

---

# SERMON NOTES

## Genesis 8: The Consequences of Sin (3:7-24)

Strange as it may seem, I think it is fitting that two days before Christmas, we are studying about how humankind fell into sin. The point is, because we did fall, and because God knew we would, plans were already in place for the Christmas miracle. It was already decided that Jesus would enter the world as a human embryo, would develop in the womb of a teenage virgin and be born in a stable near an insignificant little town in the Middle East.

As we engage the second part of Genesis 3, I want to briefly address an issue that someone raised last week. [By the way, I really appreciate it when you talk to me (or email me, or call me) about questions and issues you may have arising from the scripture we're studying, or from my sermons. I believe it helps me focus the message toward subjects that are relevant to everyone.] The issue that someone raised is this: we determined earlier that God is a spiritual being, and did not have a physical human body until Jesus entered Mary's womb. But then it says in Genesis 3, (or seems to) that God was walking around in the garden.

Then 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. (Genesis 3:8)

So at this point in the history of earth, does God have a physical body, or not? It's a great question because it gets at the heart of who Jesus is, and why he came to earth the way he did. First, we should take note that when it says God was walking in the garden, in the *cool of the day* that phrase is very interesting in Hebrew. In fact, it contains a form of the Hebrew word *ruach*, which is often translated "spirit." In fact a very literal rendering of this phrase would be "God, walking in the garden, in spirit of day." To smooth it out, you could say, "and God was walking in the garden, in spirit that day." In other words, there is a definite sense here in the Hebrew that God's presence might be more spiritual than physical. But there's something else too. God doesn't need a body to show himself to his people, or make them aware of his presence. He is certainly able to project the appearance of a body, even when he is not there "in body." In fact, he does that very thing, quite clearly, later on in Genesis.

The reason this is important, is because it shows the monumental thing that God did when he came into the world as a human being. When he came 2000 years ago (or so) on Christmas eve, he was not simply projecting a physical *image* to everyone. He actually joined his spirit to a human egg inside of the virgin Mary. He was here, in the same sense that you and I are here right now.

Adam and Eve may indeed have perceived God with their physical senses, but even so, he was really there mostly in a spiritual sense. When God became a human, he really put on a human body with human nature.

Now let's continue on with the text. Something used to trouble me about this part of scripture. When God tells Adam not to eat the fruit of the forbidden tree, he says "for in the day you eat of it, you shall die" (Genesis 2:17) And yet Adam and Eve clearly did not die on the day they ate the fruit. Or did they?

I think there are two possible explanations for how things happened. The word "day" in Hebrew, as I have said before, can mean 24 hours, but it can also mean time-period, or era. If we look at it this way, an alternative translation to Genesis 2:17 might be, "if you eat of it, you will enter the era of death." It is manifestly obvious that this is indeed what happened. Our entire world suffers from the power of death in one way or another. Death in all its forms is present and working in the world today because of the fall of Adam and Eve. Disease, violence, mental illness, fear, accidents, hate, envy, lust – the list goes on forever – are all manifestations of death in the world, which entered through sin. Some of the bad things we experience come about as a direct consequence of our *own* sin. For instance, if I choose to lie to my employer, and end up losing my job as a result, it is my own fault, and the "bad thing" is a consequence of my sin of lying. On the other hand, if a drunk driver crashes into me, and cripples me for life, it is not a

---

direct result of my own sin, but it *is* a result of the fact that sin – and the power of death – is in the world. Either way, the evil that plagues us is a result of the fact that when Adam and Eve sinned, they caused all human beings to enter the era of death.

Sometimes people say, how could a good God allow so much evil? We've already discussed why he had to *allow* it – for love to be real. We'll continue to discuss how he has been *defeating* the evil – through Jesus Christ. But God didn't *cause* the evil – that was caused by human sin. That was the “death” that Adam and Eve entered into and experienced, the very day they sinned.

Let's consider how death began its work on Adam and Eve from the very day they ate the fruit. The Bible teaches quite clearly that human nature consists of three parts: Spirit, Soul and Body (1 Thessalonians 5:23-24). We all know what our body is. When Adam and Eve sinned, their bodies did not die immediately. However, immediately, death began its work upon their bodies. They began to age. Their days were numbered. Work became hard for Adam. Childbearing became very painful for Eve. Their bodies became susceptible to diseases and illnesses; the genetic code got broken.

The second part of human nature is the soul. The soul is sort of like the interface between spirit and body. The Greek word for soul implies “life.” I would suggest that within our soul is our personality, or “psyche.” In fact, the Greek word for soul is “psuche” - which gives us our English word, “psyche.” Our soul persists even without our body. Jesus said to not fear those who can kill the body, but rather the One (God) who can destroy our soul in hell. However, the body can influence the soul. As soon as Adam and Eve sinned, the influence of death began its work on their souls, and even today shows itself in mental and emotional disorders including depression and schizophrenia and other such things.

The spirit is the part of a person which is designed to interact with God. God is spiritual – so are we. This, along with the soul, is part of the image of God in us. It might look a bit like this: my body interacts “outwardly,” with the physical world, and “inwardly,” with my soul. My soul interacts “outwardly” with my body, and *through* my body, with the world around me, and with other people. “Inwardly,” my soul interacts with my spirit. My spirit interacts with my soul on the one hand, and with God on the other.

God designed it so that we would have a spiritual connection with him that would flow from our spirits, through our souls and bodies and out into the world. But in the day – the very literal moment – in which Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, their *spirits* died.

#### **Their connection with God was cut off.**

Colossians 2:13 says “When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ.” Ephesians 2:1 says, “As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins.” But we *weren't* dead physically. We weren't even dead in the soul – not completely. Of course death was at work in both soul and body – but we weren't fully gone yet. Why then does the Bible say we were dead? Because the immediate effect of sin is *spiritual* death. **Sin kills the spirit**, cutting us off from union with God, and it is a long term terminal illness for both the body and the soul (Matt 10:28). But there is an immediate death, and that is in the spirit. Since the time of Cain, every human being has been spiritually stillborn. We come out of the womb spiritually dead, with the clock already ticking down toward physical death, and the destruction of our souls hanging over our heads.

Did Adam and Eve enter the era of death when they sinned? You bet. Did they die in the very day they ate? Absolutely yes, spiritually.

You can see that they are spiritually dead by the way they react to each other and God. They are suddenly ashamed of their nakedness. The sewing of fig leaves is symbolic of their spiritual condition. They are no longer able to be completely open to each other or to God. Their souls are no longer open and connected to God. In fact, they *hide* from him. Their relationships are all broken.

Now, of course, God knew what had happened, but he wants to call them to account. The way the

---

judgment scene is laid out is actually very interesting. It makes use of a Hebrew literary device called *chaiastic structure*. The scene begins with Adam, and God asks Adam what he has done. Adam blames Eve. God next moves to Eve, and she blames the serpent. The center of this scene is what God says to the serpent. Then we move back to Eve, and finally end where we started, with God talking to Adam. The reason I point this out is because this particular structure calls attention to what is at the center – that is, the judgment upon the serpent. We can sometimes lose sight of this, and say it is all about the consequences of sin for human beings. True, it is about that. But the main point is what God said to the serpent. It is the heart of this passage, and it is shown to be the heart of the passage by this chaiastic structure.

I've pointed this out before, but I just want to mention again that God calls Adam to account first. He knew what had happened. But he held Adam responsible before Eve. Adam's response is so much the way we all are tempted to be (male or female). He doesn't accept responsibility. He blames Eve – and incredibly, he tries to blame God himself. He says, “it was the woman. You know, the one *you* put here with me.” But, as I have said before, the rest of the Bible clearly teaches that sin entered the world through Adam – it was *his* responsibility. So God doesn't let him off the hook. In the first section, God holds him accountable. In the closing section at the end of the passage the consequence to Adam is hard work and toil. Adam was made – before sin – to enjoy work and to conquer and do stuff. But now it will be hard, difficult, and burdensome, even dangerous. And also he and Eve are forced to leave the perfect Garden, planted by God's own green thumb.

Eve is next. Taking a page from Adam's book, she also says, it's not her fault – the serpent made her do it. God provides consequences to her too, in the second part of this section. She was created to be a wife and a mother. But now she will experience physical difficulty and emotional distress in these things.

The heart of the passage, as I have mentioned, is what God says to the serpent.

<sup>14</sup> So the LORD God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, “Cursed are you above all the livestock and all the wild animals!

You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life.

<sup>15</sup> And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”

First, God cursed him. Just think for a moment about what it means to be cursed by God. God did not curse Adam or Eve – he cursed the ground because of Adam, but not Adam himself. But God personally curses the devil. He then decrees the devil's fate. Remember, Satan was proud and wanted to be the highest of all beings. So God makes him lower even than the animals. He makes him eat dust like the snake. And then God strikes the nail into Satan's coffin – he has a plan. A child, born of a human mother (but, but implication, not of a human father) will destroy the devil and his works. The devil will “bruise the heel” of this child (which I believe is a reference to the physical harm Jesus experienced at the crucifixion) but in turn, he will crush Satan's head.

This is not just a judgment on Satan – it is also a promise to Adam and Eve and all their descendants that God has already made a plan to destroy evil without destroying love. It is a promise to undo sin, to undo what Adam and Eve cannot undo themselves – to undo death.

That promised child, is of course Jesus. We celebrate his birth during this time of year. We like to think of him as a sweet little baby. And I'm sure he was. But he didn't come just so we could think about shepherds and angels singing and Christmas pageants and such. He was promised to us in the ancient mists of the past, after our ancestors had committed unspeakable, eternal suicide. He came into the world as a warrior, a rescuer, to destroy the devil and his works, and save us from death and all its manifestations.