We have looked at God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, touching on some of their characteristics and how we need a close relationship with all three of them.

We were all created by God to have that relationship with Him, but because of a thing called sin, we cannot enjoy the same kind of relationship that Adam and Eve had with God in the Garden, before the Fall.

At best we can see in glimpses what that relationship should really be like with God, but that is not His intention. He wants each person on earth to enjoy closeness with and to Him, whilst we live our earthly lives.

To enable us to do that, we need to know about and understand sin; where it came from and why, understand what it is and its’ consequences. Then we can recognise it and start to deal with it.

**PRAY**

It is easy to blame God when bad things happen – that’s exactly what Satan wants and often society is involved in that too – we all refer to disasters as ‘acts of God’. That is a misnomer – God described His creation as ‘good’ and His creation of man as ‘very good’.

There is nothing in Scripture to suggest there were disasters in the early days after creation, so something must have changed – that something was sin entering into God’s perfect world.

**1 John 4:8** says God’s nature is **love**. It is what He does, it is who He is.

In **Matthew 13:24-30**, Jesus told a parable to teach people, of all ages, that God created only good things, but an enemy later came in and sowed other things – in the parable they are called tares, but in life, we can call them evil, sin and discord.

For those who have already put their trust in God, we are told it would cause damage to the good crop if the Lord was to remove the bad crop - the enemy and what he sowed. So God allows everything and everyone to grow together, until the harvest when it is obvious to everyone what is sinful and what is good - and who the enemy really is.

It is actually fortunate that we have that opportunity to grow together, otherwise, in the past, we may have been cleared as a weed, before we had a chance to respond to the message of salvation in the gospel.

I am sure you are all aware that sin entered into the world when Adam and Eve were living in the Garden of Eden, through the deceit of Satan.

But it is **Ezekiel 28:12-18** that gives us a fuller description of this enemy of God and mankind.

**SLIDE** **Ezekiel 28:12-18 “This is what the Sovereign Lord says: ‘“You were the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. 13You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone adorned you: carnelian, chrysolite and emerald, topaz, onyx and jasper, lapis lazuli, turquoise and beryl. Your settings and mountings were made of gold; on the day you were created they were prepared. 14You were anointed as a guardian cherub, for so I ordained you. You were on the holy mount of God; you walked among the fiery stones. 15You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created till wickedness was found in you. 16Through your widespread trade you were filled with violence and you sinned. So I drove you in disgrace from the mount of God and I expelled you, guardian cherub, from among the fiery stones. 17Your heart became proud on account of your beauty and you corrupted your wisdom because of your splendour. So I threw you to the earth; I made a spectacle of you before kings. 18By your many sins and dishonest trade you have desecrated your sanctuaries. So I made a fire come out from you and it consumed you and I reduced you to ashes on the ground in the sight of all who were watching.**

Ezekiel uses the illustration of a wicked earthly king, who God identifies as the enemy – this is the sower of evil and sin from the parable in Matthew.

Lucifer, who we also call Satan and the Devil, was a beautiful angel created by God. He was placed in the highest position a created angel could have, standing next to the throne of God, to carry out the will of God.

He was perfect, because that is how God created him. But something changed in his heart, not because of anything God did, but because of Lucifer’s choices. His nature changed and he began to oppose God’s order and law, to subvert God’s government and sought to cause mistrust of God in the rest of the created angels.

Speculation – humans lower than angels, but will become higher. Change of status may have been a matter of pride, leading to hatred of God’s greatest creation – we were made in the image of God.

Lucifer means ‘light bringer’ in Latin – he was meant to carry and represent the light of God’s truth, but instead he allowed pride and jealousy to take over, so that he became Satan the ‘accuser’ or ‘adversary’.

In a way, Satan is a perfect explanation of sin - we may not be able to fully understand how an angel, perfectly created by God, could become fallen, but we do need to remember God’s character.

God’s character and his Sovereign governance is based on love, mercy, fairness, truth and choice (free will). God does not force His will on His creation, so we are free to choose to follow and worship Him, or not. There are consequences to the choices we make – they can be positive and negative.

God’s will not to manipulate or coerce; rather it is to love us and part of that is His nature to discipline us, to make us realise we are better looking to Him for protection and salvation, rather than anywhere else. God is our Sovereign Creator and He wants us to worship Him - because we want to worship Him.

But when He is pushed away and disregarded, that is rebellion – that is sin.

The deception in the Garden of Eden is that Satan deceived Eve by first questioning God’s words, then by calling Him a liar. He made Eve believe that God was keeping her from a better and more full life – and that she could become like God. The irony is that was the very thing Satan coveted for himself in heaven.

What was the first sin all about? It was about failing to trust God and His ways. Failing to stay close to Him, by questioning and doubting that God’s way was the best – and only – way.

Firstly Eve was deceived, but Adam didn’t have to follow. He rebelled. Then both quickly realised their mistake – that their perfect relationship with their friend and Creator, the Lord God, had changed - it had disappeared from reach.

Probably more than anyone else on this earth, they truly knew the effect that sin and evil had – in losing their perfect unfallen nature, with which they could have resisted sin, they realised they were spiritually and literally, naked.

If you or I were the only ones in that Garden, Satan would have been after us – it is personal - **SLIDE** **1 Peter 5:8** tells us that Satan’s goal is simple, he **prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.** When he has devoured that person, he will move on to the next. He will never be satisfied.

But, importantly for the person concerned, as **SLIDE** **1 John 3:8** tells us, **the one who does what is sinful is of the devil**. The Bible and therefore, God, is very clear in that verse and the previous one, that we either belong to God, or the devil – there is no other option.

There are some verses in Romans that show us Paul understood fully the consequences of going away from God, of sinning –

**Romans 6:16** reinforces what John wrote. **Don’t you know that when you offer yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one you obey—whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? 17But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you have come to obey from your heart the pattern of teaching that has now claimed your allegiance. 18You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.**

The choices we make, indicate who we belong to: Satan or God and the answer to that determines our eternal future - eternal loss or eternal life.

Paul described that in **SLIDE** **Romans 6:23** by saying **the wages of sin is death** – when we sin, we are actually working towards our own eternal death. That will be your rightful reward - in the same way that being paid money is your rightful reward for doing your job of work – but in this case, the consequences are more severe and everlasting.

Many people would describe themselves as ‘good’ and on that basis, by their reckoning, God will allow them into heaven when they die. But that is not what God says in His Word.

We all inherit traits from our parents – some good, some maybe bad. But, because we have all descended from Adam, who was himself a sinner, we have all inherited a trait that we should not want.

We are all born with - we have inherited - a fallen nature that cannot resist sin. That is fact, you cannot change that on your own, but God can help.

Although He is a Holy God, who cannot look on sin, nor will He allow it in His Heavenly kingdom, He has chosen not to leave us, despite us pushing Him away when we choose to sin, rather than focus on God.

But there is good news and that is also contained throughout the Bible and especially in the gospels – Jesus, our Messiah, our Saviour came to deal with the whole problem.

The writer to the Hebrews lays out what God, through Jesus, has done on our behalf. **Hebrews 2:14-18** **Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil— 15and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. 16For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham’s descendants. 17For this reason he had to be made like them, fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. 18Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.**

Not only does Jesus’ perfect life on earth and sacrificial death set us free from sin and its condemnation, it also results in the destruction of Satan.

Even though we have all sinned, our debt has been paid by Jesus - and if we, in faith, accept God’s grace and Jesus righteousness as being our own, we are made right with God - we become free of any condemnation.

As long as that is how our hearts continue to respond, God will stand beside us and help us to overcome sin **Isaiah 41:13**.

That is the message of the gospel and of Jesus – we are all sinners who fail to match up to God’s target. But through Jesus there is redemption.

That is what we remember as we partake in communion and what we will be reminded of in the coming weeks as we approach Easter and look at Jesus’ final week before the crucifixion.

Be assured, there is ultimately only one winner in the battle of sin – that is God. **SLIDE** **God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. 4‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away. Revelation 21:3-4**

Our response to be enable us to be part of God’s dwelling place is to get rid of our sin – in a way it is as simple as that. **SLIDE** **If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness 1 John 1:9.**

Eventually sin and death will be wiped away and it will never return – the perfect relationship between man and God.

**OFFER / PRAY**

**READINGS Genesis 3:1-12 / Matthew 13:24-30**

**Genesis 3:1-12**

**3 Now the snake was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, ‘Did God really say, “You must not eat from any tree in the garden”?’**

**2The woman said to the snake, ‘We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, 3but God did say, “You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.”’**

**4‘You will not certainly die,’ the snake said to the woman. 5‘For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.’**

**6When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. 7Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realised that they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.**

**8Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. 9But the Lord God called to the man, ‘Where are you?’**

**10He answered, ‘I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.’**

**11And he said, ‘Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree from which I commanded you not to eat?’**

**12The man said, ‘The woman you put here with me – she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.’**

**Matthew 13:24-30**

**24Jesus told them another parable: ‘The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. 25But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. 26When the wheat sprouted and formed ears, then the weeds also appeared.**

**27‘The owner’s servants came to him and said, “Sir, didn’t you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?”**

**28‘“An enemy did this,” he replied. ‘The servants asked him, “Do you want us to go and pull them up?” 29‘“No,” he answered, “because while you are pulling up the weeds, you may uproot the wheat with them. 30Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: first collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.”’**