



A Beautiful Design (Part 4) – Man's Hurdles

Beau Hughes – September 28, 2014

Hello, friends! It's good to see you, and also to those of you who are at our campuses in Dallas and Fort Worth and Arlington, it's good to be seen by you. I know you're there. I wish I could see you, but I thank God for you, and I'm excited tonight to walk through God's Word with you. If you have a Bible, why don't you take it and turn to Genesis, chapter 2? That's where we'll be for the majority of our time together tonight. We'll read chapter 2 and then chapter 3.

If you're new here, I want to welcome you. My name is Beau Hughes. I'm one of the pastors and elders up at our Denton Campus, soon to be an actual new church you have had a part of planting and establishing up there in Denton. It's my joy to be here with you. If you're new, we are a few weeks into a sermon series called *A Beautiful Design*.

We're talking about the way God made humanity and what that means, specifically in terms of gender, what it means to be man and what it means to be woman, made in the image of God. Tonight we're in the second week of a sort of series within a series about manhood. Last week, Matt covered the design of man, who man is supposed to be, what man is supposed to do in glorifying God and living in the way he desires and has designed for them to live.

Last week we introduced this word called *headship*. We used that as a word to summarize the role of man, why God put man on the planet and in the home and in society. We talked about how men are meant to exercise leadership through loving, serving, and protecting. What we're going to do tonight is pause and think, "Okay, if that's true, if that's why God has made men, and if that's who men are supposed to be, where are all of these men?"

That may be a little unfair, a little heavy-handed, but even last week after the sermon in Denton, I had a number of young men and women come up to me and say, "Hey, I hear what he's saying about man and about what man is supposed to be, what they're supposed to do, but I've just never seen

that in my life. I've never seen a man like that. In fact, I've seen a man who's the opposite of that. Where are all of these men?" I got five, six, or seven of these questions after the service last week.

There are a lot of good answers to that. Part of it, I'd say, is a lot of these types of men we see are in this congregation. Praise God. We're not perfect men, but by God's grace he has saved us. He has rescued us. He's transforming us. He's increasingly making us men who exercise humble headship and leadership through serving, loving, and protecting.

At the same time, I think even those of us God is doing that in would have to say we still feel so far from what we're meant to be as men. We still feel so far from who God has created us to be in walking in a manner worthy of the Lord that really does image and exemplify even the way Jesus Christ lived his own life.

This is not a cute theological conversation. Thinking through where all of the men are... We have a lot of boys, but where are all of the men? This is not cute conversation that we're sitting here theoretically talking about, as we talked about last week. The answer to this question, where all of the men are and what's hindering men from actually being men who are living in the way God designed and created us to live, has enormous ramifications for society, for the family, for our relationships, for our workplaces, and for our church.

Whether you're a male or a female, like we touched on last week, this is an important conversation. It's a sermon on manhood and the hurdles to true manhood, but it's important whether you're a man or a woman, whether you're black or white, whether you're young or old. It doesn't matter. This conversation matters for all of us, because where there's an absence of men, like we talked about last week, society and the home and the church go a direction they were never created to go.

So where are all of the men? Let's look at Genesis 2. Before we start there, let me just pray that God would help us tonight from his Word to see God's clear answer to this question and to really sit underneath it and allow the Holy Spirit to minister to us through it.

Father, we pray and we ask and we hope tonight that this hour would not be an exercise in missing the point. We pray now that by your Spirit, as we look into your Word, you would uncover our hearts in ways that draw us near to you, in ways that draw us into repentance. Lord, where we are knowingly or unknowingly living against the grain of your design for our lives, would you reveal that?

Beyond just revealing it, would you convict us and humble us and lead us into repentance through your kindness? We thank you that you have not left us alone in this conversation. Whether we're men or women, wherever we are tonight, you have spoken to us. So God, give us ears to hear now as we incline our hearts to hear. We ask these things in Christ's name, amen.

Genesis 2... I know we covered some of this last week, but I just want to read it. We're really going to camp out on Genesis 3, but it's helpful to get our minds and our hearts in the narrative that explains so much of what has gone wrong with manhood. Genesis 2, verse 7. This is the creation account in Genesis 2.

"...then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life [his spirit], and the man became a living creature. And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed." Then skip down to verse 15. It picks up and says, **"The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it."** That's what we camped out on last week. That's what God created the man to do: to exercise headship by working and keeping, by leading and loving and serving and protecting.

"And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, 'You may surely eat of every tree of the garden...'" That's an amazing statement. **"...but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.'** Then the LORD God said, **'It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.'**

Now out of the ground the LORD God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh.

And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, 'This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.' Therefore a man shall leave his

father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed."

You see the trajectory of the whole story here, leading. They were naked and were not ashamed. Imagine, sense as you can, the picture of what this is describing. This is perfection. This is perfect harmony, perfect paradise, perfect *shalom*, the biblical word would be. This is God's design. Not only is there man and woman walking in freedom and no sin has entered into the world, but there is perfection. They're naked. They're not ashamed. No shame, no fear, none of that. It's perfect.

Yet the story takes a surprising turn here, surprising to those of us reading it, especially if we're reading it as if we've read it for the first time. It's not surprising to God, but it's a surprising turn for those of us reading it. A new character steps onto the scene. In the very next verse, in verse 1 of chapter 3, it says, "**Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made.**"

If you've never read this story, that should make you pause. I know many of us, if not most of us, in this room have read this story before, and I think the familiarity with it sort of numbs us to what's happening here. This verse should make you anxious about reading on. It's like there's perfection. There's harmony. Oh, what's the Serpent doing there? He's crafty... Even the description of the Serpent. What is this?

I like watching sports on television sometimes, but do you know what I hate about watching sports on television? The instant replay of the injuries. Who are the sickos who want to watch that in slow motion? It's like, "Look at the guy's bone coming out of his skin. Let's slow it down and try to get the trajectory of that." That's not good. As an athlete, you know, you twist your ankle... You just don't want to see that.

Every time I'm watching television and that happens, great. It's sad. I'm going to pray for this guy in a better moment. Yet then they want to slow it down. I turn my head. I at least cover my eyes. I mean, I'm okay with hearing them describe it, kind of. Even that it's like, "Is this fun?" It's like, "What about the guy's...?" I don't like watching that. This story should be sort of like that for those of us who know what's happening, but it's not, because we're familiar. This Serpent is now coming on the scene in the middle of God's garden, and this is what it says.

"[The serpent] 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.'" This is when we should turn our heads. Look at the next verse.

"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." In this moment, the first moment of human pride, the first moment of human unbelief, Adam and Eve lusted after autonomy. They trusted and gave themselves over to the voice of the Serpent and to their own wisdom over and above God's.

Instead of trusting God's Word, they trusted in the Serpent and rebelled against the Creator, and they refused to be satisfied in God and his provision for every other tree in the garden. They said, "That's not enough for us," so they said, "Forget you, God. Forget what you've told us about who we are and what your design and your purpose and your desire is for our lives," and they rebelled. They sinned. If you're not a Christian, this is an important concept for the worldview of a Christian: sin, rebellion against God, refusing to be satisfied in God alone.

When they sinned, when they decided to be their own gods, to be their own authority, the flourishing and perfection of creation was utterly marred. In these verses, in this fateful moment, you have God's diagnosis and explanation of what went wrong with the entire world, manhood included: sin. It's important that we understand this, because if we get the wrong diagnosis of what went wrong with our world, if we get the wrong diagnosis of what has gone wrong in manhood, then we'll prescribe the wrong solution.

Right here, clearly, helpfully, in our faces, is God's explanation and description of what went wrong, which he gave us right here at the beginning of the Bible so we wouldn't miss it once we opened it up. The Scriptures teach that our problem is sin, that we've rebelled and are rebelling against God's beautiful design for our lives.

Through the rebellion we see in Genesis 3... It's not just what happens to them that we're about to read about, but what we know from the rest of the witness of Scripture is, despite sin, mankind made in God's image substantially and essentially was changed forever in this moment we just read about. It's really hard to wrap our minds around this. When they took that fruit and ate, man went from being good to bad. That's what Paul says in Romans 5.

He says sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and then death spread to all men because all sinned, which we'll get to in a bit. Look at how it plays itself out in Genesis 3. Stay here with me in the story. So they ate. **"Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked."** The exact opposite of what we just read at the end of chapter 2.

"And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths [because they were ashamed]. And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, 'Where are you?' And he said, 'I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.'

He said, 'Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?' The man said, 'The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.' Then the LORD God said to the woman, 'What is this that you have done?' The woman said, 'The serpent deceived me, and I ate.' The LORD God said to the serpent..." He turns to the Serpent and to the woman and to the man, the other characters in this story, and speaks to each one of them. He says to the Serpent:

"Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.' To the woman he said, 'I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.'" We'll come back to that.

"And to Adam..." To the man, as we're talking about manhood. **"...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."

Again, it's hard to wrap our minds around this, but this passage explains and accounts for every bit of pain the world has ever known. Think about that. Every bit of pain, every bit of sadness, just in your own life, not to mention how it is multiplied across this room. Every bit of it comes from this moment. Every bit of violence, every loss, every catastrophe and devastation the world has ever known. The effect of sin is cosmic in scope. All of it comes from this moment. Sin is universally devastating.

Author, pastor, and theologian Tim Keller explains the cosmic scope of sin this way. He says sin brings spiritual alienation from God, emotional alienation within, social alienation from each other, and physical alienation from nature. Listen to this. As a result of the fall, as a result of what we just read about, humanity is alienated from God fundamentally (that's the primary thing that has happened), causing guilt and hostility to the knowledge of the Lord.

Men and women are alienated from themselves, causing a loss of identity and a loss of meaning, as well as anxiety and emptiness. People are alienated from other people, causing war and crime, family breakdown, oppression, and injustice. Finally, humanity is alienated from nature itself (that's what he talks about), causing hunger, sickness, aging, and even physical death.

That is pretty devastating. That is pretty total in what sin has done. Yet sin is not just cosmic in scope; it's also specific. It has not just marred everything; it has marred manhood specifically. Eric Mason, friend, author, and pastor up at Epiphany Fellowship, one of our partner churches in Philadelphia, says in his book called *Manhood Restored* that manhood specifically was lost in the fall along with the rest of God's original design for creation.

Because of this, instead of the things we talked about last week, responsibility, representation, relationship, service, protection, and love, now things like chauvinism, violence, passivity, insecurity, and addiction would now characterize generation after generation of men in a continually increasing way. It is truly difficult to fathom the marring of manhood that has taken place because of sin.

Even the best men you and I know, even the most godly men (that's how I'm defining *best* there)

who seem to be conformed to the image of Christ more than anybody else you know, are a faint echo of true manhood. Again, I don't think we believe that. I think we really think we're better off than we are, so this doesn't fall like a ton of bricks on our hearts in the way it should. Listen, I'm not trying to shovel shame and guilt here. I just want to get a picture of what has happened to manhood: sin and selfishness.

Genesis 3 is particularly insightful about manhood, because it provides us a glimpse not just of what happened, but it provides us a glimpse of at least two particular, specific ways sin has ravaged manhood. The text itself (we'll come back to it now) actually hints of two extremes of what happens when sin infects the heart of a man. Selfishness fundamentally, but it works itself out in *selfish passivity* and *selfish aggression*.

As those striving to be men of God on this side of Genesis 3, we fight against these hindrances, these proclivities and inclinations to sin in our hearts and in our lives, every single day. So let's look at them, because I think there's a lot God wants to uncover in our hearts tonight. Let's start with *selfish passivity*. We need to define passivity first, because by *passivity* I don't mean our current contemporary therapeutic use of the word *passive*.

By *passive* I don't mean men are not actively pursuing or doing anything. There's no such thing as a truly passive man. You do understand that. Even the man who sits at his house drinking, in a stupor, watching the game, while his whole house burns down around him is not being passive truly. He's actively giving his heart over to what's more important in that moment. There's really no such thing as passivity in that sense, so we have to define *passivity* carefully here.

When I say *selfish passivity*, I mean not the absence of doing anything, because that's impossible. All of us are actively pursuing something, always, all the time. What I mean by *passive* is men who are actively pursuing something other than what God desires and designed them to pursue. They are actively going against what we talked about last week. By action or inaction, in their hearts they're actively rejecting that for something else. That's what I mean by *passivity*. Men are passive by abdicating their design and responsibility before the Lord, just like Adam did.

You see this numerous times in this text. Look at verse 6 with me. It says, "**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 doing...what? He was standing right there with her.

The one who was supposed to work and keep the garden, the one who was supposed to exercise leadership by protecting, this is how he protected. He was intrigued, perhaps. He wanted to do it, but he was afraid to do it, so he let his wife do it for him. He was doing the opposite of what he was designed to do. In that sense, he ate it and was being utterly passive in his activity.

Then you look at verse 9. This is after he has eaten. **"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...'"** He's hiding. What's he doing hiding? That doesn't seem like responsibility. That doesn't seem like pressing into leadership. He's hiding.

God said, **"Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?"** Listen to the man's response and the passivity through it. **"The woman whom you gave..."** Which is true. This is not untrue what he's saying, but it's what he's saying *in* what he's saying that is so devastating. It so should land on us, because we do this all the time.

He says, "The woman you gave..." He says not just it's the woman. "You gave me the woman." It's a double passivity here. It's like, "The woman *you* gave me. So ultimately, I'm grumbling against *you* because this is *your* fault that I ate of the tree." This is what he's saying. He's saying, "The woman *you* gave." What an utterly passive response.

"The man said, 'The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.'" You see here the utter abdication of the responsibility God had given the man and created for him, and God calls it sin. He calls it sin and judges him for it. In verse 17, look at what it says. **"And to Adam he said, 'Because you have listened to the voice of your wife...'"** "Because you abdicated your responsibility and sat in passivity, for whatever reason, this is why this is happening."

For those of us who live as men (and as women, but I'm talking specifically to men here) on this side of Genesis 3, the tentacles of selfish passivity reach into every domain of our lives. It's really easy to stand back and go, "What a dope." I think it's hard to actually find ourselves in the story, because we can't relate what it's like for our passivity to actually cause sin to come into the world for the first time.

Ours doesn't seem that bad because the result is not that bad, but what I hope the Holy Spirit will uncover in our hearts is that we do this all the time. Again, this is a hurdle to being the type of men God has designed and desires for us to be. The selfish passivity we see here works its way into our work, into our studies (for those of us who are students), our friendships, our finances, our leisure, our marriage, our parenting, you name it. Selfish passivity is laced through all of those roles and all of those spheres of our lives, and it takes a variety of forms.

Just relax and listen and see what the Holy Spirit might say to you. I just want to give you some illustrations of how I see, and others I walk with who spend a lot of time counseling men in particular see, selfish passivity working its way in our lives. Listen, Adam is easy. You could go to King David in the Bible and watch how he was passive and then slept with another man's wife while that man was out at war.

That's a good example of passivity, but again, it's so extreme I feel like it's almost unhelpful, especially to those of us who are really trying to walk by the Spirit and put to death the deeds of the flesh. What I'm trying to do is hit those of you who really are... You're maybe not on *this* extreme or *this* extreme.

You're really just trying to navigate your way through a fallen world with a sinful inclination of heart, and you may not be aware of how you're living in a way that is selfish and passive, so I want to help you see that. That's what Matt gave me to do. Thank you, Matt. He's off wherever he's off, and here I am with this. He's going to come back and encourage you with the gospel next week.

Here's one way we're passive: *refusal to worship God*. The refusal to enjoy and honor and serve and know and obey and delight in God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit is passive. Even to come in here tonight and not rejoice in singing to him is passive. It can be. You're not delighting in God. That's passive.

Engaging fantasy instead of reality. Fantasizing and living in a world of fantasy instead of the world you really live in, that God has put you to live in, to work, and to keep. That's passive. Fantasizing about a different job, fantasizing about a different spouse. Even entertainment is filled with fantasy, just indulging as a glutton in entertainment and video games and movies and music and this whole world where you can get outside of reality, which is where God has placed all of us to engage and to lead and to serve.

Fantasizing even about different children, if we can just be honest, especially some of us who have grown children who are wayward or who aren't encouraging or didn't wind up the way you felt like you could control them enough for them to wind up. We just want to engage in a fantasy world, in a different life. Of course, checking out emotionally and spiritually is a part of this.

Silence in a moment where words are needed is passivity. So silence when you should say something encouraging to your wife or your children or your friend or silence when you should confront sin in the life of your friend or your children or your wife is passive. You think, "I'm just not going to say anything," when a wise word, an encouraging word, a word of admonition is called for and you've been placed there to give that word.

What we're doing by our silence is actively avoiding something. By not speaking, we're actively avoiding conflict. We're perhaps avoiding vulnerability. We don't want to be vulnerable, so we don't engage there. We're avoiding work. It's just harder work to speak sometimes than it is to be silent. Again, you're seeing with whatever we're being passive about, we're being active about getting something else, whether it's comfort or leisure or whatever we're really wanting.

Excuse making, complaining. That's passive. Again, you see that in Genesis 3. He's just making excuses as if God was going to go, "Oh, that makes sense." No, it's passive, and we all do it. We all grumble. All of our complaining and grumbling ultimately, just like we saw with Adam, is grumbling against the Lord. *Disorganization and procrastination.* That's passive. Proverbs has a lot to say about that. *Hiding sin* is passive. You see Adam doing this. Hiding instead of bringing it into the light. That's passive.

Busyness can be passive. I know it doesn't seem like that, but what are you doing? You're actively busying yourself so you can avoid *this*. "I want to be so busy I don't have to think about this, I don't have to engage with this, I don't have to be a part of this. I'm just going to stay busy. I'm going to stay here and do this and make myself look like this is what I'm really needing to do," when all the while the priority is absolutely being shunned. We give ourselves over to busyness to cover up.

Laziness, obviously. Laziness in work, laziness in service, laziness in ministry, not getting out of bed when the alarm goes off. I know you probably don't connect a straight line from Genesis 3 to that, but there is a pretty clear line there, I think, when there's a responsibility on the other side of that alarm. *Leaving difficult labors to other people.* Men don't do that. God didn't design us as men to do that.

Leaving people in need, just walking right by. We see a need and we're just going to walk by. Even something simple, like you're walking through the office and there's trash on the floor. Pick it up. That's working and keeping. I'm trying to get to the ground level. All of us struggle with this. *Gluttony*. I already talked about gluttony. Overindulging for comfort and relief in sex or in food or in toys or in entertainment.

Then I think just *apathy*, a lack of ambition about things that are truly important to God and other people. That's passive. Either by not being excited about what God is excited about or by not being appalled by false worship, not being appalled by child abuse, not being appalled about abortion or racism or oppression or sexual immorality, especially in our own lives. That's passive. Not just not doing what we should be doing, but actually not caring that that's going on in our lives and in our world. That's very passive. We're just okay with that.

Then I think even the passivity underneath all the passivity. You see in Genesis 3 (a friend pointed this out this week as he was going over my manuscript) a striking kind of passivity, where Adam is refusing to eat freely from all the trees and be fully satisfied in them. How passive is that? Think about it. After all, why are Adam and Eve standing there in front of that tree on that day in Genesis 3? Why was the Serpent's temptation so tempting?

Were they not satisfied in all God had lavished upon them? Were they not satisfied in every other tree in the garden? He gave them every other tree, and they're passively standing in front of the one tree he hasn't given them to enjoy for their benefit, which is really underneath all of our passivity: a lust for something more, a lust for something beyond what God has provided for us in himself. On and on we can go. All of these things are expressions of passivity.

To walk in selfish passivity as a man is to actively live against God's design for manhood. It's not just bad habits. Well, maybe it is, but that doesn't matter. It's passivity, and God says, "This is not what I created you for. I've designed you for a more rich and full life, something different." But it's not just passivity. If that's one end of the spectrum, maybe you can come over here. It's also selfish aggression that has marred manhood as well.

Look at verse 16. This is actually God talking to the woman. He says, "**I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be for your**

husband, and he shall rule over you." I don't know exactly what that means, but that is not good. He's going to rule over you.

That word *rule* there... Old Testament theologian E.J. Young said, "All was now changed, for the fall had taken place. Instead of the mild and tender love of Eden, the husband would now domineer over his rebellious wife. Over her he would become a despot [a tyrant]." Because of sin, headship is now inclined to ungodly aggression, to oppression, to domination. Instead of loving, serving, and protecting those around us, we men are now inclined to rule over them in a sinful way.

Surely this isn't hard to see. In many parts of the world, including our own, the role of the woman in marriage has been reduced to that of virtual slavery. I know it has taken some screwing with our fantasy football teams to actually wake us up to domestic abuse these days, but upwards of one in three women live in a house where there is abuse going on.

I'll just say if you're an abuser, God sees you. He knows, and right now, tonight, he is confronting you and telling you he's not pleased with you. He even tells you in other places in his Word that in the same way you treat his daughters, he's going to treat you. The omnipotent, all-powerful God of the universe, who sees everything. If you're here tonight and you're an abuser, verbally, physically, I don't care...

If you're abusing someone in your care, God is inviting you, because he's gracious, to repent of that, to stop that, to get help for that, and we want to help you. But you just need to know the God of the universe sees. If you're the abused, if you're being abused or have been abused, God sees you and loves you. Despite not being able to wrap your mind around how he could see this and know this and still love and care for you, I'm promising you he does.

You being here tonight... Me speaking is him telling you he loves you and wants to help you through his people. So if you'd be courageous enough to let us in on that, to let other women in our church walk with you and know you and care for you... I'm not promising you we'll care for you perfectly. We may not even know what to do or say, but we'll sit with you and do our best by God's grace. I'm so thankful you're here, and we'd love to talk with you after the service about this.

This is what happens in the heart of man now. We're inclined to sinful aggression. It's not just in marriage. You keep reading and see Genesis 4, the first brothers. One of them gets ruled by sin, and then it causes him to rule over his brother and kill him. Or even if you keep reading in the Bible, you

think about those God has given to care for his church. In Ezekiel 34, it talks about these shepherds who were horrible shepherds and were shepherding with force and harshness, it says.

You see this all through the Bible, and there are these extreme examples. Again, some of us live in that world where our examples would fit into that extreme category, but for some of us it's just the pornography we're looking at. We talked about that a few weeks ago. That is violent in nature. There's something behind that that is aggressive and domineering. You are using a human being to get something you want more than caring for, loving, serving, and protecting that human being.

Even *thoughtless criticism* is aggression. That's selfish, sinful aggression. You're using criticism or correction or you're nitpicking. You're just giving verbal and vocal displeasure to get other people to change and do what you want them to do. That's sinful and selfish aggression. *Withholding affection or attention when somebody fails you*. It seems really passive, but it's actually really aggressive, and sinfully, selfishly so.

Using your money or your power or whatever you have to control other people. That's sinfully and selfishly domineering. *Mocking or belittling or demeaning others so you can exalt yourself*. *Slandering or harming another person's reputation so you can get ahead*. The whole spectrum of *retaliation against others when we don't get our way*, from silent treatment to violent acts, is selfish aggression.

Sarcasm. Hello, can we just talk for a minute? I know it's our love language, but a lot of times what's behind sarcasm, other than a fear of intimacy, a false intimacy, especially with guys... We're afraid to get vulnerable, so we just make fun of each other, which sometimes is fun, but sometimes it's just us... We don't know how to be vulnerable, so we make fun of each other.

But sometimes it's veiled anger. I want to say this to you, whoever it is (mostly with those we live with and walk with most closely)... I'm going to say this to you and try to make something that's really angry funny, but I'm really angry, and that statement I'm making is really laced with pride and selfishness and a desire to belittle you and put you down. I'm sort of hiding behind the funniness, because I can, and because it's accepted in our culture. Sadly enough, it's accepted in the culture of many of our churches.

Obviously, *abandoning your wife or your children or those you have responsibility over*. That's a violent act in God's eyes. That's an aggressive thing. Then, even man's heart can be so twisted we

actually derive pleasure from *watching other people suffer or by inflicting pain on other people*. Again, that can be subtle or not subtle, but that's how much sin has entered in.

Take a breath. Selfish and sinful passivity and aggression are two of the most significant hurdles to males living as the men God created us to be. Again, we're still answering the question, "Where are all of the men?" Where we're struggling with this is where we're at. Many of us are trying to be godly, trying to do right before the Lord, but our hearts are filled with this, and we're trusting the Lord to put those things to death.

I would just ask you...*Where is the passivity or aggression in your life?* Brothers, where is it? Where does it come out most often? How does it work itself out? Which of these things are you most inclined to? I know it's going to be a mixture of all of them, but in your life right now, what has the Holy Spirit uncovered in your heart as I've been talking? Are you seeing what he has uncovered during this time as the selfish and sinful inclination of heart that it is, as the breach of actual manhood that it really is? Because that's what God wants to show you and reveal to you tonight.

The point is because of the fall, all of our hearts are inclined to selfish passivity and selfish aggression. If that's not bad enough, look at verse 17. What has such sin earned for the man? It has earned exactly what God said it would. It says in verse 17, "**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...'**"

Listen to this result. The ground God put under man's care in the garden as his source of joy and life becomes the source of his pain now. Creation is now being reversed because of sin. Then he says, "**...in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles...**" This is not healthy language. It's not encouraging. "**...it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face...**" Again, sweating. "**...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.**"

Get the picture here. Get the contrast from last week. Because of the sin in our hearts, men will now suffer lifelong toilsome labor, and then we'll die. That's not the way God made it. Death here is actually described as the reversal, the exact opposite of the creation process we read earlier. Instead of God breathing life *out* of the dust, now we're going backwards *to* the dust. That's the picture here. That's the contrast. This is the wage sin earns. It's the exact wage God warned against and about which the Serpent said, "That won't happen." Death.

Don't miss the other contrast in the picture of Genesis 1 and 2, that sin has so ravaged Adam he has gone from a vibrant, righteous prince over the kingdom in the garden of Eden to a broken and unrighteous farmer whose very meals are now spoiled by the fatigue he has to put out to get them. That is a devastating picture of what has happened.

So coming back to our original question of what has happened to manhood, this is what has happened. Sin is what has happened. When you combine men who have selfish inclinations of heart toward aggression and passivity... When you take that selfish man and put him in an environment that is thorns and thistles and work and devastation and wilderness and death, do you know what you get? Ugliness.

Don't miss the connection here. This is what sin has done to our hearts and this is what it has done to nature, and now we live with these sinful hearts in this post-Genesis 3 wilderness, and that's why we have what we have. That's why we look around and there's fatherlessness. That's why we look around and there's laziness. You can just go on and on and on.

This is what has happened, and this, friends, is a horrible picture, so horrible we should want to turn our eyes from the screen. But we can't, because this is where we live Monday morning. This is where we live Saturday nights after we leave this service. We live in labor and struggle through this Genesis 3 wilderness, sinful and selfish hearts, thorns, thistles, sweat, and death. The Scriptures say we're all groaning because of this.

Think about Romans 8. It talks about how even nature is groaning because it has been subjected to such futility. Human beings are groaning. We know this is not right. Even if you're not a Christian in here, you feel it. Even if you have toys and trinkets and seemingly have comfort... All of us are groaning under the weight of this. All of us feel this in our lives. All of us see this on the headlines if we'll watch them and internalize them.

All of us are groaning, and all of us are looking for a salvation from this wilderness. Every one of us. Or you should be. If God is being gracious, you're looking for salvation. I think we're all looking for rescue from this groaning. Our entire culture's concept of the good life is built on the pursuit of happiness, and what is happiness but nothing other than the dissolution of pain in our culture, the dissolution of this wilderness, the putting away of thorns and thistles.

"If I can get enough money and get my family organized enough and get *here* in my job, then the thorns will go away, then the sweat of the brow will go away, then death will go away." But we know better, don't we? Like a duck under water, though, we're turning and churning, trying to find salvation. We're looking for it in all of these different places. We're striving to keep the thorns and thistles at arm's length. We're trying to get back to Eden. We're trying to find something or someone to save us from this curse.

What are you looking to to save you? Who are you looking to to rescue you from this heart, from this groaning, from this sin that has separated you from God? The Scriptures say there's only one source of rescue from the sin that has alienated us from God and one another and the world and created this groaning. There's only one place to find rescue. Some of you are here tonight because you thought, "Maybe I'll come to church. Maybe there's something that will rescue me that none of these other things I've looked to..."

The answer is *yes*, there is. The Scripture says that to find our savior from this wilderness, to find our savior from this sin, we have to look to another garden in the Bible. We have to look to another encounter between a man and Satan. The man is known as the second Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ, Jesus of Nazareth. At the end of his perfect life, his life of living in perfect manhood, perfect headship, perfect love and submission and care and protection and service, we find Jesus Christ in another garden.

We find him in the garden of Gethsemane with sweat dropping off of his brow. He's resisting Satan. He's looking ahead to another tree, and he's entrusting his will to God in a way Adam didn't and you and I haven't. He's preparing to make all things right so that humanity and our entire world can be rescued from the sin that has devastated it and be restored in right relationship with God and be restored in our manhood. That's what we'll talk about next week.

Father, we thank you for how you have answered our prayers that we prayed 45 minutes ago. Not only have you given us clarity on what has gone wrong with manhood, but you have, God, I trust, by your Spirit in this room, uncovered in our hearts ways in which, as men and as women, we are walking in sin, giving ourselves over to selfishness in the form of passivity or aggression. Lord, now that you've been gracious to reveal that, I pray and ask by your Holy Spirit that you would lead us to repentance.

Thank you that you haven't left us alone in this wilderness. Thank you that you haven't left us alone in these thorns and thistles to look death in the face without any hope, God. Thank you that you've sent your Son. We pray now that we would look to him for hope and salvation and rescue from this groaning. In Jesus' name, amen.

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