



"Then the eyes of both were opened and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths. And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD 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, and I hid myself.' He said, 'Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?' The man said, 'The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.' Then the LORD God said to the woman, 'What is this that you have done?' The woman said, 'The serpent deceived me, and I ate.' The LORD God said to the serpent, 'Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.' To the woman he said, 'I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.' And to Adam he said, 'Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, "You shall not eat of it," cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.' The man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living. And the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them. Then the LORD God said, 'Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever—' therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life" (Genesis 3:7–24).

It's amazing the damage one little snake can cause. It's amazing the damage one choice can create. It's amazing the damage that comes from one bite of fruit. You can trace all of your problems back to that snake/choice/bite. The Bible is not disconnected stories; it's a single story about God, what's wrong with this world, and where help comes from.

I think Genesis 1-3 are the three most important chapters of our Bible. The story starts in Eden; actually, it starts with God. It's the dynamics of sin and temptation: (snake/choice/bite) the wrong voice! And it's the consequences of sin.

The doctrine of original sin needs no proof. Just look around you. We can trace all of what's wrong with our world and wrong with us back to the Garden of Eden. Praise God, we can also trace all our hope back to this same Garden.

How Sin Damages

The woman and the man take hold of the forbidden fruit, then they take a bite. I don't know if it happened as they chewed the fruit, as their taste buds picked up the flavor, or after they swallowed that first bite. The serpent had promised their eyes would be opened. The serpent's promise of eyes opened came true, but the dream of enlightenment didn't materialize. *"Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths" (v.7).*

They had been naked all their lives, *"naked and unashamed."* But for the first time, they feel **shame!** This is the first experience of insecurity. This is loss of childlike innocence. The man and the woman now look at themselves and feel naked, guilty, humiliated, insecure, lost.

Long ago in the garden when our relationship with God was severed, our relationship with ourself was severed. Sin damages our relationship with ourself. We're just like Adam and Eve; we're not at ease with ourselves. We're ashamed of who we really are, so we hide from ourself. We're so insecure, so ashamed of who we really are—our naked selves.

So we do what they did. We search for fig leaves to cover ourselves with. But it doesn't work. Human solutions to this problem, don't work. Fig leaves can't fix the insecurity that haunts us.

What fig leaves do you hide behind? You're trying to prove yourself to your self, to God, to others with these leaves. Sin does this through religion, self-help, advertising, etc. They offer fig leaves to fix your shame and insecurity. They offer you fig leaves because they don't understand how deep the problem really is. Christianity offers you something far different, far better.

After gathering the big leaves and sewing them together in different configurations, the man and the woman try on their new clothes: fig leaf boxer shorts, fig leaf sweaters. Then, they hear God walking in the garden. They hide from God. They hide behind a tree! Trees God created for their enjoyment, they now use to hide from God. Man wasn't created to hide from God. Verse 8 says they *"hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God..."* The man and woman had accepted the wrong presence. Because they'd accepted the presence of the snake (Satan), now they can't be comfortable in the presence of the one who created them and loved them.

Adam says he's "*afraid*" (v.10) of God. It's the first mention or experience of fear in the Bible. Man had been secure with himself and safe with God; now he's insecure with himself and unsafe with God. Sin damages our relationship with ourself and our relationship with God. And hiding behind fig leaves and hiding behind trees doesn't fix it.

Hiding behind their leaves and trees, the man and woman begin to talk. What comes out of their mouth is blame. Nobody takes responsibility for the bite, for the sin; blame is cast and we see that sin also damages our relationship with others.

Malignant tumors are ambitious. Unlike benign tumors that generally stay put, malignant tumors have two goals in life: to survive and conquer new territory. To be human is to be radically relational. But sin is a malignant tumor that spreads and damages your relationship with yourself, God, and others.

What's fundamentally wrong with our world, what's wrong with me, what's wrong with you, isn't our circumstances, the environment we're in, our economy, our lack of self-esteem, what the psychiatrist says, or the family we grew up in. What's wrong is the cancer of original sin. And we've all got the cancer. We're all sick! We all need a doctor. The doctrine of original sin puts everybody on the planet on the same level—Christianity is a religion of equality, nobody is better than anybody else, we've all been diagnosed. We're all sick. We all chose to bite the fruit. We're all hiding—behind our fig leaves/trees/blame—from God, self, others. It's a big mess.

We're all sick. And it's going to take more than a doctor to cure us. Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote: "The most experienced psychologist or observer of human nature knows infinitely less of the human heart than the simplest Christian who lives beneath the Cross of Jesus. The greatest psychological insight, ability, and experience cannot grasp this one thing: what sin is. Worldly wisdom knows what distress and weakness and failure are, but it does not know the godlessness of men. And so it also does not know that man is destroyed only by sin and can be healed only by forgiveness. Only the Christian knows this. In the presence of a psychiatrist I can only be a sick man; in the presence of a Christian brother I can dare to be a sinner. The psychiatrist must first search my heart and yet he never plumbs its ultimate depth. The Christian brother knows when I come to him: here is a sinner like myself, a godless man who wants to confess and yearns for God's forgiveness. The psychiatrist views me as if there were no God; the brother views me as I am before the judging and merciful God in the Cross of Jesus Christ."

How God Restores

Before they hear his voice, they hear the sound of God, walking in the garden in the cool of the day. Man and woman take their positions, hiding behind the tree. We're just three chapters into

the Bible, and man and woman are hiding from God. What will God do? Will he smite them right away?

Man invented a game called **hide**. It involves fig leaves, trees, and blame. But God invented a better game, a game called **hide and seek**. The sinners hide, the Savior seeks. Our God is a pursuing God! God has not abandoned his garden. He visits the garden and calls to the man. We're introduced to the characters in the correct order: man, woman, serpent. Rebellion happened in the reverse order: serpent, woman, man. Now the Lord corrects the order: man, woman, serpent. He holds the man primarily responsible.

God asks the man three questions. God asks questions that he already knows the answer to. Why? These are opportunities for repentance. God doesn't **drive** the man out of hiding, he **draws** him out. In this game of Hide & Seek, it takes a voice, it takes a question, to find the lost. God is pursuing some of you today. You hear his footsteps in the garden. Will you hear his voice?

God asks his first question: "*Where are you?*" Adam needed to be asked this question. What would Adam do with this question? Would he allow himself to be found? Would he take responsibility, be honest, repent, come out of hiding? This remains an urgent question today for us: Where are you? Look around you. What trees/fig leaves are you hiding behind?

Adam doesn't confess to the first question. God asks him two more questions. The third question is: "*Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?*" Adam's answer: "*The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.*" Blame! From poetry to blame!

Now God asks the woman a question: "*What is this that you have done?*" The woman responds: "*The serpent deceived me, and I ate.*" Just like her man, the woman blames. Nobody is taking any responsibility. Adam and Eve are the first to claim the infamous status of "victim." They're just victims: "it was the woman's fault, it was the serpent's fault, it's not my fault." Evidently disobeying God is nobody's fault.

Now God speaks to the serpent. Unlike the man and woman, the serpent doesn't get a question. God doesn't give the evil serpent any opportunity to explain himself. God doesn't question the serpent; he curses the serpent. "Curse" is a stunning word in a book about blessing. Blessing is an arrow moving forward; curse is a dead end. There will be an end to the serpent, an end to evil.

After speaking to the serpent, God speaks again to the man and woman. It's so important to note: God curses the serpent, but he doesn't curse the man and woman. God judges the man and woman. There are consequences for their sin, but he does not curse them. There is still blessing for them.

What does God say to them? In short: what has been held so dear in these first chapters of Genesis is now laced with pain, thorns, sweat, and dust. Marriage, relationships, work, being fruitful and multiplying, now involves pain. But this pain is a strange gift from God. Because now Adam and Eve feel pain in their marriage, and in their parenting, and in their work, and it drives them back to God. God uses the pain to teach them that they're not to find their home in this world, but in God.

God made them and God made you for something far bigger and better: himself. The antidote to that pain you feel, it isn't a human relationship, a better marriage, that job you want, more money, kids, or fancier fig leaves to cover your blemishes. It's God! The pain, the longing you feel—only God can satisfy. You were made for him! The deepest explanation of who you are/ what you feel comes from this ancient garden.

The man and woman stand there, listening to God curse the serpent and judge their sin. There still hiding behind the trees. Adam's still wearing his fig leaf boxer shorts. These are uncomfortable, inadequate clothes. They don't keep him warm and they certainly don't cover up his guilt and shame.

God takes action. This story is so full of grace. ***“And the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them” (v.21).*** God meets an immediate need—they need clothes to cover their skin and make them warm. And God meets an ultimate need—they need clothes to cover their sin and make them whole. This is the first act of atonement in the Bible. It took a sacrifice, the costly sacrifice of an animal, to adequately clothe the sinful man and woman for the presence of God. Sinful humans must be adequately clothed if we're to appear before God.

Eventually a much greater sacrifice would be required. Before he clothed the man and woman, God spoke about this greater sacrifice. Genesis 3:15, to the serpent: ***“I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring, he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”*** The rest of the Bible is the search for The Serpent Crusher. As we read our Bibles, we're wondering, who is The Serpent Crusher who will step up, crush Satan's head, and defeat evil?

Throughout the centuries, Satan does everything he can to prevent the offspring of the woman from winning, to make sure the Serpent Crusher doesn't show up. He has Pharaoh destroy all the baby boys born to the Hebrew people in Egypt (midwives preserve one: Moses, but he's not the one). He has Herod destroy all the baby boys born in Bethlehem (yet a baby named Jesus escapes). It all started with this garden promise of The Serpent Crusher. And after centuries of waiting, this baby named Jesus grows into a man named Jesus.

A poisonous snake comes slithering into this family's house, ready to strike. And one brave man steps forward and begins to stomp on the snake's head. He crushes the snake. He saves the

family, but only after he's bit in the heel, the poison goes into him, and he dies. The promise is that a descendant of Adam and Eve will come, but in the process receive a fatal bite and lose his life.

Adam should've done this in the garden...stomped on the snake. Adam failed, but the second Adam didn't. Jesus didn't fail. Adam was tempted in Paradise. Jesus was tempted in the wilderness, fasting 40 days and 40 nights. When Jesus was hungry and starving, Satan also tempted him to eat, to take a bite of food. Jesus resisted, he beat Satan. But Satan still had that poisonous bite. He took his bite at the cross, as a spike was driven into Jesus' heel. It looked like defeat. The long-awaited offspring of the woman died. For the first time someone was in the grave that didn't deserve to be there.

But three days later, the Serpent Crusher rose from the grave. Death, evil, my sin, your sin, and the serpent couldn't keep him pinned down. The serpent loses. The Serpent Crusher wins!

How We Respond

“The man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living” (v.20). Adam names his wife Eve (*chava*—Life-Giver). She didn't have a name until now, just “woman.” It's a beautiful name. Adam believes God's promise that he and his wife will live (there is a solution to their sin problem that doesn't involve their immediate death) and that his wife will bear offspring that will defeat Satan, crush the snake.

How are we going to respond to this story? Here are two ways.

Take Responsibility

We need to do what Adam and Eve failed to do: take responsibility for our sin. The Christian life doesn't really start until the excuses stop, until we quit playing the victim card. Have you taken responsibility for your life, for your sin, before God? What I mean by taking responsibility is repentance. Do you give God repentance, or do you give him excuses?

C.S. Lewis said: “I find that when I think I am asking God to forgive me I am often in reality (unless I watch myself very carefully) asking Him to do something quite different. I am asking him not to forgive me but to excuse me. But there is all the difference in the world between forgiving and excusing... If one was not really to blame then there is nothing to forgive. In that sense forgiveness and excusing are almost opposites... the trouble is that what we call ‘asking God's forgiveness’ very often really consists in asking God to accept our excuses... we shall go away imagining that we have repented and been forgiven when all that has really happened is that we have satisfied ourselves with our own excuses...we are all too easily satisfied about ourselves. All the real excusing He will do. What we have got to take to Him is the inexcusable bit, the sin.”

Don't give God your excuses; give him your sin.

Martin Luther wrote: "When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, 'Repent', he willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance." Not just on the bad days when you've blown it in the garden. If we're going to really repent, really take responsibility, we need to repent of our fig leaves. What are your fig leaves?

Your fig leaves are what you put on, thinking it will justify you before God, before other people, before yourself, what you think will cover your shame and insecurity and make you presentable. You? Hiding? It's not until we acknowledge that what we're trying to cover ourselves with is inadequate that we can appreciate how God covers over our sin through the blood of Jesus, the Serpent Crusher.

Fight for Faith

Adam eventually exercises faith in God's word. Genesis has one message: live life on the basis of God's word/voice. Everything went wrong in the garden because the man and woman listened to the wrong voice: the serpent's. Instead of listening to and obeying God's voice, they listened to and obeyed the wrong voice. Everything went wrong in the garden because Adam and Eve forgot to fight. Adam and Eve should have fought!

Fighting is central to the Christian life. Fighting for faith in God's word is the great key to the Christian life. Faith doesn't work automatically. Faith is a muscle you must build. Faith is a weapon you must pick up and use. Beware as you go about your week, watch out, there are snakes in the grass everywhere you look. When the snake shows up at your door, what are you going to do? "Fear knocked at the Door. Faith answered. There was no one there." You've got to make sure that Faith answers the door. Fight back! When the snake-voices show up, fight back with faith...in God's voice, faith in The Serpent Crusher.

Fight for faith the way Robert Lewis Dabney did 100 years ago. He was a famous theologian who, when approaching death, wrote a letter to his friend Clement Vaughan, wondering if he would have enough faith:

"You want more faith. Do you remember, in the stress of your trial, how faith comes? Let me remind you, although you know it. Just here is where Christians make a great mistake. When they want more faith...instead of looking at the things to be believed, they turn their eyes inward and scrutinize their faith. They want to see something in their faith to trust in, something that will certify their faith. Of course, self-examination is all right, but not when it practically substitutes faith for our Lord... Now, suppose a traveler comes to a bridge, and he is in doubt about trusting himself to it. What does he do to breed confidence in the bridge? He looks at the bridge; he gets down and examines it. He

doesn't stand at the bridge-head and turn his thoughts curiously in on his own mind to see if he has confidence in the bridge. If his examination of the bridge gives him a certain amount of confidence, and yet he wants more, how does he make his faith grow? Why, in the same way; he still continues to examine the bridge. Now, my dear old man, let your faith take care of itself for awhile, and you just think of what you are allowed to trust in. Think of the Master's power, think of his love; ...Think of what he has done, his work. That blood of his is mightier than all the sins of all the sinners that ever lived. Don't you think it will master yours?

"Now, dear old friend, ...May God give you grace, not to lay too much stress on your own faith, but to grasp the great ground of confidence, Christ, and all his work and all his personal fitness to be a sinners refuge. Faith is only an eye to see him. I have been praying that God would quiet your pains as you advance, and enable you to see the gladness of the gospel at every step. Good-bye. God be with you as he will. Think of the Bridge!"

Think of the Bridge! That's how you fight for faith. Quit listening to the serpent's voice, quit listening to your own voice, quit your introspection and quit looking at your faith, look at the source of your faith—the Bridge. The two pillars of a healthy Christian life are repentance and faith: taking responsibility and fighting for faith.

It's amazing all the damage one little snake can cause. The Garden of Eden is compromised now. ***"He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life" (v.24).*** Cherubim are not cute. They are fierce, winged lions with human heads and flaming swords. Cherubim elsewhere are guardians of the Holy of Holies, their forms embroidered on the veil. When The Serpent Crusher hung on the cross, that veil was torn in two.

We now have access to God, but we're not going back to Eden, we're going somewhere better. Eden is good, but not perfect. Revelation 22:14: ***"Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by its gates."***

It's amazing the damage that one snake/choice/bite can reap. It's amazing the redemption of one Serpent-Crushing Savior who gives robes of forgiveness. Our choice is to take responsibility and live by faith in the Serpent Crusher.

This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.

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