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Message: The Fall and the Battle of the Sexes

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Genesis 3

It was this past June that marked the 50th anniversary of the passing of federal legislation called Title IX, which was part of a sweeping education pack that President Nixon signed into law that established that there would be gender equality across the board. We hear a lot about it of course in the area of sports, but it was true in any area that there would be equality of treatment regardless of gender. It is actually next September 23 of 2023 that we have the 50th anniversary of the battle of the sexes that you might remember between Billie Jean King, who was a professional tennis player age 29, and a guy named Bobby Riggs, who was a former professional tennis player age 55 at the time. He was also a male chauvinist. Bobby Riggs said quite loudly and proudly that he could defeat any tennis woman in the world. So of course, some entrepreneurial type guy got this match together that made him a whole bunch of money and Bobby Riggs found out that that wasn't true because he lost 6-4, 6-3, 6-3 and had to eat his words because Billie Jean King beat him. Where do chauvinistic attitudes come from? Or for that matter, where does the idea of "I am woman, hear me roar" come from? If you're too young to even know what that means, you can ask your parents or grandparents what that refers to.

The last time we saw our first couple, they were in the garden and they were in paradise. In fact, that last verse of the second chapter of Genesis said, "And the man and his wife were both naked and they were not ashamed." They were truly living in paradise. But it all changed in Genesis chapter 3, which is where we go this morning. We see that God's plan for husbands and wives is to complement each other. It is to complete each other. We're not in competition with each other. We're not to be in any way against each other. We're pulling on the same rope together.

But before we jump into Genesis 3, let's go back and establish what we've seen in Genesis 1 and 2. To do that, I want to just have us look briefly at this matter of

Genesis and man and woman before the fall. We'll look at a couple of things and the first one comes to us in Genesis chapter 1. It is this principle that we establish and lay as the foundation, or revisit it if you will, as a foundation and that is that we are all created equal in God's eyes. We're created equal in God's eyes and in God's image. That was the whole point of chapter 1:27. "God created man in His own image. In the image of God He created him. Male and female He created them." It couldn't be any more clear. That statement of equality that God makes.

The word "man" there is the generic word for mankind, for humanity, for human beings. Male and female in His image and likeness. He says the same thing in chapter 5 and verse 1: "This is the book of the generations of Adam. When God created man, He made him in the likeness of God. Male and female He created them and He blessed them and named them man when they were created." Different from all of the rest of creation is this unique stamping on men and women, male and female, this uniqueness of being made in the image of God. We alone out of all of God's creation bear that image and likeness. It speaks to our equality. What is the significance of that? What is the meaning of that then in terms of what we're looking at?

I want you to see three things that flow out of that first statement of equality between men and women. The first one is there is equality in personhood. There's equality in personhood. Whatever the differences there are between men and women, and I believe there are differences. Men are from Mars and women are from Venus. We know that. We know there are differences, but whatever those differences may be, it has nothing to do with personhood and it has nothing to do with equality. That is our biblical worldview. Our biblical worldview says that in the eyes of God, men and women should be seen as absolutely equal. We establish this first in terms of equality of personhood.

How sad is it to look all around the world in so many different cultures and see that women are depreciated and women are devalued. It is literally all around the world in so many cultures. Jesus stepped in to the 1st century and He brought a completely different perspective about how He interacted with and how He treated women. He did so with beauty and He did so with dignity. He clearly was speaking to and establishing

the fact that this is a biblical, Christ-centered worldview to see men and women as being totally equal in the eyes of God and sharing in equality of personhood.

In doing that, Jesus establishes secondly that there's equality of dignity. Jesus interacted with the women of His day and did so with great dignity. He did so because in Genesis 1 there is this stamp on humanity, male and female, that marks us as image bearers of God. We honor each other. We complement each other. We complete each other. There is mutual respect. There's harmony. There's complementarity. There's not competition between men and women in this regard. When we read in Genesis 2:18 and God saw Adam. God saw Adam and saw that he was alone and God said it's not good. I will make for him a helper who will complement, who will complete him. That was God's vision from the beginning. It spoke to equality that exists between men and women. It speaks to equality of personhood and it speaks to the matter of dignity in the eyes of God.

Thirdly, there's equality of destiny. There's equality of destiny. When we come to faith in Christ, the Bible describes us together as being fellow heirs of God, speaking of men and women, male and female. There is absolute total equality of destiny. When Paul writes in Galatians 3 and he says there is neither male nor female, there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor slave. He's not diminishing the distinctions between those. He is saying though that there is equality in terms of their destiny. He is speaking to the fact that our destination is the same glory. Our destination is the same enjoyment of God's presence and the pleasure that that will involve. The basis of unity before God is that there is no sense of superiority or inferiority. There's no place for that in a Christian marriage. There is no place for that in a Christian marriage. A Christian marriage should reflect this biblical worldview. That's Genesis 1. In Genesis 1, God marks the stamps, this idea of equality between men and women.

Now the second thing we see in Genesis 2 is that we're created equal but we're created different. We are created equal but we're created different. Within equality there are in fact special responsibilities I believe that the Bible teaches that God has given to man. There are special responsibilities that God has given to women. We call this complementarity. In complementarity, it simply is to say yes, there is equality, but equality does not demand sameness. That is why in Galatians 3, when Paul says there

is neither male nor female, some people pull that out of its context and say see, here it is. There are no differences at all. That clearly wasn't Paul's point because there are differences between men and women. There are differences between Jews and Greeks and there are differences between bond and free. But he was saying in Christ, as He sees us, there is no distinction. When we talk about complementarity, we're saying yes, there's equality, but that equality does not demand that there is sameness in all of these areas.

Now the other side of that position is something called egalitarianism. We've talked about these things many times in the past. Egalitarianism says yes, there is equality, but there is sameness. There are no distinctions, that God had given any special responsibilities to man. He hasn't given any special responsibilities to women. There are no gender roles in the Scripture. When you think in terms of how does a home function, how does a marriage function, there are no distinctions in the eyes of God. When you think about ministry in the church, there are no distinctions between genders. Men can do anything and women can do anything. That's where you end up if you're an egalitarian. Our church believes that the Bible teaches complementarity, that there is equality but there are differences in assignments that God has given to us.

When we look at it from that standpoint, how is that established in Genesis 2? It was established in Genesis 2 in at least three ways. First of all, by the very fact that man was created first. When you look at Genesis 2 and verse 7, here is what God tells us with regard to the creation of man: "Then the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground and He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life." Man is created first. You read later on in the chapter all the way to verse 21: "So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man and while he slept He took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh and God took the rib and He fashioned a woman." When you read the text and you see the flow and the priority and the way in which this is explained to us, then obviously man was created first. Paul says the very same thing in 1 Timothy 2:13: Man was created first, then God created the woman.

Let me ask you this. Why did He do it this way? Why didn't God create Adam and Eve simultaneously? Why didn't God create the woman out of the same clay that He created the man? Why do we have a difference in order of the creative work? Why do

we have a difference in the very means by which God created the man and the woman? Here's my further question. Wouldn't there be a greater sense of equality if God had done it exactly the same? and you say what? Silence in a hundred different languages. Not a word. Would there be greater equality if God had created the man and the woman simultaneously in the exact same way at the exact same time? I thank you for shouting no. There would be no greater equality. Why not? Because God has already established the equality principle in Genesis 1:27. He's already told us what He has done in creating the man and the woman, that He has done so in such a way that each of them equally bear the image and likeness of God. So no, it would not strengthen the argument. How can you strengthen the argument more so than the clear statement in Scripture that there is equality in the eyes of God in terms of how he has established this? In chapter 2, the focus is on relationship. and that's why in this matter we have this distinction.

Secondly, we notice as we read Genesis 2 man was given the primary responsibility for moral life in the garden. He's not given the only responsibility. It's a responsibility that is going to be shared but he is given the primary responsibility. Before the woman was created in verse 16, what did God say? "And the Lord God commanded the man saying, 'You may surely eat of every tree of the garden.'" Before Eve is even created, God has charged Adam with the primary moral responsibility for the garden. He has given to Adam this charge and this responsibility. He is to lead in this regard. He shares it with Eve, but he is to initiate. He is to lead. He is to protect.

Now that point is confirmed when you look at the third point and that is that man bears primary accountability for the failure. In this divine order, man is created first. In that scenario, man is charged with the primary responsibility for maintaining, protecting, and keeping the moral order in the garden before the woman is even created. Then we see that borne out in this third point is that man bears primary accountability for the failure. After the moral pattern has been broken by Adam and Eve, God came calling. God came calling in chapter 3 as we're going to see more of this in just a little bit. But even though Eve had eaten of the tree of the garden first, who is it that God calls out to? Look at chapter 3 verse 9: "But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, 'Where are you?'" Yeah, it's the man. Verse 11. "He said, 'Who told you that you were naked?'"

Why does God come to the man first? Why does God come to Adam first? Because of point two. God had given to Adam primary accountability for moral life in the garden. That being the case, when they disobeyed, God came to the one that He had charged this responsibility to. Now make no mistake. Eve is just as responsible, as we're going to see, for her choice, for her sin. It's the very same thing today. Men, you are charged with the responsibility, irrespective of what your wife does. Her choices do not change your command to obey God. Ladies, whatever your husband does, it does not change your accountability and your responsibility to walk in obedience to God. It doesn't change that, but clearly there is accountability here that is represented. God comes to Adam first. He had been given the moral and spiritual responsibility for maintaining a moral order in the garden. This was God's plan. This is His plan before the fall. How did it work out?

Let's look then at the second part of our outline. Genesis man and woman after the fall. We've already gotten a glimpse, but this will bring us into the text and the account of the fall in Genesis 3. We notice first of all that Satan spoke to the woman and not the man. Genesis 3:1. "Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made." Before we look into these details, I want you to see when you look back at chapter 2 in verse 25, that's really a bridge verse into the third chapter. Not just because it's the last verse of the chapter, but for other reasons as we'll see. This is a place where the chapter break doesn't let us see the flow maybe in the way that it would if we didn't have this chapter break. When we read in that 25th verse "and the man and his wife were both naked and they were not ashamed", and then we go to chapter 3 verse 1 "now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field", we don't see in the English text that there are two words that are a word play against each other. The word "naked" and the word "crafty" or shrewd are from the same basic Hebrew root word. Clearly, the Holy Spirit as He inspires Moses to write these words, wanted us to see something that is connecting these two verses together, and these two concepts together in such a way that there's something happening here both in terms of what is pictured in nakedness, which as we said last week is the beauty and the glory and the mystery of this relationship. Then, stepping into that is the serpent who is more crafty. He's been uncovered. His shrewdness has been uncovered. His

shrewdness is laid bare and we see it as it is exposed. In this picture, we have this idea then of this bridge verse that takes us into this 3rd chapter and the work that the serpent is doing.

He attacks Adam and Eve at the heart of their relationship. That's the point that the author is wanting us to see here. Marriage at its best, chapter 2 verse 25, is now under assault in chapter 3 verse 1 at its very heart and its very core, at the very thing that God has established within this marriage relationship. That's why when we read: "Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, 'Did God actually say you shall not eat of any tree in the garden?'" why would he approach the woman? Why would he come to the woman first? Why would he want to make her the spokesperson for what's happening in the garden? Because, of course, he wants to attack fundamentally this relationship that God has established. The answer to the question why speak to the woman is not because she would be easier to deceive than the man. That's not the answer. The answer is not she would be more likely to be persuaded or she's more gullible. That's not the answer. The Scriptures never indicate anything like that to us at all. It is in fact true that if God had charged Eve with being the primary bearer of responsibility and accountability then Satan most certainly would've come to Adam first. That's what's under assault here. That is what is under attack here. It is the very design that God has created within the context of the marriage relationship. Satan attacks that first. He draws the woman into this conversation so that she becomes the spokesperson, so that she becomes the guardian, so that she steps into the role that had not been given to her.

Notice how he does it. He does it by questioning the word of God. He does it by questioning the goodness of God. What does Satan so consistently do in our life today? What does he do in attacking marriages today? What does he do in attacking the walk with God, whether you're married or single? He speaks lies to us about the truthfulness of the word of God, that it is somehow hindering who we could be. It's somehow limiting us, if we were just free from the constraints that God has put upon us. It's the same thing over and over, undermining the goodness of God towards us. The master deceiver is always at work. These are the very things that go on in marriages today, when

instead of understanding that we're to complement and complete each other, we get into a contest of competing against each other.

Notice secondly, Adam was with Eve the whole time. Adam was with Eve the whole time. The serpent was talking to Eve and Adam was right there. We know this because in verses 1 through 5 of Genesis 3, every time you see the word "you" it's in the plural. God is saying you together, you Adam and Eve. Look at verse 2: "He said to the woman, 'Did God actually say you (plural) shall not eat of any tree in the garden.?'"

Verse 2: "And the woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat of the tree of the fruit in the garden but God said you...'" Every time you see the word "you" in verses 1 through 5, it's plural because He is speaking of them collectively together. Adam is standing right there. We know that because look at verse 6: "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. She gave some to her husband who was there with her." She didn't have to say this is an interesting proposition. I need to go get Adam. Where is that guy anyway? Adam didn't walk up and say what's going on here, Eve? Are you having a conversation with the serpent? No, he was there the entire time. He was listening as the serpent was speaking. Eve was speaking for her husband. She was presuming to step into the role that God had given to Adam as guardian, protector of the moral order in the garden.

Notice thirdly that both of them sinned against God. Adam and Eve both sinned against God. They both distrusted His goodness. They both rejected His work. They both in effect declared their independence from God. When they took the fruit, that's what they were doing. They were declaring their independence from God. We know better, and we do the same thing every day when we sin. We tell God we don't really need Him and we know better. The principle that comes to us time and again in Scripture is you can never find happiness in disobeying God's word. You can never achieve happiness in disobedience to the word of God. "But I ...". You can never achieve happiness in disobedience to God's Word. "But you don't know about..." You can never achieve happiness when you step out of obedience to the word of God.

Let's look at the consequences of the fall. What happens? The first thing that happens is that God disapproves of the eating of the fruit obviously, but also of the way

that they related to each other. He disapproved of the eating of the fruit and the way the man and the woman related to each other. Now we look at chapter 3 and verse 9: "But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, 'Where are you?'" Verse 11: "He said, 'Who told you that you were naked?'" Now the word "you" is no longer plural. The word "you" is singular. It's you, Adam, that I am addressing. It's you that have been given this responsibility. 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 that you shall not eat..." It is in this regard a corruption of God's design. It's a corruption of God's design. That's what happened here. God's intent was one way. Adam and Eve chose another way. It was Adam's responsibility to lead. It was Adam's responsibility to protect, to guard. Eve was to share in that, of course. But they were to be not only a team but to realize that Adam was given the responsibility to lead. Apart from obedience to God's word, Adam stood there and did nothing. He did nothing. He listened silently. He acted with passive detachment to everything that was happening in front of him.

Eve steps in and begins to act as a spokesperson, the head of this relationship, and Adam assumes the role of the helper. The serpent stepped in at the core relationship that God has established. When you look at the 16th verse: "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.'" your desire shall be contrary. That is, you're going to want to resist your husband's leadership. This is the part of the consequence that God brings judgment on their relationship because of their sin, and a part of that, as he describes it to Eve and to women in the generations to come, because now they possess a sin nature, they are going to resist the leadership of their husband.

The second part of that it says "that he will rule over you." The man, now possessing a sinful nature, is going to choose to act in a way that is domineering and seeing his wife as something less than equal to him. This is why we call it the battle of the sexes. You might ask: How can you be sure that's what that verse means? When you look at chapter 4 verse 7, you have the same exact words, only this time it's speaking of Cain after he had killed Abel. Look at the 7th verse of chapter 4: "If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. It's

desire is contrary to you, but you must rule over it.” Those are the exact same two Hebrew words. Describe the need that we would have to resist and battle back against sin. We have nothing less than a picture of conflict and rebellion against God. Two people who now instead of complementing and completing each other are destined to be competing and exploiting each other.

Notice the second thing that they do or is a part of this disruption of their relationship. There is the blaming of others and avoiding all responsibility. They blame others and avoid responsibility. Adam blames God and he blames Eve. We see that in the 12th verse: “The man said, ‘The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me fruit.’” God, you gave me this woman so I can blame her, but I'm also blaming You because You gave her to me. Adam, instead of bearing the responsibility, blames God and he blames Eve. Eve blames the serpent. Verse 13. “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.’” Of course, the serpent doesn't even have a leg to stand on. We're still following the same pattern today, rather than accepting responsibility.

What would have happened if when God came to Adam, and He came to him first, what might've happened if Adam had said God, I take full responsibility. I have disobeyed Your law. I have disobeyed Your word. I have offended Your holiness. I have failed to do the very thing that You called me to do. But instead, he deflects any personal responsibility, and he has the audacity to blame God and to blame the woman that God has provided for him.

Secondly, we see then that Satan continues this assault. Satan continues his assault on God's pattern right up to today. This is the very reality that we live in. His goal for every marriage is to circumvent God's will, plan, and design for that marriage. He is actively working against you that are married every day of your life. Part of what we have to wake up to is the fact that we are in this spiritual battle because Satan has not changed his tactic at all. He is still doing everything that he can to get your eyes off of the opportunity to complete and complement each other, and instead to constantly be in competition with each other, and to exploit each other, to use each other. He pulls men towards either domination and anger and abuse, or he pulls them towards passive disinterest. If you're a married man this morning, you know Adam. That's what you've

experienced and you've faced. Some of you yield to the sin of trying to dominate and run your home with the iron will authority. Others of you disappear and become passive and inactive and uninvolved. It's right here. This is why. To the women, to wives, he pushes towards assertiveness, leadership, and taking charge in ways that God never intended. It certainly doesn't mean that a woman can never be assertive, have leadership, and take charge of things, but there are places and times when that is not to be the case and we'll step into that hopefully, Lord willing, when we put forward what I hope will be a vision for what God intends for a godly wife next Sunday. Then we'll hopefully do the same for the men on the 24th. God's plan for husbands and wives is that we truly complement and complete each other, not that we compete against each other.

What do we take away? I would say to you this morning based on Genesis 1, 2, and 3, the key to a thriving marriage is found right here before us. It is a willingness to face and deal honestly with the problem of our own sinfulness. Our own sinfulness. We have to own our own sinfulness. I really believe that one of the purposes that God intends for every one of our marriages is what I said in that opening session is that our marriage is to be viewed as a refining process. This is literally what God uses our marriage for. At least one of the things that He does is He pulls back the curtain and He exposes the ugliness of our self-centeredness. He exposes our utter sinfulness before him and before our spouse. Then we have a choice at that point. We can choose to leave ourselves situated on the throne, or we can replace self and rightfully put God and Christ at the center and on that throne. We get that opportunity literally every day of our married life because every day the sin of selfishness and self-centeredness presents itself in some form or another – through words spoken, attitudes displayed, actions taken. God is giving us that opportunity every day to say God, I own this sin. I want to be honest before You. these failures are mine. Not my spouse's, not my husband's, not my wife's. You are dealing with me and You want to deal with me irrespective of what that person is doing. You have committed to make me more like Christ every day. That is what God is doing. If we would view our marriage that way, it would be transformative. If we would step back from the need to win, we would realize that the offense of exploitation and selfishness that we so easily expose to each other is not

what God would have. Thomas Watson said, "Until sin be bitter, Christ will not be sweet." What about this? Until sin be bitter, our marriages will never be better. That's where we have to be. Until sin be bitter to us, our marriages will never be better. Let's invite God into the mess of our lives, into the mess of our marriages. Let's ask Him to change and transform us.

This just brings us right back to the gospel because we can't do it apart from the gospel. We can only do it as we acknowledge our need that everyone of us have for a Savior. That savior is of course Jesus Christ who died on the cross for our sins. If we will but confess and acknowledge our own sinfulness and that what Jesus did is enough, God says He gives us new life. He gives us eternal life. He gives us the gift of life. We invite you to do that today.

Let's pray. Father, God thank You for Your commitment to the marriages of Covenant Community Church. Thank You for the commitment to each person in this room, whether single or married. Thank You that You have committed Yourself by Your Spirit, by Your word, by Your truth, by Your people to build into our lives the picture of this glorious mystery of Christ in us, the hope of glory. Father to that end we pray. I ask that You would infuse into every marriage a sense of hope, because that's what Christ brings to every marriage. That's what the gospel brings to every marriage. Father, do that work this morning in our lives. Open hearts to understand the glory of the gospel even now. Father, that someone might invite and trust Jesus as their Savior even now. We pray in Jesus name, amen.