

SESSION 26: EXCUSES

Genesis 3:9-13

April 28, 2024

It is very often a good idea to include in one's study of a passage in God's word at least a moment where one backs away, squints a little, and considers the passage in a larger context. Monday morning, as I read once again the passage before us, I was struck by how perfectly—in concert with the Creation narrative thus far—it illustrates the folly of this fallen world, even today, to turn its back on its Creator. 📖

The passage before us exquisitely illustrates the contrast between living in harmony and peace with God—and rejecting Him for the world's system. Just imagine the difference for the first man, and later, first woman: dwelling in exquisite harmony not just with their environment—the verdant garden, and the creatures that shared it with them—but with Yahweh God, their Creator and Lord of *all* Creation. Beyond this, they were at peace with—indeed we might safely assume *reveled* in—*each other*. It was a perfect, happy, peaceable existence in a paradise.

But they were not satisfied with this. They thought they should have more. And the beguiling serpent, in service to his master Satan, held out to them the tempting promise of that which they desired: to be like God. Consider the paradox here:

- They were *already*, in their created state, closer to “god-like” than any human being that would follow;
- they were created pleasantly ignorant of sin, but would now, being like God, know all about it (as does He)—and now practice it;
- they surely imagined that this newfound knowledge would be layered on top of everything else they possessed, but instead, it was an *exchange*: they lost all they had—peace with God, peace with their environment (3:17-19), even peace with each other—all in exchange for a new knowledge that would explain and reinforce their rebellion: the knowledge of good and evil (2:17).

Here is an epic, Shakespearean tragedy writ large. And in the passage before us we see being played out the fresh loss of peace between the man and woman.

(If it did not have such dire, eternal consequences, it would be almost laughable: our society and culture today spend an inordinate amount of time denying and railing against a God who they claim has no relevance for their lives—if He even exists at all! *Then, who is it you are constantly fighting against?*)

Read Genesis 3:9-13.

vv9-10

Yahweh God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?” And he said, “I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.”

Here we have the first recorded words of the first man—and it is a lie, or, at best, a half-truth. I have no doubt that his nakedness did indeed present a new-found discomfort in the presence of his Maker. But that’s not the half of it—and certainly not the *root* of his shame. Adam’s shame and fear are the result of his *disobedience*—not the absence of pants. (Besides, by v8 they *do* have “pants” [loin coverings] on.)

In another sense, however, his fear *does* stem from his nakedness—a *spiritual* nakedness he has never known before. Hearing Yahweh in the garden instantly reveals to Adam all that has now been stripped off him: sweet fellowship with Yahweh, His counsel, His Spirit. Having lost all that he has been reduced to mere flesh—sinful flesh—without any covering of holiness.

As Adam should know by now, *hiding* from God is as futile as *lying* to God; both are of no value, and a waste of time. He always knows where we are and what is in our heart.

v11

And He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?”

Once again, Yahweh is not asking a question so as to discover the answer, but He is giving the first man and woman an opportunity to do the right thing. In the OT especially there is a connection between confession and “giving glory to God,” to the point that they become synonymous. Perhaps the best example of this is found in the book of Joshua, and the story about the cause of Israel’s defeat at Ai: the sin of Achan. When it was discovered by casting lots that Achan’s disobedience was the cause of Israel’s defeat, Joshua confronted him.

Read Joshua 7:19-21.

Achan and his family were executed for this sin, but God received glory and praise because of Achan’s forthright confession.

In v11 Adam and his wife are given the opportunity to “give glory to God,” to honor Him by confessing their disobedience; in fact, God prompts them with the actual sin, but once again they fail miserably. Yahweh’s first question—“Who told you that you were naked?”—is not answered. Adam does answer the second—sort of.

v12

And the man said, “The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave to me from the tree, and I ate.”

Wow. It is apparent from the start that we do *not* have another Achan here—someone willing to confess his wrong and accept his punishment. Adam is not about to take responsibility for anything that has brought the first couple before the court of Yahweh. There is no humility, no sorrow, no shame, no sense of guilt. There is not even a hint of a husband manly taking the hit for his wife—quite the opposite: the first man turns on *her*, as we would say today, throwing her under the bus. But that is actually not the worst of his response.

“The woman whom You gave to be with me...”

The most egregious aspect of Adam’s response is that he first blames Yahweh God! It is *His* fault because He is the one who gave Adam the wrong woman!

Leupold: It is a reply that offers further evidence of the complete corruption and contamination of all of man’s nature by his sin. It is a reply that in cowardly fashion refuses to admit plain guilt and in an entirely loveless fashion lays the blame for it all first on his wife and then by a wicked charge upon God Himself.

As we noted in our previous session, sin makes one stupid, and often makes us, like Adam, hide from God instead of rushing toward Him. Martin Luther agrees: “The very nature of sin is that it will not suffer the mind to flee unto God, but instead compels it to flee from God.”

Once again, however, we can see the benefit (a rather sad and inadequate noun) of having Christ Jesus in our life. Although there are rare exceptions in the OT of confession answered by grace—King David, for one (Psalm 32:5)—it is with the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ that we are told, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

Adam did not have that promise, so his first reaction is to hide and deny any responsibility for his actions. Absent a holy Advocate, the best he can hope for is to improve his chances by casting blame upon others—holy *God*, no less! And Yahweh does not waste time bandying words with a fool; ☞ God will deal with him when comes time for the verdict. For now, however, He moves on to the woman.

(Or as La Boeuf says to Mattie Ross in the original *True Grit*, “You've done nothing when you've bested a fool.”)

v13

Then Yahweh God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?” And the woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”

The contagion of blame-passing spreads as Yahweh interrogates the woman. She can't point upward to Adam, so she points downward to the serpent. I suppose she could have, like Adam, pointed upward to Yahweh, saying something like, *The serpent* You created *deceived me...*, but she doesn't. (Maybe she is really the smarter of the two.) Nonetheless she shirks responsibility, as if the serpent force-fed her the fruit.

As we have discussed before, 1 Timothy 2:14, which reads, “And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into trespass,” does not heap all blame on the woman; it suggests a deeper level of culpability in the man. The man wasn't deceived; when he took a bite from the fruit he knew *exactly* what he was doing. The woman may have ignorantly bought into the serpent's lie, but Adam's act was one of naked rebellion against Yahweh God. Leupold's wise remark applies to both the man and woman:

Man can never bring a good case into God's presence as long as his own works are being considered.

Yet, Eve's statement is correct: She was indeed deceived by the serpent. Does this let her off the hook? Hardly—no more than it would us.

It can rightly be said that it is not sin to be tempted, only to give *in to* the temptation. But that is a simplistic way of looking at it—akin to saying “once saved always saved.” On the face of it, neither aphorism is untrue, but there is more to it than that. Either may be sufficient for the babe in Christ, but for the maturing adult, there is a much deeper context that needs to be known.

Read 2 Corinthians 11:2-4.

On one level, Eve was beguiled by the serpent's (Satan's) temptation for the same reason we often are. Like the Corinthians, we live in a time and place where it is considered laudable to be open-minded, to be tolerant of a vast parade of philosophies and beliefs. We can't know for sure about Eve, but she may have thought, *Well now, this sounds reasonable. Let's hear what this guy has to say.* And there is the first mistake. As Paul told the church, we are “betrothed to one husband,” and should not be sampling—or even considering—the merits of others. When we do this, we have just taken on some of the responsibility for the ensuing temptation. We have invited it.

If we send our teenager to Berkeley, we cannot claim innocence if she comes back a Marxist; if we send our teenager to Columbia, we cannot be surprised if he comes back a supporter of Islamic terrorism. If we voluntarily listen to or read heresy—i.e., a “different spirit,” a “different gospel”—we cannot claim innocence when our faith is then corrupted.

Eve listened. She kept listening. She indulged in a dialogue with the tempter. In the language of 2 Corinthians 11:4, she *bore the serpent's words beautifully.*

The apostle John tells us to “test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1). His injunction is that we not “believe” them. True enough, but the prophet Jeremiah takes it a step further, words which Eve, had she been created at a time to have known them, would have done well to heed.

Let’s close with the words of Jeremiah.

Read Jeremiah 29:8-9.

Don’t listen to the deceiver. Don’t even give his words the time of day. Paul told the Corinthians and Timothy to “flee” from such things. ❏ James turns it around and tells us to “Be subject therefore to God. Resist the devil and *he will flee from you*” ❏ (emphasis added).

What are we to do?

First, *know* God—know His word, know His ways, know Him. Know Him so well that we can instantly spot a fake and a deceiver.

Second, don’t listen, don’t graciously give them a respectful hearing.

Third, flee.

1 Corinthians 6:18
1 Corinthians 10:14

James 4:7

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Giving up Peace

They dwelt in exquisite harmony not just with their environment—the verdant garden, and the creatures that shared it with them—but with Yahweh God, their Creator and Lord of all Creation. Beyond this, they were at peace with each other. It was a perfect, happy, peaceable existence in a paradise. But the first man and woman were not satisfied with this. They thought they should have more. And the beguiling serpent, in service to his master Satan, held out to them the tempting promise of that which they desired: to be like God. Consider the paradox here:

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Truly Naked

In one sense, Adam’s fear does stem from his nakedness—a spiritual nakedness he has never known before. Hearing Yahweh in the garden instantly reveals to Adam all that has now been stripped off him: sweet fellowship with Yahweh, His counsel, His Spirit. Having lost all that he has been reduced to mere flesh—sinful flesh—without any covering of holiness.

Giving Glory to God

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(over)

Listening

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