

52 Stories of the Bible

(Old Testament)

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1. Creation and God

Genesis 1: “How Big is Your God?”

GENESIS 1

One of the two or three most important stories in the entire Bible

Lays the foundation for much of the theology of Scripture

Controversial

Conflict with science — science agrees 6 literal days impossible — so?

Conflict within the evangelical church (e.g., young earth)

Whatever position you hold

I believe that the primarily purpose of Gen 1 is theological

Other issues like science and history are secondary

Story is primarily there to teach us about God and ourselves

1:1-2

Title affirming the central truth: God is the sole creator of everything

God and God alone has the power and wisdom to create everything.

Stands above creation, separate from creation, sovereign over everything.

Probably we are to see in the title the initial creation of matter (*ex nihilo*)

God created the basic *stuff* of the universe

“Heaven and earth” is a “merism” – state opposites to mean everything

Stage is set

Creation is formless and void

Dark

God’s Spirit is hovering, ready to act

SIX DAYS OF CREATION

First three days are concerned with God making the earth inhabitable

Left column of chart

Moving what is chaotic and formless — to something that is inhabitable

“Separate”

DAY 1 — CREATES LIGHT, TO SEPARATE DAY AND NIGHT — VV 3-5

Three significant truths — repeated throughout the Creation story

1. God is Creator — no other creative powers in the universe

“And God said”

Ultimate creative might — simply speak and brings order into chaos

Light without sun

God does not need the stars for there to be light — Day 4

Pagan myths see stars (esp. sun) as powers that exert influence on creation

Are we any different today? Horoscopes and astrology

2. God created orderly, intentionally, with purpose

Creation is no accident

Pagan creation myths — Enuma Elish (Babylonian)

gods/dragons —warring

Tiamat stabbed in eyes, out of which flow Tigris and Euphrates

Different today — freak chance of nature — primordial scum on the beach

3. God created it “good”

Goodness of creation is not inherent

Creation is good because *good God* created it good & *blessed* it with his goodness.

Far cry from the humanistic cry of Henry Higgins — “spark of the divine”

DAY 2 — SEPARATE WATERS ABOVE FROM WATERS BELOW — VV 6-8

“Expanse” is probably the sky — waters above are clouds

DAY 3 — SEPARATE SEAS FROM DRY LAND — VV 9-13

Breaks pattern — producing vegetation/fruit

The chaotic, formless world is now ready for habitation

First three days — putting things in their proper places

Separating — setting boundaries

Familiar story. Think about it. “How Big is Your God?” — our response to the story

The God we worship Sunday morning.

The God who pursues us and loves us

The God who calls us to pursue him and to love him

This God spoke — and all reality (including time) simply came into existence

NOW IT IS TIME TO INHABIT, THE NOW INHABITABLE WORLD — RIGHT COLUMN

“Separates” becomes “inhabit”

Day 4 — Stars to inhabit the sky — vv 14-19

God is in control — He creates / places them / determines their functions

Stars are not gods and exert no influence on creation

Orderly — regulate the passing of time

Day 5 — Fish to inhabit the waters, birds to inhabit the sky — vv 20-23

God blessed them and told them to multiply — fully inhabit

Despite biology class— sea/land do not have the inherent ability to produce life

Days 6 and 7 are the culmination of Creation

Animals and people, and God’s rest — next Sunday

WHAT DO WE LEARN ABOUT THE CREATOR GOD FROM DAYS 1-5?

Main point: There is only One God – separate; created all things; sovereign

No one participates with God in creation

Not the sun, moon or stars

Not mother nature / earth

Not the waters or the dry land — sorry Darwin

First of Ten Commandments: “I am the Lord your God. You shall have no other gods before me.”

Is. 42:8

God will not share his glory, his place of pre-eminence, with any one / thing

This is one of the central truths attacked by the sinful world

World wants to believe that it created itself

Holds the keys to its own existence

Real issue: *World* does not want to be answerable to anyone except itself

And so it convinces itself that it made itself

Relentless in insisting that we worship the world

Bible says it is *sin* that propels creation to worship creation (Rom 1)

Sin wants us to look at the heavens and see nothing but stars.

Sin says, there is no God — you are gods.

Mormonism — Animism — New Age — Hinduism — Humanism

I want Genesis 1 to enlarge your vision of God

To see the immensity of who God is — words fail!

Web picture — we serve a God whose greatness extends beyond anything science or Star Trek can comprehend.

HOW BIG IS YOUR GOD?

Has he become so small that he cannot care for you?

Have the gods of this world become so big that we worship them?

Gods of pleasure, achievement, money, power, and independence?

Has the God of Genesis 1 become so unsatisfying

that the gods of this world compete for our affections?

Or is your God the God of Genesis 1, who

speaks all things into existence?

is *sovereign* over absolutely everything — possess all authority?

is *wise* beyond anything we can possibly understand?

is *worthy*

of being pursued with every ounce of passion in our body and spirit

of not sharing his glory with anything in creation

of the place of absolute pre-eminence in our lives

to whom we cry out to in our pain

hang on to in times of trouble

whom we serve

whom we glorify in our obedience

Question of Genesis 1

2. Creation and Us

Genesis 1

Last time — “What do the first five days of creation tell us about God?”

Today look at Day 6 of creation

What does creation tell us *about ourselves*?

DAY 6 — TWO CREATIVE ACTS

1. *Animals* to inhabit the earth — vv 24-25 (God; purposefully; good)

2. Human beings

“Man” (Adam) is generic (singular mankind; plural male and female)

In chapter 2 become personal name — details of Day 6

Vv 26-28

Conclusion of the creation story

Provides for his creation — vv 29-30 (all are vegetarian)

V 31 — final benediction that it is *very* good

THEME: PEOPLE ARE THE APEX, THE CLIMAX, OF CREATION

Literary crescendo building

Length of the description of each day increasing

Literary pattern

“Let there be ... and it was so” — “according to kind” — Good

Rhythm/pattern to days 1-5

Interrupted at day 6

Familiar “Let there be” becomes “Let us make”

Instead of creation reproducing “according to their kind,” Adam and Eve are created “in our image”

Instead of just filling the earth — also rule the earth

“Subdue” the earth itself

Dominion over the inhabitants of the earth

You and I are not some Darwinian mistake

We didn’t make it to the “top of the evolutionary ladder” because we have opposing thumbs and the ability to think abstractly.

I am the *crowning point* of God’s act of creation. Why?

The omniscient, all-powerful God said, “Let us make man in our image”

Wanted to create something that was more like himself than birds

Made me/you in his image, in his likeness

WHO IS THE PLURAL “US” — “OUR IMAGE” — IN V 27 => SG. “HIS OWN IMAGE”?

Creation emphasizes that there is only one God — monotheism (v 27)

But here is a hint that there is more to God than meets the eye

In his singularity there is some sort of plurality

“Trinity” (“threeness”) — we see this in creation

God the Father — ultimate authority; decides there will be a creation

God the Son — agent, does work — Col 1:16; John 1:3)

God the Spirit (v 2) — completes, gives life

This is the “us” of Genesis 1 — we are made in the image of the triune God

WHAT IS THIS “IMAGE” OF THE TRIUNE GOD (“IMAGO DEI”)?

Debate often looks for one specific thing

Intellect, moral choices, creativity

Key is in the Hebrew word translated “likeness” — similar but not identical

“Image” refers to *all* those qualities that together enable us to resemble God

Seen in the context — God wanted to make something more like himself

More like himself than the animals, birds, fish

More than vegetation and the stars

So he made human beings

Heavens may declare the glory of God, but you and I look like him

No mountain/starry night/sunset can do.

We alone of all are made in the image of God — we alone reflect God to creation

Spiritual qualities — more than flesh and bones — awareness of God

Mental qualities — intellect, reason (abstract)

Relational qualities — walk with God (Gen 2)

Moral qualities — conscience (right/wrong)

Image of God

We were made like him

We were made to reflect him to creation

APPLICATION #1: THE IMAGE OF GOD IS THE SOURCE OF ALL HUMAN DIGNITY

“Dignity”: sense of worth, significance — “I’m somebody”

I am who I am because God has infused his likeness into me

World is messed up in understanding the dignity of human race

World claims a dignity of itself — apart from God

World measures dignity based on performance — its own values

Tells some they have earned dignity — “beautiful people”

Hold awards ceremonies so we can adore them.

“Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous” — not “meek and humble”

Tells others they are worthless. Why?

You can't jump as high, tackle as hard, not as rich — not very pretty

But there is no human dignity apart from God

Our dignity lies *solely* in the fact that God created us

Image of God — “very good”

This is who I am — Why I am here — Meaning of life — Source of my dignity

I am worthwhile not because of what I have done.

I am worthwhile because God created me ... in his image to rule

Why we are all of the *same value*, worth, have the same dignity

Young woman who was coming out of anorexia

Self-image had been crushed in a church's youth group — control

“It doesn't matter how people view me. Only matters how God views me.”

God loves me for who I am. I am created in his image and therefore I am his treasure.

APPLICATION #2: RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CREATION AND OUR SPIRITUAL GROWTH

Continuum

We were created in God's image

Image is never lost, although it is marred by sin

God died so that his own image in us could reach its full potential

Spiritual journey is one in which we are to look more and more like Him

2 Cor 3:18

“Great Stone Face” (Nathaniel Hawthorne) — “by beholding ...”

Why should we bother with spiritual growth?

Painful and full of disappointments!

This is what we were made to be and to do

God created us so that his image can become more and more visible in us

Why it is worth the effort and the disappointments and the joy

Ultimately, someday, we will look like God

Never be God — but we will be him — 1 John 3:2

Lets get ready

MAY WE NEVER DERIVE OUR SENSE OF SIGNIFICANCE FROM WHAT WE DO

Or from what the world thinks of us

May we always draw our significance from fact that we created in God’s image

As we live out our lives, may we know the greatest joy, looking *more and more like him*

Someday, we will *be like him* — see our creator face to face

3. The Fall

Genesis 3

Connections

- 1 — God created all things — good
- 2 — detailed discussion of the creation of Adam and Eve — 2:16-17 (love; obey)
- 3 — entrance of sin into this perfect world (“Fall”) and God’s plan of redemption

GENESIS 3 STARTS BY SATAN ASSUMING THE FORM OF A SNAKE AND ASKING EVE A ?— 3:1

Essence of his lie? Misrepresent God — question God’s word

EVE’S ANSWER — 3:2-3

In answering Satan’s misrepresentation, Eve misrepresents God’s prohibition
“You” is pl in vv 1-5 — explicit in v 6 — Adam not open his mouth or lift a finger

SATAN’S REBUTTAL — 3:4-5 — 3-FOLD LIE

1. Questions God’s honesty: he is a liar
2. Questions God’s character — keeping you from realizing your full potential
3. Removes distinction between creator/creation – “like God”

Jesus says Satan is the father of lies — still the nature of temptation & sin today

ADAM AND EVE SIN — 3:6

Progression

Believed lie (“wise”) — out of sinful heart comes sinful actions

Complicity of Adam

Bears the blame for sin entering the world (Rom 5:12). Why?

Adam was created first — headship — responsible

Adam’s failure to lead — silence — first sin (Eve deceived)

CONSEQUENCES (3:7-24)

Theme: God's good creation will no longer function as intended — pain

1. Interpersonal pain — 3:7

Nakedness is no longer an indication of perfect intimacy (2:25), but now shame

Blame game (3:12)

2. Pain between God and A/E — 3:8-11

Sin causes us to do silly things — hide from God (try to picture this)

Just as fig leaves were to hide their shame from one another, so also hiding in Garden was to hide their shame from God — equally ineffective

Sin results in alienation — from God and from one another

Opposite what Satan said — not “like God” — further apart

3. Blame game — 3:12-13

Adam blames Eve

Victim mentality on steroids — “Take it like a man, Adam.”

Imagine how Eve felt? (perfect husband / marriage) — no tension/pain

Who does Adam really blame? God

Isn't this just like us — blame our disobedience on God — if only you ...

Eve sees that blaming God / spouse doesn't work — tries a different tact

I was tricked — not my fault

Blame game never works with God

Ultimately — we are responsible for our choices

Curse and Judgment (3:14-19)

Curses only Satan and the ground — not Adam/Eve — judgment and pain

Second theme: promise of redemption — Judge and Redeemer

Pattern throughout the Bible

Curse on Snake — 3:14-15

Complicated — offspring of Satan is not demons

Key: “offspring” is a collective noun (singular and plural)

Plural — prophecy of conflict

John 8:44 — Satan’s offspring are all unredeemed people

Eve’s offspring are all the redeemed

Singular — prophecy of redemption

Yet, one of the redeemed offspring will deliver the fatal blow

NIV “strike his heel” — “crush your head”

Judgment on Eve — 3:16

1. Eve will still do her uniquely feminine work (childbirth), but now in pain

2. Pain in her relationship with her husband — controversial (“for,” “rule”)

Eve’s desire is to be over her husband — headship in marriage

But Adam will “rule over you” (not succeed, or “dominate”)

“Original sin” — Curse is passed on down to their descendants

Inherited sinful nature — all areas of life including marriage

Judgment on Adam — 3:17-19

God’s intention was that Adam work the ground — ground co-operate

Apparently A/E were to live forever — 2:17

1. Adam will still do his work, but now in pain — curse the ground

“Why are there thorns?” (mosquitoes)

2. Eventually will return to the ground from which he was created

Died spiritually — relationship with God crumbled

Will eventually die physically

Original sin — curse extends to all descendants of Adam

WHAT DO WE LEARN ABOUT GOD AND OURSELVES (SPECIFICALLY SIN)?

Reflection questions

1. Problem of Pain

Greatest hindrance to people believing in God

40,000 children a day die from starvation

Aids in Africa is going to kill 1/3 of the population

How can God be all-loving and all-powerful and allow this amount of pain

Because Adam and Eve sinned

We have continued to sin — our fault, not God's

Rom 8:19 — even the earth is waiting for the end of time

Greatest act of treachery and pain was the death of the only truly innocent

In the midst of pain — God is in the process of redeeming his creation

2. The essence of sin is lack of faith in God

Questioning his character, goodness, wisdom, love for creation

When you and I sin, we are saying that God is wrong

We don't trust him — He doesn't know what is best

God says, "Whatever is pure and holy" (Phil 4)

We say, "You don't know what you are saying" — book; movies

God says, "Give, and it will be given to you, pressed down, running over"

We say, "Don't tell me how to spend my money"

God says, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God (Pl 4:6)

We say, "I don't trust you — worry is so rewarding and effective ..."

Nothing has changed — Genesis 3 is not ancient history; it is current events.

3. God is both Judge and Redeemer

1. Forgiveness in the sacrifice — 3:20-21

Think of Adam's prior relationships with the animals — name; talk (Eve)

God wraps them in the skins of his redemption and love

2. Promise of a coming savior — crush Satan's head

3. Not allow us to live forever in our sin — 3:22-24 is act of judgment and mercy

4. God's creation will someday be restored — return to the Garden

Perfect harmony — with God, spouse, family, creation

Revelation 21:3-4; 22:2 ("tree of life")

Some day we go home to the Garden — redemption complete

4. The Flood

Genesis 6

Introduction

Leave Gen 3 with A/E beginning to experience curse — removed from Garden

4-6 we see sin and its consequences continue to grow

4 — Cain kills Abel

8 generations (1,500 years): Lamech — 2 wives; brags about killing

Ninth generation: Noah and the story of the Flood (Genesis 6-9)

1. GOD'S JUDGMENT ON SIN — 6:5-7

When Bible says God is “sorry,” does not mean God made a mistake.

Means he will do something about the problem.

Sin grieves God

When you enter into any human relationship — open heart to possible pain

More you open your heart, the deeper the pain can go

Same is true of God

God has made his heart vulnerable to us

When we sin, it grieves God (not just breaking rules)

Don't leave today thinking that sin is not a big deal — “Not that bad”

Not trivializing sin — Holiness matters *some* of the time

Sin grieves the heart of God — Sin is bad enough to “blot out” all life (6:7)

Is the story of the flood a children's story? (cute pictures, and “Arky Arky Arky”)

One of the darkest moments in humanity's existence

Only darker moment — hours of darkness before Jesus' death

Gustave Dore's “Deluge” — X-rated movie

Sin is a big deal

Always destructive — always consequences

Never trivialize sin — God's holiness always matters

Do we really understand this?

Say something that hurts a person's reputation (story of visitor)

Draw negative conclusion without knowing the person

Pass judgment when it is none of our business

Refuse to forgive

Allow anger to fester — refuse to deal with fear that fuels the anger

Sin is a big deal because God's holiness is really a big deal

2. EVEN IN THE MIDST OF JUDGMENT, GOD IS THE REDEEMER

Meet Noah — 6:8-9

Noah stands in stark contrast to all the sin

Promised conflict of Genesis 3:15

(6:14-22) — See how God redeems the righteous Noah

God the *Judge* tells Noah about the coming flood

Kill all human and animal life

God the *Redeemer* makes plans to save Noah

God gives the plans for the ark

Send the animals — shuts the door (7:16)

Never loses control of the flood — tells it to come and go

When over — accepts Noah's sacrifice

What do the Garden, Ark, and the Cross all have in common?

Each is the place of the judgment of sin and the redemption of the righteous

Even in the midst of God punishing our sin, he is always there to redeem.

Are you in the midst of sin and its consequences?

God is always there to redeem and restore

3. NOAH IS A MAN OF AMAZING FAITH

Put yourself in Noah's shoes

God tells him about the flood. — “What?” (canopy theory)

Build ark. “What?” — Long, skinny, floating barge

Where's it going to float? — You'll see

How big?

1.5 football fields x 25 years wide (this room), 3 levels 15' ceilings

So big it will take 7 days for the animals to fill it up.

“How will I steer?”

No rudder — at my mercy of the redeeming God

Gather food for all the animals

How much? For over a year

Imagine the ridicule

Apparently took over 100 years

What if God asked us to build an ark on our parking lot.

Yet, look at Noah's response

Believed God and responded in obedience — 6:22 (4x)

Example of faith in Heb 11:17

NOAH WAS 600 YEARS OLD,

God sends the animals

Imagine the neighbors (picture)

He enters when the rain starts

40 days for the floods to rise above the mountain tops — 7:21-23

We were put here to care for these animals — they suffer the consequences of our sin

150 days to recede (ark on mountains of Ararat)

4 months until see the dry land

Raven — strong bird; never returns

Dove (twice) — olive trees only grow in valleys

2 more months until God says it was okay (1 year and 10 days) — 8:15-17

Picture the recreated world is like

God continues to be a redeeming God

Covenant — sign of the rainbow

People have not changed — 8:21 (NIV “even though”)

FLOOD IS NOT A CHILDREN’S STORY

Sin grieving God’s heart — Redeemer — Faith

When you see rain — agree with God that he hates sin

Sin grieves God — always horrific — destructive

Look at the sin in your life — esp. what you are comfortable with (tongue)

When you see the rainbow — God is a redeeming God

People whose faith leads to obedience will be redeemed

Has God asked you to do something the world says is silly? Step out in faith

Like Noah and the ark?

Like Moses returning to Egypt?

Like Hudson Taylor and the Inland China Mission (60 - 70 million)

Hate sin, not even toying with it, and pursue holiness?

Give all of yourself to him? Fully devoted disciple

When God calls you to believe him

Like Noah, we are to respond in faith, and faithful obedience

5. Abraham's Covenant

Genesis 12, 15

After the flood, sin continues

Individually (Noah's son Ham) and corporately (Babel)

God's redemption also continues

God chooses one of Noah's descendants—Abra(ha)m

Agent of redemption — means by which God will deal with sin

God calls Abraham to leave Ur (on the Euphrates north of Kuwait) & go to Canaan

Stopped in Haran — eventually Abraham's father died — 2100 B.C.

GOD RENEWED HIS CALL TO ABRAHAM — 12:1-4A

Two parts to the promise

1. "Great nation" is promise of descendants, land — not specify thru his own son
2. "Blessing" — Abraham — Abraham will be blessing to all families on the earth

This is a conditional promise — conditioned on Abraham's response

1. Abraham must *believe* God's promises are true — trust God's promises
"Faith" not explicit here, but is explicit in chapter 15 — Heb 11

2. Then he must *act* on that faith — faithfully obey

Not just enough to say you have faith — faithfully obey

Abraham has a choice to make. He chooses to *believe* God's promises and then to *faithfully obey* God by leaving Haran.

COVENANT CEREMONY (15) — “ABRAHAMIC COVENANT”

Top Ten Stories — this would be the second

“Covenant”

Formal agreement between two parties — obligations, privileges, relationship

“Covenantal relationship” — “Covenantal community”

Summarize ceremony (15:7-21 — both kings walk)

15:1-6 gives us the situation that leads up to the covenant ceremony

Read vv 1-5 (explain Eleazar)

Abraham (v 2) is not questioning God because of a lack of faith

It is *because* Abraham believed God’s call in chapter 12 that he doesn’t understand why he is still childless.

“Lord God” (v 2) is an unusual title in Hebrew that emphasizes that God is master and Abraham is the slave.

“I believe you, God, that you will be my shield of protection and will give me a great reward, but ...”

“What good is a reward if I have no son of my own, no heir to leave it to?”

God clarifies his promise

The “great nation” (chpt 12) will be through your *own son*

Your descendants will be as numerous as the innumerable stars.

Abraham’s growing faith restates itself — 15:6 (supply antecedents)

“Belief”: Abraham trusted that God would do what He said He would do

Rom 4:21 “*fully convinced* that God was able to do what he had promised”

Biblical definition of “Faith” — “trust” — “believe in”

“Righteousness”

A. responded in faith, God responds by declaring Abraham “righteous”

Conduct expected of someone within the covenant relationship

What did God expect of Abraham? Faith. Belief. Fully convinced

WHAT DOES GOD EXPECT OF US? TWO THINGS

1. Exactly the same thing he expected from Abraham. To trust him.

Fully convinced that what he says is true — even if it runs *counter* to what we see

Heb 11:1 — Hab 3:17-18

The human tendency is not to believe

Want something to hang on to — “See” God — “Feel” his presence

Something more than faith — physical or emotional — crutch

Thomas in trouble for this (John 20:25) — still today

“Without *faith* it is impossible to please God” (Heb 11:6)

Core requirement for righteousness — God’s will for your life

2. True faith always shows itself in action

If faith is not followed by faithful obedience — not like Abraham

No better than the best demons (James 2:19) — dead and useless

But if faith is true, it will of necessity be followed by faithful obedience

It was faith that made ...

Noah obey God and build the ark

Abraham leave his homeland and sacrifice Isaac

Moses refuse the power of Egypt

King David praise God in the midst of being attacked and maligned

Habakkuk praise God even though the fig tree should not blossom.

Paul: “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us” (Rom 8:18).

It is faith that makes the husband trust God even when

his wife’s medical test suggests she has cancer

wife ... she has buried her first two children

Gerry Sitzer ... a drunk driver murdered his wife, mother, daughter

Gretchen Hill ... in spite of having cancer in 21 of 22 lymph nodes, returned to Turkey to share the gospel with Muslims in Istanbul.

And it is faith that will support Gretchen’s husband and four little boys now that she is gone.

See faith in the ordinary as well as the extraordinary. It is faith that ...

Makes the husband ignore the lures of the world and honor God's call on his life —
Dobson

Leads young boys girls to take a purity class, promising to hold to their sexual
purity — believing that God's way is better

Led a 20 year old young man, who had misplaced his purity ring, to ask for a new
one for his birthday

It is by faith that leads the single person finds his/her sufficiency in Christ.

This is the faith of Abraham — fully convinced — faithfully obey

WE LIVE WITHIN A COVENANTAL COMMUNITY

"I will be their God, and they will be my people"

What does God require of us?

Are *you* fully convinced that what God says is true?

If you are, then you have the joy of receiving the rewards of the life of faith

Accepting God at his word, and stepping out in faith and watching Him keep his
promises.

If you are not fully convinced that God is true

1. Cry out with the father who has the demon-possessed son:

"I believe. Help my unbelief!" (Mark 9:24)

2. Step out on the promises of God

Take a chance — risk believing

Come to understand the joy of living by faith in the God of Abraham

6. Joseph

Genesis 37-50

God made a covenantal promise to Abraham

Abraham would become a great nation

This would happen through his own son

Genesis 21-36 is the story of God being faithful to that covenant

Isaac was born 25 years later

Isaac married Rebekah (God's sovereignty — control over human events)

They had twin boys, Esau and Jacob — story of redemption focuses on Jacob

Jacob married Leah and Rachel, and was renamed "Israel"

They had 12 sons (tribes) — story of redemption focuses on one son, Joseph

STORY OF JOSEPH IN GENESIS 37-50

Too long to retell in detail — summarize main points

Themes

God's faithfulness to his covenantal promises — God is main character

God's omnipotence — all-powerful

"Sovereignty": all-powerful king over all creation in control

God's omniscience — all-knowing — future

God is so powerful and wise, He is so faithful to his covenantal promises, that He will keep those promises even if it means working in the midst of — even through — human sin.

Joseph was his father's favorite

Robe of many colors ("richly ornamented") and therefore hated by his brothers

Sold by his brothers as a slave

Was bought by an Egyptian officer named Potiphar

In the midst of his brothers' sin, God is still sovereign, accomplishing *his* purposes, keeping *his* promises (39:2-6)

Tendency to think that because there is injustice/hurt/pain

that God has forgotten Joseph/us
that God has lost control of the situation

But not only is God still in control

He is still bringing great blessing in the midst of sin.

Sometimes God keeps us from harm ("angels watching over") — don't know

Other times he works in the midst of sin and hurt — Joseph
God is still sovereign — his plans cannot be thwarted by human sin.

Joseph refuses the advances of Potiphar's wife

"How can I sin against God ... flees"

If I were writing this story, I would reward Joseph for his sexual purity

In response to his purity, she lies about him and has him thrown in jail

Imagine how Joseph feels

Isn't it bad enough to have been sold into slavery by my brothers?

This is the thanks I get for retaining my purity?

God's response? In the midst of the sin of Potiphar's wife, I am still sovereign, accomplish my purposes, keep my promises, bless (39:21-23).

After who knows how many years, Joseph is given a chance to get out

Two of Pharaoh's officials are thrown into jail

Both dream, and Joseph is asked to interpret — 40:8

From a human standpoint, some may think Joseph has the right to be mad at God — not mad — still wants to give God the credit, the glory

Joseph's interpretation comes true

Baker is executed — Cupbearer returns to service

One request — 40:14-15

In appreciation, the Cupbearer forgets all about Joseph

But two years later (Genesis 41) Pharaoh has two dreams

Cupbearer remembers Joseph

Once again Joseph asserts that interpretations belong to God — 41:16

Seven years of good harvest; seven of famine — 41:32

Joseph is appointed to gather grain for the first seven years

41:39-44 (familiar?) — just as in Potiphar's house and in the jail, God continues to bless Joseph — second in command over all Egypt

God is still sovereign — will accomplish his purposes — keep his promises — in his way and in his time — in midst of, even though, human sin

Joseph's interpretations come true

7 years' harvest — 7 years famine

Joseph's brothers come to Egypt to buy grain

Don't recognize Joseph, he accuses them of being spies

They go home, but have to come back a second time

Joseph frames them as thieves

GENESIS 45

45:1-8a (watch pronouns)

One of the most amazing statements about God's sovereign control

In midst of sin — what humans mean for sin, God means for good.

Eventually

All Jacob's family (70) come to Egypt and settle

God, through Joseph and the Pharaoh, provides for his covenantal promises

On his death bed, Jacob blesses/curses his twelve sons

Joseph — 49:23-24

Dies — brothers become nervous (50:15) — lie — 50:20

Even in the midst of all the injustice/hurt/pain, Joseph still believes that God is sovereign over all, willing and able to keep his promises.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THE JOSEPH STORY?

1. God is omnipotent and omniscient

Sovereign — King who rules over all
Psalm 115:3 “God does all that he pleases.”

2. God’s sovereignty allows him to keep his promises, even in midst of sin

Story of Joseph shows us that even in the bleakest of times
when we are engulfed by sin and its consequences,
when life seems out of control, faith says “God is in control” — one of the promises
that God asks us to believe

Romans 8:28-29

3. We are called to faith

“When life seems out of control, faith says God is in control.”

Like Joseph, we are called to trust in God, to look beyond the immediate and believe that
God is ... will do ...

Rewarder of the righteous and punisher of the wicked.

We don’t need to be able to understand God’s ways

God does not call us to understand everything but to believe everything.

Isaiah 55:8-9

STORY OF JOSEPH IS NOT THE GREATEST INJUSTICE IN HISTORY

God worked in the midst of human sin when they killed his perfect son.

If God can work in the midst of that kind of depravity and sin

He can work in the midst of your life, and mine.

Do you believe that God is sovereign?

Do you believe that when your life seems out of control, that God is still in control?

This is the faith that God asks of us, like he asked of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph

This is the faith that pleases him.

7. Moses and the Plagues

Exodus 1 – 14

Introduction

Gen 15:13-14 — God's covenant with Abraham

"Land" is Egypt

Sets the stage for the book of Exodus

1:8-10

Led to slavery — eventually, murdering newborn baby boys

Moses is saved, eventually flees to Midian,

40 years later ...

BURNING BUSH (EXODUS 3)

3:4b-6 — identifies himself as the God of his fathers

Fulfill covenant promises to Abraham — send Moses to save them

3:13-15 — Reveals his true name "YHWH" ("LORD")

When God reveals his name, his name reveals God's basic character

No vowels — vowels from Adonai to get Yahweh (Jehovah)

John 8:58 "Before Abraham was, I am" — stone him

Includes the ideas of ...

1. Existence — God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.
2. Uniqueness — no one like him (e.g., 15:11)
3. "Immutability" — does not change — Mal 3:6

MOSES HEADS TOWARD EGYPT WITH HIS BROTHER, AARON

God tells Moses what he can expect — 4:21-23

Moses goes before Pharaoh (5:1-2)

In the following chapters, there are two important statements by God

1. God will keep his covenantal promises — 6:6-8
Essence of the covenant: “I will be your God and you ...”
2. Yahweh will declare who he is to the Egyptians/Hebrews — 7:3-5
Why God hardens Pharaoh’s heart? Not respond to first plague?
God will declare His greatness to the Egyptians — requires 10

PLAGUES (7:14 - CHPT 10) — SAME BASIC SCENARIO

Moses confronts — Pharaoh’s heart hard — plague/repent — changes his mind

1-4. Nile to blood; Frogs; Gnats; Flies

5-9. Not on Israelites — Livestock; Boils; Hail; Locusts; Darkness (3 days)

Pharaoh’s heart is hard — will not let God’s people go

Preparation for the tenth plague

God knows this will break Pharaoh’s heart

Release and plunder — 11:4-6

God will kill every firstborn in Egypt, because Egypt is killing his firstborn

Passover (12 — summarize), and then the Tenth plague — 12:29-32

430 years earlier in Gen 15 — 70 to Egypt — 600,000 men (& women & children)

Story is not over (14. “Crossing the Red Sea”)

God has Moses appear to be wandering in the desert — going in circles

God tells Moses — 14:3-4

Pharaoh is told the Israelites left — v 8

When Israelites see the Egyptians coming — vv 13-14

God parts the Red Sea — vv 16-18

God hardens their hearts — they are still responsible- — consequences

Bill: complete the story

WHAT DO WE LEARN? (EX-ODOS)

Concentrate on God and *his* part of the covenant

Next week — our part of the covenant

1. God is faithful — to keep his promises — to you, today

God will do whatever is necessary to keep his promises

When times get difficult, we tend to become short-sighted

Tend to forget about God's past acts of faithfulness

Exodus/Red Sea become the primary salvation event in the OT

Look at God's faithfulness throughout time past — Red Seas in my life

If God did this, he will save you now — 14:13-14

2. God is most interested in His own glory — himself

Strange sounding — biblical

God is the only being for whom this is not arrogance

John Piper

Define it in reverse

Sin says that I am the center of the universe

I am to pursue *my* own good, *my* own self-interest

I am to praise *myself*

Unfortunate example — this is true in many (American) churches

The focus of worship is on how Sunday morning makes me feel

Honest: God exists for my pleasure — take my pain away — bless me

Almighty "I" becomes the center of worship

When we put ourselves at the center of the universe — idolatry

Why? Because we are not the greatest good

God is the greatest good — our most satisfying joy

He is the center of the universe.

Answer: We are most interested in God's glory
Nothing we say or do diminishes his glory
He be praised above all else

We must be most interested in God's glory
Anything less is idolatry — 1 Cor 10:31

Therefore, God also must be most interested in His own glory

Anything less than that for God would be sin
Isaiah's refrain — 42:8; 43:7; 48:9,11

God pursues his own glory and praise
For us to do this is idolatry
For God it is the only just and right thing
Even to the point that he hardens Pharaoh's heart
Kills the first-born of every family (judgment on sin)

Is God fair to do this? — Heart of faith cries out, "Yes."

Rom 9:17-18, 19-21

Startling, radical view of God as the center of all things

John 11:14 and Lazarus "This illness does not lead to death. It is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it."

God's glory is more important than anything else—even pain of plagues

If God is most interested in his own glory, so should we.

We serve a most amazing God

God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob — Unique — Immutable (YHWH)

A God who is absolutely faithful to his promises.

A God whose desire for his own glory supersedes everything else.

And the same desire should supersede all of ours as well

8. The Ten Commandments

Exodus 20

God entered into a covenantal relationship with Abraham

Essence: "I will be their God, and they will be my people"

Last week: God's part — faithfulness; rescue his children from captivity

Today: our part — what does it mean to be "his people"?

Learn quickly there is a conditional element in this covenant

God is going to keep his promises no matter what — unconditional

But if any individual is to receive the blessing ...

going to truly be part of the covenantal community

then he must be obedient — Exodus 19:2-6a

Not a surprise

Started with Adam/Eve — tree of knowledge

A/I/J were all required to respond in faithful obedience

Just because, from the outside, you look like you are part of God's community

Does not mean you truly are part — will receive the blessings (1 Cor 10)

God calls all of his covenantal people to obedience — if receive blessings

EXODUS 20 AND THE TEN COMMANDMENTS — LOOK LIKE TO LIVE WITHIN THE COMMUNITY

20:1-2 — Yahweh's declaration stands at the center of the OT

Yahweh is their (only) God — a fundamental principle (OT and NT)

V 2 stands at head — Ten C. work out the implications of this central affirmation

Briefly summarize the Ten Commandments

FIRST FOUR COMMANDMENTS FOCUS ON GOD

1. 20:3 — because “I am YHWH your God” (v 2) therefore ...

God demands pre-eminence — sole allegiance

God will brook no rivals — he will not compete

God’s of this world — self; power; independence — fade into the distance

2. 20:4-6

Prohibition of making images and of worshipping those images

Packer (*Knowing God*) — prohibits images, period

V 5 — Human jealousy can be a good thing

I will not share Robin — at any intimate level

Usually, human jealousy is a sinful thing.

Divine jealousy is always a good thing, because it is a God-thing.

I don’t want God to share me

I don’t want God to share pieces of me with the world

I don’t want God to be content with me worshipping him with other gods

Gods that compete are whatever we treasure the most

3. 20:7

To take God’s name in vain, is to trivialize his name and *hence* his person.

Not just swearing — not just what we say

Taking what is holy and treating it as profane, common — speech; actions

Do nothing to trivialize God, degrade him, detract from him

Positively: in everything we do/say, may it bring glory to God

People will praise him (think well of him) because of us

4. 20:8-11

God established a pattern in creation, and he calls us to follow it. — come back to this

Yahweh is my God

From this flow the first 4 commandments — how we relate to God

FINAL SIX COMMANDMENTS FOCUS ON OUR NEIGHBOR — SPELL OUT V 2

5. 20:12

Establishes the authority of the parents over the children.

6-9 deal with taking things from your neighbor

If Yahweh is your God, you will not take another's life (20:13), another's spouse (20:14), another's property (20:15), another's reputation/freedom (20:16).

10. 20:17 — “not covet” (wanting what belongs to others)

Like the first commandment in that it deals with the heart

Specifically, the heart attitude that leads to breaking commandments 6-9 .

The heart that does not covet does not kill, commit adultery, steal, or lie

HOW DO THESE TEN COMMANDMENTS COME INTO THE NT?

How did Jesus understand them?

Mark 12:28-31

Matthew 22:40

Quotes 2 OT passages that sum up the 10 Commandments

Path covenantal blessing

1. Deut 6:4 — Love God

Shema and Mk 12:29 both start with Ex 20:2

Summation of the essence of the first four of the Ten Commandments.

If you love God above all else, ...

1. You will put God first and worship him only.

2. You will not make him compete with the gods of this world.

Cannot love God and money/independence/luxury — chose (Mt 6:24)

3. You will not do anything to diminish his glory.

Treat God as normal, everyday, as profane

4. Show it by making the Sabbath different from all the rest.

Cycle of rest and worship is part of the fabric of creation — not cultural

Substantive way we can profess our reliance on God

(Christian Sabbath is Sunday — end of the work week)

(Doesn't matter what day — regular cycle)

Honest: most of evangelicalism observes the Nine Commandments

Talk about the Sabbath commandment — labeled a legalist

Another way: If I love God, I will want to worship him

(NT: worship is not limited in place and time — 24/7)

One of God's ways of worshiping is to set aside one day of the week as his.

If you love God, don't you want to worship him along with other like-minded people?

2. Leviticus 19:18 — If you love your neighbor ...

5. You will start at home and honor your parents — closest neighbors

6. You will not murder

7. You will not take his wife

8. You will not take his property

9. You will not take his reputation/freedom

10. You will not *covet*, because covetousness is the opposite of love.

Rom. 13:8-10

TWO EXTREMES

Middle stands just. by faith / changed people live changed lives — balance

1. Think that external obedience is all that God requires

Ten Commandments are not merely external rules, otherwise “love” would not be a fulfillment of the law.

To hate is to break the 6th commandment (Matt 5:22)

To lust is to break the 7th commandment

The Ten Commandments give form and structure to what love should produce

2. Think obedience is unnecessary

There is a sickness being preached — “Moment of positive volition”

Magic prayer, magic hand, and receive the “Get out of Hell free” card

Holiness always matters!

Your reception of the blessings of covenant is conditional — Exod 19:5a

May we find the middle ground — balance

Notice the order

Start with our view of God. If we truly love him, that love will flow into a love for others

9. The Presence of God

Exodus 33

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth — why?

Not explicitly told

Created us in order to have fellowship

God didn't need anything — perfect fellowship among the Trinity

Desired to be present with his creation — fellowship (Garden)

Ex 6:7

God's presence was disrupted by human sin — fellowship broken

As the story of the Bible unfolds, there are two halves to this brokenness

1. God's holiness — he will not dwell in the midst of sin — Leviticus
2. Human sin — separates us from the presence of our holy creator

Scripture becomes a record of a holy God dealing with human sin ...

in order to restore his full presence with his creation

TABERNACLE

Large tent

Place for presence of the holy God to dwell in the midst of his sinful people

Represents both the presence of God and his separation from sin

Moses goes up Mt. Sinai to receive the plans

25:1-2, 8 — voluntary capital campaign, so God can dwell in their midst

Description of the tabernacle and its contents go through chapter 31

Meanwhile, back at the camp, there's a party going on (Ex 32)

A few months ago saw the plagues and Red Sea

Golden Calf — 32:23-24

Punished — Levites killed 3,000, and God sent a plague

Greatest punishment is the absence of God's presence — 33:1-3

Will see in the next chapter that this is what Moses feared the most

World trivializes sin — laughs at sin, it mocks our holy God

A holy God takes sin seriously — punishes it

TWO HUMAN "PLAYERS" IN THIS "DRAMA"

Israelites — are not concerned with being God's friend — his people

Moses — continues to obey and enjoys God's presence

Two stories that emphasize Moses' subsequent privileges

1. Tent of Meeting

Tent outside of camp — place where God met with Moses

Pillar of cloud would descend — 33:11a

This is how God wants to be present with his people — a friend

"Scripture was fulfilled that says, 'Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness'— and he was called a friend of God" (James 2:23).

"You are my friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends" (Jn 15:14-15).

Christian life is not centered on externals — what you do in a building

Primarily an internal thing — sense: who our best friend is

2. Cleft in the Rock (33:12ff)

Asks, ultimately, what defines the people of God? Friend?

Moses is concerned that God said he would only send his angel

Moses pleads for God to go with them, and God agrees — 33:12-14

Moses emphasizes that he wants God's presence to remain — 33:15-17

Moses would rather live in the desert with God's presence, than to live in the land flowing with milk and honey yet without God's presence — friends do

At the deepest level, the people/friends of God are those who enjoy his presence

You are not a friend of God because of something *external*

Not an issue of what club you belong to — what you *do* Sunday morning

It is God's presence that determines whether you are or are not part of the people of God — *internal, heart* — Rom 8:9-11

Moses wants to see God's glory

To experience his presence, to know more about who God is — 33:18-23; 34:6-7

Moses responds — 34:8-9 (three-point sermon)

If that is not the gospel, I don't know what is — ABC

At its deepest level, the people of God are those who enjoy the presence of God

It is God's presence that defines his people — internal, not external

God's friends are those who confess sin, accept forgiveness, live as inheritance

Story of David on Sinai

David is defined by external criteria

IN THE BEGINNING GOD CREATED. WHY?

To be present with his creation — have fellowship with us as friends

But because he is holy and we are sinful, something special had to happen

For Moses, the presence of God was found in the Tabernacle

More importantly — face to face in the tent of meeting, and Mt. Sinai

For you and me, the presence of God is found in Jesus Christ

John 1:14 (“tabernacle”)

To Philip “Whoever has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:9)

Someday, you and I will see God in all his glory

Some day we will enjoy God’s presence face to face — without sin

Walk in the Garden — with the Tree of Life (Rev 22:1-5)

Question of tabernacle: “Are you a religious person” or “Are you friend of God?”

Are you “religious” — defined by external things?

Or are you defined by the fact that the Spirit of God lives in you?

If God is present in a personal, relational way

Then you are friends — we are brothers and sisters

If all you know is external religion

If you “got to church” rather than “are the church”

Encourage you to mull over the gospel in Exodus 34:9

Respond: become God’s treasured possession, God’s inheritance, His friend

Walk *through* life, and *into* eternity, as his friend — ask your neighbor

10. Leviticus and the Holiness of God

Today we are going to look at the book of Leviticus

Third book in OT

Instructions given to Moses along with the Ten Commandments

At first glance, strange book with strange regulations about strange things

Sacrifice animals

Ox gores someone a *second* time

Special festivals

Not the core themes of Leviticus

1. Leviticus is consumed with the holiness of God — separate from sin
18:2-4; 19:18
2. He expects his people to more like him than like the world
3. If fail: God is a forgiving, merciful God

CENTER IN ON THE SACRIFICES

Same basic procedure — 1:3-9 (supply antecedents) — four things

Without blemish — “Pleasing” (Forgiveness is granted, cf. 4:20)

Clear that the one bringing the sacrifice is a participant, not an observer

Sinner hand and kills/skins/hacks / washes the sacrifice

Some sacrifices: blood sprinkled on sinner

Sinner is responsible for his own sin — participant (not meaningless ritual)

THEME #1: LEARN ABOUT GOD — GOD IS A HOLY GOD

“Does not sin” — separate from sin — nothing contrary to his character

Exodus 3 and Burning Bush

Exodus 19 and not touching Mount Sinai

R.C. Sproul, “The Holiness of God”

It is God’s holiness that drives the entire sacrificial system

God is not a cruel God who likes to torture animals

Narcissistic God who wants us to beg for mercy

God is holy — sin separates — something has to be done to reconnect

Say another way: as we grow in our awareness of God’s holiness

We also grow in an awareness of our own sin

Understand that God’s holiness demands punishment for sin (Isa 6:1-7)

Pastor — never preach sin — never preach holiness

THEME #2: SIN

1. Breaking of God’s rules

God alone decides the rules

Nowhere in Leviticus does God ask Moses’ opinion, or ours

This is why sin is always, ultimately, against God

Yes, we sin against people — against my spouse, parents, one-another

Deepest level: Joseph; Ps 51:1-4a

When you are cruel to your sister/brother, you are sinning against God

Devalue people by excluding them from your clique at school ...

Disrespect your spouse ...

Private thoughts/ actions are full of lust and anger ...

Why we don’t sacrifice to anyone else — forgiveness ultimately comes from God

2. High cost of sin

World belittles sin — Ridicules holiness — Mocks righteousness

Purity is only for the weak — Phil 4 is for losers

Sin is so serious that the only acceptable punishment for sin is death

Morbid — Take a butter knife and hold it against Fluffy's throat,
then tell God that the "little" sins, private sins, really don't matter.

Even for unintentional sins — bulls, goats, and lambs were slaughtered

If a person feels that sin isn't that bad — haven't read Leviticus

Haven't come to grips with the holiness of God

THEME #3: FORGIVENESS

1. Forgiving God

Does not have to forgive — nothing forcing him to forgive — Ex 34:6-7a

2. Allows substitution — leads us to the cross

Forgives because of his mercy and grace

3. Forgiveness is not automatic

First impression of reading Leviticus might imply it is all external.

Must be accompanied with faith and true repentance — Isa 1:11-17

LEVITICUS PREPARES US FOR THE CROSS OF JESUS CHRIST

Leviticus teaches us that

Our sins have separated us from our holy God — broken his rules

Penalty is death — "for the wages of sin is death" (Rom 6:23)

Forgiveness is only through the mercy and grace of God — I don't earn it

In his mercy, he allows a substitute whose death pays the price for my sin

Yet in Hebrews, God's holy demands were satisfied, once for all, on the cross

Cross becomes the ultimate altar

Jesus was the "lamb of God who takes away the sins of the ..." (Jn 1:29)

Jesus is the ultimate sacrifice — why we no longer sacrifice

Hebrews 9:22 ("without shedding ") and 10:4 ("impossible for blood of")

LEAVE THIS MORNING WITH TWO IMAGES

1. Image of God's holiness

God is absolutely perfect — not the slightest hint of sin — Isa 6

He does not live in the midst of sin

2. Imagery of sacrifice

We have broken his rules of the relationship

In his mercy and grace, has extended forgiveness through death of another

Place on head and kill/skin/ hack / wash

Extend the metaphor

It was our hands that pounded the nails

Thomas Blackshear's "Forgiven"

Leviticus calls us to fall at the feet of the cross and worship him.

Amazed and in awe at his perfections

Sin our sin as a violation of his character

Overwhelmed with thankfulness for our forgiveness

Out of a desire to please him, pursue his holiness

"Lord come in our midst. We are a stiff-necked people. Please pardon our iniquity and our sin. Thank you for taking us for your inheritance."

11. Sold out to God (the Shema)

Deuteronomy 6:4

Fourth book in the OT is Numbers

Picks up the story after the Israelites leave Mount Sinai

They travel to the border of the Promised Land — God will give

Send spies — 10 of the 12 fail to believe God and convince the people

Saw plunder Egyptians — Red Sea part — manna

40 years wandering in the wilderness until the adults are dead

Fifth book is Deuteronomy

After 40, the children of Israel once again at the border to Promised Land

Moses summarizes what parents were taught in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers

In Deuteronomy Moses makes two fundamental assertions/truths (chpts 4-8, 11)

1. MONOTHEISM — ONE GOD — THAT ONE GOD IS YHWH

Unique in the ancient world — head of the pantheon

Deut 6:4 — “Shema” (LORD — personal name) — Greatest Commandment

Yahweh is not some collection of tribal gods, Baal and Asherah, Isis and Osiris

There is only one who is God, and his name is YHWH, the LORD

All other so-called gods are demons or nothing

In Deut 4, Moses spells out all the unique things God has done — 4:35-39

There is only one who is God, and his name is Yahweh.

Teaching on monotheism leads to a prohibition of idolatry (Deut 4:15-19a)

Because there is only one God, we may not serve other so-called gods.

Not divided in our loyalty — worship.

DEUTERONOMY IS ASKING TWO QUESTIONS OF US

Easy to give a quick answer — think more deeply

1. Are you a monotheist or a polytheist?

Do you believe in one God, who is Yahweh, Jesus

Or do you believe in a pantheon of gods, with perhaps Jesus as chief god?

Our “God(s)” are whatever we worship

God is what we take the uttermost delight in

God is what we take the greatest joy in

God is what we value the most.

Practical: God is who we spend our time/money on.

Story of the workaholic — house with a view of the ocean

Is he a monotheist? Who is his god(s)?

2. Parallel Question: Do we worship idols?

Please don't think idols are only images carved out of wood and stone.

Idols are whatever takes the place of God

4:15ff — prohibition against worshipping creation rather than the Creator

Idols are whatever takes the place of God, and idols are alive and well

Some idols are made out of ...

Wood — perhaps a cabin at the lake

Fiberglass — fixation on a bigger and faster boat

Leather — Canaanites worshiped Baal, but our culture worships the ball

Flesh and bone — worship ourselves, and give ourselves over to
entertainment/relaxation/self-sufficiency — (“Immortals” — wrestling)

Are these things necessarily idols? Of course not

But when we take the uttermost delight in them

When they become our greatest joy

When they become our highest value and we are consumed by them.

They become our pantheon of gods — idolaters

Doesn't matter if we think Jesus is the chief god — still idolaters

Deuteronomy's emphasis on monotheism ...

its identification of Yahweh as the one God,
and its prohibition of idolatry,
is just as necessary today as it was 3,500 years ago.

Robin and I love our cabin — basketball
But they are not the source of my ultimate joy

2. TOTAL DEVOTION

Not part-time observers but full-time participants — “Fully devoted disciples”

Shema — 6:5 (read together), 6-9

Because there is only one God, the only logical/theological conclusion is to give him all our worship — sold out

Paul House (172)

See the flow of theology

1. There is only one God, and his name is Yahweh
2. Therefore, we are to love him with a love that shows itself in obedience
John 14:15 “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.”
Balance — starts in the heart — flows out to obedience (≠ legalism)
3. This obedience is to be total — Deut 10:12-13 and Mark 8:28
Cannot compartmentalize God — Sunday; Private (porn)
Jesus is either Lord of all or he is not Lord at all.
4. God reveals his will — we call them “commandments” — so that our love knows how to spill out into our lives.
Can you imagine loving someone, but not know how to express that love?
In his grace, and for our good, God tells us how our love should spill out into our lives — commandments, statutes, does and don'ts.

AMAZING THING IN ALL THIS? GOD'S DESIRE IS TO BLESS, NOT TO CURSE

Deut 30:8-9

Health and wealth gospel has perverted this teaching

Nonetheless, it is still true — blessed in His way and in His time
Deuteronomy asks, do you want God's blessing to rest on you?

High School; College; Single or married — you, your family, this church

Path to blessing is not to compartmentalize God
Not to dabble in the things of this world
Not to water down the gospel and make him a coke machine
Path to blessing is to make YHWH our God, our one and only God
Love him with all our heart
Let our love flow into obedience — joyous obedience every day ...

He will pour out his blessings on us
His blessing — in his way and in his time
Bless perhaps with suffering — prosperity

Hear, O Church, the Lord our God, the Lord is one

And we shall love the Lord ...

12. Faith is not Genetic (Judges)

Book of Deuteronomy ends with the death of Moses

Joshua, Moses' right-hand man, takes his place

Book of Joshua is the story of the conquest of the Promised Land

Story of God giving the the land — Joshua 21:43-45

God kept his part of the covenant

BOOK OF JOSHUA ENDS WITH A "COVENANT RENEWAL CEREMONY"

Chpt 24 — All tribes gathered at Shechem

Joshua recites Israel's history

Call to renew their part of the covenant — 24:14-15

Remember: Covenant was conditional

They will inherit the blessings only if they follow God in loving obedience

Not enough for their parents to commit themselves to God

Each generation must make the commitment for themselves

People choose Yahweh, and the covenant is renewed

There are many things we pass on to our children genetically

Personalities — good and quirky — pronated ankles; tendency to sleep walk

One thing we do not, cannot, pass on — our faith

Faith is not genetic — there is no family plan for salvation

Hayden will not go to heaven because his dad is going to heaven

Explains the emphasis on teaching children since the Exodus — Deut 6:6-9

Our sons/daughters must be taught — make own decision to follow Jesus

APU — make your parents' faith your own — covenant renewal

Stage is set for life in the promised land after Joshua — Book of Judges

BEST OF TIMES; WORST OF TIMES (TALE OF TWO CITIES, DICKENS)

Best of times— Judges 2:7

Joshua's generation was a great generation

Quickly becomes the worst of times — Judges 2:10b

Not destroy all the Canaanites (1:27 - end)

Did not complete God's punishment of the Canaanites

Co-mingled with the Canaanites and eventually their gods

Downward spiral — "Each did what was right in their own eyes."

Joshua's generation — for the most part — were themselves faithful to God

1. Did not fully obey God
2. Failed to train their children

Their children did not make their parents' faith their own

Interesting question: was Joshua's generation really a success — "great"?

Measure what is most important — entire generation

How far the Israelites fell

Deut 12:31 — every abominable thing that the LORD hates they have done
Baal and Asherah were fertility gods — land and people
Sexual perversions (Lev 18) — homosexuality, incest, bestiality

Cycle

1. "Did what was evil in the sight of the Lord" — Baal
2. God sends an enemy nation to punish them — Midianites; Philistines
3. Israelites repented and called out to God for help
4. God sends a judge to save them — judge lead them for the rest of his life
Othniel, Ehud, Deborah, Jephthah, Samson — Gideon: Judges 6-8

Judges is a dark book

Few bright spots: God is always ready to forgive — even repeated, heinous sins

Failure to renew the covenant from generation to generation

MANY LESSONS: NECESSITY OF COVENANT RENEWAL

Faith is not genetic

Each generation makes its own decision — every son/daughter

If the covenant isn't renewed by our children

Each generation will do what is right in its own eyes

Our children will co-mingle — worship with the Baals of this world

Think of families and churches — start strong, end weak

First generation were godly — appeared — but didn't train the next generation

Surprise, surprise — the next generation didn't renew the covenant

FOR OUR PART (ADULTS)

1. Cannot impart what you do not possess

We must love the Lord our God with all ... heart ... soul ... might

What matters most to us is loving Jesus

Not talking about church — loving church activity and programs

If only we were as passionate about loving God as we are about sports ...

If only we were as quick to talk about Jesus as we are about weather ...

Barna — goals for children — no difference — education (spiritual 6th)

We must have a passionate, personal, obedient love of the person of Jesus Christ

Of being deeply, emotionally, in love with Jesus

His name constantly on our lips — live in and through us every day

We must be a Joshua generation — yet better

2. We must intentionally impart what we possess

Must be Joshua — “as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord”

Teach our children — Youth pastor cartoon

Home — dinner table (current forms of polytheism)

No guarantees — *Shattered Dreams*, Larry Crabb

Barna: spiritual influence on children — parents; adult friends of parents

Cross-generational church

Ed and Tacie Taylor have become uncle and aunt to our kids

Look in a mirror — Swindol's metaphor — apron to serve or bib to be fed

This place primarily a place to serve others — encourage; comfort — Jn 13

Bib — all about us? — "Ask not what I can do for my church, ..."

Measure what is most important

What do you consider to be signs of success and/or failure?

Your children leave here after high school — in love with Jesus

Or do they just leave?

FOR OUR CHILDREN'S PART

Understand that they are called to make the decision for themselves

Faith is not genetic

At Judgment Seat, not ask "Who's your daddy?"

Some day you must ask yourself the hard questions

Do I believe in God?

Shema?

My prayer for my kids — struggle through — make their faith their own

Answer: Jesus is my greatest treasure

EVERY CHURCH IS ONE GENERATION AWAY FROM FAILURE — LIKE NATION OF ISRAEL

May we shed all forms of religious hypocrisy and meaningless traditions

Burn our bibs and tie on our aprons to serve one another

Individually affirm the Shema

And then commit ourselves to Deuteronomy 6:6-9

Measure what is truly important

Advance of God's kingdom — in me — in the next generation

13. God is King (1 Samuel)

1 Samuel

Last Judge in the history of Israel was Samuel

1 Samuel tells his life — change in Israel from theodicy to kingdom — (Saul, David)

Elkanah and two wives — Peninnah and Hannah (barren)

Yearly pilgrimage to sacrifice at Shiloh

Prayer for a son (1:9b-17) — (Have I ever been this desperate?)

Samuel was born — 1:26-28

HANNAH'S SONG OF PRAISE — SEE WHAT HANNAH LEARNED

2:1 Declaration that she will praise God with everything she has

Why does she do this? Because of who God is and what He has done.

2:2-3 Praise God for who He is

Joyful reaffirmation of the first commandment — no competition ≠ pantheon

Rock: protection, security, strength, stability, refuge

God is also just (v 3)

He is the ultimate judge — will judge by what he knows to be true

Will not be swayed by arrogance

Will find out — not swayed by human achievements

Wonderfully, radically God-centered life — God is in the center of her triangle

2:4-8a Praise God for what He has done

In His grace/sovereignty, he blesses some/curse others — reverse fortunes

Seven set of contrasts — (1) strong and weak, (2) full and hungry, (3) barren and fertile, (4) dead and alive, (5) sick and healthy, (6) poor and rich, and (7) humble and exalted

(Not all sick, hungry people are wicked)

How can He do this? — 2:8b — Everything is his (the world and its foundations)

He is sovereign/free to do whatever He wishes — in control

2:9-10 Who does He bless/curse?

Whose good fortunes does he reverse?

Against whom does God thunder? Wicked

Whom does He bless with strength, food, life, health? “Faithful Ones” (v 9)

“*Hesed*.” Faithfulness, loyalty

Within the context of a relationship — Covenantal faithfulness

“He will judge by what is true” — His standard is the covenant

If live outside/break covenant relationship — God will thunder/curse

If live within — respond in faith/love — bless

Hannah’s Song is a Cry of Faith — read again

Hannah has learned that the battles of life are not won through human strength-v9

Victory is given by our gracious, sovereign Lord — our warrior

Jer 9:23-24 (cf. Ps 33:16-20)

It is God who makes the strong weak, and the weak strong

God makes winners into losers, and losers into winners.

Hannah has learned that God blesses his faithful ones and curses wicked.

Hannah has learned that all that matters for us is faith — faithful obedience

Believe that God is our rock, our refuge

Radically God-centered life

Not force God to compete — Shema

Not compartmentalize

Provides the theological structure/emphases for 1 and 2 Samuel

King Saul and David live out and illustrate the truths of Hannah’s song

2 Samuel 22 ends with David singing a similar song — bookends

(1) God is King — in control (2) For our part — *hasidim*

SAMUEL AND SAUL

People's sinful request for a king

8:4-7 — want out of the covenant (theodicy; kingdom of priests - Ex 19:5-6)

Samuel warns them, and then gives them what they want.

God has not abdicated his throne — in control — The King

Saul starts strong but ends weak (best and worst of times)

Defeats the Ammonites — 11:13b

His son Jonathan fights the Philistines — 14:6b

Sins by sacrificing (instead of Samuel)

Does not destroy the Amalekites as God demanded

Samuel tells Saul that God has rejected him — 15:26

Success/failure is measured, not by military victory, but by faithfulness

Standard of God's judgment — Hannah — winners or losers

Appears that Saul almost goes insane

Repeatedly tries to kill David; witch at Endor; killed by Philistines

So much for the king of Israel

WHAT DID HANNAH LEARN THAT DID SAUL DID NOT LEARN?

No matter what the external situation (king or no king; powerful or weak)

God is the The King — Rock — In him alone is salvation, protection

What matters for us is faithfulness — radically God-centered life ≠ compete

OT is a witness to the fact that for the most part people just don't get it

Pratico — can't preach same message over and over

OT is making the same point, over and over — "They just don't get it."

1000 YEARS LATER

There was another woman who had never had children

God gave life to her womb

Mary responded in much the same way as Hannah — Luke 1:46-53

Mary's son was born, lived, and died

In the process he did what we could not do on our own — Shema

His death on the cross

1. not only paid the penalty of sins committed by people who *like* God.
2. Brings in the new covenant
3. With it comes the power to love God — HS

Through the power of the HS we can know truths even more deeply than Hannah

Without faith it is impossible to please God — 2:2

True faith overflows into faithful/joyful obedience

Must not force God to compete with the gods of this world

1 John 2:15-17

At the end of the day what matters ...

Is not the pleasures of this world

Is not half-hearted commitment to God (like Saul — partial Shema)

Human achievement — arrogance of the external

What matters is a soft and gentle heart

molded by the hand of God

empowered by his Spirit

ready to do his bidding

sold out entirely to God

radically God-centered life

Invite you to celebrate the victory of our king (1 Cor 11:23ff.)

Kingly victory over greatest enemy — Invite all his faithful ones to join.

14. David and Goliath

1 Samuel 16

STORY OF KING DAVID STARTS IN 1 SAM 16

Saul has rejected God, and God has rejected Saul as king over Israel

Secretly, Samuel anointed David as the new king

16:6-7 — Samuel looked on the outside

16:11 — Jesse is looking on the outside

V 14 — Need a good musician to sooth Saul during this troubling times (v 18)

Went back and forth between shepherding and Saul

GOLIATH (1 SAM 17)

Initial confrontation between Goliath and Israel's army (vv 1-11)

On the border between Judah and Philistia, about 17 miles from Jerusalem

On opposite sides of the Valley of Elah, 2-3 miles apart

Confrontation — vv 4-7 (9 feet tall; armor 125 lbs; spearhead 15 lbs)

Detailed description of the armor is more than a historical curiosity

Challenge — vv 8-10 — Twice a day for 40 days — Common in ancient warfare

Mike Tyson challenging Steve to a fight (Read With Me Bible)

Responded with fear — v 11

Theological condemnation because of lack of faith (Deut 20:1-4)

How far they have come from the Exodus — God of Red Sea

David — Interacts with the army, his big brother, and Saul (vv 12 - 39)

Others fear (v 23), but David responds in faith — vv 26b

Sees through the eyes of faith — God's perspective — defy God

God has promised to defeat the enemies of his people

Doesn't matter how big the enemy is — David believes God

Literary devices — play on words — contrasts — quote

Conflict with his big brother — vv 28-29

Eliab thinks he knows David's heart — evil

Eliab really looks on the outside

"What did I say now? Get off my back."

Saul hears about David's willingness to fight — but young

Samuel, Jesse, Eliab, and now Saul look on the outside — see Goliath/David

I may be young but I'm not a wimp — vv 36a-37a

David's greatest strength is not in his might but in the Lord's strength

Not want Saul's armor — diplomatically — "not used to it"

Real reason is theological — see in a few verses

David and Goliath (vv 40-54)

Prepares for battle — v 40

When manufactured — 2-3 inches across, made of flint

Israeli Ministry of Tourism refills the stream today

Goliath's challenge (vv 41-44)

Staff/stick instead of a sword — Common curse

Dagon and the ark (1 Sam 5) — fell and then beheaded

David's challenge is one of faith (vv 45-47)

Throwing Goliath's words back in his face — one contrast after another

Emphatic pronouns — v 43 and v 45

Huge giant with massive armor vs. sling/shepherd's staff

Why describe in detail

Why not want Saul's armor

Fight — vv 48-49, 50-51a

As Dagon fell and was beheaded, so also Goliath

Philistines routed and plundered — David's victory (vv 54, 57b)

1 Sam 17 is not primarily the story of the victory of a young man

The story of the Lord defeating his enemies through a young shepherd

God working through someone who trusts Him wholeheartedly

MANY LESSONS — CHALLENGE THAT WE SHOULD STEP OUT IN FAITH

David could have stayed in the back (where his big brother thought he belonged)

Even though David was a qualified fighter — not my battle — sheep
Chosen to do the “safe” thing — stay within his comfort zone
Couched it in religious terms — “Do not test God”

But David was a man after God’s heart (Acts 13:22)

This means He sees life through eyes of faith — Heb 11:6
David understood that God had committed himself to his people.
David believed that God would be victorious
And David wanted to be part of God’s victory
Not sit on the sidelines
Midst of the battle and experience firsthand that the battle was the Lord’s.
David believed God

David understood that true faith always drives a person to act

Faith that lies dormant and doesn’t extend itself isn’t faith
James 2:26 — Faith that is lifeless is no faith at all
Faith by its very definition propels people to action

Sometimes we are called to step out in faith — still within our comfort zone

Even if it makes us a little uneasy, we’re okay with it
Deal with a lion or a bear

Other times God calls us to step out in faith, way on to the end of the limb

Human, sinful side will tend to respond with fear
Faith will always see life through God’s eyes — battle is the Lord’s

Whether inside or outside our comfort zone, faith says to

Step out in faith

Step up to the plate

If necessary, go out on a limb — for the battle belongs to the Lord

Mike Constantz (Bill Bright)

Hudson Taylor (Inland China Mission)

As we step out in faith

As we see goliaths fall by the hand of the Lord

What once was outside our comfort zone begins to fall within our comfort zone

David did not fear Goliath one bit — not fear — believed/knew that the battle was the Lord's

What are the Goliaths in your life? Apparently insuperable challenge?

Then step up to the plate and step out on faith — run to battle and sling the rock

Watch God drive the rock home.

15. God's Provision and Protection (Psalm 23)

AFTER DAVID'S VICTORY OVER GOLIATH

Things continue well for him, at first

Close friends with Jonathan, Saul's son

Saul puts David in charge of part of the army — God blesses

Quickly things fall apart

Saul becomes jealous of David's victories and repeatedly tries to kill him

Eventually David flees for his life into the desert

Joined by others (distress, bitter)

Difficult times —running and hiding from Saul, fighting

Just when you think it can't get any worse — 1 Sam 30—all their families captured

David's men start to turn against him

How will David respond? — Fought Goliath, Philistines — I wouldn't kill Saul

If this is the thanks I get, then phooey!

David was a man after God's heart — He responds in faith

David's faith is woven throughout the fabric of the story

Nowhere more clearly than at 30:6 — God restores his soul

BACKDROP TO TALKING ABOUT PSALM 23

Don't know when David wrote it

It is through difficult situations such as this that David learned

"The Lord is my shepherd" — provide — protect

Central teaching in middle statement (v 4b): "You are with me"

Faith: in the midst of the uncertainties of life there is one thing that is certain

Out of conviction flows faith in God's provision/protection

FIRST OF TWO IMAGES — GOD AS SHEPHERD

23:1 “The Lord is my Shepherd”

What is striking is the intensely personal element throughout the Psalm (‘he’)

So much of Israelite worship had become corporate

Yahweh is often called the Shepherd of Israel — Shema (‘our’)

David understands that the Shema continues with “You (sing) shall love”

1 Sam 30:6 “his Lord”

David understands that there is more to true worship than corporate religion

What sets David apart—his understanding of the personal element in true rel.

Result: “I shall not want” — lack

Faith — the good shepherd will do his good job of providing for me

I shall not lack what? — Ps 84:11

Seven Ways the Good Shepherd Provides for His Sheep

Pure, unbridled, unrestrained faith in the provision of God

{1} “Makes me lie down in green pastures” — “I shall not want”

{2} “He leads me beside still waters” — “I shall not want”

Shepherd goes before — know his voice and follow

{3} “He restores my soul” — “I shall not want”

Hebrew for “me”

Revitalizes me — strengthens me — “comfort” (v 4)

Sense of slowing me down to catch a breath and to provide my needs

1 Samuel 30:6 — Jesus’ prayer life — Where do I turn?

{4} “Paths of righteousness”

Shepherd takes his sheep on the right path toward the right destination

God leads us along the right path — toward a destination that is truly good

“For his name sake” — ultimately, His honor, reputation

Human tendency is to think that I am the center of the universe

Faith: “All to the glory of God” — unifying theme (Ps 25:11; 31:3)

David understands that God is the center of the universe — revolves around Him.

23:4a Moves from Faith in God’s Provision to Faith in God’s Protection

“Death” most likely is a Hebrew way of expressing the deepest darkness

Even if the shepherd leads his sheep through an extremely dark path (where predators might be waiting) or along a dangerous ravine — I will not fear

Presence of danger — even death — does not mean we are on the wrong path

In these situations fear says: God doesn’t care; lost control; up to me.

Especially in the midst of the pains/dangers of life, faith says, God is still “my” shepherd, and He is taking me to a better place.

23:4b Why does David believe in God’s Protection? — Center of the Psalm

Shift from “he” to “you” — even more personal — appropriate

Rod (club for fighting) and (shepherd’s) staff (for guidance)

Ps 16:11

Christianity is so much more than a corporate religion

Core is a personal relationship with my God who promises, “I will never leave you or forsake you.”

23:5 SECOND IMAGE OF GOD: GENEROUS BANQUET HOST

All three emphasize the abundance of God’s provision for us

{5} Lavish — not a burger from Zips (on Francis) but a generous banquet

{6} Hospitality/rejoicing

{7} Excessive —abundant

Jesus: “I came that you might have life and have it abundantly.”

23:6 CONCLUSION — FINAL AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

Instead of being pursued in the darkness by predators

David is pursued by God's goodness and mercy (*hesed*) — 23:6

Covenant — v 6 doesn't apply to everyone.

Three main affirmation — three main consequences

1,000 YEARS LATER DAVID'S SHEPHERD WAS BORN

Name was Jesus

John 10:3b-5

10:10b-11 — a few years later he laid his life down, at the cross — paid price

Someday our good shepherd will return for us — in death, or end of time

Psalm 23:6b

Rev 7:15-17

The Question of Psalm 23 is — Are you one of his sheep?

Promises are only for his sheep — presence, provision, and protection

1. His sheep know they need a shepherd (admit sinners)
2. His sheep believe their shepherd laid his life down for them (paid price)
3. His sheep hear his voice and follow him (commit)

If not one of his sheep – ABC

If you are one of his sheep — Psalm 23 challenges you to live out your faith in the presence/provision/promise of my good shepherd.

16. Confession and Forgiveness (Psalm 51)

2 Samuel begins with David hearing of Saul's death

Anointed King in Judah (southern tribe)

For 7.5 years warring with the house of Saul (esp. Abner)

Eventually, all the people agree to make David their king

30 years old — reigned for 37 years

Conquers most of the Promised Land

Neighboring countries pay tribute — Israel's Golden Years (politically) — 1000 B.C.

Two major events

1. Davidic Covenant (2 Sam 7: 12-14)

2. DAVID AND BATHSHEBA

2 Sam 11-12 — read in detail this afternoon

David sees her bathing — married to Uriah (Hittite) — gets her pregnant

Compounds his sin by having her husband killed in battle

How can this person be “a man after God's own heart”?

1. Good people fail — Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Gideon, Saul

2. How David responds to sin

2 Samuel 12

Prophet Nathan confronts

David did confess — fly on the wall

Psalm 51:0

Powerful expressions of sorrow — repentance — faith in God's forgiveness

1. CRY FOR FORGIVENESS (VV 1-2)

1. True Confession holds nothing back — complete/total admission of sin — no excuses

Didn't point the finger at other people

Bathsheba shouldn't have been taking bath where I could see her

Husband is a Hittite — I'm just a red-blooded man

No victim mentality

Not really all my fault — Poor me — life's not fair — sharing of blame

What I did was wrong — no excuses

"Just as I am, poor, wretched, blind."

Rom 7:24 "Wretched man that I am. Who will deliver me from this body ...?"

2. True Confession agrees with God that sin is horrible (words fail)

Doesn't argue with Nathan — "Come on. It's not that big of a deal."

Doesn't paint sin in shades of gray, but in black and white.

Three different words for sin — totality of David's horrible sin

Three pictures how the sin will be removed — totality of God's merciful forgiveness

a. "Blot out my transgressions" — remove my sin from books/records (erase; wipe clean)

b. "Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity" — sin is a stain that needs to be washed

c. "Cleanse me from my sin" — priestly language

Unclean (e.g., leper), removed from the community/fellowship — hyssop

Return to fellowship with God

Sure, if I had raped and murdered someone, I'd confess like this

But what I have done isn't that bad, so there is no need to this type of confession

Lusted? Hated?

3. True Confession admits that it doesn't deserve to be forgiven

No sense of David bargaining with God (look what I've done; King; Goliath)

Benefit of the doubt

David appeals to God's character — Exodus 34:6b-7a

Love — "Abundant mercy" (compassion on the undeserving and needy)

REST OF THE PSALM SPELLS OUT THE SPECIFICS

Most of it is clear by itself — no need for me to comment on it

Skip postscript in vv 18-19 about the effects of repentance on the community

Full admission of Guilt (vv 3-6)

(God's judgment on sin is just)

Contrast between what God desires and David's guilt

v 6: God is primarily concerned with the inside — who you are/ what you do

v 5: Poetic statement emphasizing totality of David's sin — feels/is filthy before God

Plea for forgiveness (vv 7-12)

God will forgive, and His forgiveness is complete/total

Sin leaves us with a deep sense of emptiness and loneliness

Forgiveness will bring fellowship with God (spirit), and joy and gladness

David doesn't just want to be forgiven; he wants to be different!

Wants God to change him, so his heart will be clear and his spirit willing to obey

Not legalism — change my motor — what drives me to do what I do

Vow of the Penitent

If you will give me the opportunity, I will praise you to the people (vv 13-17)

- Don't respond to sin not with a defiant spirit but with a broken heart
- Don't argue that sin is not that bad — your heart must be broken and contrite

Powerful picture of confession and repentance

Full admission of guilt, holding nothing back — no excuses

Agreeing with God that my sin is horrible and dark and disgusting

God will forgive, not because I deserve it but because of God's love and mercy

TIMES OF CONFESSION ARE DEFINING MOMENTS — WHO WE ARE

How will you respond when confronted with your sin?

1. Dig your heels in and refuse to confess

Blame others — Harden your heart

Not that bad - paint sin in shades of gray

“Be nice to me, God (buddy, pal), according to your love and my goodness. Overlook my minor indiscretions. Sprinkle me with a little water — whether my fault or not.”

This person knows little of confession, and therefore little of forgiveness

Sad? Not fooling God when we refuse to confess

Confession is not for His sake, as if he weren't sure

When we refuse to come clean, just hurt ourselves

God wants us to have joy/gladness—we are insisting on bitterness/anger

2. Man/Woman after God's own heart

Begin by asking God to make my sin clear to me

Many chose to go through life justifying everything we say and do

Arms folded — scowls etched on our face

Unhappy and sullen

When our Nathan confronts us

Full admission of guilt, holding nothing back

Agree that sin is horrible — separated you from God, and filled with anger

Call on God's mercy — nothing I deserve

Have you ever been so deeply aware of your sin that all you can do is cry out to God?

Have you ever fallen on your knees — grabbed your Bible — read/reread Psalm 51

It is in these times that you have known full repentance AND forgiveness

Your heart will be made clean — your spirit will be made willing

Experience the deepest joy/gladness — filth has been removed — friends again with our God

My prayer for you yesterday

17. The Wise and the Foolish (Solomon)

Second half of 2 Samuel

Rest of David's life

1 Kings tells of the reign of David's son Solomon

Solomon's prayer for wisdom (Chpt 3)

Vision — God said Solomon could have anything — 3:9

God made him the wisest of all people

God added wealth and long life (reigned 40 years; 970 - 930 B.C.)

In some ways Solomon was the greatest of Israelite kings

Legendary for his wisdom — Queen of Sheba — 4:29-30, 32

Extended the political borders even further than his father David

Built the temple and centralized worship in Jerusalem

Amassed immense wealth

Solomon like many others — starts strong but ends weak

3:3

Early on marries Pharaoh's daughter

Forced labor — heavy taxation (problems warned by Samuel)

End of life: wisest man becomes a fool (in his own words) — 11:1-4

Only thing that matters is faithfulness to the covenant (not wisdom, power, wealth)

God tears the country in two (10 northern tribes; 2 southern)

PROVERBS

Solomon wrote 3,000 proverbs

Some — along with those written by others — collected in the book of Proverbs

Something to say about almost anything

Laziness — 20:4

Tranquility — 14:30; 15:1

Wealth (ill-gotten) — 17:1 (deeper than at first glance); 19:17

Good wife — 5:18b-19

Not-so-good wife (not vice versa) — 21:9

Adultery — 5:3-4

Fools look only at the short-term (≠ consequences) — wisdom looks long-term

Most important — 1:7

If you want to be wise — starts with the fear of the Lord

“Fear” is not being frightened (unless of judgment) or being polite

Reverential awe — worshipful respect

Ex 14:32

If you search for wisdom, you will find God

True wisdom starts with knowing who God is (2:1-5)

Once you know God, you know that he is the only source of true wisdom (2:6)

If you hear anything this morning ... God knows best

God’s ways are true — right — God our Father knows best

TWO KINDS OF PEOPLE IN THIS WORLD

Those who believe God is right - wrong

Wise

Wise person believes that God's ways are always the best ways

Despite what friends say— "in-crowd" — psychological fad

Despite hormones and a young person's drive towards independence

Despite the apparent — short-term — benefits of sin

Teachable (2:4-5)

Open to learning even if it means being disciplined by God (3:11-12)

Righteousness — God's way — is rewarded in the long-term

Don't make trading cards for a wise person — name athletic shoes after them

Fools

Don't listen to God — think their friends know better

In this corner — God — already lived forever — made everything — knows everything — bench whatever

In this corner — friend from school — not even through adolescence — make a mess — knows almost nothing — bench a joint

Ensnared by evil (5:22)

Fools look at the short term

Deny consequences — takes the easy road — instant gratification

Phil 4

Images from filthy movies forever burned in your mind

Physical and emotional intimacy are for marriage

Lips that drip honey — speech as smooth as oil

All you will have for your spouse are part of your heart and used body parts.

Fool talking — fool who listens

Ken's illustration

QUESTION OF PROVERBS: DO YOU BELIEVE THAT GOD KNOWS BEST?

3:5-6

Faith — Does God know what he is talking about?

There's nothing that pleases God more
than a (young) person turning his/her back on the world and,
by faith, believing that God's ways are best.

Hard

The world fights against you — Holy Spirit will fight for you
The world will ridicule you — God delights in you
The world will not accept you — God will accept you (“well done”)

Wisdom is as Wisdom Does

Solomon, the wisest person in the world, died a fool

Did not act in accordance with his wisdom

18. Job and Human Suffering

Job is one of the deepest books in the Bible

Hard read (poetry) — Requires times to reflect and mull over

Deep theology and philosophy

Issues of hurt and pain, and the majesty and wonder of God

Asks the question, “Can you trust God?” — Calls for faith at its deepest level

Can’t be covered in one sermon

Walk through its structure and point out its two basic themes

Please read this week — poetry

CHAPTERS 1-2 ARE THE PROLOGUE — SET STAGE

1:1 (best of the best)

1:6-8 — paint bullseye on Job’s chest

1:9-12a — only reason he is blameless and upright is that God has blessed him

1. Bad things can happen to righteous people, bad things that are not their fault

Conventional wisdom: Pain and suffering are always due to sin

World view that sees everything in a cause/effect relationship

Job will teach us that God does allow pain even where there is no sin

God is free to do as He chooses — even if we don’t understand/think it is fair

“Theodicy”: defense of God’s character in the light of human suffering

2. Real question of book is much deeper than a theodicy

Is God worthy of trust even if we are not blessed?

Satan — would Job be blameless/upright if he were not rich?

Can I believe in God even if I do not receive any benefit?

Reverse: will I have faith in God even if I suffer?

Will I have faith in God even if I don’t understand why things are the way they are?

Satan's work

Wealth and children — 1:21; 2:4-6 — Job speaks the words of faith: 2:10

Job's three friends come to console— series of dialogues

3. Job's opening lament — curses the day of his birth

4-31 — Three cycles of dialogues — each confronts Job, and Job's response

As you read through these cycles

With friends like these, who needs enemies?

Have God all figured out — no mystery, only theological arrogance

Conventional wisdom — Pain is always the result of sin

God has no freedom to act otherwise — God must submit to human understanding — 4:7-9

Job maintains much of his faith

Pursues God for an answer, shows he believes God will answer

Cries out for God to show him his sin — 6:24

Knows that someday God will redeem him

As you move through the dialogues, something changes

Job demands that God answer him — puts God on trial

Job questions God's character in an attempt to justify himself

Job, in the process of insisting he is innocent, is willing to question God's innocence.

Nothing wrong with crying out to God — he is big enough to absorb your pain

Job steps over the line in his desire to justify himself at God's expense — 40:8

ELIHU (32-37)

Much closer to the truth than the other three

Central problem was Job's desire to justify himself, not God (32:2b; 34:5-6)

In the process, Job questions whether God is really just — 34:10, 12 — 40:8

Job has put himself on the same level as God

No longer a creature living in submission to his creation

Stands face to face with God — declaring his innocence — questioning God's

GOD (38-41)

38:2-3

Two answers

1. 38-39 — God is infinitely wiser than Job — 38:4-5
2. 40-41 — God is infinitely more powerful than Job — 40:9

In other words, Job is not God's equal — not on same level

What Job should have done in the midst of his suffering

Along with crying out in pain and anguish

Is to recognize his limitations as part of creation — rather than attempting to justify himself at God's expense

Same answer as Romans 9:19-21

EPILOGUE (42)

Job repents of his accusations against God — 42:2, 3b

God restores Job's fortunes

CONCLUSION

At one level, Job is a theodicy in light of human suffering

Does pain only come from sin? No

Did Job deserve to suffer? No

Was Job wrong to cry out to God in honesty and desperation? No

Was Job wrong to demand God defend himself? Yes

Was Job wrong to be more concerned with his own righteousness than with God's?

At a deeper level, Job is asking a more fundamental question

Is God worthy of trust even if we are never blessed for doing so?

Is God worthy of trust even if we do not know all the answers?

Is God worthy of our faith even if our lives are filled with pain? (Fee & Stuart, 124)

Is Job's questions ever answered?

No — never told of chapters 1-2

Yes — but the answer is not information about God

Never explains chapters 1-2

Never talks about Job's spiritual growth through pain

God's answer is to show Himself to Job — in all his power/wisdom/majesty (42:5-6)

When we understand who God is, that we do not exist at the same level as God, that we are not His equals ...

We can never demand that He explain himself.

We can never insist that He follow our rules.

If a person demands that God answer his questions, his God is too small

When we understand who God is, once we catch a glimpse of God for who He is — wisdom, power, majesty

We will respond in faith like Job — believing that God is who He says ...

God is worthy of our trust even when we do not understand and life hurts.

Job asks, when our spouse of 48 years dies, can I still trust God?

When our daughter of 3 hours dies ...

When we are not accepted at school ...

When our child turns to a life of rebellion and sin ...

When mom and dad are a dysfunctional mess ...

When the jerk at work is promoted and you are stuck at the bottom ...

When life makes no sense ...

Job answers not with facts and information but with a vision of God

As we look at God in all His wisdom/power/majesty — that is enough

We respond in faith — God Himself is the answer to our questions.

19. Elijah and Syncretism

1 Kings 17 – 18

“United Monarchy” (Saul, David, and Solomon)

“Divided Monarchy” — 1 Kings 12

Judah/Benjamin followed Rehoboam — Southern Kingdom or “Judah”

Northern ten Jeroboam — Northern Kingdom — “Israel” — “Samaria” is capital

Jeroboam has a Problem

Worship, religious festivals in Jerusalem (in Judah)

Two worship centers (Bethel, Dan) — big No No

Two golden calves — Religious festival on same date

Own priesthood (≠ Levites)

Jeroboam’s answer is “Syncretism”

Mixing of two religions — merges Mosaic religion and Canaanite religion

Baal (bull) — fertility god — storm god (over rain)

Asherah (consort; girlfriend)

Still feels somewhat like the old Mosaic religion

Its substance is radically altered

Yahweh becomes one of the many Canaanite gods subservient to Baal

Through the prophet Ahijah God condemns Jeroboam (1 Kings 14:8b)

Standard of judgment

- If faithful to the covenant, like David — praised
- If compromise, if try to mix worship — stand condemned

We must not compromise ...

by mixing worship of the true God with worship of false gods

by trying to straddle the fence between two gods

by trying to accept the teaching of the true God and the teaching of false gods

Series of kings in Judah

Rehoboam (syncretism 14:23-24) — Abijam — Asa (15:11, 14)

Series of bad kings in Israel

Jeroboam through 5 kings arriving at Ahab (16:30-33)

Syncretism always leads to paganism — Jeroboam always leads to Ahab

STAGE IS SET FOR THE PROPHET ELIJAH (C. 870 B.C.)

1 Kings 17 — “Yahweh is my God”

Prays for no rain for three years — Yahweh, not Baal, controls the weather

1 Kings 18 confronts Ahab

18:17-18

Challenge in v 19 (Carmel was a stronghold of Baal worship; ≠ neutral ground)

18:20-21

“Make up your mind”

“Fish or cut bait”

“Park it or milk it”

“Stop sitting on the fence”

Joshua 24:15

Time for compromise is past

Can't live with a foot in each camp — choose!

Spells out the contest — v 23-24a

V 26 — loved to have seen Elijah's face (rolling eyes, mimicking — disgusted)

V 27 — get nasty (Musing — deep in thought)

Relieving himself — explicitly crass — not “go to the bathroom”

Vv 28-29

Elijah's turn

Builds altar — trench — wood — sacrifices the bull — douses it with water

Vv 36b-37 — instantly

Vv 38-40 — removes the forces of syncretism and compromise

Story Comes to its Close— rain comes

Yahweh is vindicated as sovereign over Baal

Eventually his prophetic role is passed on to Elisha, and Elijah is caught up to heaven in a chariot, without dying

That's not the end of Elijah, because his message continues into NT

Insistence that there can be no compromise with the world, can't straddle the fence

"No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money" (Matt 6:24).

Church of Thyatira (Rev 2:19-23a) — no theological compromise

Church of Laodicea (Rev 3:15-16) — Colossae and Hieropolis — fully devoted

WE DARE NOT STRADDLE THE FENCE

One foot in God's kingdom and one foot still in the world — Satan's kingdom

It has the illusion of being a safe place, but it is the most dangerous

Gospel: 1 John 2:15

World teaches we can straddle the fence — love God and love the world

Syncretistic church of today preaches a compromise of God's holiness

Gospel without holiness, a gospel without love for God and hatred of sin

Preaches that we should be people pleasers and not God pleasers

Lower our standards

No discernable difference between Christians and non-Christians

Can't be a light to the world because we look just like the world

Gospel says: “Our goal is to be like Jesus, become mature in our faith

Rom 8:28-29; Rom 5:1-5; James 1:2-4 — suffering/pain can drive us towards maturity — rejoice

World teaches that our goal is the absence of pain — indulge in pleasure

Syncretistic church compromises God’s goal for our lives

Preaches a health and wealth gospel —pain due to sin

Gospel: “Deny ourselves, take up our cross, follow Jesus” (Mark 8:34)

Fully-devoted disciples living not for ourselves for Him

World teaches the only thing that matters is the holy Trinity: me, myself, and I

Don’t deny yourself — everything is about you — center of universe

Syncretistic church preaches a salvation of cheap grace that says

once you get your “Get out of Hell Free” card

you can live any way you want — Bonhoeffer (pp. 44-45)

Time for compromise with the world is past!

1 Kings 18:21

20. Isaiah and the Holiness of God

Isaiah 6

100 YEARS AFTER ELIJAH, THINGS ARE STILL GOING DOWNHILL

Northern kingdom of Israel

One bad king after another, with perhaps one exception (Jehu)

Eventually conquered by Assyria in 721 B.C. (2 Kings 17 — idolatry — broke cov.

Deported — resettled with foreigners (17:33 syncretism) — “Samaritans”

Southern kingdom of Judah did not fare that much better

Mix of good and bad kings

Series of four kings

Azariah (Uzziah) and Jotham (good) — syncretism allowed

Ahaz — wicked; child sacrifice

Hezekiah — destroyed high places — trusted the Lord (2 Kgs 8:5)

792 – 686 B.C. — Amos, Hosea, Micah

Isaiah prophesied during all four

Appears to be from an aristocratic family

Highly educated — vocabulary

One of the most quoted OT books in the NT

Dominated by the themes of God’s holiness, judgment, redemption

VISION OF GOD’S THRONE ROOM (CHAPTER 6)

6:1 — “Throne, high and lifted up”

Absolute and supreme power — 46:9-10

Words fail — describe what ultimately is indescribable — tries to paint picture

St. Helens

6:2-4 — Seraphim

6-winged creatures

Appear nowhere else in Scripture (perhaps 4 living creatures in Rev 4)

“Burning ones” — fire, burning brightly

Powerful themselves — when speak, foundations shake

Even they cannot look at the glory of God

Two wings cover their feet (humility) — cover their eyes

Exodus 19:16-20a

GOD OF HOLINESS AND GLORY

What do they say, with words that shake the foundation of the temple?

“Holy Holy Holy” — Not “Holy” or “Holy Holy”

Fullness of God’s holiness/majesty — came to know as the Trinity

“Holy” means the be set apart for God’s special use

Negatively — set apart from sin

Positively — dedicated to the service of God

But how do I define holiness as it pertains to God Himself?

Negatively — Set apart from all that is sinful

Positively — Fully dedicated to himself — his honor/glory

Nothing above God — worthy of worship — better, sweeter, more powerful — absolute in all His perfections — Piper

“The whole earth is full of his glory”

“Glory” is the visible representation of God’s holiness.

When someone gets a glimpse of God’s holiness, they see his glory.

Glory seen as a bright light, crashes of lightning, heard as peals of thunder, creation desperately trying to proclaim the glory of God

The “whole” earth — every corner of the world/reality tries to proclaim glory of creator

Thousands of genetic codes locked up in the DNA in each cell

Myriads of strange fish we never see swimming in the depths of the oceans

Thousands of different types of flowers in all the diverse splendor

To the trillions of stars that make up the trillions of galaxies

We see God being “lavish in his splendor,” and as a result ...

All of the earth is full of His glory, and every corner proclaims His holiness
Oh, if only we would have eyes of faith to see and ears of faith to hear.
See the mountains or hear all the different birds chirping ... glory of God

How Big is your God?

If only we could understand what Isaiah understood

But our God tends to become so small

Through our sin and the limitations of the flesh and our lack of vision
God shrinks, loses power, unable to save, irrelevant in our everyday life
Tendency to give him Sunday morning (if not summer) — soul, not life

He is Yahweh — creation, flood, exodus, raises from the dead, destroy this world and create a new one.

He is Yahweh, before whom the Seraphim speak and the foundations shake

How Big is Your God? Is He the God of Glory?

GOD OF JUDGMENT

How does Isaiah respond? 6:5

When we see God for who He is, it is our sin that becomes illuminated.

When we see His glory, we see our depravity, weakness, failures.

We can't see God and take our sin lightly

Isaiah is not the only one

Children of Israel (Ex 19:16-20a) — 20:18-19

Moses — Bowed his head toward the earth and worshipped" (Ex 34:8)

Ezekiel — fell on his face (Ezek 1:28)

Apostle Thomas — "My Lord and My God"

We sing, “I see the Lord, high and lifted up”

Do we really?

Do you really want to see God high and lifted up?

I doubt we ever will this side of heaven

When we sing that song, we had better be prepared to fall flat on our faces, prostrate before him, crying out our confessions of sin — “Woe is me.”

GOD OF SALVATION/RESTORATION

More next week (chapters 52-53)

6:6-8

The “Burning One” takes a burning coal from God’s altar and removes our sin and calls us into service

If this isn’t the clearest picture of Jesus/ disciple, I don’t know what is.

God in all his holiness and perfection and glory himself condescends to provide the means by which my ugly, dark, sinister sin is removed.

I have done nothing to deserve it — nothing to help

I simply cry out in my weakness — begging for the burning coal to be brought from God’s altar to touch my lips and to make me clean — to call me into the service of His glory — full-devoted

NOT EVERYONE RESPONDS LIKE ISAIAH RESPONDS

700 years later this glorious God came to earth as a baby for judgment/salvation

Was spit on, beaten taunted, tortured, and murdered — raised

Someday I will stand before his throne

I will see Him, high and lifted up
And I will give an account for my life

Invite you to get ready to respond as Isaiah

See your sin

Repent and accept God’s forgiveness/restoration

Respond to His call — Here I am. Send me! — Fully-devoted disciples

21. Isaiah and the Suffering Servant

Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12

There is a special promise that weaves its way through the OT

Individual who will come in the future who will be a savior

Starts in the Garden — 3:15 “He shall bruise you on the head.” — crush; kill

Surfaces throughout the OT: (Gen 12:13; 2 Sam 7:13; Isa 6:13; 7:14; 9:6; 11:1-3)

Promise comes to the forefront in Isaiah

Four prophecies about a person in the future

God will call him “My Servant” but the people will reject him (“Suffering”)

4th and most significant Servant passages — 52:13 – Chapter 53

Most quoted OT passage in the NT — “gospel in the OT”

Cross-references — prophecy fulfilled 700 years later by Jesus

1 (of 5 stanzas). 52:13-15 — Exaltation of the Servant

Isa 6

Exaltation is that much more amazing in light of his humiliation

Theme introduced in v 14 — Weight of his ministry, especially on the cross, had its effect on his appearance

53:2b — to look at him, never expect great things — scrawny b-ball player

Phil 2:6-11

2. 53:1-3 — Humiliation of the “Suffering” Servant

Human standpoint — loser

There was no natural reason to be attracted to this servant

Humble beginnings — No kingly splendor

In fact, people will reject him — appear to be a loser — full of sorrow and grief — people will turn away and not even look at him

3. 53:4-6 — WORK OF THE SERVANT — HEART OF THE PROPHECY

Watch the pronouns — “gospel in the OT”

1 (of 4). “borne ... carried” (4a)

Often use the language of v 5 — punished for our sins

True, but even more to it

2 Cor 5:21 “For our sake he [God] made him [Jesus] to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him [Jesus] we might become the righteousness of God.”

Not so much that he died in our place; He sinned in our place

Not so that I would be treated as if I were righteous, but so that I would be righteous — made righteous — participate in Jesus’ righteousness

“Substitutionary atonement” (5a)

John Bunyan

DCLA testimonies — realized reality of sin — what it meant for Jesus to die

2. Rejected by the people he came to save (4b)

More than rejected

“Wounded” — Israel museum — foot with spike

Jesus film for ten years — tears

“Crushed” — Weight of our sin — “My God My God, Why ...”

3. Chastisement “brought us peace ... we are healed” (5b)

Not feelings of peace that come and go — patch us up

“Sufficiency” of Christ’s sacrifice — Heb 10:10, 14

There is no sin so great that God cannot forgive — if you ask

No matter how big a sin, no matter how often

Prostitute on 2nd Street

Hen pecking wife that has made your husband’s life miserable

Hateful husband who has abused our wife and children

Rebellious child who done everything possible to make your parents, sisters, and brothers, hate you

Gospel: you can be at peace and totally healed — can move through hurt and dysfunction and sin to wholeness and peace and spiritual health

Don't have to go to "mass" ("sacrifice") every day and re-crucify

Don't have to suffer in Purgatory, as if the suffering helps Jesus save

Knock on doors with the Jehovah Witnesses

Do lots of religious things with the Baptists

You're not the one that brings peace — healing —not something I do

"Upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace"

We do not help — not deserve — dead — while sinners Christ died

4. UNIVERSALITY OF HUMAN SIN — EVERY ONE SINNED (53:6)

No exceptions (Rom 3:10-11, 23) — Statement of Faith

Not your nice neighbor or your co-worker who does nice things for you

Every single person has wandered away from God's path of righteousness

Grace responding to sin

God's holiness enduring the darkness of sin for absolutely no reason other than He loves us — even though we are ugly and unlovely

Makes no sense — thankful for God's grace/mercy — while sinners

Final two stanzas

Repeat themes humiliation (53:7-9) Exaltation (53:10-12) — Fulfillment of prophecy

AS CLEAR AS THE GOSPEL GETS — ABC

Road to Emmaus (Luke 24:25-27)

How will you respond to God's Servant?

"Isaiah" means "Yahweh is salvation" — "And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12) — only way to peace and healing.

22. Micah, Judgment and Salvation

At the same time Isaiah is prophesying,

there was another prophet named Micah

Organized around Three sets of “Woe and Weal”

“Woe” is judgment — Prophesying the coming destruction of Israel/Judah

Funeral language — Jesus: “Woe to the Pharisees”; dead

“Weal” is “blessing” — future hope of restoration

Combination is essential to the message of Micah

In the face of God’s judgment on his people — woe

there is blessing for some in the future — weal

WOE AND WEAL #1 (1-2)

Coming destruction of Samaria (Israel) — 722-721 B.C. by Assyria

Coming destruction of Judah — become like Israel — 586 B.C. by Babylonia

Cause is two-fold

Idolatry (first 2 commandments) — 1:7 (cf. 5:10-15)

Social injustice — prosperous, oppression by rich — 2:1-2 (cf. Amos 4:1-2; Isa 10:1-2)

2:6-7 — 3:11b

The people against whom Micah is prophesying believe in external religion

All that God requires is periodic, external ritual

Sabbath, tithe and offerings

Trappings of religiosity

Rooted in the belief that because they were born Jews they were special

At all other times I can do whatever I want — oppress poor — idols

Modern day equivalent

Said the magic prayer/hand (religious experience)

Go to church — Loose change at God

Born American — Parents (family plan)

“Get out of Gehenna free” card — live rest of the week any way want

God’s patience — not punish immediately — sign that He would never punish

Misunderstood God’s patience —Rom 2:4-5

This kind of thinking leads Jesus to say ... (Matt 23:25-28)

WEAL #1 (2:12-13)

Promise of future salvation

Despite all their sin, after judgment, is a bright future — but only for a few

“Remnant” important and revolutionary

Not all Israelites are part of God’s covenantal community

Only those who are righteous — “Righteous Remnant”

Always was taught that the blessing of the covenant fall only on those who love and trust God — and show it in their daily devotion to Him

Now that group of people have a name

Carries into the NT explicitly (Rom 11:1-6) and implicitly — Matt 7:21-23

Question: How do I become part of the “Righteous Remnant”?

WOE AND WEAL #2 (3-5)

Woe (3) — Words of judgment on the rulers and prophets

Weal (4-5) — Future salvation of the remnant

Chapter 5 — thread of salvation I talked about last week

Promised individual who would bring salvation — Garden

Davidic — 2 Sam 7:13 — Isa 11 (shoot from stump of Jesse) — Messiah

5:2 (supernatural), 4-5

Coming salvation of Remnant not a group project — Messiah

WOE AND WEAL #3 (6-7)

Heart of Micah's prophetic message in 6:6-8 (Quality and Quantity)

Not saying sacrifice is irrelevant — still means of forgiveness in OT

External religion — sacrifice; church — by itself is worthless

“God has no interest in the multiplication of empty religious acts”

R. Remnant understand that true religion begins internally with the heart—Shema

From the heart flows covenantal obedience — characterized by love, kindness, and humility

I do not believe that the OT was ever a religion of works and external obedience

Ps 51:16-17 — Isa 1:11-17 (cf. 1 Sam 15:22; Amos 5:21-24; James 1:27)

Human tendency is to think this applies to the other person—segmented life or fully devoted

CONCLUSION

1. God will always, eventually, punish sin

Cannot serve other gods/oppress the poor, without eventually being punished

Doesn't matter who you are — no exceptions — born American; religious; parents

If your religion is external,

If you place your trust in religious ritual and then live any way you want

Go to church — Go home and verbally abuse your wife and kids

Go to youth group — Go to school and live like the rest of your classmates

If you think that you can do certain external things to earn God's favor — and then live any way you want the rest of the week

Then you fall under the condemnation of Micah

2. Good news of Micah and the Gospel

After judgment comes salvation and restoration for the Remnant

How become part of the Righteous remnant? — work of the Messiah — ABC

23. Hosea and Unfaithfulness to God

While Isaiah and Micah are prophesying to the southern kingdom

Hosea was prophesying to northern kingdom (760-722 B.C.)

Hosea was prophesying in a time of material prosperity and spiritual bankruptcy

His Book contains graphic description of persistent sin — whore

Hosea also, graphically, portrays God's persistent love for His faithless wife.

As a husband longs for his faithless wife to return home

so God longs to receive His people back — if they will be faithful

BEGINS WITH GOD TELLING HOSEA TO MARRY A PROSTITUTE (1-3)

He marries Gomer as an object lesson for the Jews.

Just as Hosea loves Gomer — desires her to be faithful — willing to forgive her and take her back — so also God ...

1:2-9 (good chance Hosea was not the father of the last child)

What is amazing about the book of Hosea is that while it is primarily a judgment on persistent sin

At every stage, Hosea is still calling out to his wife: "If you will be faithful, I am willing to forgive."

So also, at every stage of our sin, God is calling us ...

Amazing: even in midst of our unfaithfulness God holds out forgiveness

2:16 is gut-wrenching

Try to imagine a perfect husband

Faithful and loving in all his ways

Never losing hope

Always willing to forgive

Even though his wife is on 2nd street, sleeping with anyone who will pay.

Longs to hear his wife say, "You are my Husband." "I love you."

Amazing picture of our forgiving God — wants us back if we will be faithful

4 - 13: POWERFUL PORTRAIT OF THE DOWNWARD SPIRAL OF SIN

Spiral Starts with idolatry — 4:12a

Idolatry is more than wooden statutes — anything that takes the place of God

An idol is anything we desire more than God

We are idolaters if we love/desire/seek something more than we love God

Even in the midst of idolatry, our husband calls us to return — 2:14-15

Speed of the Downward Spiral is Increased by Luxury

10:1; 13:6

You and I cry out to God when we are in trouble

When money is flowing and life is free from pain — therefore, forget God

More and more we worship the gods of wealth and comfort

Children are caught in our downward spiral

4:6b, 13 (2:4) — Generational sin is an ugly thing

Contrast with Deut 6:7

It is one thing to mess up my own life,

It is one thing for me to become like the faithless children of Israel — idolaters
but are we willing to destroy the life of our children as well in the process?

Don't be so melodramatic!

I'm not. Hosea is!

God through Moses — Exod 20:5

Even in the midst of detestable sin, our husband calls us to return — 10:12a

Eventually we become so thoroughly sinful that we are “useless”

8:8 (contrast with “nation of priests”)

Incapable of understanding (8:12) and “innocence” (8:5b)

“Became detestable like the thing they loved” (9:10)

“Determined to go after filth” (5:11)

“My people are bent on turning away from me” (11:7a)

“Cherish whoredom” (4:10-11) — “spirit of whoredom leads us astray” (4:12)

There is a bottom to the spiral — forgiveness becomes impossible

Not because God wouldn't forgive his bride

Because his bride wouldn't ask for forgiveness — 5:4

God withdraws — 5:6 (9:12)

God drives them away into judgment — 9:15b

“Hard heart”; “Unforgivable sin”

This is what Hosea calls “whoredom”

Not the occasional sin — not when we commit a faithless act

When we have become faithless people

When we are faithless to God, when we fail to love him as we ought

When we love the things of this world more than we love him

Then we are idolaters — we are whores.

Yet, even at the bottom of the spiral — even when we must go through judgment

Our loving husband stands on the other side

Still willing to forgive if we would but be faithful.

Longs to hear us say — 6:1-3 (refer to 11:8-9; chapter 14)

Even in the midst of detestable sin, our husband calls us to return

YOU AND I ARE THE BRIDE OF CHRIST

“I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ” (2 Cor 11:2; cf. Eph 1:4)

Rev 19:6-9 — we will be clothed in faithfulness

Question of Hosea is as obvious as it is blunt: “Am I caught in the downward spiral of sin?”

Idolater — loving/desiring/seeking something more than God?

Has my idolatry been sped up by my luxury? Fat and forgotten God?

Will my children pay the price for my sin?

Have I become useless, incapable of being innocent?

Am I at the bottom of the spiral — whore?

Your faithful God/husband stands before you

Arms outstretched, with a heart ready to forgive and receive you back

If only you will be faithful to Him.

Clothed in the righteous deeds of the saints

24. Habakkuk, Righteousness and Faith

Habakkuk Prophesied Somewhere Between 640-610 B.C.

Assyria had conquered the northern kingdom of Israel c. 80 years earlier

Southern kingdom of Judah had gone through a spiritual revival

But by Habakkuk's time it had degraded into being a wicked place

Rich oppressing the poor — controlled law courts — no justice

Habakkuk's World was Not a Pretty Place

Hab's book contains his discussion with God about this not-so-pretty place

Twice, Habakkuk asks God a question, and God answers

Chapter 3 contains Habakkuk's response to God's two answers

FIRST QUESTION AND ANSWER — 1:2-11

Classic Statement on the "Problem of Evil"

Underlying premise is that God is righteous/just

Reward righteous and punish wickedness

Why then does evil appear to triumph? — 1:2-4 — Judah not a pretty place

Honest Question To God

Pouring out his heart — presence of injustice/wickedness is painful to him

See something — liar not caught; adulterous spouse not consequences — P. of Evil

God answers

Punish Judah's sin by sending the Chaldeans (Babylonians) — 1:5-7 — patience

Never tells Habakkuk when this will happen — 586 B.C. (c. 30 years later)

This just makes things worse for Habakkuk

As bad as it is in Judah, the Babylonians are worse.

HABAKKUK ASKS HIS SECOND QUESTION

In 1:12 he asserts his faith

In 1:13 Habakkuk says he still does not understand

God answers (2:2ff.)

Notice especially 2:3 — in God's timing — our job is not to fret but to wait

Starting in 2:6 — Babylonians as well will be destroyed for their sin

God is righteous and just, and will reward ...

Once again, Habakkuk not told when — 539 B.C., 47 years after 586

Habakkuk probably never lived to see God's promise fulfilled

We arrive at central question of book: How live in the in-between time?

On the one hand — there are certain things we know

God is righteous and just

God has promised to reward righteousness and punish wickedness

On the other hand — The righteous are not yet rewarded and the wicked not ...

In the meantime — Righteous seem to go unrewarded and the wicked go ...

E.g., Immoral student center of attention and modest student ignored

Unethical person at work promoted and the honest squeaks by

How do we live in the tension?

Answer is in 2:4 (!) — life of righteous person is characterized by faith

We generally think of faith in connection with becoming a disciple of Jesus Christ

Become right with God not by what we do but by believing — AB(C)

How Paul uses the verse (Rom 1:17; Gal 3:11)

More to God's answer to Hab: "The righteous shall live by his faithfulness"

We become a disciple of JC by faith and then live every day in faithfulness

The life of the righteous person is permeated with faithfulness to God

Day in and day out the righteous person is faithful — continues to believe (God is ...) and then to act on that belief (God will do ...)

Heb 10:38-39 — 36, 39

HABAKKUK'S RESPONSE IN CHAPTER 3:1FF.

Responds in faith — 3:16b

Looks ahead to the coming destruction — 3:17-18

Habakkuk's faith is not passive — not resignation, fatalism

Active — “will rejoice; take joy”

Faith frees us up — shackles of fear fall off — actively rejoice in who God is and what He is about to do

Laugh in the face of difficult circumstance — “So what? I still believe!”

WHAT DOES GOD REQUIRE OF HIS DISCIPLES?

At the most basic, fundamental level, at the bedrock of our existence?

We feel good about Him and ourselves? No!

Go to church? — Read our Bibles? — Believe the right things?

Do good things and don't do bad things?

Good things that should characterize our life—but not most basic/fundamental

Most basic, fundamental thing God requires — faith (Heb 11:6)

Believe that He is ... (righteous; just; His ways are best) — Paul

Believe that He will do ... — Hebrews

Live every day, faithful to those convictions (e.g., of Heb 11)

Oh to be freed up by that kind of faith, every day of our lives

To see our faith(fullness) permeating every aspect of our life.

In the face of apparently insuperable odds, we still believe He is ...

No matter how good or bad, we still believe God is righteous/just and will ...

No matter what I see and hear, I still believe God's ways are the best.

This is the Kind of Faith frees you

From needing to be accepted at school — believe that knowing God is sweeter than friends

Girls, that frees you from the need to wear tight shirts that sell your bodies — believe it is better to be clothed in righteousness, adorned with modesty (1 Tm 2:9).

Boys, that frees you from the need to be a sexual predator in order to prove yourself — believe that sex is a bond to be enjoyed only within marriage

Faith frees you from spending our lives earning financial security — bigger house; more toys; greater luxury — believe we are “strangers and exiles; seeking heavenly homeland” (Hebrews 11).

Faith frees you to see beyond the hurts and pains, disappointments and sorrows of life, to look in the face of “iniquity, destruction, and violence” — believe God is ...

Question of Habakkuk is simple

Do you believe God? Will you be faithful to Him day in and day out?

In every day of pain and uncertainty, comfort and apparent security, will you agree with Habakkuk? — 3:17-18

Answer to the Problem of Evil

25. The New Covenant

Jeremiah and Ezekiel

REVIEW

God promised Abraham land, descendants, blessing

In order to achieve this, God established the Covenant through Moses

Exodus 19:5-6 — “I will be their God, and they will be my people”

Much of the History of Israel is How Abraham’s Descendants Failed

Northern kingdom fell quickly into idolatry

God sent prophets like Elijah (condemned syncretism with Baal) and Hosea (“faithlessness” like that of an unfaithful wife)

Assyria in 722 B.C.

Southern kingdom saw some signs of revival — Hezekiah, Josiah

Micah — condemned external religion

Isaiah — sins would be forgiven through the death of God’s Servant

Babylonians in 586 B.C. into exile for 70 years

Jeremiah and Ezekiel Prophesied during the Time of Exile

Judgment and hope — return after the Exile

ONE OF THE SPECIFIC THEMES IN JEREMIAH IS “HEART”

Jeremiah Understands, and Expresses Perhaps More Clearly

Than any other prophet, that the Heart is primary, behavior important, secondary

Heart is the center of our will, thinking, decision making, passions

All decisions are made here — priorities set, values established

Heart leads — feet simply follow.

There are reasons for why we do what we do — even if don’t know them

Ask a child: “Why did you do that?” Answer with a shrug of their shoulders

“What comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart” (Matt 15:18).

Jeremiah Also Understands that the Human Heart is Wicked — 17:9

Major stumbling block in Evangelism — not our job

Most secular people believe that the heart is basically good — environment, poverty, lack of education, anything but me.

Simply wrong — core of the human dilemma is the wicked human heart

Created good by God but bent by sin

Willful, rebellious against God — Left to its own, it will lead to sin

“Sinners by nature and by choice”

If they don't accept — never see necessity of salvation

Only solution for the human condition is to deal first with the heart (≠ behavior)

Exactly God's solution — “New Covenant” (31:31-34)

How is the “New Covenant” New? Different from the “Old” Mosaic?

Debate — I believe they are more alike than they are different

New Covenant comes with the divine power

Written internally on heart, not externally on stone

1. Power to change my heart

“Regeneration” — through God's Spirit, new creatures, born again (John 3)

Necessity because of the wickedness of the heart

2. Power to live as God's obedient children — “Sanctification” (1 John 3:1, 5-6)

HOW WILL GOD DO THIS? EZEKIEL 36:26-28

New Covenant is primarily about the heart

A new heart empowered by God's Spirit

This Spirit is so powerful that it can give life to a valley of dry bones

"Dry bones" — very dead (physically and spiritually)

37:5-6 — "breath" and "Spirit" are the same word

In the New Covenant, God's Spirit is able to breathe life into those who are spiritually dead — change and empower

You may have been praying for someone for a long time

Co-worker or neighbor — nothing seems to get through

Someone claiming to be a Christian (family member) — living in sin — "Will they ever wake up and change?"

Reread thesis above

This is the Message of Hope that Carries through the Rest of the OT

Prophet Joel prophesied of the coming "Day of the Lord" (2:28-29)

OT ends in Malachi with the promise that Elijah will announce the Day of the Lord

NEW TESTAMENT (“NEW COVENANT”)

Will see the JB is this Elijah

New Covenant Established on the Cross (1 Cor 11:23-26)

Just as the Old Covenant was accomplished through a sacrificial death of a lamb (10th plague) and memorialized through the Passover feast

So the New Covenant was accomplished through the death of the Lamb of God — Suffering Servant — and memorialized through the Lord’s Supper as a reinterpreted Passover — (next Sunday)

The forgiveness of Jer 31 and the New Covenant came at the expense of the death of God’s Son.

Spirit poured out on people at Pentecost (Acts 2)

Hearts were changed — Lives were empowered to live within the New Covenant

God’s promise to Abraham of world-wide blessing fulfilled

Purpose of the Old Covenant fulfilled in the New — 1 Peter 2:9

THE NEW COVENANT IS ABOUT GOD CHANGING PEOPLE

Habakkuk’s message of faith was difficult because no divine power

Hosea’s message of “faithlessness” was rampantly true — no divine power

How are we to have faith and live faithful lives? - “So hard!”

Jesus’ death brought about the New Covenant with its power

God’s Spirit changes lives — born again — gives us a new heart

Enable us to live as new creatures — Shema — Rev 21:3-45

Fulfillment of God’s purposes in creation — presence of God — Jer 31:14

“People Worshipping God in Spirit and Truth.”

26. Lamentations, Confession and Faith

There Is an End to God's Patience

Judah refused to confess their sin, which means their sin must be punished
586 B.C. Babylonian Exile

As is often the case,
sorrow for sin doesn't come until it is too late
not until after 586 that the book of Lamentations was written

Lamentations is a National Lament

Is a lament in that it is an expression of deep sorrow for sin
"National" in that the author speaks for the nation as a whole
What is true for the nation is true for the individual

Not so much over their punishment — prominent
Over their sin, and how their sin forced God to punish them

If you want to know what true biblical confession of sin looks like — here it is.

Anonymous — tradition is that Jeremiah

5 poems of 22 verses — number of letters in Hebrew — most acrostic

Middle poem is 66 verses (3x22)

As is often true of Hebrew poetry, the heart of Jer's message is in the middle

Passionate — at first sounds like someone just crying out

Structure shows Jeremiah is being very deliberate

Jeremiah has thought it through

come to grips with the nation's sin and the severity of God's punishment of sin
cries out to God in all his brokenness

CONFESSION STARTS BY BEING HONEST

Things are really, really bad

1:1-4 — No attempt to whitewash the situation—put a good face on it—ignore—
minimize pain — 3:45

“Brokenness”

Not making any false pretenses — putting on appearances

Honest — authentic — pouring out our heart to God — 2:11

PART OF AUTHENTIC CONFESSION IS HONESTY ABOUT THE CAUSE

We sinned — we deserve God’s punishment — it is our fault!

No victim mentality — not pointing the finger — accepts full blame (1:5, ,20; 5:16)

Were other people involved — 2:14 (cf. 4:13-15a)

False prophets of Israel, instead of speaking God’s truth, spoke lies — tickle ears

They did not expose the nation’s sin,
therefore restoration was impossible — 1 John 1:9

God has no statute of limitations — we refuse to confess - God remembers

With biblical preaching comes exposure of sin

Exposure of sin (through the HS) leads to confession

With confession and repentance comes divine forgetfulness — goal (5:21)

Notice: who is never blamed for anything evil? God

Easy to blame God — esp. when pain intensifies — divine policeman

Punishment is my fault (1:18a)—doing what He said— Deut 27-28 — 2:17

God is sovereign — in control — It is He who is punishing — 3:4-6

This is biblical confession and brokenness

CENTER OF THE LAMENT IS JEREMIAH'S "FAITH"

All biblical laments are centered in a statement of faith

Esp. Psalms — still my rock and salvation

Jeremiah doesn't just sit there crying out, "Woe is me"

In the midst of the hurt and pain — faith cries out the loudest

Says what he feels (honest) and then proclaims what he knows — faith

3:21-26

Our hope is not based in what we feel — emotions or swayed by circumstances

Our hope is based in what we believe to be true — this pleases God

Sometimes — esp. in midst of pain — takes a deliberate act of the will to assert our faith over our feelings/experiences.

"Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen."

What does he "call to mind," "know" in the midst of self-induced God-ordained punishment?

Character of God — rock, anchor in the storms of life

Steadfast love — *hesed* covenant — doesn't waver when punished

Merciful — treat as do not deserve — punishment never exhausts God's supply

Because they are new every morning

Faithful — always the same — 2 Tim 2:11-13

Salvation — takes faith to wait on God to act — to wait quietly

Fretters and worriers by nature

We want what we want when we want it

But even in the midst of intense self-induced, deserved, pain,

people of faith so trust in God

that they quietly wait for Him to act on their behalf.

NOTHING HAS CHANGED FROM CHAPTER 1 TO CHAPTER 3

Chapter 3 is the heart of the lament

Chapters 1-2 and 4-5 are centered on chapter 3

Jerusalem is still living in the midst of all the pain and anguish

In the midst of pain, when life hurts the most, our faith must burst through

Must hold on by faith — still praising God for who ...

All fine and good to talk about God's love, mercy, faithfulness, and salvation when everything is okay

Something else to cry out of pain

5:19

That's biblical Confession

Especially in the midst of pain, you and I still respond in faith

I did it

I deserve it

God is just in punishing me

Great is God's faithfulness

Habakkuk-style of faith (3:17-18)