

October 16th, 2016

—THE GOSPEL CHANGES EVERYTHING—
THE FALL

Genesis 3:1-7

If you are new to us this morning, please know that it is our normal practice to preach through the Bible book by book. However we did start a short 4 week series last week called “The Gospel Changes Everything.” **It is my conviction that Christians can believe the gospel, but fail to have a gospel-centered worldview.** This series is meant to address that problem.

Every worldview has to answer the same fundamental questions:

Creation: How did this universe begin? Where did it come from? What is it’s purpose?

Fall: What has gone wrong? Why is there evil and suffering? Is there a purpose for it?

Redemption: Is there an answer for this evil and suffering? How can individuals and the world be set right again?

Glory: Where is all of this going? How does this story finally end?

Last week we looked at creation. How did all this begin? Where did we come from? What is it’s purpose? That is where the Christian worldview must begin. As Nancey Pearcey has said “The Christian message does not begin with “accept Christ as your Savior”; it begins with “in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”¹

¹ Nancy Pearcey, *Total Truth: Liberating Christianity From Its Cultural Captivity*, (Wheaton, IL.,: Crossway, 2008), pg. 44

Upper Story vs. Lower Story

The reason why Christian worldview must begin here is *because* Christianity is not *merely* an account of how our souls are redeemed by Jesus Christ. Modern culture influenced by the Enlightenment, and Kant, and Darwin has sought to divide reality up into two stories: the upper story and the lower story. The upper story consists of personal preferences, and the lower story deals with scientific knowledge. Or we could say that the upper story deals with values and unverifiable religion, whereas the lower story deals with facts and verifiable knowledge. And because this is the cultural air that we breathe, we tend to adopt this same kind of worldview. Religion is for Sundays and for personal morality, but has nothing to do with science or art or music or mathematics or film.² Those things belong to the “real world,”—the lower story; whereas religion belongs the “ethereal world”—the upper story—pure subjectivity.

So our culture tells us “You can believe in your religion, so long as you keep it out of your work, and politics, and science etc. As long as you don’t bring your religion into the *world of facts*, then you are permitted to keep it.” This has created a **dualism** in our society divorcing the secular from the sacred. And we as the church need to resist this with all our might. As Francis Schaeffer has said:

“Christianity is not a series of truths in the plural, but rather truth spelled with a capital “T.” Truth about total reality, not just about religious things. Biblical Christianity is Truth concerning total reality—and the intellectual holding of that total Truth and then living in the light of that Truth.”³

² Francis Schaeffer has said “The basic problem of the Christians in this country for the last eighty years or so, in regard to society and in regard to government, is that they have seen things in bits and pieces instead of totals.” Francis Schaeffer, *A Christian Manifesto*, (Westchester, IL.: Crossway Books, 1981), pg. 17

³ Nancy Percy, *Total Truth: Liberating Christianity From Its Cultural Captivity*, (Wheaton, IL.: Crossway, 2009), pg. 15

Dualism and Monasticism

Christianity begins with the **creation** account. Last week we were exposed to Tertullian's quote: "What indeed has Athens to do with Jerusalem?"⁴ Or translated: 'What does the world have to do with the church?' Many of us have adopted this type of **dualism**—the world is bad, and the church is good. And this has made many Christians guilty or ashamed for pursuing their vocation outside of the church walls. Official church ministry has been seen as the real work of the kingdom, while secular work is seen as a necessary evil in order to put food on the table and financially support the work of missionaries.

This dualism further leads to **monasticism**—the view that the monks held that retreat from the world is the only path to the holy life. And so Christians begin to be shut up in the walls of their homes or in the walls of their church, and refuse to engage in culture, because out there is dirty and in here is clean. The lower story of the created order is bad, while the upper story is good.

The Cultural Mandate

But God does not view his creation as such. In the creation account, God said that creation is good, good, good...and very good. God rejoices over His creation! God is a world-affirming God.⁵ He has never called us to retreat from the world, but to advance on the world.⁶ We are to be world-affirming people. We are to imitate His creative genius in the world by fulfilling **the cultural mandate**. Genesis 1:28 says "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and

⁴ Michael Horton, *Where in the World is the Church?: A Christian View of Culture and Your Role In It*, (Phillipsburg, NJ.,: P & R Publishing, 2002), pg. 41

⁵ Even after the fall, the Scriptures still affirm creation as good (1 Tim. 4:1-5).

⁶ Jesus said in Matthew 5:13-16 "You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet. You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven." (cf. Acts 14:15-18)

subdue it,⁷ and have dominion.” In other words we are to develop the **natural order**—“...plant crops, build bridges, design computers, compose music;” and we are to advance the **social order**—“...build families, churches, schools, cities, governments, laws.”⁸

In other words, creativity and cultivation of the world is not optional. It’s part of our mandate.⁹ When we get saved, our calling is not *merely* to try and save souls, but also to carry out God’s mandate in culture.¹⁰ This is what it means to bear God’s image. For He does not merely save souls (special grace), He works among men,¹¹ preserving, developing, creating (common grace).¹²

⁷ “God made the world to need work...The word ‘subdue’ indicates that, though all God had made was good, it was still to a great degree undeveloped. God left creation with deep untapped potential for cultivation that people were to unlock through their labor.” Tim Keller, *Every Good Endeavor: Connecting Your Work to God’s Work*, (New York, NY.: Penguin Group, 2012), pg. 57, 36

⁸ Nancy Pearcey, *Total Truth: Liberating Christianity From Its Cultural Captivity*, (Wheaton, IL.: Crossway, 2008), pg. 47

⁹ “The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.” Genesis 2:15

¹⁰ “The earth had been completely unformed and empty; in the six-day process of development God had formed it and filled it—but not completely. People must now carry on the work of development: by being fruitful they feel it even more; by subduing it they must form it even more...as God’s representatives, [we] carry on where God left off. But this is now to be a human development of the earth. The human race will fill the earth with its own kind, and it will form the earth for its own kind. From now on the development of the created earth will be societal and cultural in nature...This pattern is found in all kinds of work. Farming takes the physical material of soil and seed and produces food. Music takes the physics of sound and rearranges it into something beautiful and thrilling that brings meaning to life. When we take fabric and make a piece of clothing, when we push a broom and clean up a room, when we use technology to harness the forces of electricity, when we take an unformed, naive human mind and teach it a subject, when we teach a couple how to resolve their relational disputes, when we take simple materials and turn them into a poignant work of art—we are continuing God’s word of forming, filling and subduing.” Tim Keller, *Every Good Endeavor: Connecting Your Work to God’s Work*, (New York, NY.: Penguin Group, 2012), pg. 59

¹¹ Matthew 5:45 “...be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.”

¹² Nancy Pearcey, *Total Truth: Liberating Christianity From Its Cultural Captivity*, (Wheaton, IL.: Crossway, 2008), pg. 48-49

The Fall

That is what we covered last week. This week we look to the second component of our grid. The fall. What has gone wrong? Why is there evil and suffering in the world? Imagine with me those first days in paradise.¹³ Adam and Eve were perfectly blessed, and perfectly at home in the world. Their marriage had zero conflicts. Adam was perfectly happy with his wife, and Eve was perfectly happy with her husband. Their labor in the garden was not mixed with frustration or sweat upon their brow, or thorns to prick them. They had no guilt or shame, no disease or death, no lust or longing. All fear and condemnation and perversion and danger were completely foreign to them.

In addition to the cultural mandate, God commanded them in 2:16-17 “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, *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.” There was nothing intrinsically wrong with this tree. It was part of the good creation that God made. But God set it apart in order to represent His ultimate authority over all things. God gave Adam and Eve authority over the earth to subdue it and have dominion. But this tree represented that their authority was to be under total subjection to God’s authority.

What happened? The serpent slithered into paradise and suggested that paradise was not so good unless they had final authority. Genesis 3:5 “For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” In other words, ‘God’s holding out on you... being your own authority is where real happiness is. This tree has the power to give you that. You won’t need Him anymore because you will be like him.’ Eve, being deceived, takes the fruit and eats it (1 Tim. 2:14). She then gives the fruit to her husband who although he was not deceived, received it in deliberate rebellion against God. And then the whole universe, not just Adam and Eve fell into darkness. This is what went wrong. Our first parents rebelled against

¹³ The Reformation Heritage KJV Study Bible, Ed. Joel Beeke, (Grand Rapids, MI.: Reformation Heritage Books, 2014), pg. 12

God. They sinned. And this sin is the reason why there is evil and suffering in the world.

The Big Idea...

The Fall corrupted the whole cosmos, yet the line separating good and evil passes not between the secular and sacred but through every human heart

- ☆ How Far is the Curse Found?
- ☆ What “World” Are We to Avoid?

I. How Far is the Curse Found?

Paradise Lost: Genesis 3:14-19 (Pew Bible...pg. 3)

“The LORD God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, **cursed** are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. [15] 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.”

[16] To the woman he said, “**I will surely multiply your pain** in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you.”

[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; in pain** you shall eat of it all the days of your life; [18] **thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you;** and you shall eat the plants of the field. [19] **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.**”

Remember we asking the question: how far is the curse found? In other words, what effect did the sin of Adam and Eve have?

Original Sin

The first effect the sin of Adam and Eve had is that it plunged the entire human race into sin. Adam and Eve did not act for themselves alone. Adam being the father of all humanity represented all of humanity. This was God's doing. He bound the entire human race to Adam in covenant. This is called federal headship.¹⁴

Romans 5:19 "For as **by the one man's disobedience** the many were *made* sinners" (cf. 1 Cor. 15:22)

We were *made* sinners *because* of Adam's disobedience.¹⁵ God made Adam the root of the entire human race, and as such whatever the root passes on it's nature to the fruit.¹⁶ It wouldn't be much different if your daughter asked you "Daddy, mommy, why am I an American?" 'Well because we are Americans.' Children are represented by their parents and are born with their advantages or disadvantages.¹⁷ And what is the disadvantage of being born as a sinner?

¹⁴ <https://carm.org/federal-headship>

¹⁵ Adam's sin was imputed to all of the human race. Meaning, Adam's sin was credited to our account. We are born into guilt and corruption before we ever actualize sin ourselves. Psalm 51:5 "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." <http://www.desiringgod.org/articles/what-is-the-biblical-evidence-for-the-imputation-of-adams-sin>

¹⁶ This is simply one of the consequences of authority: If a father is harsh, the whole family is unhappy; if a CEO is unethical, the whole company is likely to be corrupt." Nancy Pearcey, *Total Truth: Liberating Christianity From Its Cultural Captivity*, (Wheaton, IL.: Crossway, 2008), pg. 84

¹⁷ G.I. Williamson, *The Shorter Catechism: For Study Classes Vol. 1*, (Phillipsburg, NJ.: P & R Publishing, 1970), pg. 47

Romans 5:12 “Therefore, just as sin came into the world *through* one man, and death through sin, and *so death spread to all men* because all sinned—¹⁸

The reason why there is death in the world is because there is sin in the world. Death is an invasion into the good creation that God made. It is not part of the original creation. “The wages of sin is death.” (Romans 6:23) That’s what God threatened Adam in Genesis 2:16-17, that on the day that he ate of the fruit, he would surely die. And this death is first and foremost spiritual death. We were all born dead. That is what is wrong with the world. As spiritually still born human beings, we are not only guilty before a Most Holy God, but we are completely corrupted. Our minds are hostile to God (Romans 8:7-8); our affections are set on hating God (John 15:18); and our wills are bent on doing only evil continually (Genesis 6:5).

The Whole Cosmos

But human beings are not the only casualties of the fall. God says to Adam in Genesis 3:17 “Cursed is the ground because of you.” The entire cosmos suffers from mankind’s rebellion against the Triune God. Please turn with me to Romans 8:19-22 (Pew Bible pg. 944)

“For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. [20] **For the creation was subjected to futility**, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope [21] that the creation itself will be set free from its **bondage to corruption** and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. [22] For we know that **the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.**”

¹⁸ G.I. Williamson asks here: “Is it not true that all men are sinners? Is it not true that all men die (even little infants who seem so helpless and harmless)? If all men die and if death is the punishment for sin, how can anyone possibly deny that “all mankind” sinned in Adam “and fell with him in his first transgression.”? [reference to WSC 16] G.I. Williamson, *The Shorter Catechism: For Study Classes Vol. 1*, (Phillipsburg, NJ.,: P & R Publishing, 1970), pg. 55

I remember the blissful ignorance of going to the hospital for the birth of Josiah. I had never witnessed the birth of a child before. Monica's water broke at early in the morning on May 10th, 2001, just four months before September 11th. We packed up, went to the hospital and we were ready. Or so I thought. When Monica was in the early stages of labor in the maternity ward, I heard an unearthly and unnerving screaming from several rooms away down the hall. I wasn't ready for that. Bringing a new child into the world is a both a happy and horrifying thing. And it proved that way for Monica as well as she had to get a cesarean section. Josiah literally had to be cut from his mother's womb so that momma and child would not die.

And that is the picture of what all of creation has been subject to. Creation is groaning and in pain because of the fall. "The pains of childbirth" is one word in the Greek—*sün-ō-dē'-nō* (συνωδίνω)¹⁹, it means agony. Planet earth is in agony because of sin.²⁰ Hurricanes touch down in populated areas in agony. Floods devastates crops and communities in agony. Ebola consumes living flesh, famine greedily devours food shortages. Creation is in agony. How far does the curse spread? Everywhere. There is no part of creation (from the furthestest star to the closest subatomic particle) that is not spoiled, polluted, distorted, perverted, and corrupted by the fall. The fall wrecked the universe.

So then the question is: *how can we be world-affirming?* How can we affirm a world that has been so singularly ruined by sin? How can we affirm humanity that has and is in total rebellion against God?

¹⁹ <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongs=G4944&t=KJV>

²⁰ "It is as if it cried out, 'O sinful sin! I was freeborn and though under dominion, yet not under bondage. Once I served man freely but now from fear (Genesis 9:2)' Every creature which is under the power of man may say to him, 'I did nothing of myself to make me liable to bondage, but being your goods and chattels, I suffer a part of the penalty of your treason. If you had not sinned, I would not have suffered. But not I groan and wait to be delivered from the bondage of your corruption. O sinful sin!'" Ralph Venning, *The Sinfulness of Sin*, (Carlisle, PA.: The Banner of Truth Trust, Reprint 2008), pg. 139

II. What “World” Are We to Avoid?

Do not love the world

If we take the Bible seriously, last week’s sermon should make some of us feel very uncomfortable. My application point was that we should be worldly Christians—we should celebrate the world as God celebrates it, and we should cultivate it as God cultivates it.

And yet we have the corruption of the fall. And we have lots of verses that seem to teach a different outlook to the world.

John 18:36 “My kingdom is not of this *world*.”

Romans 12:2 “Do not be conformed to this *world*.”

James 1:27 “Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this... to keep oneself unstained from the *world*.”

James 4:4 “Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God?”²¹

And then perhaps the single weightiest text that speaks against the love of the world is in **1 John 2:15-16** (Pew Bible pg. 1021)

“**Do not love the world** or the things in **the world**. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. [16] For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world.”

Worldliness is sinfulness

How is the word “world” being used in this passage? He cannot mean physical matter, he cannot mean social institutions, he is not offering us a sacred/secular divide, between religious life and non-religious life. One of the main

²¹ Also consider these texts: Satan is the ruler of this world (John 16:11); Satan is the god of this world (2 Cor. 4:4); the whole world lies in the power of the evil one (1 John 5:19).

purposes of John's writing is to correct the gnostic heresy in his day. Which among other things promoted a **dualism** between the spiritual realm and the physical realm.²² No, John is using the word "world" here to be synonymous with "sinfulness"—that is the 'world system that is **opposed to God.**'²³ **Worldliness is sinfulness *not* the "secular world."**

v.16 helps us to see this. John tells us what he means by "world." v.16 "For all that is *in the world*—" (These are the things we are to avoid!)

- 1) "...the *desires* of the flesh." Meaning the "lust" of the flesh (NASB and KJV)²⁴ **Hedonism**²⁵— pleasure is the most dominant criterion for what is good. To love the world, therefore means that we live for sensual pleasure.
- 2) "...and the *desires* of the eyes." Meaning the "lust" of the eyes. **Materialism**— material possessions are to be considered above anything spiritual. To love the world, therefore means that we live for more and more stuff.
- 3) "...and the *pride* of life." Meaning boasting in one's self—any way of thinking that sees ourselves as superior to other people. To love the world, therefore, means that we live as self-reliant and self-righteous people looking down our noses at others we consider inferior to us.

²²John affirmed the goodness of the physical realm very emphatically in this letter against the gnostics who denied its goodness. His first words were emphatically physical: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us—that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us;" (1 John 1:1-3) Later John speaks about the necessity of confessing that Jesus Christ came in a physical form: "By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God." (1 John 4:2-3)

²³ ESV Study Bible App

²⁴ <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongs=G1939&t=NASB>

²⁵ or sensualism: "in philosophy, it refers to the ethical doctrine that feeling is the only criterion for what is good." <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sensualism>

That is the worldliness that John is telling us to avoid: **sinfulness**. “Do not love the world” *does not mean* ‘Do not celebrate creation,’ nor does it mean “stay out of the ‘secular world because that is dirty.’ It means ‘do not love sin.’

As Nancy Pearcey says

“Against the Greek conception,²⁶ we must insist that evil and disorder are not intrinsic in the material world but are caused by human sin, which takes God’s good creation and distorts it to evil purposes. When Adam fell, it was the result of a rebellious will, and not because he had a body...That’s why Paul can write, “Nothing is unclean in itself” (Romans 14:4). It becomes unclean only when sinners use it to express their rebellion against God. The line between good and evil is not drawn between one part of creation and another part, but runs through the human heart itself—in our own disposition to use the creation for good or for evil.”²⁷

Three major problems with getting the definition of worldliness wrong:

- 1) If our definition of worldliness is any part of the created order, then we are calling evil what God calls good. (Genesis 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31; 1 Tim. 4:4; Acts 10:15; Romans 14:14)

²⁶ Bavinck sheds some light here: “...Christianity has overcome both the contempt of nature and its deification. In paganism a human being does not stand in right relationship to God, and therefore not to the world either. Similarly, in pantheism and materialism the relation of human beings to nature is fundamentally corrupted. One moment man considers himself infinitely superior to nature and believes that it no longer has any secrets for him. The next moment he experiences nature as a dark and mysterious power that he does not understand, whose riddles he cannot solve, and from whose power he cannot free himself. Intellectualism and mysticism alternate. Unbelief makes way for superstition, and materialism turns into occultism. In nature and history he observes the unfathomability of the ways of God and the unsearchability of his judgments, but he does not despair, for all things are subject to the government of an omnipotent God and a gracious Father, and they will therefore work together for good to those who love God. Here, accordingly, there is room for love and admiration of nature, but all deification is excluded. Here a human being is placed in right relation to the world because he has been put in the right relation to God.” Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics: Vol. 2 God and Creation*, (Grand Rapids, MI.: Baker Academic, 2004), pg. 438

²⁷ Nancy Pearcey, *Total Truth: Liberating Christianity From Its Cultural Captivity*, (Wheaton, IL.: Crossway, 2008), pg. 84

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 “The line separating good and evil passes not through states, nor between classes, nor between political parties either, but right through every human heart.” Alexander Solzhenitsyn

- 2) If our definition of worldliness is any part of the created order, then we lose the incarnation. Jesus Christ took on flesh.
- 3) If our definition of worldliness is any part of the created order, then we get the gospel wrong. Because we will think that pleasing God means avoiding part of the material world. This places our righteousness in something else other than the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ.

If we get the definition of worldliness wrong we will dishonor God.

Worldliness is not outside of us

Listen to how Michael Horton puts it:

“This world is not the Christian’s enemy, then, *as the world*. In other words, it is not our humanness or the world in its essence that is the problem...*worldliness* is the disease of the soul that infects us when we begin to pattern our ideas, beliefs, methods, and lifestyles according to the world. Many of us grew up in churches where this “worldliness” was associated with secular callings, financial success, and dancing, drinking, smoking, or hanging around people and places where these activities took place. This is not—emphatically, *not*—the worldliness described by Scripture. We become worldly when “Phil Donahue” pep talks replace sermons, worship is transformed for market-driven consumerism, and therapeutic or political categories begin to replace the solid biblical emphasis in our churches. We become worldly when obsessions with “practical” issues replace well-informed discipleship and when we begin to think that visible popularity and numerical success are the measures of ministry. It is quite possible to be corrupted by worldliness even while we are safely tucked away in the Christian ghetto. Our Christian music, literature, schools, broadcasting, and churches can themselves be carriers of the virus of worldliness without ever having to bother with the world.”²⁸

The virus of worldliness is within us. We carry the world within our hearts. The problem is not out there, the problem is in here. As one pastor has said: **“Separation from the world is based on orientation not on location.”**²⁹ Meaning the line separating good and evil passes not between the secular and

²⁸ Michael Horton, *Where in the World is the Church?: A Christian View of Culture and Your Role In It*, (Phillipsburg, NJ.: P & R Publishing, 2002), pg. 179

²⁹ R.W. Glenn from his sermon series: “The Gospel and the Word: Part 2-Fall”

sacred but through every human heart. If we think that the line separating good and evil runs between the secular and the sacred then what will we do? We'll become Protestant Monastics and retreat from culture. And what happens then? Culture descends into darkness and decay. Why? Because the church was called to be salt and light (Matthew 5:13-16). The devil would love for us to believe that the Christian Ghetto has protected us from worldliness. Have we bought into the lie that if you just stay clean from those dirty pagans out there that we are not worldly? Ha! Worldliness has infected us from birth: it's called sin. Which means wherever we go, worldliness is right there. Kissing our children goodnight, sleeping with our wife or husband, reading our Bible, going to church, praying, doing good works. Avoiding the world is not the answer to our sin problem. Turning to Jesus Christ is the answer to our sin problem.

Application

Our Doctrine (Apologia): Creation is good in essence but fallen in nature

As we consider our grid of creation, fall, redemption, glory, we need to recognize that it is the norm to get these elements out of balance. Historically, various movements have tended towards one of these elements emphasizing it, while underemphasizing the other. If our emphasis on the fall overshadows that of creation or redemption, our outlook could be very bleak and pessimistic. Or if we limit the extent of the fall, by smuggling the goodness of creation into man's fallen nature, it can open the way for man to be his own savior, therefore undervaluing the redemption of Christ.³⁰

³⁰ For example in the case of those traditions that are not Reformed.

I think our tendency is to emphasize the fall, such that it over shadows the goodness of God's creation. Nancy Pearcey comments: "Consider the typical evangelistic message: "You're a sinner, you need to be saved." What could be wrong with that? Of course, it's true that we are sinners, but notice that the message starts with the Fall instead of Creation. By beginning with the theme of sin, it implies that our essential identity consists in being guilty sinners, deserving divine punishment."³¹

The worldview glasses that we wear affects the way we interact with both our Savior and the world. If our grid of creation, fall, redemption, glory is out of balance our Christian witness will be out of balance. If our go-to starting position is to emphasize the fall, whether it is to our children or neighbors or co-workers, we will come across as overly negative on God's world. We should not be afraid to emphasize the goodness of creation and the goodness of the imago dei to the lost and dying world. The Apostle Paul wasn't. When he evangelized the Greek philosophers in Acts 17, he started with the goodness of creation. Acts 17:24 "The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth...[v.26] he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth...[v.28] For we are indeed his offspring." Now Paul is going to go on to call them to repentance (v.30), but that is not until he has laid the foundation that God made everything in the beginning as good so that men "...should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us," (v.27)

We are not being unfaithful if we emphasize the goodness of creation and the goodness of the imago dei in others. In fact, we are being unfaithful if we do not.

Our Duty (Ethics): Be world affirming and world denying

There is a **design** and a **distortion** to everything. We must affirm the design without denying the distortion. As one pastor, R.W. Glenn has said:

³¹ Nancy Pearcey, *Total Truth: Liberating Christianity From Its Cultural Captivity*, (Wheaton, IL.: Crossway, 2008), pg. 84

“Prostitution does not erase the goodness of human sexuality. Political tyranny does not wipe out the divinely ordered institution of government. Bad art does not obliterate the goodness of art itself. Our call is to recognize the good design and the bad direction of everything in the universe. We have to say yes and no to everything that exists. Not yes or no, but yes AND no.”³²

Let’s test this out. Think about the difference between two very different aspects of popular culture (at least a generation ago). Little House on the Prairie vs. AC/DC’s Highway to Hell. What do those two things have in common? More than you think. However there is design and distortion in both. AC/DC has designs of God’s creativity and order and beauty woven, we find the distortion in their lyrics. It offers a Christ-less Hedonism as the answer for life’s problems. Sensual pleasure is the answer to life’s problems. On the other hand we have Little House on the Prairie, which instead offers a Christ-less Moralism was the answer for life’s problems. Yes there are aspects of that show that are beautiful and touching as part of God’s design of creation. But the underlying emphasis is that the path to be a better person is through moralism and not through Christ. There is a design and distortion in both.

Both of these offer an answer to the fall. And we will adopt a functional false gospel if we draw the line in the wrong place.

Our Delight (Doxology): The Fall was designed to show mercy

What was the purpose of the fall? Last week we saw that creation was the theater for Christ’s glory. Colossians 1:16 says that “...all things were created through him and **for him.**” Meaning Jesus Christ is the goal of creation. Creation was conceived in the heart of God *so that* Jesus Christ might come upon the earth and reveal who God is to us.

What about the fall? Is there an ultimate purpose to the fall? Much of evangelicalism would say that the fall happened ultimately because God didn’t make robots and man simply exercised his free will. But this answer is intellectually unsatisfying. We are talking about the Sovereign God of the

³² R.W. Glenn from his sermon series: “The Gospel and the Word: Part 2-Fall”

universe who accounts all the inhabitants of earth as nothing, who does according to his will among the host of heaven, whom none can stay his hand or say to him, “What have you done?” (Daniel 4:35) If He is not God over our wills, He is not God.

So then why the fall? If God could have stopped it, if He could have prevented the pain and suffering and sin that has come into this world, then why didn't He? This is a huge worldview question.

Here's what Paul said in Romans 11:32 (Pew Bible pg. 947—quick context) **“For God has consigned** (shut in, bound, enclosed) **all to disobedience** (the fall), *that* (purpose statement) **he may have mercy on all.** (to both Jew and Gentile alike)” In other words, God had a design to the fall. It wasn't an accident. God wrote it in to the story so that the mercy of Jesus Christ saving guilty and condemned sinners would be on display.

Think of Victor Hugo's classic *Les Misérables* (lay mis er ra blah). Jean Valjean, a hardened and unrepentant criminal, is released from a French prison at the beginning of his novel. He was a thief, and if he were to break the law again, he would go back to prison for life. Upon release he is shown kindness by one Bishop—Myriel. Myriel takes him in and feeds him and gives him shelter. Jean Valjean wakes up in the night and steals the Bishops silverware and leaves. “When the police capture Valjean, Myriel pretends that he has given the silverware to Valjean and presses him to take two silver candlesticks as well, as if he had forgotten to take them. The police accept his explanation and leave. Myriel tells Valjean that his life has been spared for God.”³³

This was the absolute pivotal point in Hugo's masterpiece. Hugo wrote in Jean Valjean as a criminal that Bishop Myriel might show him mercy.

And that is the purpose of the fall. God wrote it into this story so that the mercy of Jesus Christ dying on the cross for sinners might be displayed for all the universe. **Romans 5:6-9** “For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—but God shows

³³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Les_Misérables#Volume_V_.E2.80.93_Jean_Valjean

his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.” Beloved the fall was fashioned so that you could see the love that Jesus Christ has for sinners like you and me.