

# Genesis 3.8-13 Sermon / FBC / 08.16.20

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## Introduction

- † **[1: Mission]** Any of you watch the 1986 movie *The Mission*? Robert DeNiro plays a Spanish slave trader who, in a fit of jealous passion, kills his beloved half-brother. He reacts at first with self-isolation and depression, but then is talked by a Jesuit Missionary into a challenging act of penance, which included dragging around a huge burden including symbols of his sins. Penance is a Roman Catholic approach to dealing with sin, one which I do not believe is consistent with God's revelation. Thus penance would be what we call a "bottom line" approach to dealing with sin.
- As we will see today, penance was not the instinctive first response of Adam and Eve when they realized they had sinned, but their response to shame was just as errant, just as much a human bottom-line approach, inconsistent with God's plan of provision for his people.
  - Today, we will learn how they reacted and talk about one part of God's plan in contrast. Next week, we will learn how God responded to their sin and talk about the rest of God's plan.
  - **[2: title]** Before we get started, let's pray...
- † For the past six weeks, we have been studying the beginning of the Bible, to learn some essential truths for biblical theology and the literary structure which launches the biblical narrative.
- Tell me, who is the hero of the narrative? God. The first thing the Bible teaches is that there is one God, who has always existed. God is so powerful that, out of nothing and simply by speaking, God created the whole diverse universe to be good, meaning pure and useful for his purposes! God is the literary protagonist, the hero.
  - **[3: God]** We next learn that God created man and woman in his image. Why did he do this? Do you remember God's purposes for people, the four "Rs"? God created people to reflect God's character, represent God in all situations, reproduce God's image throughout the earth, and rule over creation in God's name.
  - **[4: image]** God equipped the first people, Adam and Eve, for success. He gave them spiritual awareness, heightened intellectual abilities, and direct communication with himself. He gave them work they would find fulfilling and a weekly Sabbath day for rest and worship. He gave them a paradise garden in which to live, with all the food and water they could want. He gave them partnership and fruitfulness in marriage. He gave them his own revelation, both promises and commands, including a simple moral philosophy.
  - **[5: top line]** What was that simple moral philosophy? They were to submit to God and they were to depend on God; trust and obey. Pretty simple, right? Take the top line: do what is right and trust God with the results and everything else.
- † All that is the setting of the narrative; what comes next is the crisis which drives the plot. We read last week that evil arose in the garden to deceive Eve, then Adam and Eve gave in to temptation and took the bottom line, going against God's revelation to eat the one forbidden fruit in the garden.
- Ironically, this fruit was from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, so it awakened in them a desire to decide for themselves what was right, rather than simply trusting and obeying God.

- It also gave them an awareness of evil and of their own shame. They lost their emotional innocence and their relational trust with each other; they lost their sense of identity and validation as God's image; and they experienced spiritual death in becoming alienated from God, because when they chose to sin, when they chose to take the bottom line of seeking their own desire, using their own method, they turned away, they walked away from God.

† That is the literary tension. Now let's turn to Genesis 3.8, because we need to find out how our protagonist-hero, Yahweh God, and his image bearers, Adam and Eve, will respond to this crisis.

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**[6: 3.8] Genesis 3.8 NIV: 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.**

- † As we saw in v.7 last week, after sinning, Adam and Eve felt naked and vulnerable before each other. Well, they felt naked and vulnerable before God too, so they hid.
- Before they sinned, they had a perfect relationship with God, they could talk with him, hear his voice clearly, they felt no urge to hide, probably they rejoiced in his presence, and they could trust that he was providing them with everything they needed. The Bible says they felt no shame. They did have God's threat of physical death if they rebelled.
  - Now they had shame, now they were acutely aware of that threat. So they covered themselves in fig leaves and then they hid from God. This alienation from God symbolizes their spiritual death: they were separated from God by their sin.
- † It seems silly to hide from God, doesn't it? Yet people today tend to do the same. Most hesitate to come to God through Christ initially, and then when we screw up, we isolate ourselves from God and the church, because our guilt would be uncovered. We hide our sins from our loved ones and we run from the light of God which would expose our corruption and shame.
- This is a terrible mistake, because it leaves us more vulnerable to evil: after all, it is the isolated sheep who is most vulnerable to the wolf or – as Peter referred to Satan – the lion on the prowl.
  - Also, in taking this wrong path, we allow sin and evil to win the day, since we are left unreconciled with God, still wallowing in our pit, depending on our own weak flesh to get out, instead of drawing strength and cleansing from God.

**[7: 3.9] Genesis 3.9 NIV: But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?"**

- † Can you picture this? I do this with my cats. When they get caught doing something wrong, they know they were wrong and they know I might be angry, so they run off and try to hide. I am not omniscient, all knowing, like God, but cats are stupid enough to make it easy: they think if they hide their heads, then I cannot see them, even though their butts are sticking out from under the couch or behind the curtain. "Kitty, where are you?" "Adam... where are you?"
- God's questions, of course, are rhetorical. Adam did not have to have his bottom hanging out of the bush, he might have been well hidden even, but God never lacks information, so he knew where Adam and Eve were hiding. That's the other reason it is silly to hide from God, he already knows our sins and what we are doing now.

- God asks his questions, you see, not to learn information, but to give the person an opportunity to answer. Here he is giving Adam an opportunity to step out and face the music.

**[8: 3.10] Genesis 3.10 NIV: He [Adam, the man] answered, “I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.”**

- † It is interesting to think of God moving around in the garden. Perhaps the Holy Spirit was causing a strong wind, making the tree branches, flowers, and grasses sway; in Hebrew, “spirit” and “wind” are the same word, [רוּחַ]. One way or another, God made noise in the garden, which Adam heard.
- † Adam was afraid. He says he was afraid because he was naked. We know from v.7 he had clothed himself with leaves, so why does he say this? Maybe he was dissembling a little, pointing to embarrassment about physical nakedness, rather than the real problem.
  - The Old Testament often uses nakedness to symbolize being stripped to vulnerability, and Adam definitely felt vulnerable. He felt his shame; he knew God had threatened physical death; he knew he had betrayed God, gone against God’s will, failed to trust and obey, failed to be God’s image because he failed to reflect God’s character, failed to represent God in that situation with his wife and the snake, and failed to rule over the snake in God’s name.
  - Yeah, he felt vulnerable, so he wanted to cover his nakedness and he wanted to hide from God. It is good to be aware of our shame; you cannot be humble or repentant unless you are aware of your sin. It is a mistake, however, to let that shame deceive us into moving even farther away from God. That is a bottom-line reaction.
  - Instead of letting fear of punishment take us away from God, we need to let the fear of God bring us to our knees before God.

**[9: 3.11] Genesis 3.11 NIV: And he [God] said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?”**

- † We should look carefully when God asks questions. God knows everything, he knows everything that has ever happened, everything happening right now, and everything that will happen in the future. He already knows about Adam’s sin. So what is God doing here? God is giving Adam an opportunity to confess, to come clean before God. In the process he reminds Adam of the command Adam broke, the reason for his shame.
  - We like to rationalize our sin, would that work here? Adam and Eve were the first people to ever face temptation, they had no cultural experience upon which to draw, shouldn’t God give them a mulligan, as they say in golf, a “do over”?
  - This was their personal first try at fighting temptation and deception, shouldn’t God cut them some slack? This might have been their first day of life, shouldn’t God accept they were not yet settled into being his image?
  - God is not offering comfort here, instead he reminds Adam of the line he crossed. We try to make things into shades of gray, but God’s ethics are black and white: you are on the top line or the bottom line, in God’s light or hiding your sin in the shadows, following Christ or following Satan. To Adam and Eve’s credit, rationalizing in this way was not their approach.

- What about us? Have you spoken harshly to anyone lately, secretly been happy when someone else was disappointed, carried unforgiveness in your heart? Have you violated the mask ordinance and thus failed to honor your civil authorities? Have you failed to put others first, to share gospel truth, to serve on a church ministry team? We all have done something like this. The real question is, did you stop, kneel, confess, and ask for help doing better, or did you gloss over it as somehow justified or not that important in your mind?
- † **[10: 1 John]** Rather than rationalizing, Adam should confess; so should Eve. As it is futile to try to hide our sin, it is counterproductive to hide from God or deny our sin; it is best to immediately come before God and repentantly confess our sin. This is how Adam and Eve could show their submission to and dependence on God, their return to the top-line, by admitting their fault and asking for forgiveness.
- God made this clear in later revelation in **1 John 1.9 NIV: If we confess our sins, he [God] is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.** This is step one to getting right with God after sinning: confess.
  - This confession is not just saying, “I did it!” That might be just a statement of fact or even bragging, depending on how you say it. No, in the Bible, confession is repentant. That means you realize you have turned away from God by sinning, so you turn back to God [repentance] and admit your fault [confession]. Implied in this repentant confession is the intention of walking with God in the future, rather than repeating the sin, that’s part of turning back to God.
  - God gave Adam and Eve an opportunity to confess. Let’s see what they do.

**[11: 3.12] Genesis 3.12 NIV: The man said, “The woman *you* put here with me—*she* gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.”**

- † We saw last week that Adam failed in his responsibility to protect his wife from the snake, failed in his responsibility to protect his wife from deception and temptation and sin.
- We saw that Adam wasn’t even deceived, he willfully chose to sin, weakly following the lead of his wife who followed the guidance of a creature, instead of standing up for what he knew was right and protecting himself and his family.
  - Now he blames the woman for all this, and he blames God for sticking him with this woman! Do you remember how excited Adam was when he first saw the wife God had brought him? Now he says, “That woman *you* put here with me, it’s *her* fault!”
  - That’s Adam, the criminal who plays the victim card, who blames his crime on his circumstances. We have little sympathy for Adam, because we know all the advantages he was given.
  - Yet don’t we see ourselves in this? We might not live in paradise and we do have a corrupted nature, but we have spiritual rebirth through Christ and empowerment by the Holy Spirit to walk on the top line in victory over sin and in fulfillment of our purposes in life.
  - Yet don’t we make excuses when we falter? She made me angry, that’s why I spoke harshly; money is tight, so I have to work under the table; I have urges, that’s why I look at pornography; I feel stressed, so I have to take pills; I am busy, so I skip quiet time. We try to shift the blame, either onto someone else or our circumstances. This is just another form of rationalizing.

- My friends, let's give this up! When we sin, let's admit it, let's allow ourselves to feel the conviction that we have done wrong; let's confess the sin to God and repent, turning back to walk with God in his light, on the top line. Are you with me?

**[12: 3.13]** Genesis 3.13 NIV: Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The *serpent* deceived me, and I ate."

- † Adam blamed Eve, now Eve blames the snake. She failed to trust God, to obey God, to know and apply God's revelation, to resist temptation, to counter the snake and his deception, to represent God alongside Adam and fulfill the purpose for which God created her, but she blames the snake.
  - It's not our fault we are overweight; it's not our fault we look with lust; it's not our fault we base our self-image on popularity or wealth, and so pursue them more avidly than we pursue God.
- † Adam and Eve distorted the truth when answering God. The snake deceived Eve and she led Adam to doing the wrong thing, but they allowed the deception and they succumbed to temptation.
  - Now they should take responsibility, confess their sin to God and repent so they are back on the top-line, walking with God instead of in sin. They did admit their actions, but their answers indicate they are still thinking bottom line, they are being dishonest with themselves and with God. They are trying to shift blame instead of accepting responsibility for their actions.
- † **[13: hide]** Let's take a step back and ask, why were Adam and Eve so vulnerable to temptation? They already lived in paradise, they already had everything they could need. Let's think about our own desires. Most of us do not *need* much: if you have a roof over your head and five dollars in your pocket, you are doing well by historical and even worldly standards today. Most of us qualify as wealthy in biblical and historical terms. Yet we have lots of material desires, don't we? Why?
  - The snake helped Eve to focus on this fruit, and as she dwelled upon it, she came to think that it was attractive, good to eat, and useful for gaining wisdom. Likewise, we have advertisements and peer pressure bombarding us with images of products, trying to sell us on the same concepts: buy this and you will be happy.
  - And we have other vulnerabilities to overcome, results of our corrupted nature, like jealousy, greed, lust, idle heads and hands, self-indulgence, and more, all making it easier to be tempted.
- † Adam and Eve's decision to go against God's will, God's revelation, ultimately came down to a failure to trust God and his provision. The snake convinced Eve that God was keeping something good from them, that they should not trust God's provision, but go get what they wanted in their own way. In other words, they should abandon the top-line as uncertain and take the bottom-line to be sure of getting what they wanted.
  - Even for mature believers this can be a problem from time to time. My daughter is struggling right now because her prayers are not being answered, or at least not the way she wants in the timing she wants. This struggle is common for adults too.
  - What if you are barely getting by financially and you can see no way out of debt? What if you are turning forty and have not yet found a spouse? What if your dearest loved ones do not know Christ? It is tempting to try to force something to happen – especially in our culture of instant gratification, of fierce independence combined with a sense of entitlement – while it is hard to wait on God's timing, not even sure whether God will give you what you want.

- † Also, why were Adam, or at least Eve, vulnerable to deception? I wonder how long they had been alive before this happened. The Bible does not give any indication; but how long would Satan have waited to make his move? This might be Adam and Eve's first or second day of life.
  - In any case, they apparently did not know God well enough to trust him in all things, they did not know God's character well enough to see through the snake's lies, they had not embraced God's revelation as sacred truth. I'd say most people struggle with these same vulnerabilities.
- † We need to do our best to counter the deceptive and tempting influences that come upon us every day, from our own flesh, from the fallen culture in which we live, and from evil forces.
  - But when we do succumb, let's repentantly confess to God right away, since this is God's provision for re-declaring our intention to trust and obey on the top-line, for getting back right with him after we have sinned.
  - Let's stop rationalizing our sin, let's stop shifting the blame, let's stop hiding our sins in the closet and avoiding God and his church out of fear. Let's instead own up to our failures like people of integrity, people created in God's image, people seeking to reflect God's character and represent God in our society; let's own up and accept whatever repercussions there are for our sins, rejoicing in the grace God gives us to get right with him again and again.

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## Conclusion

- † **[14: verses]** God later would write confession of sin into the Law for Israel. For example, in **Leviticus 5.5 NIV**, God told Moses: **"...when anyone becomes aware that they are guilty in any of these matters, they must confess in what way they have sinned."**
  - Again, in **Numbers 5.6-7 NIV**, God spoke through Moses: **"Any man or woman who wrongs another in any way and so is unfaithful to the LORD is guilty and must confess the sin they have committed."**
  - In **Leviticus 26.40-42 NIV**, God said if the nation of Israel got so bad that God exiled them, the first step toward restoration would be **"...if they will confess their sins and the sins of their ancestors—their unfaithfulness and their hostility toward [God]..."**
  - As wisdom for the ages, God gives us **Proverbs 28.13 NIV: Whoever conceals their sins does not prosper, but the one who confesses and renounces them finds mercy.**
  - You might or might not agree with my analysis that confession was a part of God's plan for restoration even back in the Garden of Eden, but certainly it is God's plan for us today. We saw earlier that for the church age, John wrote in **1 John 1.9 NIV: If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.**
  - **[15: title]** I want to close with a psalm of David, **Psalms 32 NIV: Blessed is the one whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the one whose sin the LORD does not count against them and in whose spirit is no deceit. When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy on me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer. Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD." And you forgave the guilt of my sin.**
  - Let's pray . . .