

***Foundations: The Aftermath***  
***By Jason Huff***  
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***Luke 19:1-10; Romans 5:12-21; Genesis 3:10-24***

Our final Scripture reading today comes from Genesis 3:10-24. May God bless the reading of His holy, infallible, and perfect Word. "But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?" He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid." And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?" The man said, "The woman you put here with me -- she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it." Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate." 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. 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." To the woman he said, "I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you." To Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return." Adam named his wife Eve, because she would become the mother of all the living. The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them. And the LORD God said, "The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever." So the LORD God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life."

Over the pandemic, a couple of my family members have become big *Survivor* fans, going back and watching lots of past seasons. I hadn't watched *Survivor* since the very first season, but I recently joined them in watching a season from a few years ago. If you've ever watched *Survivor*, you know it's about a group of castaways selected to compete for a million dollars by outwitting, outplaying, and simply outlasting the rest of the group.

This season had all the plotting and scheming we expect from the show, but what made it enjoyable for me was how genuinely nice most of the cast was. A lot of seasons have people you love to hate, but this season, even the cast members who were at odds admitted their affection for one another. So it was shocking in the final tribal council when a contestant who had verbally and conscientiously played his game based on loyalty, honor, and integrity voted out his closest friend. He thought his friend was the one most likely to beat him, so at the last minute, he voted for the one person he said whose name he would never write down. It's the way the game is played; it was shocking but not surprising. Betrayals and blindsides are the name of the game. But when it came from someone who had been deeply trustworthy throughout the show, it went to show how in the right circumstances, we all might throw someone under the bus.

In many ways, it reminded me of the betrayals and blame game that happened in the aftermath of the very first sin. This is a difficult passage because *we* feel the results. The results of Adam and Eve's sin reverberate throughout the world every moment of every day. The curses of the fall still hold true. Yet in the middle of this tragedy, there is hope we'll talk about today.

If you were with us last week, you heard how humanity fell into sin – the temptation of Adam and Eve by the serpent, later identified as Satan, in the garden of Eden. We looked at how this very first temptation helps us identify temptations to sin even now, and we looked at the first consequences of Adam and Eve's choice to defy God. Adam and Eve were fleeing into the garden to make fig leaf coverings, with God calling out to them, "Where are you?"

Adam finally replies by telling God that he hid because "I was afraid because I was naked." God addresses the whole "naked" thing, because that's not knowledge Adam had before. And yet, even here, God is going to help Adam see just what's happened through his disobedience. Why is Adam afraid? Why is he afraid of God? This is important to note, because before sin, there was no fear. It points to a logical conclusion, one that God had warned about and promised: *death enters the world through sin, both physical and spiritual.*

Adam now fears God, and not in a good way. This isn't the awesome reverence of someone at worship appreciating the magnificence of God. This is the fear of punishment, suffering, and death. Nothing has changed on a physical level; Adam and Eve were naked before God before and there was nothing wrong with it. Now shame has overtaken them. They fear being seen. They can't even process their fear properly because their fear is about their physical state, not their disobedience. They don't even know why they are afraid; they just are.

This fear is ultimately of the punishment God had warned them would happen, and it has come. They don't realize it yet; they don't experience physical death for nearly a thousand years. Yet their spiritual death has already happened. Fear is the result – fear of God, fear of each other, fear of shame and embarrassment. They *were* innocent; *now*, they are guilty. Their fear is rooted in the idea of death; yet they don't even recognize that by defying their Creator, they have died to the spiritual life they had from God and through God.

And the next sign that spiritual death has hit is the reactions of Adam and Eve to God's questions. God knows that their knowledge of their state has come from eating from the forbidden tree. But rather than to accept responsibility for their actions, Adam and Eve only acknowledge their roles after foisting off responsibility on someone else. Adam passes the buck to Eve, and Eve passes the buck to the serpent. Adam even has the audacity to suggest that God is somehow responsible because God placed Eve with him. This too shows the spiritual death that has taken place. Instead of wanting to be right with God, they blame God for their state.

We would do well to heed the warning here. We who live in this part of history have the privilege of knowing God's son, Jesus. We know He has purchased salvation with His own blood for all who believe and trust in Him. But believing and trusting in Him means that we believe what He said about the necessity of repentance. And here's the truth of it from Genesis 3: *we can only repent of the sins for which we take responsibility.*

Modern psychology and systems theory looks for the reasons why we fail. And there's some truth to some of it. We fall into predictable traps based on the harmful actions of those around us when we grew up. The actions that hurt us when we are young tend to stick around and make us vulnerable to certain lures and temptations later in life. It's also true that systems in societies sometimes make things harder for certain groups. We can argue about which systems and which groups, of course, but there's some truth to it.

The problem is that we now have a culture where everyone is taught they are the victim. When it comes to sin, I hold no responsibility because I was a victim – of my parents, of my bullies, of my culture. I have a convenient excuse for why I've rebelled, why I've taken things into my own hands, why I've indulged my pleasures and can't be held responsible – someone else is always to blame.

But excuses will never rebuild a relationship, only responsibility. Taking responsibility for our own sin is the first sign that God may have brought us back to life spiritually and is going to work to bring us to spiritual maturity and wholeness. Adam and Eve show their spiritual death by immediately avoiding responsibility for what is obviously their choice. But taking responsibility for our sins and being genuinely grieved by them is a step in God's direction.

When I was young, I was always a bit confused and sometimes even frustrated with the confession of sin we said every week. It was very similar to the prayers we use every week at CrossWay. I was baffled when I was confessing things I didn't do personally. I'd never started a war; I'd never polluted the oceans. Yet here we were confessing our warlike nature and all we'd done to contaminate the creation. What gives?

It was only later that I realized that I was indeed responsible – not directly, but indirectly. Those prayers are the prayers of all of us realizing our miserable state without God. Some parts hit more personally than others. And yet all of them point us back to the importance of taking responsibility for our sins and lamenting them. That's not our only step, but it's a major one.

Moving back to the passage...we come to the ultimate outcomes from the actions of Adam, Eve, and the serpent. Each one has a penalty and consequence to their actions.<sup>1</sup> For the serpent, the penalty is humiliation – the great and crafty mastermind reduced to slithering on the ground, cursed uniquely among God's creatures. The consequence of the serpent's defiance of God is defeat at the hand of the woman's offspring. (We'll speak more about that in a moment.)

For the woman, the penalty of her choice is extreme pain in labor with her children. The consequence of her sin is her defeat in the relationship with her husband – their partnership will be at odds. Where once she was a perfect companion and helper, now there are questions about how they fit together. She will want her husband, but she'll also want control in the relationship – control she will never have because he will rule over her. This is not what their relationship was meant to be, not God's intention, but it's what sin causes the relationship to become. This tug of war is something we see even in the best and most godly couples today.

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<sup>1</sup> I'm indebted to Kenneth Matthews, *Genesis 1-11:26 New American Commentary*, for this breakdown of events.

Then we come to the man. His penalty is also painful labor, but his labor is fighting with the ground. The consequence of his sin is, as with the serpent and the woman, defeat – this time, defeat by the ground that will not yield its abundance to him because it is now cursed. God tells Adam that his final consequence will be death – he will return to the dust he came from. Unlike the woman, who was deceived and who God does not call out as harshly, Adam went in knowing the truth and bears the greater responsibility. It is he, not Eve explicitly, who brings death upon the earth. And amidst all this, we are reminded that Eve has that name because through her, life comes to the human race. She has responsibility, but not like that of Adam.

But there are more consequences to come. Adam and Eve are banished from the garden, the place that was made for them. They are now fundamentally homeless. The way back is guarded by God's own angels, and it quickly becomes a desolate and forgotten place since the two responsible for its care are no longer there to provide for it.

The harshest consequence of all is hidden in plain sight. God clothes Adam and Eve with skin garments He makes for them. What this means is that physical death has entered creation as well – it's just not Adam and Eve who die. God provides appropriate covering for them, sure, but it's at the cost of some animal's life. It's more important than they realize, because it's through that sacrifice that Adam and Eve do not immediately die on the spot. Off-screen, outside the range of the camera's eye, God has provided the atonement necessary for His justice.

Last week, we talked about how sin has consequences far beyond our expectations, and we see that in full force here. But while we look at all these very severe, very real consequences, I want to point out something that should give us hope: *God does not treat us as we deserve, even when we are ungrateful and unrepentant.*

When I think about the complaints I hear about God as He reveals Himself in the Old Testament, there's one that outnumbers all the rest: God is harsh. God is mean and judgmental and full of wrath. This judgment has been going around a long time. One of the first heresies in the church was called Marcionism, which said that the Hebrew God and the God of Christianity were entirely different. The reason it's patently untrue and why the church rejected the idea is because God constantly shows grace in the Old Testament to people who rebel against Him.

God was very clear with Adam – eat this fruit, and that day you will die. Adam could not rebel against God in any other way – none. He sins the only sin possible. God made His instructions abundantly clear, and yet Adam sides with the serpent. He deserves death. And yet, Adam doesn't die! Adam lives 930 years! He saw countless of his descendants. Despite Adam's sin, Adam has an incredibly long life. While Adam faces spiritual death, the consequences he expected, he did not receive.

Friends, God has treated us more than fairly. He has shown us grace upon grace. We don't come to Him with all our needs. We desire our own way, our lusts, desires, and pleasures. We hurt others and we hurt ourselves. Yet God has made a way for us through Jesus Christ to be reconciled to Him, to be changed from the inside out into His very own people. Instead of destroying us, He made a way that He would welcome us. We do not get what we deserve. Instead, we receive what only Christ deserves – a place in the Father's eternal Kingdom.

As R.C. Sproul shared, “Some people say, “Why is there only one way to God?” And I say, “Why is there any way to God at all? How is it that God would be so merciful as to grant us repentance after we have repeatedly rebelled against His authority and His majesty? That is the real question.” We don’t deserve even one! And yet we have been given a way, through Jesus, that we might receive eternal life that starts now and goes on forever.

And that leads me to our final thought for today: *God’s salvation plan starts to be revealed in the garden of Eden.* God knew what was coming. God didn’t get stumped and say, “Well, these two really messed up, I’ve got to figure something out.” God immediately enters into a covenant of grace with Adam and Eve. They broke the covenant of works – they broke the agreement whereby they did not sin and thus would receive life. Yet God shows them grace. He begins the process that would find its ultimate fulfillment in Jesus.

When God provides the animal skins for Adam and Eve, He has provided an appropriate sacrifice for sin. There’s no law yet, no priests, no system of offerings, but God makes a way for justice to be satisfied. We might believe that an animal sacrifice is gruesome. That’s the point. Sin is treason, plain and simple, and death is the punishment. Even in our “enlightened” world, treason is one of the only crimes that around the world almost guarantees death or life imprisonment without physically hurting anyone. You betray your country, you’re in serious trouble. You betray the Kingdom of God, you’re in serious trouble. Death is the penalty for treason. But rather than demanding Adam and Eve’s lives, God made a way. He made the sacrifice that would do appropriate justice. He clothed them in that sacrifice and appeased the wrath rightfully due for their actions. God provided a way out when there was no way out.

But even more than that, even as God paves the way for sacrifices that will appease His righteous wrath on sin, He promises that the system will one day end and a right relationship with Him be restored. Looking back on the consequences for the serpent, we see that the serpent will strike at the heel of the seed of the woman, and that seed will crush his head. We know from later Scripture that the serpent is in some way Satan, the devil, the accuser and deceiver.

This promise is not just a war between humans and snakes. It’s a promise that while Satan will strike a blow at the woman’s seed – Jesus, by working his way to have Jesus crucified, Jesus would crush the devil’s head. By becoming the perfect sacrifice for our sin, by living a perfectly holy life, death cannot hold Him. Jesus rises from the dead and shows that He has defeated death, and He can offer eternal life to all who would come to Him. While the devil rages against us now, against God’s people, his doom is certain. He has lost the war. While he strives to take us down even now, the victory was secured by Jesus on the cross. As early as the first sin on record, God is letting us know, sin is truly awful, it should be avoided at all costs, but I will make a way for my people to be in relationship with me now and always.

God’s salvation is assured, and He has promised that we will not receive what we deserve when we turn to Jesus in faith, hope, and trust. Will you come to Jesus and become His disciple today?