

GENESIS 3:1-21
A LOVING INVITATION

“The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.””
– Genesis 2:(15-17).

To understand our text I just read God’s commandment that comes right before it, the commandment that Eve and Adam broke. It’s a simple commandment. Don’t eat of the fruit of that tree. Understanding the consequence is not so easy. Our translation of God’s words reads, “You shall surely die”, but the Hebrew is “death you shall die”, or “dying you shall die.” The consequence was never to be an instantaneous death, but just a life that will lead to death. It’s the life we live now. From the moment we’re born, we’re dying, and dying we will die, because the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23).

Eve changes God’s words to say that the instant she touched the fruit she would drop dead. The serpent responds by saying that there will be no death for Adam and Eve to die. So Eve responds thinking she was deceived by God. The fruit was good to eat. The fruit looked delightful, maybe it was a pomegranate. The fruit would make her wise. And Adam was right beside her and he ate of the fruit as well. So we can’t pass this off as all the woman’s fault, as some people like to do, which is exactly what we see happening in our text – passing the blame onto someone else.

Our text is one long conversation between the serpent and Eve, and between God, Adam, Eve and the serpent. We’ve looked at the first conversation between the serpent and Eve, where our world fell apart, and the taint of original sin fell upon us, now being passed down from one generation to another. So let’s pick up and think about the conversation with God in it.

God steps into the picture for a walk in the garden. Wouldn’t that be something for God to take an afternoon stroll down main street? Where would you be hiding at that time? Adam and Eve hid among the trees.

“Where are you Adam?” Adam was avoiding God. God wasn’t playing hide and seek. He knew where Adam was, and why. So God tried to call Adam out of his hiding, out of his sin. God was giving Adam and Eve a chance to repent. What would’ve happened if they had repented? We don’t know. We can only deal with what did happen.

Adam was afraid of God. He was afraid not just because he suddenly realized he was naked. He had stood naked before God before, and there was no problem then. He was afraid because he knew he had done wrong in God’s sight, and he didn’t want the nakedness of his sin to be bared before God.

Yet, God doesn't condemn Adam. He gives Adam another invitation to repent. "Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" The answer was simple, "Yes, Lord I did that which You told me not to do. I have sinned against You Lord God." But that wasn't the answer that Adam gave. Adam blames the woman. Adam blames God. Adam blames the woman again. Then he admits that he ate the fruit of that forbidden tree. It's a wonder he doesn't blame God for putting the tree in the garden in the first place. I hear people blame God for making that tree.

Still today people see sin and all that's bad in this world as God's fault. God made the tree. God made the serpent. God made the fruit. God made the woman. God gave the command to not eat the fruit. God gave Adam and Eve the ability to do wrong. It's all God's fault.

Who's fault is it? Why did you hit the parked car? Well, if they had parked within the white lines, you wouldn't have hit them. If your spouse wasn't arguing with you, you would've been paying better attention. If your kids had been ready to go on time you wouldn't have been so rushed. If it hadn't snowed you would've had more control of your car. It's their fault. It's your spouse's fault. It's your kids' fault. It's God's fault. Yes, you hit that other car, but it's not your fault.

That's not the way to repent or confess your sins. Adam is not a glowing example to look to when it comes to dealing with our sins. But we do learn very easily from Adam. We pass our guilt onto others. We claim victimhood status so that we have an excuse, and you can't blame that poor victim for their actions. There's plenty of guilt to go around in this world, but it's not my fault. There's always someone else to blame. All I know for sure is it's not me. We've learned well from Adam and Eve.

When Eve was asked, "What is this that you have done?" She said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate." She didn't say that the serpent asked her, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'", and when she tried to correct the serpent she changed God's word to say that she shouldn't even touch the fruit. Maybe she didn't trust herself, or didn't trust God, but she added an extra commandment, and off into the land of incorrect teaching about God she walked and came out on the other side sinful and unclean, not accepting responsibility but rather blaming a snake.

'Woe is me I am a man of unclean lips because I live among a people of unclean lips who keep getting me to commit sins', are words Isaiah never said. He didn't blame the other people for his unclean lips, but rather he said, "'Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!" Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he

had taken with tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth and said: "Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for." (Isaiah 6:5-7).

That's confession and absolution, not what we hear in our text today. However, even though Adam and Eve didn't rightly confess, but rather tainted their confessions with blaming others, including God, God still had compassion on them.

God pursued them, not waiting for them to come to Him and repent. He sought them out knowing what they had done. He let them play out their charade of blaming others – her fault, Your fault, his fault. Then He speaks directly and lovingly to them telling them that they're not only victims, but they're guilty, just as we're all guilty of sin. And so we all come here to receive God's persistent love and forgiveness.

This reading is full of God's grace, and if you can see it here, maybe you'll see it in other places as well, and find it easier to repent, and not pass the blame onto others. Look at repentance in view of God's incredible love and forgiveness. Repentance is contrition over sin and faith in the promise of God to forgive you. When we trust that we've got a gracious and loving Father we're always to repent. You see His forgiveness all over the rest of our lesson after the blame game is finished.

Go to the end and work backwards remembering that their punishment is that dying they will die. They don't know how long they have to live now. At the end God introduces the first sacrifice of animals for sin, maybe killing them right in front of Adam and Eve, and He uses their skins to make cloths for the husband and wife. In the list of consequences for their sin God tells Adam that he'll work the field and eat plants and bread. He knows that he'll have food to eat and time to grow, harvest and bake it. Eve will bear children, and Adam calls her the mother of all the living.

And among those offspring there will be one offspring, One Seed who will crush the head of the serpent, the head of Satan. This is the ultimate promise of forgiveness. Jesus would be the ultimate sacrifice for sin upon the cross for all mankind, and when Jesus comes back He'll completely defeat Satan.

Until then we live lives of repentance because we trust that God will forgive all our sins. God even gives us the ability to repent. "God exalted [Jesus] at His right hand as Leader and Saviour, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins" – Acts 5(:31). Knowing this we live free from condemnation, and free to try to live as children of God, knowing that salvation has already been won for us. We do good things now in thanks for that salvation, and if we mess up doing them, we're forgiven. Amen.