

The Human Response to Sin

Genesis 3:8-13

I have decided to walk slowly through Genesis 3, because there is so much of importance for us to understand correctly. I began the chapter with an emphasis upon the serpent, whose appearance was nothing other than an appearance of Satan himself, the devil, the leader of the fallen angels, about whom we read in,

Jude 6 “And the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day; 7 as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities around them in a similar manner to these, having given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.”

We read about their status under the condemnation of God’s judgment in,

2 Peter 2:4 “For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment...9 then the Lord knows how...to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment.”

The serpent, the devil, named more personally as Satan, is their leader, and in his crafty deceitfulness he called into question the word of God and then outright rejected it.

v.4 “Then the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die.”

Then last time, in the sermon two weeks ago, we studied the fall itself, the first sin of Adam and Eve, a sin of rebellion in their hearts even before it became the actions of their hands to eat

from the one tree forbidden to them. They became their own authority, determining for themselves whether or not they would eat rather than submitting to God in obedience to his commandment.

v.6 “So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.”

Then we read,
v.7-8

I included verse 8 in the previous sermon because I wanted to emphasize the grievous results of sin, namely their awareness of guilt and shame which caused them to cover themselves as their nakedness came to represent their shamefulness. I also noted as well their awareness of God’s judgment, causing them to hide from God, as we read in verse 8. This morning I am overlapping verse 8, picking up on that point of hiding from God as the focal point of the human response to sin. So last time the emphasis was more upon the nature and consequences of sin. Today it is a bit more personal, the personal response of Adam and Eve to their sin. Next week will be God’s response to that sin. In a certain sense all three of those sermons are really one, one sermon extended over three weeks. Sin itself, with all its terrible consequences. Then today, the human response to sin. And next week, God’s response to sin.

So what is the human response? Adam and Eve’s response to their own sin. I hope these points are obvious and evident, but let me state the obvious as quite a disastrous and tragic response. The sin of Adam and Eve brought about,

I. A BREACH OF FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD.

Again, today, that breach of fellowship from man's perspective. Next week, from God's perspective. So the point is that Adam and Eve were alienated from God. More accurately, especially for today's emphasis, they alienated themselves. Before we even get to God's condemnation of them next week, we see them, our first parents, hiding from God.

v.8 "And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden."

They hid themselves. They removed themselves from the presence of God.

Have you ever had a breach of fellowship with someone, or some group of people? I certainly have. It is a conscious, deliberate, intentional withdrawal from fellowship. And it isn't necessarily sinful. One specific, personal example is expressed in,

Prov. 22:24 "Make no friendship with an angry man, And with a furious man do not go, 25 Lest you learn his ways And set a snare for your soul."

We even read of the disastrous breach between Paul and Barnabas.

Acts 15:36 "Then after some days Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us now go back and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they are doing." 37 Now Barnabas was determined to take with them John called Mark. 38 But Paul insisted that they should not take with them the one who had departed from them in Pamphylia, and had not gone with them to the work. 39 Then the contention became so sharp that they parted from one another. And so Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus; 40 but Paul chose Silas and departed,

being commended by the brethren to the grace of God. 41 And he went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches."

A breach of fellowship, but even in that I'm not ascribing sin to either one of them. But what happens in Genesis 3 is far more grievous, far more severe. It wasn't just a falling out among men, it was a breach between our first parents, Adam and Eve personally, and God. And remember, that's all there was. Adam and Eve were still the only human beings whom God, those created in his image. There were only two such creatures yet in existence. And for Adam and Eve, their relationship with God was all that they had as they cared for the garden of Eden. And, here is the main emphasis at this point,

A. God's presence should have been pleasant.

Just look at the details which we are given, more than necessary you might say. More details than merely the facts of the case and the details of the circumstances. We are told in,

v.8 "And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day..."

The sound of the Lord was a good sound! It meant he was there, he was present. Sometimes just hearing someone is a good and pleasant reminder of their presence, and I would even include the little noises that babies often make even in worship. It's good to be reminded of their presence, isn't it? One of my daughters is given to talking lots and lots whenever she is excited and happy, and listening to her talk in that context is so enjoyable. So good and pleasant, because she's an adult out on her own now, and hearing her talking means that she is present. Even if it is just on the phone!

I had a phone conversation this week with a man whom I haven't talked to in many months, and his friendship and

encouragements to me during the crisis experiences of several years ago were second to none. I had numerous conversations at the General Assembly last week with friends, some of whom I have not talked to in a year, and I can rightly say it was good to hear the sound of their voice.

Adam and Even “heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden.” That should have brought them pleasure and delight! It was such a good thing, such a great privilege for them to enjoy. But all of that was breached, all of that pleasant fellowship was broken, and “the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden” was no longer pleasant. Rather, it cause them to hide.

Note as well the detail that God didn’t need to include, if I can say that from my perspective. It is a detail that simply adds to the context of what the fellowship between God and man should have been. It should have been pleasant, for verse 8 refers to “the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day...”

The idea is pleasantness, and I know exactly what that means, what it feels like. There is no time of day I enjoy more than the cool of the day. I don’t mind high temperatures, even as high as it was this week. I don’t mind 85 or 90 degrees during the heat of the afternoon, because around here, almost always, it cools off as soon as the sun goes down. And that hour between before actual sunset is, for me, so delightful. The cool of the day. That is what I disliked so much about the weather we endured in Atlanta, because it would be in the upper 90s day after day, for the better part of two months, and even after sunset the heat and humidity would remain. It would never go away. But around here, typically, that isn’t the case. So God tells us this detail, that the breach of fellowship is a breach of something designed to be pleasant, refreshing. And because of sin, it was lost.

Similarly, to add to that idea just a bit,

B. God’s presence should have been the greatest of all blessings.

It should have been an utter delight for Adam and Eve to enjoy “the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden.” That’s should have been their greatest blessing, fellowship with God. But because of sin, that fellowship with God was breached. And so what we see in their response is,

II. A HOPELESS ATTEMPT TO HIDE FROM GOD.

The Lord, of course, brings the matter right to the forefront. Adam is hiding from God, and so God calls out to Adam. It’s a great question, because we know that God knows all things and he sees all things. He is everywhere present, and infinite in his awareness of everything he has created. So he doesn’t call out to Adam like I might call out to my little dog when he wanders of into the woods by our house. God calls out to Adam knowing exactly where Adam is and exactly what Adam is thinking. But he calls out to him so that Adam would know that he can’t hide from God, despite his best efforts.

v.9 “Then the LORD God called to Adam and said to him, “Where are you?”

He’s hiding, of course.

v.8 “Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.”

The emphasis for today is why. Why are they hiding? And we aren’t left merely to speculate. Adam himself admits his reason. He is,

A. Hiding out of fear.

v.10 “I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself.”

I was afraid. Not the fear of reverence and honor. Not the fear of godly devotion. But the fear of judgment. The fear of condemnation. The fear of being exposed. And after the fall, he was painful conscious of his own nakedness, and just as you or I would do in that literal experience today, he hid from God. As if that were possible! As if he could really accomplish that, but that's what sin does. It makes you stupid. It makes you so stupid that you think you can hide from God; and it makes you want to hide from God.

Closely related to that fear is,

B. Hiding out of the shame of guilt.

Sometimes shame is used in a selfish sort of way, as the shame which is a self-absorbed response within your own pride; you are ashamed because your own pride is wounded; you are embarrassed only because you are so proud. And that's not what I'm wanting to describe here. Rather, the shame, the embarrassment if you want to use that word, is in the horror of the realization of your own utter sinfulness. Not even the sense of your own failure, because that, too, can be related to pride. But the sense of the offense you caused to God! The shame of guilt, the shame of admitting, owning, and acknowledging your own guilt, confessing your own guilt.

And in that self-consciousness of their guilt, Adam and Eve hid from God. And I should note that such hiding is not repentance! Such hiding as the acknowledgement of guilt is something far different than seeking forgiveness for that guilt, for at this point, Adam and Eve have done no such thing. Rather, realizing now the evil they have committed, realizing now that their sin has breached their very relationship with God, realizing now that they are, themselves, evil, they hide from God. I call it a hopeless attempt to do so, but nothing unusual at all for the guilty sinner.

Before we go on to look at their blame-shifting, let me note just how different this hopeless attempt to hide from God is from true repentance. Hiding from God really means that you choose to remain in your sin; or, at the very least, it means that you don't understand the gospel. Because this is the very heart and essence of the gospel, that your sins are forgiven and, thus, you don't have to hide from God.

The promise of the forgiveness of sins is the promise of the gospel. They are one and the same.

Eph. 1:7 "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace 8 which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence."

Col. 1:13 "He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, 14 in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins."

In that context, Paul identifies what he calls godly sorrow.

2 Cor. 7:9 "Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that your sorrow led to repentance. For you were made sorry in a godly manner, that you might suffer loss from us in nothing. 10 For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death. 11 For observe this very thing, that you sorrowed in a godly manner: What diligence it produced in you, what clearing of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what vehement desire, what zeal, what vindication! In all things you proved yourselves to be clear in this matter."

Here in our text in Genesis 3, Adam and Eve have no such godly sorrow. It is not a grief and hatred of their sin with which they come to God seeking his forgiveness. Rather, theirs is the

sorrow of the world, bringing death. Theirs is the sorrow of stubborn rebellion against God, which brings upon them the shame of guilt. True guilt. And they are guilty as they stand before God; or, I should say, as they try to hide from God. They have no regret yet, leading to an open and honest confession of sin. That may well have come later, and tend to think that they did eventually come to saving faith, but I don't know that for sure since the Bible doesn't tell us for us. And for sure, they certainly didn't get to that place here in Genesis 3, which is obvious by how quickly and completely they blamed someone else for their own sin! One of the hallmarks of true, genuine repentance is this absence of excuses. Repentance has no blame-shifting. For example, David, in Psalm 51.

Ps. 51:3 "For I acknowledge my transgressions, And my sin is always before me. 4 Against You, You only, have I sinned, And done this evil in Your sight—That You may be found just when You speak, And blameless when You judge."

We find none of that here with Adam and Eve. Instead, we see horrible blame-shifting.

III. BLAMEWORTHY BLAME-SHIFTING.

They are guilty before God for their sin of eating the fruit of that forbidden tree. And they are guilty before God for making such horrible excuse. First,

A. The blame-shifting of Adam.

v.11-12

Of all the bad answers to that question from God, this has to be the worst possible answer imaginable. Rather than plead guilty for his sin, rather than confess his autonomous rebellion against the revealed, spoken word of God, he blamed the woman. Clearly the woman was tempted first by Satan, as part of his

deceitful treachery, and Paul makes note of that in his explanation of the prohibition for women teaching or having authority over a man in the church,

1 Tim. 2:2 And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence. 13 For Adam was formed first, then Eve. 14 And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression."

But anyone who uses that verse to justify the notion that women are morally or spiritually inferior to men and more prone to sin miss the whole point of verse 12. Adam blames the woman, and rather than that being a legitimate excuse to justify his sin, it just magnifies his own sinfulness. Rather than accept responsibility for his own actions, rather than exercise the proper leadership and headship which God had given him, he blames the woman as if it is her fault. And in doing so, he actually blames God for giving him the woman.

v.12 "Then the man said, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate."

Gone is any sense of the delight he had in this perfectly corresponding companion whom God had given him. Remember his exaltation in her?

Gen. 2:23 "And Adam said: "This is now bone of my bones And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man."

Gone is any sense of the goodness of God in giving to Adam a helper, a companion, who corresponded to him, face to face, as an equal in the site of God, a creature like him created in the image of God. Instead, rather than accepting responsibility for the foolish rebellion of his own sin, he blames her. If I could say it carefully, too many men still do that, blaming a woman for their own moral failure and sins rather than accepting the responsibility

before God as a man.

The woman is no better here, as we see clearly,

B. The blame-shifting of Eve.

v.13 “And the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”

The serpent deceived me. At a certain level, that is, of course, true. But whose fault is it? Whose fault is it if you are deceived? It is your fault. Your culpability. Your responsibility.

The serpent is guilty too! The devil will be punished for his sin too, condemned for his deception. But that does not leave the woman innocent. You can never blame someone else for your sin, even when they sin against you.

I often identify what I believe are the three hardest words to say in the English language. “I was wrong.” We all like to make excuse. We all like to justify our actions because of something or someone else. And I don’t deny that others sin against us, and even cause us great harm. But when it comes to your own sin, you can’t lay the blame on God, as Adam does. You can’t lay the blame on the devil, as Eve does. You simply confess your sins as David did, “I acknowledge my transgressions, And my sin is always before me.” When you go before the Lord, you simply say, “I was wrong.” “I have sinned and done what is evil in your sight.”

That’s the godly sorrow to which we are called, a godly sorrow that produces repentance leading to salvation. And let me emphasize that although these last three sermons have been focused upon sin and the fall, and the next sermon will focus

upon the judgment of God which all our sins deserve, all of that paves the way for the declaration and proclamation of the gospel, which is this, that...

1 John 1:9 “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

So when you sin, don’t hide from God. When you sin, don’t harden your hearts in the rebelliousness of your unwillingness to live according to the revelation of God’s word in the Bible. And don’t make excuses. Don’t blame anyone else, either. Rather, come to God with a broken heart, with a contrite heart, broken by the awareness of the evil of all your own sins. And cry out to God, asking him, by faith in Jesus Christ, to forgive you your sins.

Ps. 103:8 “The LORD is merciful and gracious, Slow to anger, and abounding in mercy. 9 He will not always strive with us, Nor will He keep His anger forever. 10 He has not dealt with us according to our sins, Nor punished us according to our iniquities. 11 For as the heavens are high above the earth, So great is His mercy toward those who fear Him; 12 As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us.”

Is. 1:18 “Come now, and let us reason together,” Says the LORD, “Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool.”