 15. He says, I will put enmity between you, between the serpent, and the woman, and between your offspring, literally the word is seed, between your seed and her seed.

There's going to be enmity. There's going to be a struggle. There's going to be a battle. There's going to be a fight. And we are still in the course of human history. We are in the midst of that fight. We are in the midst of that battle.

Now, the interesting thing about the word seed, seed, it can refer to one seed or a lot of seeds. So that if I say, I went to the store and I bought bird seed. None of you pictures in my mind that I bought a single bird seed to bring home and put in my little bird feeder and that's it.

[12:02] You know if I say, I bought bird seed, I bought a whole bag of seed. But if I want to refer to one seed, it's the same word. Well, that doesn't function any differently in Hebrew, which is the original language.

Even the word here in Hebrew can represent multiple seeds or it can represent a single one seed. And scholars have debated, well, what does it mean here? Is it talking about all the descendants of Eve?

Or is it talking about a singular descendant of Eve? Well, it's answered in the text for us. I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your seed and her seed.

He, singular, he shall bruise your head and you shall bruise his heel. So that what's being looked forward to here is not a collective seed, not a group of people who will overturn what Satan has done, but a singular seed, a descendant of the woman who will set all things right.

He will, by his own suffering, as the serpent bruises his heel, in his own suffering, he will undo all the work of the serpent, which the New Testament tells us Jesus has accomplished in his death and resurrection.

[13:14] He became a curse for us. He became sin for us, the apostle Paul tells us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

So that Jesus is the seed of the woman who has come to undo the work of Satan in the garden. And that theme of this coming seed you can trace throughout the Old Testament.

So that as you arrive in chapter 12 with the story of Abraham, Abraham is promised seed, offspring. And through that seed, all the nations will be blessed.

If you track forward even further through the story of Israel, you'll come to David. And David is promised a seed, a descendant, an offspring, who will sit on his throne forever and will rule over God's people forever and who will bring in righteousness and set all things right.

It's a continuing promise of a seed. First, the promise is given to Eve. And so the seed could be anyone. I mean, after all human beings are descended from Adam and Eve, the seed could be anyone.

[14:24] Then it's narrowed down to Abraham. So we know it's not anyone else. It's going to come through the line of Abraham. And then further, it's narrowed down within Abraham's family, within the Jewish people.

It's narrowed down to the family of David. David, through whom the promised seed will come. And when you arrive in the New Testament, in Matthew chapter 1, the Gospel of Matthew opens by saying, the book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

As if Matthew wants us to see and understand, this is the long promised seed. This is the one who will come to set all things right, to bless all the nations, to reign on David's throne forever, and ultimately to undo the work of Satan in the garden.

The New Testament begins by pointing us in that direction. And while there are lots of clues in the Old Testament, from the prophets, where the seed would be born, from what family line he would come, until the announcement was made to Mary, there was no way of knowing exactly who this seed would be, who he would come from.

And what we see throughout the Old Testament, at least one level, one strand that runs through the Old Testament, is the playing out of this war between the serpent and the seed of the woman.

[16:03] begins in chapter 4, when Cain kills Abel. It continues on. It's probably seen most notably, most clearly, in two events in the Bible.

First, you have the killing of all the newborn Hebrew babies in Egypt under Pharaoh. You think, that seems like a strange event.

It seems like almost an odd thing for them to do. There are other ways to control population, but this hardened heart of a Pharaoh would kill all the newborn children of Egypt.

And then, when you move to the New Testament, there is almost a replaying of those events surrounding the birth of Jesus.

So that at first, there is this attempt on the part of the seed of the serpent and the serpent himself to end the line from which he knows the promised seed of the woman will come, the line of Abraham.

[17:09] End them in Egypt. Destroy them in Egypt. It fails. God brings a deliverer called Moses to take them out of Egypt and save them and rescue them. And now you come to the New Testament.

There is another opportunity. The time has come. The promised one is to be born in Bethlehem. The serpent knows the timing. He knows when it's going to happen. An evil king, once again, sits on the throne.

So what happens? Matthew chapter 2. We're told the story of Herod. It says in verse 16 of Matthew chapter 2 that Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, became furious.

And he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years older under, according to the time that he had ascertained from the wise men. Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah.

A voice was heard in Ramah weeping in loud lamentation. Rachel weeping for her children. She refused to be comforted because they are no more.

[18:12] When Jeremiah originally spoke those words in Jeremiah chapter 35, he was both looking backward to the Exodus event in which the children of Rachel were killed in Egypt.

And he was looking at the whole course of history and the present in which throughout history Satan had waged a war on children.

If you look through the prophets of the Old Testament you will find over and over that the height of the rebellion of God's people occurs not with simple, regular, everyday idolatry.

That happens all the time in the history of Israel and God judges them for it. The height of their rebellion comes when in their idolatrous practices they sacrifice their children to false gods.

And God will not stand for it. He will not be pushed beyond that limit and judgment always immediately falls when Israel reaches that point.

[19:14] There is a whole long history in which the serpent wages war against the seed of the woman. In fact, in the book of Revelation, I want you to turn over to Revelation chapter 12 because there is a strange passage here that sort of begins to tie a lot of this together for us.

I know the book of Revelation is confusing. It has got all this imagery and all those sorts of things. It has got beasts and dragons and women riding dragons and all that kind of I know there is a lot of strange stuff in here. But here in the midst of all of that even though we may not understand all the details there is a clear message here.

Revelation chapter 12 says in verse 1 that a great sign appeared in heaven a woman clothed with the sun with the moon under her feet and on her head a crown of twelve stars.

Twelve representing Israel so in all likelihood this woman represents the people of God. That is who she is. It says in verse 2 that she was pregnant and was crying out in birth pains and the agony of giving birth.

Another sign appeared in heaven behold a great red dragon who is this great dragon? He is the serpent of old chapter 20 tells us. He has seven heads and ten horns and on his head seven diadems.

[20:30] It says that his tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and cast him to earth and the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth so that when she bore her child he might devour it.

That is his goal. Throughout all of history that has been his goal. He might devour it. She gave birth to a male child who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron.

That's Jesus. But her child was caught up to God and to his throne and the woman fled into the wilderness to a place prepared by God. The point of this passage here is that Satan has marshaled all of his resources and he's doing all that he can do throughout history to end the line of the seed of the woman so that he might prevent this one from coming into the world.

And yet his war is not limited to that because in his arrogance and in his flagrant disregard for the image of God in man Satan has waged a war not only against the line that would lead to the promised seed but he's waged a war against all the seed of woman.

Throughout all history he has sought to snatch children and so there's no surprise that the church is continually encouraged throughout the New Testament to care for two groups of people widows and orphans.

[22:05] Always the church is tasked with caring for those caring for children caring for those who are the most vulnerable in society. Even Jesus himself said allow the children to come to me don't hinder them.

He gives strong warnings whoever would lead one of these little ones astray it would be better to have a millstone tied around his neck and thrown into the sea. Jesus is serious about the protection of children. He's not playing games and he's serious when he tells the church that the church ought to be about the business of protecting children.

This is not a game being played between Satan and God. The end is determined. The victory is already won and yet the dragon rages on even to this day.

Abortion is not about culture wars. Abortion is about spiritual warfare. And there stands behind it not merely a political philosophy there stands behind it a demonic intent upon the lives of babies.

I'm not saying here that everyone who's pro-choice is possessed by a demon. I'm not saying that everyone who's participated in an abortion in any way that they're demon possessed or they're being controlled by Satan or any of those sorts of things.

[23:31] I'm not saying that at all but I'm saying that behind all of that spiritual warfare is taking place. And if we think this is simply about turning the tide in a cultural war we have missed the boat entirely.

This has nothing to do with political affiliation. This has nothing to do even with what nation you're a part of. life. This has to do with an ancient war that goes all the way back to the garden.

And so knowing that and knowing what is the ultimate cause of all of this the question that we need to answer for ourselves is what do we do in light of this? What do we do as followers of Christ living now in this century in the 21st what do we do?

How do we respond? Is there anything that we can do? I mean if this is some cosmic battle that's been going on since the garden of Eden then is there anything that we can do? What role should we play in this?

How should we even approach this kind of an issue? And I want to suggest to you that there are three very specific things that we can do.

[24:43] Very specific things that we can do as a church as individual followers of Christ as we deal with this particular issue. Yes it's cosmic in scope.

Yes it's going on throughout history. Yes it will continue until Christ returns. But we have a role to play and there are things that we ought to do. So what are those things? The first thing that we need to do is that we need to remain gospel focused when we talk about this.

I'm not just throwing out some trendy evangelical language when I say gospel focused. Because when we read these verses in Genesis, the very beginning of this battle, we're reading the first announcement of the gospel to humanity.

This is not simply a judgment upon the serpent. This is all of our hope. There will come a seed who will crush the head of the serpent.

This is an announcement, although in very veiled form, this is an announcement of the gospel. A redeemer is coming. And if we approach this issue with anything other than a gospel mindset, we will only become mean-spirited, judgmental people who can't believe that anybody would ever participate in something like that.

[26:02] And yet, Jesus has come not to empower you and I to fight culture wars, but to save and deliver and rescue women who've had abortions.

He has come to forgive and pay the penalty for the sins of abortion doctors and nurses. And if we come with anything other than a gospel mindset, we will set this battle on earthly grounds and we'll think that our enemy are the people in those clinics and that's not our enemy.

Our enemy is the serpent and his work can only be undone by the seed of the woman. And his work is done through the proclamation of the gospel.

I want you to hear what the apostle Paul has to say as an antidote against legalism and judgmentalism. He's not shy about calling sin, sin.

1 Corinthians chapter 6 verse 9, he says, Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God.

[27:19] That's clear. That's plain. We shouldn't be afraid to say that. Paul's not afraid to say it. We shouldn't be afraid to call sin, sin. But what does he say next?

Verse 11, Such were some of you. You were murderers. You were idolaters. You practiced homosexuality.

You were thieves. You were greedy. You were drunkards. You were revilers. You were swindlers. You were shut out from the kingdom of God. That's who you were. That's who I was. Everybody in this room at one time, we were in that category.

Maybe your particular sin of choice is not in the list, but believe me, you were in the category of not inheriting the kingdom of God. All of us were. Such were you, but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

The main thing that we've got to remember as we deal with this issue or any other issue is to remain gospel focused. Our goal is not to win a culture war.

[28:28] Our goal is to win people with the gospel for Christ. All of our efforts ought to be aimed in that direction. That's the first thing that we've got to do as we deal with this issue.

The second way in which I think that we can be engaged with this is that we as a church, we as individuals, can be the kind of people who help those when they're faced with these kinds of choices.

Because we like to simplify it and say, well, it's easy. You do what's right, you do what's wrong. You make a choice and deal with the consequences of your choice. But there's more to it than that.

Because you're dealing with people who are not only most of the time lost and without Christ, but they're without any earthly hope as well. They oftentimes have nobody else to turn to, nobody to call upon.

Or if they do go to the people that are in their lives, they know that they will be rejected. And so what do we do as a church? We reach out.

[29:44] We love them. We embrace them. We bring them in. We share the gospel with them. We clothe them. We feed them. We do whatever is necessary.

Because the main thing that we can do practically, other than preaching the gospel, the main thing that we can do to prevent abortions is to love pregnant women who feel like they have nowhere else to turn.

To bring them in and care for them and nurse them and take care of their baby and do all of those things. And there are ministries that do that and there are official sort of channels that you can get involved and do that kind of ministry.

But where this really happens is when you just get involved in people's lives. When you know what's happening in the lives of your co-workers or your neighbors or that kid down the street. When you sort of know what's happening in the lives of people that God has surrounded you with.

When you're connected with people and engaged with people and you're loving on people in an everyday way, then those opportunities arise and you find out about these situations and at that moment you jump in and you do something that no one else will do and that's a part of what it means to be a follower of Christ in this world.

[30:59] That's what it means to be the light of the world. Not hiding away in your home or your Bible study or on Sunday morning putting the light under a basket, but throwing the basket aside and engaging with people in the world.

Really engaging with them so that you know and you're there, you're the person standing there when they stumble and they fall down and they think they have nowhere else to go. We preach the gospel to them, we come in and we love them and we help them and we do all that we can to rescue them from bad decisions.

But then lastly, sometimes we can't engage in that way or sometimes we engage in that way and it's still, it's just not enough.

There is a biblical remedy for that situation and it's called adoption. We are, as the people of God, we are called to be engaged in the issue of adoption.

It's a fundamental aspect of orphan care. The early church was known in the Greco-Roman world that they were known for their propensity to take in abandoned babies.

[32:10] Babies that were literally left out in the countryside to be eaten by wolves and animals, literally abandoned under bridges. Christians were known and they were the only ones known for seeking out those babies, hearing their cries, finding them, taking them into their home, making them their own children, because that's what the followers of Jesus do when babies need a home.

We do that because the same thing has been done for us. The Apostle Paul says that God has adopted us into his family. That we have, through faith in Jesus, been united to Christ so that he becomes our spiritual brother and his father becomes our father.

We have been adopted into God's family. And as people who have been adopted into his family, how can we not engage in adoption in the world around us?

It doesn't mean that every family in the church needs to have three or four adopted kids. It may mean that God is calling you to adopt children when you hear about them, but it may mean that God is calling you to facilitate adoption, to help other people adopt.

When you find out about a family in the church or someone that you know that's thinking about adoption, doing everything you can to serve and help and make that happen and make a place for this kid who doesn't have a place in the world.

[33 : 34] This should be not only sort of a blip on our spiritual radar. This should be at the center of how we think and function as a church.

In Acts chapter 15, you don't have to turn there, I'll just summarize it for you. But in Acts chapter 15, there was the first official church council that was called to deal with the apostle Paul.

You know, you've got to deal with Paul because you never know what Paul's going to do and he's out there doing all kinds of stuff and so they've got to address the issue of the fact that Paul is preaching the gospel and he's not making anybody follow the law of Moses or get circumcised or any, he's not doing any of that.

He's just anybody, Roman, Greek, anybody. He'll even let a Cretan come in and become a Christian. He's just preaching the gospel. So they call a church council in Jerusalem to discuss the issue of what do we do with Paul?

We let him keep doing what he's doing or do we insist that he toe the line like we do here in Jerusalem and he needs to follow all the law of Moses. What do we do? And the church determined, the church in Jerusalem, the apostles and the elders determined that it was not necessary.

[34 : 41] That the gospel did not make necessary obedience to the law. We are saved as Paul tells us we are justified by faith alone. So the apostle Paul was right in his preaching. He was confirmed in his gospel and he was sent out to preach that gospel and to continue to preach it.

And it's the gospel we still preach today. But they did say something. They did add one thing. So, make sure, Paul, as you go and plant these churches, make sure you care for the widows and the orphans.

Never neglect those things. We are justified by faith alone, but the faith that justifies is a faith that works through love, manifested supremely in what we do with the most vulnerable in our society.

And nobody is more vulnerable than babies without a place and a home and a mom and a dad that want to keep them. And so the church is called to engage in adoption on every level that we can.

Whatever that may look like for you and your family and your friends and those around you, we are called to this. That's how we do spiritual battle.

[35 : 55] We don't do spiritual battle by puffing up our chests and saying the name of Jesus as many times as we can and pretending that we are somehow stronger than Satan.

We do spiritual battle with the power of the Holy Spirit, the word of God in our hands, proclaiming the gospel and serving and loving people around us.

And to the degree that we do that, to that degree, have we really authentically and genuinely done anything about the tragedy of abortion in our nation and around the world?

Let's pray. I know, Father, that there are those among us who have been directly touched by this issue.

Maybe through their own sin and their own choices. I pray that you would speak gospel words of comfort to their heart now.

[37 : 05] We were all astray. We have all sinned. And the blood of Jesus can cover all of it.

His righteousness can be ours. We no longer stand before you as one who sent a young girl to end the life of a baby or as a woman who in her earlier days followed that course of action.

We stand now by faith in Jesus. Jesus fully clothed in his perfection and righteousness and obedience. So I pray that you would make that word of comfort real for those who need it.

And I pray that you would stir up in us not a sense of political anger or angst or anything like that but you would stir up in us a real desire to take the gospel to take a commitment to loving others and laying down our lives for their sake and to go into the world to our neighbors to our family members to our co-workers and our friends to real people to go into our world with the gospel and with hands and feet ready to serve and that we would lay down our lives for the sake of the gospel and for the sake of those that you've made in your image.

I pray this in Christ's name. Amen. Amen.