

Genesis 3:8-19 "The First Excuse"\*\*

Proposition: The first sin brought about two effects according to Genesis 3:8-19.

I. We see the shame of sin (8-13).

A. Because of sin we hide (8-10).

1. Adam hid due to fear.

2. Adam hid due to guilt.

B. Because of sin we hurl (11-13).

1. Adam blamed Eve.

2. Indirectly, Adam blamed God.

3. Eve blameshifted as well.

II. We see the sentence of sin (14-19).

A. The first consequence pertained to the serpent (14-15).

1. There would be humiliation.

2. There would be enmity.

B. The second consequence pertained to the woman (16).

1. It affected her child-bearing.

2. It affected her marriage.

C. The third consequence pertained to the man (17-19).

1. It affected man's work.

2. It affected man's future.

The Question remains: "Where are you?"

1. We are born cut off from God.

2. We are prone to make excuses.

3. We need to be reconciled to God.

4. What we need, God provided.

According to a UPI news item, the Metropolitan Insurance Company received some unusual explanations for accidents from its automobile policyholders. The following are just few:

- ▶ An invisible car came out of nowhere, struck my car, and vanished.
- ▶ The other car collided with mine without warning me of its intention.
- ▶ I had been driving my car for 40 years when I fell asleep at the wheel and had the accident.
- ▶ As I reached an intersection, a hedge sprang up, obscuring my vision.
- ▶ I pulled away from the side of the road, glanced at my mother-in-law, and headed over the embankment.
- ▶ The pedestrian had no idea which direction to go, so I ran over him.

↳ The telephone pole was approaching fast. I attempted to swerve out of its path when it struck my front end.

↳ The guy was all over the road. I had to swerve a number of times before I hit him.

↳ The indirect cause of this accident was a little guy in a small car with a big mouth.

Excuses. We all make them. We have a built in inclination to make ourselves look good, to justify our actions, and to accomplish that we manufacture excuses. Someone has said, "An excuse is a skin of a reason stuffed with a lie."

A high school administrator put together the following list of excuses that were actually turned in by parents to one school district:

1. Dear school: Please accuse John for being absent on Jan. 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33.
2. Chris has an acre in his side.
3. Mary could not come to school because she is bothered by very close veins.
4. John has been absent because he had two teeth taken off his face.
5. I kept Billie Home because he had to go Christmas shopping because I didn't know what size she wear.
6. Please excuse Ray Friday. He has lost vowels.
7. My son is under the doctors care and should not take P.E. Please execute him.
8. Please excuse Joyce from P.E. for a few days. Yesterday she fell out of a tree and misplaced her hip.
9. Please excuse Jimmy for being. It was his father's fault.

Why do we make excuses? There are obviously many factors, but the root cause goes way back...to Genesis 3. This morning in our study of God's Word we're going to see in living color the *first* excuse ever uttered in this world.

Not surprisingly, the first excuse came right after the first sin. In fact, excuse-making is a direct by-product of sin, as we'll see.

Since we've dropped right in the middle of a story, allow me to retrace our steps. In the beginning God created a man and a woman and put them in a perfect environment--a garden described in Genesis 2. Adam and Eve were created to live in a personal relationship with God, to honor and obey Him, and to care for His world.

God gave the first man and woman an opportunity to demonstrate their love for Him. He gave them a command (Gen 2:16-17), "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden [what an offer! what freedom!]; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die."

There was great freedom, with one prohibition, "Don't eat from one tree." But, as we saw last time, they did. They walked down the slippery slope of sin. It started with foolish dialogue (1-5), led to a forbidden decision (6), and resulted in a fateful discovery (7).

They ate the fruit. Eve in her deception and Adam in his defiance ate the forbidden fruit. Then they cried out to God, "Oh, God! We have disobeyed You! We're so sorry! Please forgive us!" Was that their response? No, not at all.

Yes, they experienced guilt--verse 7 indicates, "The eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked." But instead of calling out for mercy, what did they do? They tried to cover up their bodies (and their shame) with fig leaves. It was mankind's first self-righteous attempt to patch up things with God. But self-righteousness didn't work then any more than it does now.

So what happened next? I'm not sure there is a sadder scene in the Bible than the one before us in Genesis 3. As I mentioned last week, I cringe every time I read it. Sin has consequences.

Answer this. What was the effect of Adam and Eve's sin? We're given the answer in Genesis 3:8-19. The first sin brought about two effects. It did something *to* mankind, and brought something *upon* mankind. Here's the first effect...

### I. We see the shame of sin (8-13).

Verse 8 begins with the connective word, "Then" (or "And" in the KJV). Picture the scene. *Then*, at that moment. What moment? The fruit is gone, the leaves are on, and the shame is unbearable.

Verse 8 records, "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." Stop there.

Does God have legs and walk? Does He make sound? No. God is a Spirit, isn't He (John 4:24). Yet He created man to experience fellowship with Him, and takes the necessary steps to make that fellowship possible.

This could have been a *theophany*, a physical appearance of God. Apparently, as one commentator put it, "Maybe a daily chat between the Almighty and his creatures was customary." He came in the "cool of the day," a perfect time for friends to enjoy company.

But there would be no "daily chat" today. Why not? Because of the *shame of sin*. Sin changes things. It did for Adam and Eve, and it does for us. Here we see two changes.

A. Because of sin we hide (8-10). Verse 8 says, "And they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden." That's sad, isn't it? The trees that God created for man to look at (2:9) are now his hiding place to prevent God from seeing him.

They hid. But wait. How can you hide from God? He's omnipresent, isn't He? Yes. You can't hide from Him. It's foolish to try.

But we do, don't we? It's kind of like when you're driving your car, and you see the truck in front of you flip a rock into the air. It's coming right towards your windshield. What do you do? It's coming too fast to swerve. My instinct is to blink. When I see that object heading towards me, I close my eyes. Maybe if I can't see it, it will miss me!" And maybe if I hide from God, He will give me a break.

What a tragic moment! Adam and Eve were created to live in intimate fellowship with God, and now, as the text states, they're hiding *from* Him. Why? That's what sin does. Sin separates. Maybe it's not so much that they thought God couldn't see them as they didn't want to see God.

A father gave his ten-year-old son a brand new bike as a gift. The boy's eyes lit up when he saw the treasure. He heard his father say, "Son, I want you to have this because I love you so much. There's just one thing I ask of you. Make sure you put the bike away in the garage when you're not riding it."

A couple of weeks later--you guessed it--the boy got wrapped up in something and left his bike laying in the drive way, right next to the road, right in the path of...the garbage truck.

Where do you think the son was when the dad came home from work that evening? At the front door? No. He was in his bedroom. Why? Did he think he could hide from his dad? No, he hid for the same reason Adam hid--he was ashamed.

In verse 9 the conversation begins: "But the LORD God called to the man, 'Where are you?'" Notice that God addresses *the man*, not the woman. Why the man? Because he is the one God holds most responsible for what happens in the home.

Men, it's a sobering reality, yet it's true. We will give an account for what happens in our families. We are responsible for whether or not our children are in church. We are responsible for the teaching of God's Word in our homes. We are responsible for who our sons and daughters choose as friends and date while living under our roof. Yes, our children are free moral agents who will give an account to God for their choices, but we will give an account for the biblical direction--or lack of it--that we gave to them. Men, we mustn't shirk our responsibilities.

God began with a question. "Adam, where are you?" It's not because God didn't know. It's not a request for information. In fact, the question isn't for God's sake, but whose? Adam's.

In God's first words to fallen man we see grace. God asks a question. Why? In helping man, God draws him out of hiding rather than driving him out. "Where are you, Adam?" There's a certain gentleness in the question, for God the Creator is now God the Redeemer who is seeking the lost.

Listen to Adam's response (10), "He answered, 'I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid.'" Why did Adam hide? According to his own admission he hid for two reasons.

1. *Adam hid due to fear.* He said, "I heard you...and I was *afraid*." Notice how Adam's first reaction is to talk about how his sin made him *feel*, but he's not yet ready to confess the sin itself. He told God, "I hid because I was afraid."

There's the first mention of fear in the Bible. Watch how sin turns trust into fear. It's a consequence of the Fall that instead of loving God and wanting to be near God people now are *afraid* of God and want to shrink back and hide from God. A second reason...

2. *Adam hid due to guilt.* Why did Adam say he was afraid? "Because I was *naked*." But he'd been naked since the day God created him (2:25). Why is he now ashamed of being naked? It's because he's no longer innocent. For the first time in his life he is now feeling *guilt*.

Guilt is a good thing, beloved. The feeling of guilt is a God-given indicator that something's wrong and needs to be changed.

Adam is gripped by the shame of sin. And he hid because he was afraid and full of guilt. He had the sense to know that he could no longer stand in the presence of a holy God--which is something we've lost in our shame/less society.

When it comes the shame of sin, here's change #1. Because of sin, we hide. Adam knew something was wrong, but did he run *to* God? No. He ran *away from* God and hid. And so has every sinner since Adam. No sinner seeks God on his own. Sinners run and hide, don't they? Romans 3:11-12 states, "There is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away..." As sinners, we hide. That's not all.

B. Because of sin we hurl (11-13). Hide and hurl, they go hand in hand. Listen as the conversation continues with God speaking, "And he said, 'Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?'"

God asks Adam two more questions. Again, God knows the answers to both questions. They are for Adam's benefit. They're intended to help Adam do what a sinner must do--confess his sin and guilt. There's no hope until he does.

Now watch Adam. Here comes the hurling. Verse 12, "The man said, 'The woman you put here with me--she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate.'"

Remember, God asked Adam two questions in verse 11. Adam completely ignored the first--the question about how he knew he was naked. And the second question he avoided. How? By *blameshifting*.

"Adam, have you eaten from the tree?" Here's Adam's response. Notice the first two words out of his mouth, "The woman." What's Adam doing? He's *hurling*. He's blaming his sin problem on others, namely, on two parties. First...

1. *Adam blamed Eve*. I didn't mention it at the time, but did you notice when we read verse 10 how many times Adam used the word "I?" Four times. It's not *we* any more, but *I*. Now it's every person for himself.

Adam, did you eat the fruit? And Adam responds, "**The woman gave it to me,** <sup>and I ate.</sup>" What's Adam doing? He's trying to deflect the spotlight by maximizing what his wife did, and minimizing what he did.

Youngblood remarks (65), "A healthy dose of remorse would have done Adam a world of good when God confronted him with his sinful deed, but Adam chose to blame it all on his wife."

Is Adam lying? No. He's telling the truth. The problem is he's not answering the right question! God didn't ask him where he got the fruit. He asked him if he ate it. That's the issue.

Perhaps the three hardest words for a human being to utter are these, *I was wrong*. We're so inclined to throw in a fourth word, *I was wrong BUT*.

A mother asks her son, "Billy, did you talk back to your teacher?" And Billy responds, "Yea, but she doesn't like boys anyway." What's Billy doing? Blameshifting.

A youth leader approaches a teen and says, "Sally, I'm concerned about your bitter attitude." To which Sally retorts, "Oh yea? Well you'd be bitter, too, if you had a dad like mine." Because of sin, what do we do? We *hurl*, just like Adam did.

Adam blamed his sin on two parties. First, he blamed Eve. Then...

2. *Indirectly, Adam blamed God*. "The woman you put here with me." I'm not responsible God. You gave me this woman. I didn't ask for her.

Think of the audacity. To blame or even insinuate that God is responsible for this problem! My, how sin twists our perceptions.

We're so prone to make excuses, to make ourselves "look good," even if we have to make others--even God--look bad in the process. Why is that? Why do we do that? The answer is right here in Genesis 3. We are sinners, and sinners are self-focused people who want to look good with a passion.

If you doubt me, answer this. Suppose you approached a parent whose child was out of control and said, "I'm concerned about your child." What kind of response do you think the average parent would give? "Oh, my child's okay. He's a good boy. People just don't understand him. Your kids weren't perfect either!"

Because of sin, we choose to hurl, and often do so against those care the most for us. But it wasn't just Adam...

3. *Eve blameshifted as well*. Verse 13, "Then the LORD God said to the woman, 'What is this you have done?' The woman said, 'The serpent deceived me, and I ate.'"

What's Eve doing? The same thing Adam did! I'm not responsible. The serpent is. And the insinuation? You made the serpent God. If it hadn't been there, I wouldn't have done it! More blameshifting.

Do you remember Aaron's response after the golden calf incident? When Moses confronted him for making a golden idol, Aaron in essence said (Ex 32:22-24), "Hey, it's not my fault. The people made me do it. They brought me their golden jewelry, I threw it in the fire, and out popped this golden calf!" That's blameshifting.

In Discipleship Journal, Don McCullough wrote: "John Killinger tells about the manager of a minor league baseball team who was so disgusted with his center fielder's performance that he ordered him to the dugout and assumed the position himself. The first ball that came into center field took a bad hop and hit the manager in the mouth. The next one was a high fly ball, which he lost in the glare of the sun--until it bounced off his forehead. The third was a hard line drive that he charged with outstretched arms; unfortunately, it flew between his hands and smacked his eye. Furious, he ran back to the dugout, grabbed the center fielder by the uniform, and shouted. 'You idiot! You've got center field so messed up that even I can't do a thing with it!'

Dear friend, please know this. There is no hope for blameshifters. There is hope for those who will practice Proverbs 28:13, "He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy."

The first sin brought two effects. The first was the shame of sin. Here's the second.

## II. We see the sentence of sin (14-19).

The questioning is over. Now comes the judgment. God declares that the first sin will result in three consequences. The three parties are addressed in reverse order.

I'm not going to do an exhaustive study of the threefold curse today. I merely want to mention it today, and then examine it in greater detail next time, along with probing God's remedy for it presented in verses 20-24.

A. The first consequence pertained to the serpent (14-15). "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.'"

God pronounced a curse upon the serpent. We might ask, "Why? The serpent wasn't responsible, was it? It was merely a pawn in Satan's hands." Centuries ago, Pastor Chrysostom offered the analogy that the Lord cursed the serpent, "just as a loving father when punishing the murderer of his son, might snap in two the sword or dagger with which the murder had been committed."

As a result of the curse, what did God say would happen to the serpent? Two things.

1. *There would be humiliation.* "You will crawl on your belly and eat dust," God said. Calvin insisted that the curse did not change the anatomy of the serpent. I disagree.

Prior to Adam's sin this creature was perhaps the most sophisticated one in the animal kingdom (see 3:1). But the curse affected its physiological structure. Apparently, before the Fall the serpent moved about in a vertical fashion (perhaps it walked). But in pronouncing this curse God says, "Now you will crawl." Aalders comments (105), "The present method of locomotion of the serpent is the direct consequence of the curse God pronounced on it. This does not mean that the whole appearance of the serpent changed. It is possible that the serpent kept its general appearance while changing its means of getting about."

For the serpent, the curse resulted in humiliation. Secondly...

2. *There would be enmity.* What kind of enmity? Two types, first an enmity between the serpent and the woman. The serpent was once an attractive creature, but from now on it will be repulsive.

But God announced another level of enmity--between the serpent's offspring and the woman's offspring. God made a promise here. The woman's seed is going to crush the head of the serpent's seed, and the serpent's seed is going to strike the heel of the woman's seed.

What's God talking about? I'm convinced He's not just talking here about a victory of people over snakes. Here in the Garden God is giving a promise. Genesis 3:15 has been referred to as the *proevangelium* (meaning "the first gospel"). As early as the second century A.D. biblical scholars like Justin Martyr and Irenaeus taught that the woman's offspring referred to Christ who would some day defeat Satan himself. In Romans 16:20 Paul declared, "The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet."

More about that next time.

B. The second consequence pertained to the woman (16). "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.'

God's judgment on the woman affected two things.

1. *It affected her child-bearing.* The rendering of the AV follows the Hebrew text more closely at this point, "I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and they conception." Two things will increase for the woman: her sorrow (or pain) in delivering children *and* her conceptions.

She will now deliver children in pain. And she will see an increase in conceptions. Apparently, Eve's physiology changed. Dr. James Grier suggests that prior to sin Eve did not experience the 28-day fertility cycle that women experience today. But after the curse her pelvic structure changed, and so did her ability to conceive and bear children.

I'm reminded of Carl Sandburg's definition of a baby: "God's opinion that the world should go on." God's judgment affected the woman in a second way.

2. *It affected her marriage.* "Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you," is how verse 16 concludes.

What does that mean? Some have asserted that "your desire" refers to Eve's psychological need and dependence on man. I don't think that's it.

The Hebrew word (*tesuqa*) conveys the idea of a desire to possess or control. The same term appears in Genesis 4:7 where God says this to Cain, "Sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it." Sin wanted to master Cain.

So, too, as the result of sin in the world, the woman will "desire" to dominate the man, rejecting God's design for marital roles. And what about the man? What will he do? He will "rule over you," God told Eve.

Don't miss this. Why do husbands and wives lock horns so often when it comes to marriage roles? According to Genesis 3, it's because of the Fall. Before Genesis 3, there was harmony. After Genesis 3, there is conflict. When sin entered the world it affected the way men and women look at their roles in marriage. God said the woman would desire to usurp and the man would desire to squelch.

What about the man? What did God tell him?

C. The third consequence pertained to the man (17-19). "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.'"

How did the Fall affect man? In two ways. I'll mention them now and we'll develop them next time.

1. *It affected man's work.* How so? Adam, from this day on you'll have to exert painful toil to get food. The ground is going to produce thorns and thistles. You're going to eat by the sweat of your brow. And why? Because of Adam's sin, God cursed the ground.

God made Adam from what? The ground. And what did God do to the ground in Genesis 3? He pronounced a *curse* upon it.

Don't miss this. Adam's sin affected the rest of creation. According to Romans 8:22, what is creation doing right now? It is *groaning*. So Adam's sin affected Adam's work.

2. *It affected man's future.* God concluded His message of judgment with these sober words in verse 19, "For dust you are and to dust you will return." Here's your future Adam. You're heading back to the dust. You're going to *die*.

This is serious business, isn't it? This morning we've see that the sin brought about two very drastic effects--there's the shame of sin, and the sentence of sin.

Now let's make it personal. Adam had sinned and was hiding from God. In his guilt and shame he was away from God and in serious trouble when he heard those piercing words, "Adam, *where are you?*"

In a very real sense, the question remains for us, doesn't it? The Creator God continues to ask, "Where are you?"

### The Question remains: "Where are you?"

How about it? Where are *you*? To help you evaluate where you are in relationship to God, I'd like to pose four very personal realities that are true this morning. These four realities grow out of Genesis 3. Where are you? First of all...

1. *We are born cut off from God.* Unlike Adam, we were *born* in sin. Adam became a sinner when he sinned, but we inherited a sin nature from Adam. All of us did.

The *New England Primer*, a teaching book used with children in colonial America, put it this way, "In Adam's fall, we sinned all."

Adam acted as what theologians call the "federal head" of the human race. His fateful choice brought the curse of sin crashing upon mankind and the entire creation.

Let that sink in. You were born cut off from God, and so was I--because of Adam.

2. *We are prone to make excuses.* It's all Adam's fault, right? Hold on. Yes, because of Adam we are born in sin, but that's not our only problem. As we grow up, guess what we do? We *willfully choose* to do the same thing Adam did. What's that? We sin and hide.

We're like Lucy in the cartoon strip "Peanuts." She loved to shift the blame. When she missed the fly ball,

she didn't say, "My bad." Rather she blamed it on the sun, the moon, the stars, and even the toxic substance in her baseball glove.

Isn't that our inclination, too? Rather than face up to our shortcomings, we are so prone to make excuses.

We go our *own way* instead of God's. We put on a "respectable" front--our own set of "fig leaves"--and then we hide.

When we hear the question, "Where are you?", our first instinct is to *defend ourselves*. We cling to our self-righteous rags. We try to make ourselves look good. How do we do it? By blame-shifting. By making excuses.

Listen. The fact is this. There is no hope for a person who makes excuses. *No hope. Why not?* Because our excuses can't change the third reality...

3. *We need to be reconciled to God.* Is that possible? Yes! How? Through Jesus Christ. God sent the "second Adam" to reverse the curse, as 1 Corinthians 15:22 puts it, "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." Why did God become a man? To undo what the first man did. When Jesus hung on the cross, He took the penalty for the sin of Adam and of every other person who would believe in Him. He became alienated *from God* so we could be reconciled *to God*.

And whereas Adam chose to disobey God and died, Jesus Christ chose to obey the will of God perfectly and then *conquered death!*

That's the good news, the *gospel*. To put it simply, here's reality #4...

4. *What we need, God provided.* Christ is all we need. So the question remains--*where are you?*