

“GRACE FROM THE BEGINNING: Personal Discoveries in Genesis 1”

HOLINESS

REV. TED WOOD

November 21, 2014

Ted: Okay. Good morning. I think I’m going to ask Lou and Don to lead us into the presence of God. (*Music.*)

Ted: The Lord be with you.

Men: And also with you.

Ted: Let us pray. O Lord, our heavenly Father, almighty and everlasting God, who has safely brought us to the beginning of this day, defend us in the same with Your mighty power, and grant that this day we fall into no sin, neither run into any kind of danger, but that all our doings, being ordered by Thy governance, may be righteous in Your sight, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Men: Amen.

Ted: I got a communication from Sig this week. I think it was Wednesday, and he said, “You can get me the title of your talk and your outline by today.”

And I said, “What are you talking about?” (*Laughter.*)

Participant: No rush.

Ted: No rush. Well, there had obviously been a mix-up in communication between Bruce and me, and I did not receive His text message, and he didn’t receive a response from me. So I was struck in a panic, because I had a full load of client work that I was doing this week, and it occurred to me that there was a part of the book of Genesis that I wanted to speak to my new son-in-law about, and since I’ve not had the opportunity to do that, I thought I would do it today with you folks.

You know, when I first came to Brave Men, (and I often look back and think, “Why did it take so long for me to get here?”), I came here near the last quarter of the **Attributes of God** talk. And when I heard about what the subject was—the attributes of God—I thought, This is not going to be very interesting. I mean, this is just going to be some basic stuff that I already know. Well, it blew me away from the first day I was there. And my wife often will text me from her work. She works for the school district. And she’ll say, “What did Bruce talk about today?” I can’t even begin to know how to say that back in a text message. It’s nearly impossible.

So, in the same way, when I tackled the book of Genesis in my quiet time, my devotional time, as I have nearly every morning, I thought that this was going to be stuff I’d already read before, and I already knew. And I’d been through Genesis before, but I’ve been quite surprised by what I’ve found.

And it was interesting. I sat down and made a record, because I keep a journal. I write down the passages of Scripture that I tackle every day. I don’t follow a particular guide. A lot of my study and thinking is what I would call “curiosity driven.” I just get curious about something, and I start to read about it. I looked back to the year 2006—all of my reading since 2006. And I was stunned to find how many different books of the Bible I had not spent any time in. I guess I wasn’t very curious. One that really surprised me

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was the book of Romans. I had never, in the last eight years, read the book of Romans during my devotional time.

Participant (in mock shock): Shame on you! (*Laughter.*)

Ted: I know. I know it. That’s right. That’s quite extraordinary, isn’t it? I’d read Habakkuk ten times. (*Laughter.*) I’m just joking about Habakkuk.

And so I started to read Romans. And I got through Romans once, and I found it almost incomprehensible. I went through it the second time. I was more befuddled. And the third time I was even more so. And it just began to show me how little I understand of the great teachings and the thought, the theology, the doctrine and the truths that are in that book.

Well, another book that I didn’t tackle was the book of Genesis. Isn’t that amazing? In eight years I’d never read, in devotional time, out of the book of Genesis. I’m not saying this with any pride. I’m just telling you what the reality is.

So I started into Genesis, once again thinking, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth,” and “Yawn! I already know this.” But the stuff that came out of that! And I want to just share that with you this morning, since I was caught short on the notification of this. That’s probably due to my own failing. But I just wanted to share with you, and get your thoughts on this as well.

I guess I have two things that I want to tackle. I want to tackle the first chapter of Genesis, and things that have jumped out at me. Now this is not meant to be comprehensive. I’m sure there are those here that have nailed down Genesis, and they would say, “Well, Ted, you forgot that,” and “that really means that,” and I understand that. I am just trying to tell you what the Lord has kind of shared with me that jumped out at me.

So I started to work on Genesis. But actually, in my devotional time, I’m as far as Genesis, the fourth chapter. And I only take as many verses that I can digest at any one time. If I can digest ten verses, I’ll eat that. But if I can only digest two verses, that’s all I’ll take. I don’t feel any urge to plow my way through thirty verses a day, and get to the end of the Bible. I’m trying to take as much as God makes real and alive to me personally, and then chew that up, and go no further.

So I want to really start with Genesis 4, and then jump back to Genesis 1, with the treasures that I’ve grabbed out of those two sections.

And Genesis 4 really sets the stage for why we are the way we are where we are today, with just our own situation. And then Genesis 1 gives us a great hope, because God’s grace is expressed from the very beginning. That’s the thing that jumped out to me.

Okay, I’m going to start in Genesis 4. I’m going to read the first seven verses, but really focus on verses 5-7.

Genesis 4, and this is beginning with the first verse. “Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, “I have gotten a man with the help of the LORD.”” “And again she bore his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain a worker of the ground. In the course of time Cain brought to the LORD an offering of the fruit of the ground, and Abel also brought the firstborn of his flock, and their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and his offering, but for Cain and his

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offering He had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his face fell. And the LORD said to Cain, “Why are you angry? And why has your face fallen?” If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it.””

So let me go over those verses, 5-7 once again, because I see that this is where it just struck me, as I was reading, this is where the problem begins. It begins in Adam and Eve, but we really see the working out of it in Cain’s experience.

“But for Cain and his offering,” (verse 5), “He had no regard.” That is, the Lord had no regard for Cain’s offering.“

So Cain was very angry, and his face fell. The LORD said to Cain, “Why are you angry? And why is your face fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it.””

So this sets the stage, as I’ve said. And here are the points that I think jump out at me.

First, for Cain and his offering, the LORD God had no regard. Now it’s interesting to look at this in the Hebrew. The word “regard” comes from a root word, and can be translated from a Hebrew root word which means “to gaze at for help.” So God had no gazing to give help to Cain.

And I’m just looking at this before and after. Before Adam and Eve fell, before, in the garden, Adam and Eve had uninterrupted fellowship with the Lord, and the Lord delighted in all that Adam and Eve did. That was the situation before the Fall. “It was good,” the Lord says. It was “very good.” And this was in existence between Adam and Eve and God, where there were no recriminations, and no judgment. Wouldn’t you love to live a life in which you felt no recriminations or judgment?

I mean, that’s a painful part of my living. I think about it with my clients—no recriminations and no judgments on me, and that everything I do for my clients, and for my wife, and for my children, and for my church—thy delight in it, all the time. I would love that.

But something happened. And this is what happened. Habakkuk refers to this. “You, LORD, are of purer eyes than to see evil, and cannot look at wrong.” So God, after the Fall, could no longer look and give regard to Cain. He could not gaze on Him because of his attitude. He had not slain his brother yet. It was because of his attitude.

The second thing that jumped out of me is that Cain was very angry. He was very angry with God. Before the Fall, man’s delight was in the LORD God. Not only did God delight in man, but man delighted in God. With everything God did, he was absolutely pleased. It wasn’t a matter of saying, “Well, God, why did You do that? Why did You bring this sickness? Why did You make me lose my job? Why did You have my wife leave me? Why do my kids not like me anymore?” There was none of that. Man’s delight was in the LORD God continually.

But afterward, as a result of what happened, man was angry with God continually! A complete turnaround.

This amazing passage from Jonah. Do you remember when Jonah went and preached to the Ninevites? All the Ninevites were converted. What a great and glorious day, right?

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No, it wasn't great and glorious for Jonah. He didn't like it, because it wasn't according to his plan, or some other reason. I can't fathom Jonah's unhappiness. But it says, "It displeased Jonah exceedingly." Thousands of people are saved, and it displeased Jonah exceedingly. And he was angry.

"And the LORD said, "Are you right in being angry with Me, Jonah?"

"And he said, "I do well to be angry with you, LORD, angry enough to die.","

So before, delight in the Lord, and now anger with the Lord. A huge shift has taken place.

The third thing that struck me is that it says, "Cain's face fell." "His countenance fell." Man rejoiced in every situation and circumstance in the Garden. They loved everything that God did, every circumstance and situation. It rained. They were delighted. There were too many antelope in the garden. They were delighted. It was continual satisfaction with their situation and circumstance.

Now is that the way we are today? Are you and I continually satisfied with our circumstances and situations? In Psalm 42, in several places, it says, "Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you in turmoil within me?" Why are you so upset all the time?

I think I've shared with you before that I've been reading, slowly, George Whitfield's *Journal*, from one of the greatest evangelists in England and in the U.S., in the 1740s, just prior to the French and Indian War, and actually several decades before the Revolutionary War. George Whitfield was a priest of the church of England, but he was also an amazing evangelist who seemed to get along with every kind of denomination.

And the thing that strikes me about Whitfield is everything he encountered, and he encountered a huge amount of opposition. When he was preaching in Gloucestershire, over near Bristol in England, he was pulled up by the bishop of Gloucestershire. Whitfield, I believe, was from another diocese. In the Anglican church, one preacher can't go from one diocese to the other and start preaching. You have to be licensed to do that. You have to have the approval.

And so the bishop calls up Whitfield, and he says to him, "Mr. Whitfield, I understand that you are preaching in my diocese without a license."

And Whitfield says, "Bishop, I understand that you are letting your clergy play cards, go to dances, and bet on horses," (which is against the Canon Law.) (*Laughter.*) It was against the law at that time. It's amazing to think that, in the eighteenth century, that it was offensive for clergy to go to horse races, play cards, and dance. It's an interesting change, as we've seen.

And the bishop's response to George Whitfield was, "I've had no complaints." (*Laughter.*) So he didn't say, "No, they're not doing it." He said, "No one's complained about it." Well of course, if the clergy are having a grand, high time of it.

But "his face fell." But the thing that strikes me about Whitfield that he was amazing in his character, the character that God created. He was a strong believer in the doctrines of grace and in the sovereignty of God. He believed that, because of the doctrines of grace and the sovereignty of God, that everything that happened to him he thanked God

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for. You read it in his journal. He says, “I had people come to my preaching, and they taunted me. And they threw rotten fruit at me.” And he says, “And I thank God for that.” “The bishop opposed me, and I thank God for that.” He thanked God for every situation. He said, “I’ve been very sick, and with a fever. Thanks be to God.” “I’ve been laid up, and can’t preach, because I have no food, or I’m too weary. Isn’t that a blessing from God!” So he really believed in a sovereign God, and every circumstance was good.

But after what Cain did, and what Adam and Eve did, there was great unhappiness with every situation.

Okay, another thing. Yes, I’m sorry. Don?

Don: Yes. I have an observation also, in verse 5. It’s interesting to me that it says that Cain was very angry, and that his countenance fell. And it wasn’t “LORD, I’m so sorry! What can I do to make it right?” It’s almost “How dare you not accept my offering!”

Ted: Right.

Don: I did the best I could. I did everything that I thought was good, and you don’t like it! Well, that’s terrible! Too bad!”

Ted: Right. But aren’t we that way today?

Don: Oh, sure!

Ted: I mean, I know you’re saying that, but isn’t it true that when things happen, we say, “Why did this happen to me? What did I do to deserve this?”

Don: Right.

Ted: I say that to my wife, and she has lots of ego!—reasons! (*Laughter.*) So I’ve learned not to ask that question. (*Laughter.*) Because I already know what the answer is, and she’s right, too.

But that’s right. And that’s a very common question. I mean, a sure sign of spiritual immaturity is that you’re always asking God, “Why did you do this?” I mean, I think it’s irrelevant why He did it.

Participant: Amen.

Ted: The fact is, He’s sovereign, and He’s doing it, and He has the final say. Yes, Tom?

Tom: I’ve always looked at Proverbs 21, which gives a little bit more of an expression from God’s point of view, that “the sacrifices of the wicked are an abomination to the LORD, and with evil intent, even more so.”

Ted: Yes.

Tom: I mean, what’s going on with Cain?

Ted: That’s right, exactly, in terms of his own attitude and his approach, right. Excellent. Thanks.

Well, it goes on, the other thing. “If you do well,” God says, “will you not be accepted?” Now, before the Fall, with Adam and Eve, the Lord’s acceptance was unconditional. We never had to worry about God accepting us. It was just totally unconditional. But afterward God says, “If you will do” His acceptance becomes conditional.

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In Deuteronomy, it says, “If you will indeed obey my commands that I command you today, to love the LORD your God, and to serve Him with all your heart, with all your soul.” I mean, that’s a lot of conditions, don’t you think? “If you will serve the LORD, and obey all His commandments, and love the LORD, and serve Him with all your heart, and with all your soul.” All those are very conditional. There is no unconditional love after this point. It’s all conditioned upon what you can produce. And to me, that is a horrible burden to bear. I can’t bear it. It’s too heavy for me.

I mean, you see some of these fringe groups in the evangelical camp that talk about the importance of obeying God’s commandments and doing His laws as a way of being accepted by God. I just don’t get that. I want to say to them, as you’ve heard me say before, “Well, how are you doing?” I mean, if your acceptance by God is conditioned by obeying all the commands, loving the Lord, and serving Him with all your heart, and with all your soul, how are you doing? And there are some people who are so self deceived as to think that they’re getting there! And that’s nothing but a fool’s assessment of what the reality is. Yes, Doug?

Doug: I remember a Bible passage that says that you have not yet resisted sin to the point of shedding your blood. I think it’s relevant.

Ted: I’m trying to tie it in my mind.

Doug: Well, if I think I can do all these things, and I am doing it, but I’m not sweating blood over it, then what kind of effort am I—

Ted: Exactly. And, you know, to me, we talk about the struggle with radical Islam, or even Islam for that matter. The problem with Islam is that it is so based on this verse, that you have to follow all the commandments. You have to love the Lord completely. You have to love Him completely with your soul and body and spirit—I mean, all of those things.

That’s why it makes sense to blow yourself up, and to kill the enemies of God. I mean, it makes perfect sense in my mind. If, indeed, your acceptance by God, if His approval of you is dependent on how well you perform, the ultimate performance is the giving of your life in service of God, and especially if you kill off God’s enemies, because God needs help. I mean, in Islam it always strikes me that Allah is a god that needs a lot of help from his people, or he’s not going to pull off his rule on earth. And really, that’s the foundational problem with Islam.

I mean, commentators, you watch them on TV, and they have these discussions, and they’ll have an Islamic scholar, and they debate someone who is non-Islamic, and we see this on national TV, and I think they miss the point completely. It’s not a matter of bad people going out and doing bad things. It’s a matter of people thinking that, if you believe that it all depends upon you in the end, you have to do that. You don’t have any alternative but to destroy yourself in the service of God, because only then is it perfect.

It’s kind of like in the old days, with the Catholic church in the old days. They said that (and I’m over-simplifying it, so I apologize), that committing suicide is the unforgivable sin, because you really don’t have a chance, after committing suicide, to repent and ask for forgiveness. It’s kind of the ultimate thing.

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So, after the Fall, it’s all conditional on your performance. “Sin is crouching at the door. It’s desire is for you.” That’s a very frightening thought. See, before, in the Garden, there is no enemy or opponent to fear. There is nothing to fear out there in the Garden.

But after the Fall, clearly evidenced by Cain, and what he says in his conversation with God, we have things like this. “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy.” So now we have a thief out there. Before, we had nobody lurking behind the bush. Now we have a very dark and sinister character out there lurking behind the bush.

And again, it says in 1 Peter, “Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.” So before, when Adam and Eve got up in the morning, and they went out of their grass hut, or whatever it was, and they walked, there was nothing out there in the bushes to get them. And now, there is all kinds of stuff out there for us, to get us out there in the bushes. And that’s true in terms of our own homes, and our schools, and our businesses. But it’s also true in terms of just the things we face in life with other individuals. There are people out there, and there are situations out there, that are seeking to devour us.

Participant: Ted?

Ted: Yes?

Participant: One of Bruce’s messages was that there was the Fall, and God didn’t want us to die, so He sewed us a flesh suit.

Ted: Yes.

Participant: Because He loved us so much that He didn’t want us to die.

Ted: Right.

Participant: Prior to that, there wouldn’t be any kind of physical interaction. Would we be like angelic or celestial type of beings, maybe?

Ted: I don’t know. Thank you for your comment. The thing that I’m trying to get to is that I’m just telling you the things that struck me about the before and after. Before there was a situation, and then after, and after is what we’re facing today.

And then, this final one. You must rule over sin. “Sin is crouching at the door. It’s desire is for you, and you must rule over it.” You must rule over sin.

Now I want you to think about this. Before the Fall, life was always “is” and “being.” That means that there weren’t any “shoulds.” There were no “shoulds” prior to that. It was just who Adam and Eve were, and they went about their business, and it was all just who they were at the time.

But afterward, it became “shoulds,” and “Musts,” and struggle. There was always the pressure on performance, and doing what you needed to do.

Remember the curse that is given to Adam. God afflicts him with toil, thorns and thistles, “the sweat of your brow,” and “to dust you shall return.”

You know, Solomon got this perfectly, didn’t he? In Ecclesiastes, what did He say? “Vanity of vanities! Emptiness of emptiness!” This is the way life is, no matter how much you add to it in terms of possessions, and people, and pleasures, and entertainment, and football games, and everything else. No matter what you add to it, in the end, it’s toil, thorns and thistles, the sweat of your brow, and to dust you shall return. So, in the

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end, that’s where every life is going, back into the dust. You knock yourself out to die, and go right back into the stuff you came from.

Participant: Why bother?

Ted: Yes?

Participant: So before the Fall, we were in perfect harmony.

Ted: Right.

Participant: With each other.

Ted: Right.

Participant: There was on conflict. Perfect harmony with God. I don’t know, but to me, as a human being, I don’t even know what that is, probably.

Ted: Right, that’s right. Kit’s almost impossible to imagine.

Participant: No fear.

Ted: No fear. There is nothing crouching at your door as you open it up in the morning. No enemies within the house, no enemies outside of the house. And everything got changed.

Listen! The consequences of sin, and breaking away from god, are beyond calculation. Yes, Bishop?

Bishop Rodgers: I just want to throw a little pebble in the pond.

Ted: Okay. Yes, please?

Bishop Rodgers: Did God not say to Adam and Eve, “Thou shalt not eat of this tree?” So there were conditions.

Ted: There were conditions. But what I’m thinking is, until they violated that, they had no sense of that.

Bishop Rodgers: It wasn’t a struggle.

Ted: Yes. There was no struggle.

Bishop Rodgers: Yes. In that sense, I think we can all agree. But they did have a condition.

Ted: Right.

Bishop Rodgers: In other words, even our position in grace, in Christ, is richer than theirs was before.

Ted: Yes.

Bishop Rodgers: So if we’re going back to that, we’re going on to—

Ted: That’s good. Thank you. Yes, Tom?

Tom: Isn’t Solomon saying that it’s not life that is vanity, but that all these things we strive for is vanity? They vanish. But life is sacred.

Ted: Life, outside of God’s provision, is a vanity. That’s what I’m saying.

I’m in an interesting conversation with a client right now. And, as I think I’ve shared with you, the person comes out of an academic background, and I think they really want to talk to me. But they’re a little afraid to talk to me, because they’re really committed atheists. And, as he said to me, “Your faith, what you believe in, starts with a myth and ends with a myth.” I think I’ve already shared that with you. But I think they want to talk to me. It’s like a moth being drawn to the flame. They can’t resist.

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I said, “Well, I stay overnight here. Why don’t you guys just have me over to your house, and we’ll have a nice conversation. We won’t debate. We’ll just share where we are in terms of what we believe, and how we got there. Let’s just do that.”

And he’s a little intrigued by it, but he’s a little worried about his wife, because she’s very militant. And, you know, there was a discussion the other day about something having to do with religion, or faith in the world, and the guy leaned over to me and he said, “Hey, there’s another example of what religion does.” Okay, fine! You know, what are you going to do? You’re wrong; shut up! Yes, Don?

Don: Yes. I agree with you, that outside of Christ is vanity. I mean, look at the woman who put on Youtube and Facebook that she was going to kill herself, you know, when she had the terminal cancer, and she wanted the right to die, and she did that. And the whole thing is hopeless, and just very, very depressing.

Ted: Yes, right.

Don: But, if there is no god, that’s her world view, and live is vanity.

Ted: Yes, that’s right. Exactly. There was no accountability to god. There was no reference to Him, as to what He might want. Of course, some forms of dying are awful, they’re terrible, they’re painful.

Don: Sure.

Ted: But we don’t get the choice. I just don’t know what to say. What do you say to somebody who is going through that? Do you say, “Yes, you’re justified. Go ahead and end it.” Is that what you say to them? I can’t say that. What do you say? You see, all I can say is, “Seek the Lord where and when He may be found, and go after Him, and see what He does. But you don’t have the option to do that. It’s not about you.”

You know what the big problem is? It’s that we’re all living too long. You know, in the old days, we used to grow out of childhood and go through our period of fertility, have children, and then die. Smallpox and cholera would come through the community, and you would go out to some of these great old Presbyterian churches out in the countryside of Washington county, and there’s a whole family lined up, who died within two weeks of each other. I mean, it’s just over, you know? And now we just live forever! Kit’s the big problem! Yes?

Participant: Just another small pebble in the pond. Jesus didn’t have the option, either.

Ted: The option either of what?

Participant: Of dying.

Ted: No, but He did. That was what He and the Father and the Holy Spirit all agreed to. That was the plan.

But, so, given this very dark scenario, we have god’s provision of grace. And we know that “where sin has increased, grace abounded all the more,” it says in Romans. And so, we think, Okay, Ted, the solution to all this is found in the grace given us through Jesus Christ—His life, and His death, and His resurrection, and His glorification. All that is solved. All of what Cain, and what Adam and Eve went through, is solved in that.

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Well, what I began to find, and I guess the thing that struck me, was that I found it being solved in Genesis the first chapter, and even before the coming of Christ. So God’s provision of grace was even before the Fall. And these are some of the things that struck me.

I remember Bruce’s great quote. “The most important verse in the bible is,” John 3:16? No. What is it?

Men: “In the beginning, God.”

Ted: “In the beginning, God.” Genesis 1:1. Isn’t that great?

I mean, I’m watching channel 40 last night. Oh, it’s just unbelievable! I mean, it’s not even Christian anymore! The whole message, the whole night, I kept going back and forth. I kept hitting it during the night, looking for the game. And it was “the three things we’re dealing with are your healing, your finances, and your children. So send in this sacrificial gift, and encourage god’s own faithfulness to you, and we’re going to show god how serious you are. Now He’s going to show you how serious He is in the areas of your health,. Your finances, and your children.”

Oh, my gosh! That’s the thing that people carnally worry about all the time! In the flesh, that’s what you worry about. You worry about your health, you worry about your finances, and you worry about what in the heck is going to happen to my kids, and how are they going to turn out? I mean, those are easy targets. And if this becomes the message of Christian television, night after night after night, I mean there’s something so profoundly wrong with that!

In fact, I had a chance to work with channel 40 a number of years ago, in consulting, and I said to one of the managers, “You know this is not true.”

And they said, “Yes, but when we don’t do it, the money doesn’t come in.” (*Groans.*) Lord, have mercy on us!

So what did I find in Genesis? The things we kind of take for granted, and the things we take for granted about god and His grace to us, even in the book of Genesis. And we have to remember that when God started off, in this great creation, on day number one, when He started off, what we’ve got is ,we’ve got a reality that is “formless and void,” a “great deep.” It’s all very dark, and very chaotic in the beginning.

So, the first thing. Genesis 1:6-7, on the second day—a place to breathe. I call it a place to breathe. God said, “Let there be an expanse,” or a canopy, “n the midst of the waters.” Think of it! There was nothing but water, or a watery mass. “And let it separate the waters from the waters. And God made,” (or fashioned), “the expanse, and separated the waters that were under the expanse from the waters that were above the expanse.”

Without a breathing space, without this kind of separation from the waters, you’re going to die. You’re going to drown. It’s death out there without this separation. We see that in Genesis the seventh chapter, when God brought the Flood. “I will bring a flood of waters upon the earth to destroy all flesh, in which is the breath of life. Everything on the earth shall die.” And that’s because each of us needs this kind of opening. What god did is that He took the waters—the waters above the earth and the waters below the earth—and He opened up a breathing space.

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We take that for granted, but life, at the beginning of creation, was nothing but a great expanse of nothingness. It was “without form and void,” and a great, watery mass.

And I thought about this in my own life, and others of us can reflect on this as well. In my life, I’ve gone through periods in which I was totally drowning in my circumstances—most of them self-made. I was totally drowning. And if God had not opened up a breathing space, I would have died—spiritually, maybe even physically. God is in the business, from the very beginning, of separating them—the waters from the waters—so there’s a place for us to get our heads above the water. And that is one of the greatest acts of grace. We could have been left in a watery chaos in our lives, whether it was in work, or family relationships, or our own sinning, our own addictions, or whatever it was. We were in a position of drowning, but God opened, He separated the waters for us, which is a mighty miracle. That was the second day.

The third day, God-given life. “Let the earth sprout vegetation—plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit, in which there is seed.” The Spirit gives us life. “The words that I have spoken to you,” Jesus said, “are spirit and life.”

You know, as difficult as life is, as much pain as there is, I really like being alive. I don’t know about you all. And that’s an act of grace. On the third day, God gave life, and He gave each one of us life. I prefer to be alive than to be dead. So that’s another act of grace that I thought about.

The next act of grace is on day number four. I call it “manifest order.” “Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens, to separate the day from the night, and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days and years, to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness.” What God has done is, He has kind of created an order for things. It’s not totally chaos.

There is something worse than bad laws. There is something worse than evil laws. There is something worse, than, for instance, the laws and the rules in Nazi Germany, and that is, no laws, or no order at all. Chaos is a far greater enemy of mankind than are evil and bad laws. And what God did was that He set an orderliness to everything, so everything fell in place. And that’s a great act of grace.

There was a book written that I listened to on tape. I was very caught up in it, and you can help me with the author’s name. It’s called *The Road*, by Cormack—

Participant: Cormack McCartney?

Ted: Cormack McCartney. He’s a superb writer. And then I watched the movie the other day of it. What it is, it’s a story. It catches up a family, a family of a husband, a wife and a son. And it has been seven years since something on earth has happened. Probably an asteroid hit the earth. And everything is just dark all the time. There’s nothing that can live. There’s no vegetation that can live, because it’s overcast, rainy and cold all the time. And it’s a very depressing movie, and all the world, and the people who survive, have degenerated into total chaos. So you never know what is right/wrong, top/bottom, left/right. It’s a terrible situation. It’s interesting that much of the movie was filmed in western Pennsylvania. (*Laughter.*) During the winter. I mean, the end of the world is reflected in living in western Pennsylvania. (*Laughter.*)

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And there is one scene where they use an abandoned tunnel on the Turnpike, and another scene where they reach the ocean, that’s really on Lake Erie, and it’s just overcast and cold and wet all the time. And those people live in a world that is totally chaotic, and there are no rules. Maybe their rules are “survival of the fittest.”

God is gracious. In His grace, He laid out boundaries, lights, times, seasons for everything. We may hate it. We may hate when the winter comes. But then spring is going to come. You know what? It’s thirty more days today until the shortest day of the year. But after that, every day adds about thirty seconds to the day, to light. And this is something we can look forward to. I’m grateful for the things that God laid out, even in the most primitive and early stages of that.

God has blessed us, in 1:22, with a foundational purpose. “God blessed them,” (that is, all living creatures), “saying, “Be fruitful and multiply.””

You know, the purpose of life, if you think about it, what is the purpose of life? The purpose of life is to procreate. All living things, that’s what they do. If something is living, if an amoeba is living, what is its purpose? Its purpose is to make another amoeba. That’s its whole purpose.

That’s the problem, primarily, that we have with the whole homosexual philosophy. It’s not so much a problem that the homosexual behaviors and lifestyles are contrary to Scripture. You know, you’ve got the seven Scripture verses, and people debate over that, and what they really mean. Here’s the problem with homosexual behavior. It doesn’t produce life. It’s incapable of doing it. So the problem isn’t so much a Biblical problem. That, to me, is almost secondary. It’s an ontological problem. It’s a problem with the very being of the thing, because the very thing itself cannot, by its nature, produce life.

And it’s arrogance, in my mind, for people to say, “Well, we’ve advanced. We don’t need to do that anymore. We’re no longer responsible for the nature of the thing. We can change that in the space of several decades. Our thinking is revolutionary. We can put new rules into effect.” Well, your new rules contradict what people have lived with for aeons and aeons and aeons. Humans were not built the way they were, not to produce. They were built to “be fruitful and multiply.” That’s the whole purpose.

So, at its base, the problem with homosexuality is not that it’s contrary to God’s laws, which it is, but that it’s contrary to the creation of God itself. The Roman Catholics are very keen on this, and I think they’ve got it right. That’s where they hit the hardest.

On day number six, we have a distinct identity. God made the beasts of the earth “according to their kinds.” “God created man in His own image. In the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.”

So where is our identity? Where is the identity of animals, from the very beginning? The identity of animals is the design that God made for that animal, and it produces after its own kind. It’s like you have the original model, and you produce after its own kind.

But what is the foundational identity of man? What is our foundational identity? Is it because God made a model of man? No. What is it? What is the foundational identity of man?

Participant: After His image.

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Ted: After His own image. We are distinctly and profoundly different from every other created thing. And that’s part of god’s grace to us.

And then finally, on the seventh day, gaining God’s rest. “God rested the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all His work that He had done in creation.” And I’m very much attached to that verse, as it ties into Hebrews chapter 4, verses 9-10. “There remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God. For whoever has entered God’s rest has also rested from his works, as God did from His. Let us therefore strive to enter that rest.”

So, in the beginning, God rested. We’ve become very active at doing. But after the doing, God says, “I invite you back. Come back into My rest. Rest from your labors, and let Me be the one who is doing the work. Rest in Me. Abide in Me.” That completes the circle of the whole situation, from the Garden of Eden to the Fall, and then restoration, where we can now enter God’s rest. Don?

Don: Yes. It’s interesting to me, Ted, that our society, particularly in scientific academia, teaches the very opposite, that this all is chaos.

Ted: Yes.

Don: Everything came from chaos.

Ted: Right.

Don: Evolution. And people like Stephen Hawking, and people who are atheists, as most scientists in secular academia are, say that this is all chaos, for no reason. We’re just cosmic accidents, and, therefore, there are no morals, there are no rules, there are no laws, and death is it.

Ted: Right. That’s right. I mean, I can’t help thinking about this friend of mine, this client friend. I think about the same thing. I don’t know what their answer would be. The other day, he said to me, “Well, we’re all animals at heart.”

Participant: No, no!

Ted: Fair enough. But, okay, well, really, that’s fine for you. But where does that leave you? The thing is that folks who believe that really don’t think about taking it out to its ultimate conclusion. They quit thinking. They limit the implications of that. They don’t think about all the implications, and the fallout from making a statement like that.

Well, the time is over. Let me conclude with prayer.

Let us pray. Almighty God, Father of all mercies, we, Your unworthy servants, give You most humble and hearty thanks for all Your goodness and loving kindness to us, and to all men. We bless You for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life, but above all, for Your inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ, for the means of grace and for the hope of glory. And we ask You, give us that due sense of Your mercies, that our hearts may be unfeignedly thankful, and that we show forth Your praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives, by giving up ourselves to Your service, and by walking before You in holiness and righteousness all our days, through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom with You and the Holy Spirit be all honor and glory, world without end. Amen.

Men: Amen.