

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

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SPEAKER

Brian Frost

SERIES

Did God Really Say?

PART

1

TITLE

Spiritual Faultlines

SCRIPTURE

Genesis 3:1-6



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Well, it's good to see you, Providence family. Hope you have had a really good start to the year a week in, and if you are a guest with us, we're really glad that you've joined us. I hope this time will be encouraging to you. If you have a Bible in your hand, if you would turn with me to the Book of Genesis and to the third chapter. We are going to start a new series this morning. It's called Did God Really Say? And it starts in the early parts of the Bible.

Over the next eight weeks, we're going to examine God's designs for human flourishing. What did he create? Why did he create, and how did he create, and how did he tell us to live in His world? In addition to these designs, we're going to look at many of the confusions that exist in very specific areas, such as authority. Next week, the sanctity of human life. Following week will be on race, gender, sexuality, personal responsibility, justice, and salvation.

In each one of these, when we're looking at God's design and we're looking at our confusion and brokenness, we're also going to look at God's path for restoration. Every sermon requires precision. When we're dealing with the Word of God, which is the authority over all of life, and we're dealing with the souls of people, our hearts, our lives, people created in His image, we're talking about two of the most significant eternal realities in all the world. And so to be flippant with these things would be absolutely foolish. So we never try to be more precise in one kind of sermon than another. However, there are times to where precision is needed in an extra way, only in the sense that there's certain words, there's certain phrases that are borrowed and used by different ideologies, and it's important to know what we mean when someone says a certain word or phrase.

For that reason, the series ... There's a little place on our website. It's pray.org/say. What you're going to find there is not only several articles ... Actually there's one article that you're going to find there right now, but there's going to be more that'll be packed in there. What you're also going to find there is all of the sermons. So if you want to actually follow along with my notes, even this morning as we're doing that, you can look there and you can find a sermon there that's called Spiritual Fault Lines.

Let me pray for us. Father in heaven, we believe you to be true, and we believe your Word is true, and as the people who have been redeemed by Jesus Christ and who come to this place to worship you and to seek to grow and learn and understand how to live in your world, we confess to you that everywhere we see, we see brokenness, but not nearly the intensity with which you see, for you see all people in all places at the same time. We believe your Word is true when it says that there is social and cultural collapse that takes place when there is a famine of your Word in the land. And so we care about what you said. We want to know what you have said.

As our creator, we want to know what you have said to us that is true and right and fitting and excellent, noble, excellent, and praiseworthy. And so I pray, God, that you would be gracious, that you would help us to believe and see wonderful things in your Word, and that in doing so, you would change our heart and en-

able us to experience a restoration that will allow us to flourish again. And we pray all of this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Imagine a perfect world that's designed by a perfect architect, a world that has no guilt or shame, a world that has no anxiety, no pain, no physical sickness, no mental sickness. Imagine a world where there's no fear and no funerals, a world where everything was created to function in harmony. This is the world that God created and designed. For a period of time, although it was very short, the first man and woman, they enjoyed God in each other with perfect peace. They enjoyed unbroken love. They enjoyed satisfying work. They enjoyed and appreciated each other's created differences. Within the clear boundaries that God gave for their protection, communicated for their good, and they were in alignment with His holiness and His justice, the man and woman lived in perfect peace.

And then after what we read in Isaiah 14 and Revelation 12, a failed attempt to usurp God's throne led an archangel named Lucifer, also called Satan, to be cast out of heaven. And he came into this perfect world that God created in the form of a snake, and he did so with intentions to dishonor God and to destroy everyone who was created in the image of God. This is what we read in Genesis chapter three, starting in verse one. "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?' 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'll be like God, knowing good and evil.' So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food and that it was a delight to the eyes and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her and he ate."

When Jesus Christ came to the earth, he spoke of Satan and he gave categories of his intentions, purposes, and schemes. In John 8:44, Jesus said of Satan, "He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies." So we learned here at least two things. First is the Satan's motive was to kill. He desires to kill, steal, and destroy. As image bearers of God, whom he hates, he wants to kill our mind. He wants to kill our heart. He wants to kill our body. He wants to kill our joy, our peace, our purity, our hope, our distinction, our honorability. He wants to kill our families, our relationships, our children, our church, our worship, our unity, and our culture.

He has intentions to kill and he also has methods. One primary way that is listed over and over again and that is to lie. He intends to kill. The way that he does so is he lies. Adding just enough truth to be plausible, his lies are often believable. You compare the Word of God and you compare how Satan twisted and distorted his words, most of the words are the same. There's enough truth to get into the door so that it's plausible, so

that it's believable, and yet the words that are changed remove human flourishing and present the possibility and the reality of human brokenness.

It's important to remember that when the Bible tells us of Satan that he is the deceiver of the whole world, his lies first are targeted at God. AW Tozer, a pastor who I trust is in heaven today, tried to explain why when he said, "What comes to our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us, for nobody rises above their thoughts of God." What that means is this, is that you and I are not going to outpace in our morality what we believe to be God's morality. We're not going to be more loving than our understanding of His love. We're not going to be more generous than our understanding of His generosity. It becomes the bar, and therefore, wherever that bar is, whether it's accurate or inaccurate, it completely affects and limits our life.

We were created by God. We live in God's world and one day we will all stand before God's throne. He is the source, the plumb line of righteousness and justice and truth. And as such, to be wrong in our thoughts about God, irreparably distorts our sense of direction, morality, and justice until we begin to think rightly about God. And so in Genesis three, the six verses that we read, we find three spiritual fault lines.

You know what a fault line is? It's where the earth literally shifts and it creates literally a divide, one part of the earth and another part of the earth. What we find here are these spiritual fault lines, places that divide humanity from flourishing to brokenness. Not surprisingly, each one of the spiritual fault lines, it lies with God, our understanding of God and our relationship with God. You see, this is so critical that we all see this. The divide in the fault line is never visible to our eyes. Instead, every house, whether that house, we call it politics or marriage or sexuality or race or babies or abortion or justice or personal responsibility, the houses that we build on this fault line.

When the fault line moves and shakes and we do not have an accurate view, understanding, or relationship with God, and that line shakes, what happens is we don't always feel the shake, we simply see the cracks and the divisions in the things we call houses that are built upon the fault line. That's why we are constantly distracted, giving primary attention to what's secondary. Calling the source the symptom and the symptom the source.

But all the fault lines that I want to show you, three of them, are all regarding our understanding and relationship with God. The first fault line I want to show you is the fault line of God's goodness. Here's a question for you. Is God good? We might go, "Well, of course. He's good." All right, let's get a little bit more granular. Okay? Is God good to knit a baby in the womb? All right, yes. I agree, by the way, He is. But let me tell you the fault line of God's goodness. In other words, how you answer that question is going to affect how you treat the baby in the womb.

Is God good to wrap us in diverse colors of skin? How you answer that question will determine how you treat

people with diverse colors of skin. Is God good to make us male and female? Is God good in his instructions and restrictions? Is God good to restrict sex to marriage between a husband and a wife? Is God good to restrict our work to six days out of seven? Is God good to restrict our worship to Him alone? Is God good to give us just one savior? Is God good? Satan would lead all of us to say no.

Verse one says, “The serpent was more crafty,” or sly. “He said to the woman, ‘Did God actually say you shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’” Now, when we read what God actually said, oh, we can’t mistake His vast generosity and His goodness for what God said in chapter two, verse 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.”

Oh, what God actually says proves that He’s more like a chef who leads us into a buffet hall that He has created. All kinds of amazing foods, and he says to us, “I made it all for you. It’s all for you. Every table, every single entrée, every side dish, every dessert. It’s all for you. Just don’t eat the Hershey Kiss because it’ll kill you.” The emphasis is on the generosity of God, the goodness of God, which is why the psalmist says, “No good thing does He withhold from those who walk uprightly.”

But in spite of all the evidence, Satan maligns God’s goodness in our hearts and therefore the first divide between human flourishing and human brokenness ... Let me say it this way. The first divide between your flourishing and your brokenness is how you answer the question: is God good to me? And what He has restricted and what He has instructed and what He has limited and what He has provided, is He good to me? The second fault line we find here is God’s truthfulness. Is God telling us the truth about life? Is He telling us the truth about death? Is He telling us the truth about relationships and responsibilities? Is He telling us the truth about sexuality and gender? Is He telling us the truth about death? Is He telling us the truth about heaven and hell? Satan would have us say no.

Eve wanted to set the record straight, so in verse two, she said, “Oh, 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.’” And then came Satan’s denial, “You will not surely die. You’re not going to die.” Satan would make a skeptic of God’s truthfulness out of all of us.

Verse five. “God knows that when you eat of it, your eyes will be opened and you’ll be like God, knowing good and evil.” In other words, you can’t trust Him. You don’t know for yourself your eyes are shut. All you have is His Word on it. In other words, the temptation that Satan gives to us, every single day, is to experiment instead of trust. You don’t know if what He said is really true and so you need to experiment to see if it’s true. And so today we hear all the time you need to experiment and see if you are gay or straight. Young people are told you need to experiment and see if you are a man or a woman. You need to experiment and see if pornography will actually reshape your view of beauty. You need to actually see if mob rule is destructive to society. You need to experiment and see if judicial deference to the rich or poor intensifies lawlessness.

Romans chapter one speaks to all humanity when it says, “Although they knew God, they did not honor

him as God or give thanks to Him, but they became futile in their thinking and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools.” Friends, truth is not what we feel. It is not what works. It is not our experience. It is not what we agree with. Truth is what God says. Psalm 119:160 says, “The sum of your Word is truth. Every one of your righteous rules endures forever.” Whether we like it, hate it, deny it, or believe it, God’s Word is true. And therefore, the second divide between human flourishing and human brokenness, our flourishing and our brokenness, is how we answer the question: is God truthful and trustworthy in what He has said to me?

And that leads us to the third fault line and that is God’s justice. Is God just? Does He see my life? Does He know my ways? And is He going to hold me accountable for what He sees? Satan would have us say no. When Satan said in verse four, “You will not surely die.” He was saying you don’t need to factor accountability into your decision. You need to live today under your watching eye and not His. You see, Satan’s gospel, his good news, always says that God is not going to punish sin, that there’s no consequence for our behavior. His gospel, put into a simple living example, would be that he welcomes us to walk into a supermarket. He gives us a cart and he says, “Fill it up with anything that you want. Anything that you want.” And then we get to the end, and unlike reality, there’s simply no cash registers, allowing us to walk out with everything that we took. This is not reality. You see, the Bible tells us that God is holy, which means He always does what is right. Oh, praise God, He is patient, but His patience never subverts justice. He is the source of justice. And so when God said you will die if you eat, He wasn’t giving advice. He was setting law, that the wage of sin is death. The fact that judgment, sin, and hell are all things that shake the sensibilities of our modern culture does not make them make believe. It means people are unprepared.

And therefore the third fault line that divides human flourishing and human brokenness, our flourishing and our brokenness, is how we answer the question: is God, the judge of all the earth, who sees and knows me, going to hold me accountable? How would you answer the questions? Is God good to me, truthful to me, just towards me? The last temptation that you faced, the answer to those questions, form the motivation of our response. They’re critically important, for nobody rises above their view of God.

Well, verse six, we’re told the tragedy that took place. “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. This was called sin.” And the devastation that immediately followed proves God’s goodness, truthfulness, and justice. They immediately died spiritually.

They began to feel guilty, ashamed, insecure, vulnerable, and naked. And so they hid, each behind their own bush, and humanity has been hiding from God and each other ever since because we all have something to hide. They were driven from this lush, beautiful, perfect garden of Eden into a hard world that was cursed with thorns and thistles, highlighting the futility of our life. For the first time they began to experience strife

in the relationship with one another as each vied for prominence in the home and as each began to utilize their own strengths to exploit the weaknesses of the other.

Their children, who would be born in pain, would inherit a sin nature that would be predisposed to rebel and sin against God and would be passed on to every subsequent generation down to you and to me. And in the end, mankind would die physically. Face judgment in the possibility of being separated from God for all eternity. Now, do you know who did not grieve this devastation? Satan.

He delighted in what took place and determined that he was going to keep it broken by simply recycling his schemes and efforts upon every subsequent generation, including ours. Remarkably in the bleakness of this moment, when God was even giving out the consequences, when He was sharing, “This is the consequence of sin. This is what’s going to take place. This is the curse that you’re going to have to live within,” He does something absolutely unthinkable and that is He promises a rescuer.

Right there in the middle, he starts the consequences and it says, “Before I finish the list of the consequences, let me tell you what’s going to happen. One day there’s going to be a son that’s going to be born of woman and evil is going to strike at His heel, but He’s going to crush evil’s head. He’s going to live without sin. You keep reading through the Old Testament and there’s promise after promise that’s supposed to highlight our eyes to say, ‘This is who you’re looking for.’ He’s going to be born in Bethlehem, the tribe of Judah, the line of David. He’s going to have power to do miracles. He’s going to open up the eyes of the blind. He’s going to teach with authority. He’s going to highlight what life is supposed to be like. He’s going to reflect in His own self the perfection that we lost. And then He’s going to go to a cross and He’s going to die for sin on that cross. And because of His moral ability and capital, He’s going to rise from the dead, defeating Satan once and for all.”

And this is precisely what Jesus did. The New Testament removes all doubt of who this son would be. The apostle Paul says of Jesus, “When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his son, born of a woman, born under the law to redeem those who were under the law.” Jesus came into this world to seek us and to save us and to rescue his beautiful design from our sin. This is why John says the reason the son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. Jesus went on to live that sinless life. He died from our sin. He was buried in a grave. He rose from the dead on the third day and then He extends an invitation to all of us, and that is that if we would put our faith and trust, not in our own morality and righteousness that is insufficient, but in His, which is utterly sufficient, that we would be forgiven of all of our sin, that He would give us His righteousness, that He would empower us by His spirit to love one another and would allow us to begin flourishing again.

This is what the Bible calls the gospel, the good news. The fact is, is we often mistake the symptomatic divisions in our society as the primary cause of the brokenness instead of the fault lines of our understanding and relationship with God. You have to understand that when we do this, when we confuse the symptoms with

the source, we make fixing the societal divisions our ultimate hope, our gospel. That has no lasting power to bring about salvation or human flourishing.

This is where it becomes so granular, so in our face. When we think about what do we talk about when we talk about the brokenness in the world? What's the solution that we typically go to? If your solution in your mind is if I could get everyone to vote as I, to think the same way about abortion as I, to think the same way about social justice as I, about racism as I. If we could fix these buildings, all the cracked buildings that are built upon these fault lines, what we do is we actually make a false gospel, even if we have trusted the real one. Let me ask you a question. Would your heart be content if everyone in America got to the place to where they believed the way about abortion as you, and yet no more people than there are today came to faith in Jesus Christ? Which one influences the other more? The gospel says that when we put our faith in Jesus, His spirit lives within us and His spirit enables us to love in such a remarkable way that it brings about flourishing societies. Through His Word, He clarifies how we should live. These things are not unimportant. What you think about, all of these societal issues, they're absolutely important, but let me tell you something, your solution to each one of them outside of the gospel of Jesus Christ is a false hope and it will fall. It will be like a house that is built on sand that only needs a storm to wash it away.

And so, you excited? Before we take the Lord Shepherd this morning, I want to give you a few applications. First, let me encourage you to put your trust in Jesus Christ. Oh, friends, don't you understand? He did the hard work to make reconciliation with God and peace with one another possible by living without sin, by dying for our sin, and by rising from the dead. In Jesus Christ, God's goodness is put on display by sending His best. And in Jesus Christ, God's truthfulness is put on display by fulfilling all of His promises about the coming Messiah. And in Jesus Christ, His justice is put on display. Why? By showing that the wage of sin is actually death.

For a holy God to acquit guilty sinners and remained just, he had to send His own son Jesus Christ, the perfect one, to die in our place. And those who put their faith and trust in Him are forgiven and justified, powered and enabled to flourish again. Have you put your faith in trust in Christ? You simply stop listening to me and start talking to Him. You confess, "God, I believe. I believe that I'm a sinner. I believe I've contributed to the chaos. I've not trusted your Word. I've not trusted your goodness. I've not trusted that you were just, but I believe in Jesus Christ who came and died and rose again. I confess Him as Lord." The Bible says you'll be forgiven. First day of the rest of your life, trust Him.

Second, let me encourage you to trust God's Word. There is simply no need to experiment when we can trust what our creator said. Do you recall the name Ivan Pavlov? You're like, "Yeah, isn't that the guy with the dog that spit all the time?" It was. He did a lot of interesting experiments. One of his experiments illustrates really emphatically what's happening in our culture today, and I want to share it with you. What he did was he trained the dogs to distinguish between circles and ovals.

So he had a circle on one side. I don't know exactly how it was, if it was painted or written on one. There was an oval on the other side and if the dog went and pointed and went over to the circle, then the dog received a treat. And if he went over to the oval, then the dog received a penalty. Over a period of time and practice, the dogs would go, they'd look at the two, they would distinguish that's a circle, that's a prize, and they'd go over. Once they absolutely knew for certain what one was versus the other, he then began to modify the oval, forcing it to look a little bit more like a circle each time. And eventually what took place was that it became very difficult to discern an oval or a circle and the dogs became confused and they became erratic and they showed signs of distress.

We find the same thing happening in culture today with human beings, and that is that as our culture seeks to reshape moral values without regard for God's law, each generation is increasingly confused and anxious, erratic and distressed. Friends, as people created in the image of God, we will not flourish until we yield to what our creator really did say.

Third, let's recognize Satan's schemes. They're the same today as they were in the garden. First, he questions God's word. Did He really say ... You'll hear this all the time. "Does the Bible really talk about that? Really? Does it really talk about that?" What's the second thing? He twists. "You may not eat of any tree." That's not what God said. Then he denies. "You will not surely die." And then he entices. "You will be like God." Satan will lean on anything that has the potential to replace the gospel of Jesus Christ as our chief and ultimate hope.

Popular options today include pluralism, relativism, political idolatry, Christian nationalism, and corrupt philosophies. In recent years and days, critical theory, a philosophy or a world view and it's many derivatives, such as critical race theory and social justice, have gained a lot of traction within our culture, and as such, a lot of people have asked about them and so I've written about them. The first article that you find at pray.org/say is critical theory in the gospel. The next one you'll find is critical race theory, social justice. They're going to keep coming. It will give more and more clarity to many of the threats that are before us as a culture. Let me just say one thing about it and it's this. While I do believe that critical theory serves to desensitize us to the real pains of mistreated people, its fundamental flaw is that it establishes the dismantling of unjust societal systems as a gospel in itself, and to the degree that we as a church absorb the inaccuracies of any false hope, we find ourselves trading in the ability to flourish for the ability to be broken.

The fourth thing I would encourage us to do is to speak the truth and love. In coming weeks, we'll look at important and contested societal issues. Not everyone will agree. Not everyone will use the same terms in the same way. Many of you are in a life group where you talk about these sermons and it's going to be very natural for someone to say a term that's used in one place and there's so many nuances to those terms. Before you condemn anybody, why don't you seek to listen to what they really mean? And then once you really do know what they believe, speak the truth and love, that we should be known for graciousness towards those

with whom we disagree, particular in the family of faith.

And the last thing is let me encourage you to tell somebody about Jesus. In this broken world, there's only one true gospel. There's only one true gospel that has the power to reshape all the other broken areas of our life, and it is Jesus Christ. He's the only answer to our brokenness, the only capable healer and restore. He alone defeated sin. He alone can bring us to heaven. And this morning, billions of people woke without Him. We've got to tell them. If we really believe He's the hope of the world, we've got to tell ...



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