

St. Augustine's Sermons

Calgary, Alberta

October 21, 2007

The Rev. Jonathan Gibson

The Text: Genesis 3:1-13

The Title: "The Fall and the Fallout"

8:30 and 10:30 am, Holy Communion

The Text

1 Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made.

He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?" **2** And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, **3**but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" **4** But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. **5** For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." **6** So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. **7** Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.

8 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. **9** But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?" **10**

And he said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself." **11** He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" **12** The man said, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate." **13** 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."

Introduction

For the past month we have been studying Genesis. Thus far in our study we have concentrated on chapter 1 and 2. In these passages we are given a picture of how God intended the world to be when he created it. As we move into Genesis 3 we are given a picture of the world as it now is. We cannot understand ourselves apart from this text. Here is the passage in all of Scripture that tells us that we have this ingrained desire for independence from God. The Bible's diagnosis of this is characterized by that three letter word Sin. Sin needs to be understood in two ways. First it needs to be understood as a disease. Because we live after Genesis 3, each person in this room is infected by sin. Even for those of us who are Christians this is so. ¹ If there is a disease there are also the symptoms of sin. There are two headings that will help us get a handle on what is going on in this text as we think of the disease and symptoms of sin.

The first heading is *The Fall* and the second heading is *The Fallout*. Under *The Fall* we will look at the disease. Under the *Fallout* we will look at the two main symptoms that are the result of *The Fall*.

The Fall

As we look at the first seven verses of this passage the disease of Sin has two main characteristics. They are unbelief and pride.

¹ Thomas Cranmer, the Anglican Reformer captured this point so clearly in Article 9. It reads: *Original sin is not found merely in the following of Adam's example. It is rather to be seen in the fault and corruption which is found in the nature of every person who is naturally descended from Adam. The consequence of this is that man is far gone from his original state of righteousness. In his own nature he is predisposed to evil, the sinful nature in man always desiring to behave in a manner contrary to the Spirit. In every person born into this world there is found this predisposition which rightly deserves God's anger and condemnation. This infection within man's nature persists even within those who are regenerate. This desire of the sinful nature, which in Greek is called phronema sarkos and is variously translated the wisdom or sensuality or affection or desire of the sinful nature, is not under the control of God's law. Although there is no condemnation for those that believe and are baptized, nevertheless the apostle states that any such desire is sinful.*

Because we all are influenced by what is described in Genesis 3 we need to understand that our natural tendency is to question and distrust God. It is only as we come to live by faith that this natural tendency is replaced by the supernatural desire to trust and obey God. Apart from faith we want to separation from the LORD God and this is because that malevolent power called Satan is at work subtly drawing our souls farther way from God.

Loot at verse 1:

The Serpent said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?"

Now let's think about the serpent for a minute. The Hebrew word which we translate "serpent" is "nachash" This word means literally "to shine," or in the noun form here, "a shining one." If you read it that way, an entirely different being emerges.

Now the shining one was more subtle than any other wild creature that the LORD God had made.²

I don't have time to trace how in the New Testament there is a development of thought where depicting the devil as a serpent ties into this story in Genesis three. What is worth noting is that in 2 Corinthians 11 Paul refers to the devil as both the serpent and the Shining one. In 11:2 he writes:

"3 But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ."

Then later in the chapter at verse 14 he says this:

"even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light."

What is important to understand for our purposes is that the issue here is not primarily about a talking snake. The issue at hand is that this creature, who makes himself visible to Eve, appears as an angel of light and is very attractive indeed. He is crafty because he interacts with her in such a way so that he entices her and Adam away from God and towards living autonomously. Notice that it is this that Paul underscores in 2 Corinthians. There is nothing Satan wants more than for you and me to be led astray for a sincere and pure devotion to

² Ray Stedman: The Enticement of Evil (<http://www.raystedman.org/genesis/0314.html>)

Christ. He wants to plant within each of us the desire to not believe the LORD God.

So the question then is: How does Satan entice Eve and by extension, how does he entice us to unbelief. In James 1:14-15 we are told:

...each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin; and sin when it is full-grown brings forth death.³

This is exactly what we see happening here. Eve is lured by the Shining One to question God's love for her and his will for her. He plants within her the desire to doubt God. Then he plays with her so that once the desire is conceived it will give birth to sin. This happens as she sees that the fruit is both pleasing to the sight and touch and good to the taste. Desire matures, just as a fetus once conceived, but when sin is born, Eve and Adam become autonomous, but they are also trapped and death enters into their world.

There is the strategy of the Devil. It is his strategy here in the Garden of Eden and it is his strategy in your life and mine. The only difference between us and Eve in the Garden is that, for her, the Tempter stood outside. She was innocent and he stood outside attempting to reach into her mind and thoughts. Since the Fall, the Tempter is within us and has access to us, so that we are never out of reach of temptation; we are always exposed. This is why we cannot run from it. We can go a thousand miles away but we will never thereby avoid temptation. We carry a tempter within us wherever we go. He has access to us continually and at the very heart of his intention day by day is to have us choose to live an autonomous unbelieving life.

Satan misleads Eve by creating a picture of the LORD God that makes him into a dictatorial sovereign who establishes nothing but prohibitions.

Eve responds in verse 2 this way:

2 And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, 3 but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" 4 But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. 5 For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

³ James 1:14-15

Even though Satan is subtle crafty as he plants doubt in Eve's soul, she is able to counter his false claim with the truth. Yet she takes the truth farther than it needs to be taken. God had not said anything about touching the tree. All he had said was they are not to eat from it. There is a subtle play that goes on between the serpent and the woman until she comes to the place of seeing that there is something attractive about disobedience. I think this is a very important thing to underscore. Because of our nature, we are actually not only prone to disobey God's word but we actually want to do it. And when we are in this place unbelief gives birth to pride.

Obedience is something that is unnatural for us. Note that the evil one is not an atheist. He believes in God but wants to distort the truth about God. He doesn't want us to deny God completely, instead he wants us to live in this word without any real need for the Lord God because we have a distorted understanding of Him.

Once we have displaced God we can then determine how we shall live. This is what is at the crux of verses 6-7

6 So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit⁾ and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. 7 Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked.

We need to see that what is really going on here is not primarily that Eve and Adam are law breakers but they want to be law makers. They find it attractive to live in a world where the point of reference to determining what is right and wrong is not centred in God but in themselves. This is something that is so powerful in us that it can only be by the renewing and transforming work of the Holy Spirit that we can become people who exclaim with the psalmist "I delight to do your will O God. I have hidden your law in my heart" This kind of prayer does not come naturally to us. What comes naturally is our wanting to be the ones who determine what is good and evil. But such a power is too great for us to handle. We have so much empirical evidence to support this. All we have to do is open a newspaper, turn on the news, or look inside our own heart.

When we try to play God we have a problem. If I want to play God, you will want to play God too. Such a world, such a country, such a province, such a city, such a workplace or school, such a church or such a home rather than being paradise becomes hell on earth. There is only room in your heart and mine for one God. If I am that god, then we have a problem. If you and I allow the true God permission to

reign in our hearts than we are learning to live as God created us to live.

If the disease of sin is characterized by the two-fold problem of unbelief and pride, so too the symptoms of sin have a two-fold characteristic. They are shame and blame.

As so we move from The Fall to The Fallout.

The Fallout⁴

At verse 7 we read:

And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths. 8 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.

The first symptom of sin is shame. There is an instant loss of relationship with each other. As soon as Adam and Eve decide what is right and wrong they can't trust each other. There is no longer any of the vulnerability and harmony we read of at the end of chapter 2. I am frightened of you and what you might think of me. And you are frightened of me. All that God has created is replaced by shame. Our natural response to shame is not to turn back to God and say "Lord what have we done, please forgive us." It is to make these fig leaves. The fact that this action rises so spontaneously is proof of their guilt. This is a futile attempt to cover the symptom of their sins. All the fig leaves will not deal with the underlying guilt.

The way shame and guilt work is that it makes us want to avoid the presence of God. We naturally have lost our love for hearing God's voice. His voice comes as a reminder to them that they are trying to play God. That is why people do not naturally come to church. It is not because of busyness. It is because of disinterest and sin. It is because we are busy playing God and the one thing people do not want to do is to hear the true God speaking to us. His voice speaks deeply into our hearts and is the only thing that can deal with our guilt which we are so busily covering.

There is an irony here. Notice that Adam and Eve hide in the trees. These are the same trees in chapter two which were the good gift that God had given to them. We do the same thing. We use the good gifts

⁴ I am grateful to The Reverend David Short. In his sermon entitled "Snake on a Plain" he develops these ideas. What I have written here is largely taken from the latter part of Rev Short's sermon. (<http://www.stjohnsshaughnessy.org/files/29oct06.mp3>).

that God has given to us to hide from him. For some of us it might be a cause bigger than ourselves. It is busyness and a whole host of other socially acceptable addictions. God comes to us in great humility and asks us a series of questions. Where are you? Who told you? What have you done? It is only as we truly answer these questions that we can in turn respond to God and turn to him. Look at verses 10-13.

"Where are you?" 10 And he said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself." 11 He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" 12 The man said, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate." 13 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."

Because they will not answer the questions honestly shame leads to blame.

You notice what Adam does. He says in effect: "I am not responsible. I am a victim of my circumstances." He blames his wife and then God. "After all God, you are the one who gave this woman to me. You had better take your blame in this God." As Adam blames God and the woman, she in turn blames the serpent.

In doing this they have demonstrated that they have changed their allegiance from God to Satan. They no longer deal with the truth uprightly but twist the truth to justify themselves. And so do we. What the heart desires, the will chooses, the mind justifies and distorts the truth to our own advantage.

This permeates our whole being. We try to cover ourselves and we distort the truth. In so doing we avoid accountability and ultimately we blame God himself. When we do this we choose to side with Satan.

So how can the disease of unbelief and pride and the symptoms of shame and blame be countered? What is the treatment we need? There is only one. What we need is a new nature and a new humanity. We need a new Adam who will come from heaven and will remake our nature, washing it and cleansing it and bringing it so that it can be justified before God. We need a desperately big act of grace from God, bringing life and goodness.

Conclusion

I want to finish by taking moment to briefly look at a text from Romans 5.

You and I begin life not as pre Genesis 3 human beings but as post Genesis 3 human beings. It does not matter how nice we are the decision was taken for us in the Garden. We inherit the corruption from the first Eve and the first Adam. This is why unbelief and pride are natural for each one of us as is this desire to be free from God. In Romans 5:12 we read:

12 Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned.

Here is described the text we have considered this morning. The death referred to is shame and blame and the host of symptoms that flow from them. It also includes our physical death.

In verse 14 it is intimated that there is a Second Adam who is coming. This is of course Jesus Christ. Then as we read verse 17 we are told what it means for us that the Second Adam Jesus Christ has come.

17 For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.

The remarkable thing about verses 17 is that it tells us that what Christ has done does not just reverse what Adam has done it does much, much more. If our need is immense, which the Bible tells us it is, the provision of God is much, much, much greater. In Jesus Christ God gives us back far more than was lost in the garden. He does not just remove the alienation, guilt, shame and death. He brings us to something far greater. That is why the Bible moves not from the Garden of Eden to the Garden of Eden, but from the Garden to a great city. A grace filled, love filled, and life filled city. This is a city where all of the promises of the garden are there but perfected and fulfilled. All of the effects of our rebellion are much more than reversed. They are outdone by God's forgiving generosity and grace.

As we live in the present our opportunity is to live humbly by faith in Jesus Christ so that shame and blame can be replaced by forgiveness and truthfulness. As we do this we can receive the free gift of grace and the abundance of righteousness and so live as those who celebrate the effects of our baptism.

