

## 7.3.25 Friday Evening Preparatory Service: THE CAUSE OF THE CROSS

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Date: 07 March 2025

Preacher: Reverend Iain Macritchie

[ 0 : 00 ] Good evening. A warm welcome to the service this evening. It's good to see all of you here this evening and it's good to have Ian McRitchie back with us this evening.

It's actually his first communion back, first communion away since he's gone to Greyfriars. So it's great to have you back here with us in Harris and I don't need to introduce you.

You're well-known within the congregation. We look forward to your ministry over the course of this weekend. Those who are visiting with us tonight from different places, it's good to see you especially.

We don't have tea and coffee here after the service, but there is tea and coffee at Time of Fellowship in the man's for any who want to come up the call and that will just be immediately after the service this evening.

Tomorrow we have got the service at 7 o'clock, which is a bilingual service. We'll have a time of prayer. It's like a prayer meeting service hybrid.

[ 1 : 02 ] So I'll ask a few folks to pray and Ian will bring a word tomorrow evening also. So that's 7 o'clock tomorrow night and then the service is there at 11 and 6 on Sunday.

Also to say that the session was open this morning and if there are any who know the Lord, who love the Lord, but haven't yet professed faith and come to the table, please be encouraged to do so. The elders will meet on my left at the end of the service and so if there's any who want to come forward this evening, please be encouraged to come. So these I think are all the notices.

Again, Ian, thanks for being here and I'll hand over to you now. Thank you. Thank you, David. It's lovely to be back with old friends and new friends as well and I bring with me the greetings of Greyfriars Free Church.

There's a good number of Scalp Box in my congregation and they told me to give a wave over to Scalpy while I'm here. So I'll do that for them and if you're from Scalpy, make yourself known to me and I can pass your regards on to them.

[ 2 : 08 ] It's good to be with you and we pray that together we'll know God's blessing as this weekend we come around God's word and that indeed he'd be pleased to shine the light of his countenance on us.

Well, we're going to sing to begin to God's praise from Psalm 34. Psalm 34. This is the Scottish Psalter version of Psalm 34, reading at the beginning.

God will I bless all times his praise. My mouth shall still express. My soul shall boast in God the meek, shall hear with joyfulness.

We're going to stand to sing if you're able. Verses 1 to 10 to God's praise. God will I bless all times his praise. God will I bless all times his praise.

My mouth shall still express. My soul shall boast in God the meek, shall hear with joyfulness.

[ 3 : 28 ] God bless you.

from all fears delivered. They looked to him and lightened where not shaded where there is said this good heart thine for ever not stay in from all his distresses.

The angel of the Lord then comes and proud and comfort said for those alone that you have been and then deliver to the Lord and see that God is good who just in heaven is blessed.

Fear God his sins now that him fear shall be with want to face The night Let's join to United Hearts in prayer. Let's pray.

Lord our God, we bless and we thank you afresh this evening for the words that we have taken upon our lips, that those who seek the Lord shall not lack any good. And we pray, O Lord, that as

well as taking these words to our lips this evening, that indeed they would be impressed upon our hearts, that we would have a desire one and all, as we gather for these few short moments, to seek after your name. We acknowledge that without your Holy Spirit leading us and guiding us and enabling us to draw from those wells of salvation, that our worship is in vain. And so we call upon you, O Lord, seeking that you might indeed be pleased to open our ears and our hearts, the eyes even of our understanding, so that we might behold wondrous things from your law, that your word would be precious to us, that we would not be as a people gathered going through the motions of ritualistic religion, but rather that we would have a desire to hear what God the Lord will speak.

[ 8 : 04 ] For to his folk, he speaks peace. And if we are yet to identify as a child of God, we pray that over these days that you might be pleased to enable us to see the beauty of who you are as Lord and Saviour, as prophet, as priest, as king, as the one who stretches out his hand in tender, loving care, even this evening, and bids us to come, to come and to put our trust in him. For what indeed should it profit a man if he should inherit the whole world, yet lose his soul? And what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? So of any here tonight are yet to know what it is to identify as a child of God.

Lord, we pray that your Holy Spirit would minister powerfully to that greatest need of theirs, that need to know the joy of the Lord as their strength. We pray, O Lord, for this congregation. We give thanks for them and for their witness here in this community, a bright light in the darkness of this world, Lord, a beacon of hope that week by week goes and shares the good news of the gospel as we find those around us whom we know and love in our family, in our workplace, in our communities, many of whom are quite content living only for the things of time and sense as we once wear ourselves. We pray, O Lord, that your Holy Spirit might indeed be poured out in a day of your miraculous power, turning this community upside down so that men and women, boys and girls would come and taste and see that the Lord is good. We pray, O Lord, that we as your people, as your church, as your beloved bride, that we would not lose that first love, that we would not lose sense of our identity in Christ and even find our hearts growing strangely dimmed towards the things of the gospel, but rather that you would be pleased to daily fan and to flame the embers of your grace within our hearts so that we might even be us as two on the road to a mace, that we would be so mindful of you there by the way with us, and that our hearts might burn within, hearts that not only would burn within but would burn without, so that those around us would see something in us that is not of this world, that they would see even a glimpse of the light and the hope and the love of Jesus Christ, and that they would seek after that for themselves.

We pray, O Lord, for David as he so faithfully sows the seed of the gospel week in, week out. We pray that you would encourage him and his office bearers and all who serve in this congregation in varying and different ways, known and unknown, but yet all known to you. We pray that you would continue to help them to have their eyes set upon you, and that for all of us we would seek to see Jesus in the ordinary every day, that you would be our motivation for who we are and what we do, that we would seek to bring glory, honour, and praise to your name. We pray for our friends in Scalpe who meet also in a similar manner such as this. We pray that you would bless the word as is preached over the days ahead there, and that collectively we would know a unity of the Spirit of the Lord, and that we would be so mindful of that glorious reality in all our congregations, that we are all one in Christ, united not in anything good in and of ourselves, but rather united in and through the shed blood of the

Lamb. We marvel, O Lord, when we look within and we see the darkness of our own hearts, the depravity of who we are by nature, a people who find ourselves straying from God. We marvel, O Lord, that many of us here tonight can say, my Lord and my God, but yet we are reminded all the more of the reason and the reality of such a hope, not that we have anything to offer or to bring, but rather that we are clothed with the righteousness of Christ, clothed with that which we could never hope to be clothed with here in this world, a world that gives only rags, yet you are the God who turns our rags into spiritual riches when we know what it is to be a people who are numbered amongst your precious redeemed, those whom you have loved with an everlasting love. And as we reflect upon the wonder of such a truth this evening, we pray that you would be pleased afresh to stir us up and to give unto us a heart of worship, take from our minds that which distracts, enable us to humbly sit under your word, and that you would be pleased to speak to us through it. We pray for those who cannot be here, those who are sick, those who are so aware of the infirmities of their flesh. We pray for those who are suffering in body, in mind, and even in spirit, that you would be

with them, O Lord, for such a time as this, that your healing hand would be upon them, and that although they cannot maybe gather with us during these days, that they would be so aware of the presence of the Lord, surrounding them and comforting them with that heavenly blessing that comes from finding shelter and comfort under the shadow of your wings. And so lead us in your truth, we pray and forgive us for Jesus' sake. Amen. Well friends, let's sing once more together. This time we're going to sing from the hymn Jehovah St. Kenyu.

I once was a stranger to grace and to God. I knew not my danger and felt not my load. Though friends spoke in rapture of Christ on the tree, Jehovah St. Kenyu was nothing to me. We're going to stand to sing, if you're able, to God's praise. I once was a stranger to grace and to God.

[ 15 : 07 ] I once was a stranger to grace and to God. I knew not my danger and felt not my I once was a stranger to grace and to God. I once was a stranger to grace and to God. I once was a stranger to God.

Oh Christ on the tree, Jehovah St. Kenyu was nothing to me. I offered with pleasure to suit your in peace.

Isaiah's wild measure and Johnson will face. But even they picture the blood-sprinkled tree. Jehovah's in Kenya seemed nothing to me. Like tears from the daughters of Zion that roared, I wept when the waters went over his soul.

Yet God not that license had nailed to the tree. Jehovah's in Kenya was nothing to me.

[ 17 : 12 ] When three great some only I like from on high. then leave the fear shoot me I travel to die.

No refuge no safety himself could I see.! He told us that can you like sin ever come speak.

! My treasure so vanished before the sweet day.

My guilty fears vanished with fullness I came to drink of the fountain like living and free.

love to hear. in Kenya is all things to me. Jehovah's in Kenya I treasure and pour Jehovah's in Kenya I never be lost in me I shall conquer my blood and my fear I gave all my anger my breast plate and shield in treading the valley the shadow of death this word shall rally my faltering prayer for why from my sweet earth my

[ 19 : 25 ] God sets me free Jehovah's love as it gave you my great song shall be well friends let's turn now to read God's word we're going to read from the pages of the Old Testament and from Genesis chapter 3 the third chapter of Genesis we can read the whole chapter together let us hear the word of God now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord had made he said to the woman did God actually say you shall not eat of any tree in the garden and the woman said to the serpent we may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden but God said you shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden neither shall you touch it lest you die but the serpent said to the woman you will not surely die for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God knowing good and evil so when the woman saw that the tree was good for food and that it was a delight to the eyes and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise she took of its fruit and ate and she also gave some to her husband who was with her and he ate then the eyes of both were opened and they knew that they were naked and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths and they heard the sound of the Lord and they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden but the Lord God called to the man and said to him where are you and he said

I heard the sound of you in the garden and I was afraid because I was naked and I hid myself and he said who told you that you were naked have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat the man said the woman whom you gave to be with me she gave me the fruit of the tree and I ate then the Lord God said to the woman what is this that you have done the woman said the serpent deceived me and I ate the Lord God said to the serpent because you have done this cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field on your belly you shall go and the dust you shall eat all the days of your life I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your offspring and her offspring he shall bruise your head and you shall bruise his heel to the woman he said

I will surely multiply your pain and childbearing in pain you shall bring forth children your desire shall be contrary to your husband but he shall rule over you and to Adam he said because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you you shall not eat of it cursed is the ground because of you in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life

thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you and you shall eat the plants of the field by the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground for out of it you were taken for you are dust and to dust you shall return the man called his wife's name Eve because she was the mother of all living the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them then the Lord God said behold the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil now lest he reach out his hand and take also off the tree of life and eat and live forever therefore the Lord God sent him out of the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken he drove out the man and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed a cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life

Amen this is the word of the Lord and we pray that he'll bless it to us in its reading and in our hearing of it well friends before we come back to that chapter we're going to sing once more this time we're going to sing from Psalm 51 the Scottish Psalter version of Psalm 51 reading at the beginning after thy loving kindness Lord have mercy upon me for thy compassion's great blot out all mine iniquity we're going to stand to sing if you're able verses 1 to 6 to God's praise after thy loving kindness Lord after thy loving kindness Lord have mercy upon me for thy compassion's great blot out all my iniquity be cleansed from sin and holy wash from my iniquity for my transgressions I confess my sin I ever see yet be the only have I sin in my sight done this air but when thou speakst thou mayst be just and fear in still!

[ 26 : 50 ] behold thy iniquity was part the world within my we conceive my father!

father also be conceived in guiltiness and sin and sin behold thou in the inward parts with truth delighted art light and with love shalt be no within the hidden heart in hidden heart in the heart my friends if we could for a short time this evening turn back to the chapter we read Genesis chapter 3 chapter 3 and as we consider this chapter together perhaps we could take our focus text from the words that we have in verse 6 so when the woman saw that the tree was good for food and that it was a delight to the eyes and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise she took of its fruit and ate and she also gave some to her husband who was with her and he ate.

! As we were to turn back to the beginning of Genesis and the first chapter verse 31 we notice these words this is of course following on from the creation narrative and following on from that creation narrative we read these words that God saw everything that he had made and behold it was very good.

And yet here we are this weekend. a weekend that has a very specific purpose and a very specific focus.

that focus of course of the sacrificial love of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. a love that of course was necessitated by that which was far, which is far from very good.

[ 30 : 02 ] the fact that God had to be good. The fact that God had to become man, God incarnate, that he was crucified, that he died that death on Calvary's hill as a living ransom to free sinners like you and like me from that eternal consequence of hell itself is far from very good.

And yet it happened. And yet it happened. The fact that it happened is why we are here this weekend. A weekend through which we hope to find ourselves looking upon that cross on Calvary's hill that took from us that curse of sin itself.

Tomorrow evening, God willing, we are going to think about the call to the cross. The call to the cross, the call of Jesus to the cross. On Sunday morning we are going to look at the curtain and the cross.

Sunday evening, if you are here, we will conclude our focus by looking at the consequence of the cross. But tonight we are going to look at the cause of the cross.

The cause of the cross. Because before we can really hope to come to Golgotha in any meaningful way, it is important that we come back to the garden.

[ 31 : 31 ] It is important, is it not, really to remind ourselves of what we have been saved from. It is important to look upon the reality of why we need a saviour at all.

So tonight we are going to look at this chapter just under three headings. The suggestion of sin. The succumbing to sin. And then the separation caused by sin.

Not a comfortable topic for a preacher to preach. For a congregation to hear. But a topic that is so necessary, friends, just to reaffirm our love in the Lord Jesus Christ.

To remind us who we are by nature. And who tonight we are. If we are His, by grace. And so let's look firstly then at the suggestion of sin.

Here we are in the garden, the Garden of Eden. That place where all was very good. That place that John Calvin described in this way. He said that before the fall, the state of the world was a most fair and delightful mirror of the divine favour and paternal indulgence towards man.

[ 32 : 52 ] Now, in all the elements we perceived, we perceive rather that we are cursed.

The before and the now. Which leads us to ask the question, what happened? What happened? Why is it essential for us to come and to remember?

Why do we need to remember a tall field that the Lord God had made? What happened? What happened? The crafty serpent happened.

The serpent, who is none other, of course, than Lucifer. That fallen angel, otherwise known as Satan or the devil. The Bible doesn't, and this leads to many questions in our minds, I'm sure, tonight.

But the Bible doesn't give a detailed account of Satan's origin. But it does tell us that he was a created heavenly angel. That's a thought, isn't it?

[ 34 : 09 ] A heavenly angel that rebelled against God. The prophet Isaiah, he expands on this rebellion when he makes reference to Lucifer in chapter 14 of his prophecy.

He says, And so here we have that motive for rebellion.

A desire to be like the Most High. To be equal with the Most High. Even more, to usurp the authority of the Most High of God himself.

That was, that is the motive of Satan. Of course, his rebellion failed. Consequently, he's cast out of heaven. The timescale of when all of this happened isn't revealed to us.

We do know that angels aren't eternal beings. They're created beings. But we don't know the exact chronology of when all of this happened. But what we do know is that not only was he cast out, but also his followers, his legion of angels.

[ 35 : 33 ] Separated from the glory of heaven forever and forever. And so here we meet with Satan once again, still at odds with God.

Still trying to usurp the authority of his creator by doing all that he can to undermine the work that the Lord has just done. To undermine all that was very good.

And that's the way he works. And that's the way he works. You can be sure. If as a congregation you're trying to do something for the Lord, he'll try to undermine it. He'll try to come in subtly. He'll try to destroy all that's very good.

Because that's his mission. To bring the name of Jesus to nothing. And so here he is in the garden. He's seeing all that's very good.

And what does he do? He tries to undermine Adam and Eve, the created beings in the created garden. This place of inexplicable, inexpressible beauty and peace.

[ 36 : 37 ] This place that's been entrusted to them. A place that he is willing and wanting to ruin. And how does he do it? He does it by being cunning.

By being cunning. That's why the Bible describes him as being cunning. Being crafty. You know, you might know people in life who are crafty. Ragalic phrase, yekoch.

People who go around things in a crafty way without being found out. That's the way Satan is. He tries to be subtle. In a way that doesn't draw attention to himself. But a way that nonetheless accomplishes his mission.

And what does he do? Well, he says to the woman, Did God actually say, You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?

And he said to the woman. Now, this is significant. The fact is that when God had sanctioned Adam to be able to eat of every tree apart from this one tree, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Eve hadn't been created.

[ 37 : 43 ] She hadn't heard firsthand what God had said to him. And so any information that she had, had to have come from Adam, her husband.

But Satan's clever. He knows this. And so he exploits the situation. And so what he's saying to the woman is this. Can you really trust your husband?

Or can you really trust God? God of the universe. The one who's created all things. Can you really trust him? Are you sure that that's what God really said?

We know what it's like when maybe we've heard God speaking to us through his word, through providence. We think he's leading us in a certain direction. And then the doubts come in. Is he really saying that?

Is that what he really meant? Maybe even in professing faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, you have these doubts. Does he really want me to do that? And then we see our response.

[ 38 : 42 ] Now, from the outset, before any fruit is eaten, Satan, he's sowing these seeds of uncertainty. And Eve responds in verse 2.

And the woman said to the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden. But God said, You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden.

Neither shall you touch it, lest you die. Now, this, on the surface, at first seems like a positive response. One of retaliation against Satan. That she's trying to resist the evil ones so that he'll flee from her.

A desire that's founded on what God had to say. But as we look at our words a little bit more closely, friends, we see that they reveal something else.

They show us, friends, that the seed of unbelief and doubt has already taken root in her heart. And the woman said to the serpent, We may eat of the fruit in the trees of the garden.

[ 39 : 47 ] But God said, You shall not eat of the fruit of the trees in the midst of the garden. Neither shall you touch it, lest you shall die. Two things to notice here. Two things that aren't true or aren't expressly said by God.

Because God had said absolutely nothing to Adam about touching the tree. And so what Eve is doing is she's exaggerating the command of God.

She's adding to the word of God. She's adding to his prohibitions. But she also adds something else to what God says. Implying that the consequence for eating of that tree or touching it in her own mind.

Isn't quite as black and white as God had made out. You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die. In case you die.

In other words, you might die. But just in case, don't eat of the fruit. There's a measure of flexibility here. And yet that's not what God said.

[ 40 : 54 ] In the previous chapter he said, But the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat. For in the day you eat of it, you shall surely die.

And that's the way Satan works, friends. As an angel of light. He can come with scripture to us. And ever so slightly distort it to give a meaning to the scripture that changes the whole dynamic of the scripture.

And even changes the implications of that scripture to the life of the hearer. He's subtle. He comes as an angel of light.

And so Eve, what she does is, at this point, she leaves herself wide open to Satan, who pushes a little further in verse 4.

See what he's doing.

[ 42 : 00 ] He's turning this woman against her creator. He's saying to her, I know what God's saying, but there's a reason for it. And so really, I know better than that.

And what I have to offer you will be far better for your good in the long term. He says, you're not going to die. He says, God is telling lies.

Effectively, he's saying, take of this fruit and your eyes will be open so that you will be just like God. You will be a God yourself. You'll be the master of your own destiny.

Do whatever it takes, he's saying, in order to satisfy yourself. And that's, to be honest, is a tactic that he continues to employ even tonight.

Are you sure that that's what God really means? Are you sure? Which brings us very briefly to our second point. Our second point is going to be very brief. Succumbing to sin.

[ 43 : 00 ] Because no sooner has the suggestion been made that Eve goes straight for the forbidden fruit. So that when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired, or coveted, to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate.

And she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. She succumbed. She looked at the fruit. She desired the fruit.

So she ate the fruit. And at this point, we can see that she's trusting the words of Satan, a created, fallen being, more than God himself.

How sad. How short-sighted. Yet how like us friends by nature. How many of us, before we came to know the Lord, could put out amen to this selfsame scenario.

Even as Christians, we do it. We believe the voice of the fallen people around us, rather than the voice of God.

[ 44 : 09 ] The wisdom of man, overpowering the wisdom of God. But what about Adam? Where is he in all of this? Before we're tempted to shine the spotlight solely on Eve, let's look at Adam.

How do we know? Because when Satan's busy promising Eve the world, that if she disobeys God, she'll have all at her disposal. Where is Adam?

Well, he is right there by her side. How do we know? Because we read that she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.

He's with her all along. He's there when Satan tempts her. He's there when she responds with a distorted twist on what God actually said.

He's there when she reaches out and takes off that fruit. And what does he do to stop her?

Absolutely nothing. Absolutely nothing.

[ 45 : 11 ] He sits back and he watches as all unravels before his eyes. And you know, it was his duty to instruct her.

Remember, God had spoken to him. It was his duty to instruct her in all that God had told him. And yet he willfully allowed her to disobey. Isn't that solemn?

And because of this, he would be the one, as the covenant head, who would be responsible. But he failed.

He failed catastrophically. A failure that would have implications for mankind for the rest of time, for all eternity. Which brings us to our third and final point.

Separation caused by sin. Because the effects of such disobedience, we see in verse 7, are felt immediately.

[ 46 : 09 ] Then the eyes of both are opened. It's amazing the play on words that we see in scripture. The Lord is the perfect linguist.

Look at the way we see the eyes of them are both opened. Just as a serpent had previously predicted that their eyes would be opened. Your eyes will be opened, he said, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.

But yet, just like so many promises that Satan gives us, he doesn't deliver. Because when their eyes are opened, what happens? They know that they are both naked.

They know that they are both naked. Because what has come upon them, that which had been so natural and normal, is now shameful. They have brought to themselves that guilt and that shame, so that they have to sew those fig leaves together and make themselves loincloths.

They are embarrassed. Having listened to Satan and acted, they are now so full of guilt. And that is what sin does. Sin, it gives to us that guilt, that shame, that shame of who we are by nature.

[ 47 : 28 ] That willful disobedience that cost them their innocence, cost them their freedom, rendered them guilty, rendered the whole of mankind guilty before a holy God, before the judge of the earth.

At this point, we might be saying, well, okay, they ate of the fruit, they made a mistake, but surely such a small action, it doesn't warrant them to be guilty.

And it certainly doesn't warrant the whole of mankind to be guilty. Surely, it's a bit of an overreaction. Surely, there's something not quite right here. Well, Barry Cooper from Ligonier Ministries, he helpfully puts it like this.

And I quote, he says, Imagine I take off my wedding ring and throw it in the sea. On one level, it's no big deal. It's not as if the ring is particularly expensive.

It's really just a tiny piece of metal thrown into a body of water. Who cares about that? But what the act represents, what it would show about my heart, would be huge.

[ 48 : 44 ] And the repercussions would be considerable. The marriage would seem to be over. When Adam and Eve ate the fruit, in one sense, it was only a small thing.

But what it represented was huge. And what it showed forth were repercussions. Repercussions that showed that they didn't really believe in God.

And that's what it all comes down to, friends. Unbelief. Not believing what God has to say. That's the fall. And what a fall it is. What a nightmare even it is.

A nightmare that humanity still hasn't woken up from. A nightmare where this marriage between God and mankind was over just like that.

A nightmare that brought separation. For Adam, for Eve, for humanity, for you, for me. The God with whom they'd previously enjoyed such close communion with would now be the God with whom they'd estranged.

[ 49 : 54 ] A stranger to. So much so, that what do they do to God? And we don't do this to strangers. To, rather, people who are close to us, I should say.

People we love. What do they do with God? They hide from Him. They don't want to see Him. And there's times in our lives there's certain people we don't want to see, and perhaps with good reason. And there's usually a back story. That person's maybe hurt us deeply or whatever. But they don't want to see Him because they've hurt Him. They're ashamed.

Verse 8. They heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. That's what sin does. It brings us to that point where we hide from God. We don't want to see Him. We don't want to hear from Him. We don't want to talk about Him.

[ 50 : 54 ] Maybe you're not a committed Christian here tonight. I don't know. And yet you wince maybe when people start speaking about the Lord to you. You feel uncomfortable. You want to hide from it.

You want to put it away for another day. You want to shelve it till next Sunday. That's what sin does. That's a reflection of who we are by nature. That rebellious heart who says, No, I don't want you to rule over me.

I don't want you to be my king. I don't want you to be my father and my friend. And that the reality is we cannot hide from God. Verse 9. The Lord God called to the man and said to him, Where are you?

So that even when we've turned our back on God, he's still calling us to himself. We might not want to see him, but he wants to see us.

And as he calls us to himself, he does this out of love. He reminds us of the shame that sin brings to our lives. Verse 11.

[ 51 : 59 ] He said, Who told you that you were naked? In other words, I didn't tell you that. What's led you to this point of time in your life? Tell me the story. Tell me the steps that have brought you to this shame.

In other words, having to do that, Adam and Eve would have to recollect all that they'd just done. They would have to admit and acknowledge that they disobeyed God.

That they'd sinned willfully against him. And sometimes, friends, it's not until we articulate the truth ourselves that we really believe the truth. We can put it away.

We can act as if it's just not part of our own story. Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree which I commanded you not to eat?

They're being faced with the facts. And of course, Adam's response only goes to confirm the query of the Lord.

[ 52 : 57 ] Verse 12. The man said, The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me the fruit of the tree and I ate.

Isn't that such a typical reaction, friends, of all of us? Myself included. None of us are out with this. What is Adam doing? He's blaming God.

He's blaming God for his own sin. The woman that you gave me. This isn't my fault. This is your fault. If you hadn't given me this woman, none of this would have happened.

Astounding. Isn't it? Isn't it just as well? It's not really astounding because we see in ourselves that we like nothing more than to abdicate responsibility for our own actions.

Maybe not in front of God. But even in the ordinary everyday, in our workplace, in our families, wherever we are, there's something within us that likes to say, it's not my fault.

[ 53 : 55 ] It's that person's fault. It's not my fault. It's not my fault. Blaming everyone else for everything apart from ourselves. A sign of who we are by nature.

You gave me this woman. And of course, we see that this woman jumps on the bandwagon, the blame bandwagon herself. Verse 13. Then the Lord said to the woman, what is this that you've done?

And the woman said, the serpent deceived me and I ate. It's Satan's fault. It's not my fault. The fact that I've disobeyed the God of the universe, it's not my fault.

It's the serpent's fault. It's Satan's fault. You know, friends, there's such a valuable lesson here for all of us that we can never blame Satan for our own actions.

Of course, we'll say that Satan whispers in our ears. And he does. He absolutely does. He whispers.

[ 54 : 53 ] He prompts. He suggests. But it's you and me that act. It's you and me that do.

It's you and me that say, okay. Not him. But us. And so Adam and Eve are separated from God.

We read in verse 23. Therefore, the Lord God sent him out of the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken, sent out from the garden, separated from God.

Not how it should have been. You might be thinking, well, why haven't they died? I thought they were going to surely die. And here they are, banished from the garden, very much alive.

Did God change his mind? Well, of course he doesn't. He didn't. Because had Adam, and this is a thought. It's a hypothetical thought. But had Adam not partaken of the fruit in this, what's known as, in the theological world, in this probationary period, had he not partaken of this fruit, he and Eve, they would have lived forever and ever in the wonder and the beauty of the garden.

[ 56 : 08 ] Much as you and I will if we're Christ tonight. In heaven itself. Is heaven itself this world we claimed?

We don't know. It could be. But that's the hope of the Christian. Living in perfection, with perfection, for all eternity.

And that would have been their story, had they not changed history. Because now death and decay are set in. The selfsame death and decay that is so evident around us today.

We don't need to go far in this room, I'm sure, to speak to people who are so aware of that death and decay in themselves or in their family. The wages of sin is death.

It's a pretty grim and bleak picture, isn't it, friends, for a Friday night of a communion. It really is. The wages of sin is death.

[ 57 : 13 ] But the gift of God is eternal life. We're all dying from sin by nature. Our communion with God has been broken.

But tonight, friend, I come here with a diagnosis, the harsh reality of sin. And I remind myself of it as much as I do of you. But I also come with good news.

That even although we deserve eternal death, God has in his mercy, in his love, provided that new and living way. And we see something of that mercy and love, even in this very chapter, do we not? When Adam and Eve, they try and cover their nakedness, their embarrassment, they're scrabbling together fig leaves to try and cover themselves. What does God do? What does God do? He comes in, as he often does, in love and in mercy.

Verse 21. And the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them. God sacrifices in order to cover their shame.

[ 58 : 20 ] God sacrifices their shame. He sacrifices an animal. And so, yes, we've looked at the suggestion of sin, the succumbing to sin, the separation that sin causes. But we can have a fourth point here.

The salvation from sin. Because the good news is that just like God sacrificed in order to cover the shame of Adam and Eve, he did the same for you and for me.

To cover our shame. As we've looked at that gruesome picture of who we are and what we're all capable of, we now come to see who he is and what he has done and what he can do.

That's why we're not staying in the garden this weekend, but we're going to Golgotha. That's why on the Lord's Day we'll hear those words that Christ shared at the Last Supper. Take, eat.

This is my body. Take, eat. Clever, isn't it? The irony in these words. I don't think it's coincidental. Satan said to Adam and Eve, take, eat.

[ 59 : 22 ] And Adam's taking and eating is now a symbol of death. And yet, when the second Adam, Jesus says, take, eat. This is a symbol that life has come into this world.

And more than that, that life has come into the hearts of his people. And yet I wonder, friends, as we close, is there anyone here tonight?

And I know what this is like. Is there anyone here tonight who is a believer and yet Satan is saying to you, don't eat? The opposite of what he said in the garden. Don't eat.

Whatever you do, don't eat. You can't do that. You mustn't do that. Your life will be over if you do that. Remember, friends, he is the father of lies.

He is the voice of deception. He is the one whose voice we must not only be able to recognize tonight, but reject.

[ 60 : 23 ] The cause of the cross is our sin. But yet we thank God that this is far from the end of the story.

So that our duty this weekend is to be obedient not to the voice of Satan, but to the voice of Christ. The one who commands you and me with you, if you're his today, to take, eat.

This is my body. Do this in remembrance of me. If you've not yet done that and you're the Lord's, why not?

Whose voice are you really listening to? Let's pray. Lord, we thank you that you don't leave us with a picture-perfect image of humanity, but you lay bare the realities of who we are all by nature.

And as we reflect upon the fall of man, we thank you, Lord, that you don't leave us there, but rather you pick us up with the glorious truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the one who promises to cover our shame by the shed blood of the Lamb, to give to us that coat of righteousness, so that although our sins shall be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow, that in the eyes of the Father we are perfect through the sacrificial love of the Son.

[ 62 : 04 ] Hallelujah! What a Savior! We pray then that you would be pleased to speak to us this evening, reaffirm our faith, be with any who are yet to take that step of faith, that they would know the blessing that follows the obedience not of the evil one, the one who wants us to do nothing more than to drink from the murky puddles of this world, but rather the voice of the Lord God himself, who says, take, eat, do this in remembrance of me, for I died for you.

Be with us in our final item of praise. We thank you for those who lead us, that all would be done to your glory. Forgiving sin we pray in Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen.

Let's, friends, conclude our time of worship. We're going to sing from His mercy is more. Our sins they are many, as we've seen there today, tonight.

And yet His mercy is so much more. What love could remember, no wrongs we have done, omniscient, all-knowing, He counts not their sum, thrown into a sea without bottom or shore.

That's what He casts our sins. Our sins they are many, His mercy is more. We're going to stand to sing, if you're able, to God's praise. What love could remember, no wrongs we have done.

[ 63 : 36 ] What love could remember, no wrongs we have done, omniscient, all-knowing, He counts not their sum, Oh, thanks to God.

Oh, thanks to God. Oh, thanks to God. Oh, thanks to God. Oh, thanks to God. Oh, thanks to God.

Oh, thanks to God. The Lord, His mercy is born. Stronger than darkness, new every morn.

Our sins, they are many, His mercy is born. The nations would wait as we constantly roam.

What Father so tender is calling us home. He works the weakness, the wildest, the poor.

[ 64 : 56 ] Our sins, they are many, His mercy is born. Christ the Lord, His mercy is born.

Stronger than darkness, new every morn. Our sins, they are many, His mercy is born.

The riches of kindness, He lavished on us. His blood was the payment, His right was the cross.

We stood in the debt we could never afford. Our sins, they are many, His mercy is born.

It's the Lord, His mercy is born. Stronger than darkness, new every morn.

[ 66 : 06 ] Our sins, they are many, His mercy is born. Amen. May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit rest on and remain with you now and always.

Amen. Amen.