

A few years ago... Christian author and speaker... (Greg Smalley) noticed weeds sprouting up amongst the healthy grass in his yard. ... So Smalley did what probably many of us would do... he went to a hardware store... picked up a bottle of weed killer... and drenched the eyesores.

A day later the weeds remained... along with new patches of brown grass... that Smalley had inadvertently killed. ... He tried again... and once more... he killed more healthy grass.

His wife finally convinced him that he needed to speak with a professional... before he killed their whole yard... and left nothing but the weeds. ... So... off he went for professional help.

Smalley recalls his conversation with the master grower... *"What he said I'll never forget because it applies to dealing with sin in our lives in general.* The best way to kill the weeds (of sin) in your life... is to focus on growing healthy grass. (Give your lawn proper nutrients.) The healthy grass will choke out the weeds.

This is kind of where we left off last week in our study of Genesis. We ended... right after Eve gave-in to temptation (and Adam... full-on... disobeyed God)... We concluded by acknowledging... that our best safeguard against temptation and disobedience... is to fill our hearts with the Word of God – Scripture! ... Cultivate a healthy spiritual life... so that it will choke out Satan... and the world's lies... (that God is stingily holding-back from you... the best of what you could have.

Let me do a brief review... before we turn to today's passage in Genesis... because we will build upon it.

Whenever we give-in to temptation... Joy in God... is extinguished in us. God is quite unreal to us... He loses all reality... and only desire for the object of our temptation... is real. ... Satan does not (at this point) fill us with hatred of God... but with **forgetfulness** of God.... The lust that is aroused... envelops the mind (and will) of man... in the deepest darkness.

The questions present themselves: "*Is what the flesh desires really sin in this case?*" ... "*Is it really **NOT** permitted to me?*" .., "*Actually... isn't it more realistic to see this matter (given my particular situation... and my unique circumstances)... that it is right to satisfy my desire?*"... .. It is here that everything within us... (as believers)... will rise up against the Word of God.

This is precisely what happened to Eve in her treatment of God's word in the dialogue with the serpent. ... She first minimized the freedom God had given them to eat from the trees of the garden... then added a strictness to his word that simply was not there... and finally softened his word in regard to the certainty of death should they sin.

Then... once Eve started to tamper with God's word... she was now open to believe the lie of Satan (against all her experience of God's goodness.)

Eve rose up against God's word... took the fruit and ate it... and gave it to her husband. ... Her husband's disobedience had greater blameworthiness because: 1) God's word had been given directly to him before Eve's creation, 2) he was present with Eve during the temptation (as evidenced by Satan's consistent address of Eve with the plural "you"), and 3) Adam, in self-serving passivity, allowed his wife to partake while he looked on.

Then... seeing that she did not physically drop dead on the spot... he partook. ... Adam was not fooled... as was Eve.

1 Timothy 2:14 (ESV)

and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor.

So... Adam's rebellion was an informed... eyes-wide-open... self-serving rejection of God and His word. ... His was an unspeakable rebellion. ... They chose to act in another way... that looked better to them.

All of God's commands are for our own good... but we may not always understand the reasons behind them. ... People who trust God will obey because God asks them to... whether or not they understand why God commands it.

On September 12, 1933... C.S. Lewis wrote a letter to a friend of his... expressing his understanding about our desire to disobey God... In it... he used an illustration... that many of us can identify with... “taking a dog for a walk on a leash...”

Supposing you are taking a dog on a lead through a turnstile or past a post. You know what happens (apart from his usual ceremonies in passing a post!). He tries to go to the wrong side and gets his head looped round the post. You see that he can't do it, and therefore pull him back. You pull him back because you want to enable him to go forward. He wants exactly the same thing—namely to go forward: for that very reason he resists your pull back, or, if he is an obedient dog, yields to it reluctantly as a matter of duty which seems to him to be quite in opposition to his own will: though in fact it is only by yielding to you that he will ever succeed in getting where he wants.

The dog believes the lie that the only way forward, the only way to get what it wants, is to push ahead. Lewis, the dog-owner, affirms the

longing of the dog to go forward, but he must pull the dog back in order for it to actually make any progress.

So what should you do when you fall into sin? Ask for forgiveness and redirection. Lewis continued, "You may go the wrong way again, and again [God] may forgive you: as the dog's master may extricate the dog after he has tied the whole lead round the lamp-post. But there is no hope in the end of getting where you want to go except by going God's way."

All of God's commands are for our own good... but we may not always appreciate the whys and wherefores behind them. People who trust God will conform to His instruction... whether or not they comprehend fully... why God orders it.

This morning... we pick up the story of our first parents... after they disobeyed God... and it will deal with God confronting them with their sin. ... Just as we see many common tendencies to ourselves... in the way temptation pulled them (and pulls us today) into disobedience... we will see many more similarities in the way they reacted... and the way we often react... when God confronts us with our sin.

Genesis 3:7-8

In an instant the original couple passed from life to death... from sinlessness to sin... from harmony to alienation... from trust to distrust... from ease to dis-ease. ... It did not take a day. ... I am sure that it happened in a millisecond!

In the Bible... death is the reverse of life... It is not the reverse of existence. ... To die does not mean to cease to be... but in biblical

terms... it means... to be 'cut off from the land of the living.'... It is a diminished existence... but nevertheless an existence." ... Since dying is existing... Adam and Eve's existence was now one of death. ... And not only that... sin immediately penetrated every sphere of their being... like a drop of dye in a pail of water. ... They were at once irretrievably and utterly sinful.

So there the first couple were... in their ridiculous fig leaves... slouching around paradise lost. ... It is clear that death has already occurred.

The wonder and amazement they had one toward another - gone! ... The understanding of God as the benevolent Creator... of whom they had no fear - gone! ... Eyes with which to see and appreciate the wonder and glory of righteousness - gone! ... A relationship between the two without meanness... division... animosity... and misunderstanding - gone! ... The ability to control their destiny - gone!

At this moment, Adam and his wife would have given anything to gain back what they had lost. She had lost the sense of being beautiful and adored by her husband. Adam had lost the respect and admiration of his wife. Their shame created the need for hiding.

You and I (of course) have never experienced the Garden of Eden... and therefore we may never understand the dramatic turn of events... for the first man and woman. ... They had experienced the holiness of their prior life... and the only way to adequately characterize the dramatic difference... is by mentioning it... as the difference between life and death.

The thought of two humans covered with fig leaves trying to hide from the all-seeing... all-knowing God... is humorous. ... How could they be so silly as to think they could actually hide? ... What a pathetic delusion for anyone... then... or today... to imagine that it is possible to hide from God. The psalmist tellingly asks:

Psalm 139:7-8 (ESV)

⁷ Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? ⁸ If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!

We all know this... but when we disobey... we naturally succumb to Jonah's folly... and hop onboard a Tarshish-bound ship "to flee... from the presence of the Lord." ... Unbelief spawns the common delusion that we can be where God is not. ... And what's more... we sometimes think we can privatize our thoughts... denying the fact that "You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar" (Psalm 139:2). ... Even as Christians... we can become mastered by the "we-can-hide-from-God" delusion.

We try to run and hide by:

- by despising a loving rebuke from a Christian brother or sister (whether it is a husband... wife... parent... friend... or church leader)
- by refusing to place ourselves under the microscope of God's Word
- by staying away from church
- by never seeking God

Believers sometimes act... as though God does not see them... even when they:

- tell a malicious lie
- or pass along gossip (which we know - divides the church, Whom Christ dearly loves)
- or to turn a deaf ear (or blind eye) to God's clear teaching - in order to show loyalty to a friendship
- or take revenge
- or act in all sorts of unloving ways.

On and on... the list could go.

People try to hide behind everything imaginable... our modern fig leaves... that are used in the church today... take the form of:

- regular attendance at church and church-sponsored events
- constant religious speech (even using Bible verses)
- putting on a show for others - using exuberant worship
- over-committing ourselves with all sorts of ministry responsibilities
- doing things and buying things for others (to look like an encourager... but really... it is to gain the receiver's approval... and maybe a sense of loyalty and obligation from them)
- using "prayer requests" as the means to spread and receive gossip

It can be anything... as long as it keeps one feeling that they are "off the hook" from facing God... or if it creates an illusion for others to see them... as being in good standing with God.

But (LISTEN!) no person — not a single person — can hide from God.... Everyone of us will have to face God someday. ... Some-day... we will all have to stand - face to face with Him. ... No person can hide from Him. ... He sees us... no matter where we are... and what we are doing - good or bad.

Have the courage to share all you do and think with Him. And don't try to hide—it can't be done. Honesty will strengthen your relationship with God.

Adam and Eve should have been running to God... confessing their sin... and asking for His forgiveness. But instead... they were hiding from God

Genesis 3:9

The question must have stabbed like a fiery sword... into Adam's wretched soul. ... He was lost... that was where he was.

God knew exactly where Adam was. ...God doesn't ask questions... because He needs information. The question... "*Adam, where are you?*" was not for God's discovery. ... It was to stir Adam to think about where he was. ... He was running away and hiding from God. ... God was calling out to Adam in order to arouse conviction within him. ... Adam needed to think about what he was doing.

God's "*Where are you?*" was corrective... like a father's question to a naughty child hiding behind a door to avoid his face. The "*where are you?*" really asks "*Why are you there? Is that where you should be?*"

Here in Genesis chapter three of our Bibles... we are given a very moving picture of divine grace! This was not the voice of a policeman. It was the call of a Father's love! ... What a terrible thing it was for Adam to turn his back on God... and so knowingly (without being deceived) deliberately chose to sin. ... When 1/3 of the angels sinned and followed Satan... God consigned them to everlasting chains... under darkness. God would have been fully justified to do the same thing again. No one would be able to blame Him.

But these verses show God's strong desire to have fellowship with us. It was not Adam who sought God... but God that sought Adam. ... And this has been the order ever since.

Romans 3:11 (ESV)

¹¹ *no one understands; no one seeks for God.*

God who sought out and called **Abram** when he was an idol worshipper. ... It was God who sought Jacob at Bethel... when he was fleeing from the consequences of his wrong doing. ... It was God who sought out Moses while a fugitive in Midian. ... It was Christ who sought out the apostles... when they had a fishing business and a lucrative tax collector position... so that He could say, "*You did not chose Me... but I have chosen you.*" ... It was Christ ...Who... in His overwhelming love... came to seek and to save the lost. ... It is the Shepherd who seeks the sheep... and not the sheep that seek the Shepherd. ... How true it is that "*We love Him because He first loved us.*" O, that we might appreciate more deeply the marvelous condescension of Deity in stooping so low as to care for and seek out such undeserving poor worms of the dust – that we truly are!

God's question to Adam still sounds in the ear to **us**... as sinners. "*Where are you?*" It is the call of divine judgment... (which cannot be overlooked)... and it is the call of divine sorrow... (which grieves over the sinner.) "*Where are you? Are you thinking you are OK as you participate in such innocent-looking behaviors... like gossip... saying bad things about people... giving your mind over to pornography... giving-in to envy and strife... and other unloving behaviors...?*"

Stop hiding. Come on out and expose yourself to the Living God!

Genesis 3:10

Notice that Adam's response contained no admission of wrongdoing. He only said, "*I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.*" ... It is apparent that at that moment... he was more aware of his nakedness and shame... than of his *sin against God*. ... All he could do was express his fear and shame. ... The only thing that Adam truly confessed to was a *feeling*—fear. ... Of course... he knew he had broken God's command... but in his new self-focused state... he was more concerned about how he felt... than about his *sin against God*.

This self-focus and shrinking from God remains part and parcel of our fallen condition. Adam was a fallen man... giving us the first glimpse of the fallen human heart... that it is just as Jeremiah declares...

Jeremiah 17:9 (ESV)

⁹ *The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?*

Like Adam... the truth (far too often)... has to be dragged out of us. Our hearts focus on something else. Like Adam... we don't (naturally) want to come out honestly and say... "*I have sinned before Heaven and in Your sight and I am no more worthy to be called Your son.*" ... But God continued to lead Adam (and He pursues you and I... as well)... to come to such a humble realization. ... Watch how God did this with Adam.

Genesis 3:11

God's question is designed to force the man to look beyond the consequences of the act... to admit the act itself. '*...Have you eaten of the*

tree...? ... Let's discuss **the act** which created the nakedness... not the nakedness, itself. ... God says... "*Adam... you are focused on the wrong thing. Accept that the problem... is **not** your shame. ... It is your decision to disobey my command.*"

When we come out in the open before God with our sin... we must identify that the true problem... is our disobedience to what we knew God wanted.

But Adam and Eve were not at this point yet. They still had more attempts to try and cover themselves.

Genesis 3:12-13

As Adam spoke... the words must have been a piercing arrow to the woman's heart. ... She must have been stung with the anger in Adam's voice. ... She has lost his love... and the resounding joy he had previously demonstrated in her presence. It is now resentfulness at her presence.

"The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate" (v. 12). ... These are the words of a man who was spiritually dead. This is wicked!

Remember Adam's ecstasy when he first laid eyes on Eve?

*This at last is bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
she shall be called Woman,
because she was taken out of Man. (2:23)*

These (by the way) are the first human words recorded in Scripture. They expressed such intimacy... such oneness... and such joy. ... She was his "human universe."

But here... we read something entirely different. It is "*she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.*" ... What infamous treachery! ... "*It's her fault, God. Don't blame me.*"

Adam was so calculated and so cold. ... (So long... marital bliss!) ... And for her... there had to have been... a very deep sense of the loss of her husband's love. He was now resentful of her.

But the blame did not stop with Adam pointing his finger at Eve. No... It gets worse. Adam also accused God. "The woman *whom you gave to be with me, she gave...*" ... "*God, you put this dangerous creature at my side. I'm not guilty, God. You're guilty!*"

In doing this Adam was like Satan... who had argued that a better God would not withhold anything from His people. ... Here... Adam implied that a better God would not have given him Eve. ... This is implicit blasphemy.

And the "Blame Game" is not yet over. Eve follow suit... and her excuse followed the same pattern of Adam - shift of blame! She points to the snake and says... "*The serpent deceived me, and I ate.*"

Now... her excuse is not as shameful as Adam's. ... By that... I mean... she did not say "*It's this 'man' that you gave me,*" (in other words... she didn't insinuate that God was at fault.) ... But even so... still she... like Adam... did not accept blame. ... We need to notice... that at this point... neither Adam nor Eve showed a hint of repentance.

Today... we are a lot like our first parents - Adam and Eve! ... We sometimes blame God for placing us in circumstances that we regard as too much for us. "*God, you know my weaknesses, but there it was. Why did you allow it?*" ... An adulterous man will blame God for the ingredients that led to his sin — his depression... his poor self-image... that woman who had to come along... the faraway place... a sense of loneliness.

A common delusion exists in our day that goes like this "**God has given me passions and appetites so strong that I can only yield to them.**"

"It's my God-given hormones. My passions, my appetites, my exquisite tastes, my intelligence, my proclivities, my insecurities, my experience, my energy—these together leave me subject to sins that barely tempt others. God made me this way, so what can I do?"

If you read Adam's sin through the lens of today's world... you see the language of victimhood — Adam as the poor victim of the woman and of the God Who gave her to him. ... The modern version goes like this: "*God, you're responsible for my situation that has left me so susceptible to sin—my upbringing, my abuse, my inept parents and teachings.*"

Oh! Please listen to me !!! - Such thinking is from below. It is from the pit of Hell.

According to Scripture... no one from Adam - to the last man on earth... will ever get away with passing the buck. ... Listen to James... (the Lord's brother)

James 1:13 (ESV)

¹³ Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one.

Adam's pathetic attempt... no matter how deceptively altered (or rephrased)... by us... will never hold water. ... We must never say, or even *imagine*, that God is tempting us.

The Genesis reality and the New Testament reality is this... (look at the next two verses in James):

James 1:14-15 (ESV)

¹⁴ But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. ¹⁵ Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.

We cannot blame God. We cannot blame anyone else. And we cannot blame the devil.

The very first question asked by God was "**Where are you?**" If this question was directed towards you... what would be your reply? ... Where are you spiritually? ... Are you unsaved? ... Are you a backslidden... carnal Christian? ... Are you dedicated to serving the Lord daily and living for Him?

Have you stopped passing the buck? ... Have you gone beyond the point where we leave Adam and Eve this morning? Do you recognize that the guilt for your sin... is yours alone? ... And then... have you passed it on to Jesus? Have you allowed Him to take the penalty for it... and done a 180 degree turn... never to return to it...?

[After the recording has been stopped]

I have turned off the recording that will go online tomorrow... to be broadcast... (which... by the way... is close to reaching 12,000 listeners around the world.)

There are some private applications to our congregation... that I need to make... from our passage today... dealing with the matter of being confronted with sin.

I was going to wait until our annual meeting... but God seemed to be directing me to tag it onto the end of this message. Friday morning... at the very same time when God seemed to be directing me on this... I received a text message from a fellow elder... who told me that God was saying the same thing to him. This confirmed to me that God was orchestrating my bringing the matter to you now.

2018 has been a difficult year for myself and for the elder board of our church. We have been led by God to address some sins among our membership.

Now it is very important for you to know that nothing was done in haste... or with any other motive... than to honor God... and try to restore the person for which there was clear evidence of sin and rebellion. A considerable amount of time was given to prayer and investigation... to make sure that we were following God... and that we had our facts right.

Unfortunately there were two very similar situations... that needed to be confronted in close proximity to each other. Both were matters... that if we

did not confront... the elders unanimously believed it would have brought greater harm to the person... and harm to our church body.

In both cases... we are still praying for their repentance and restoration. It is for this reason... the elders have not discussed it openly with the congregation. Recently... some have publicly questioned our silence and spoken of their desire for us to be more informative with the congregation. But we must act in accordance to our Biblical convictions... which is... that matters as sensitive as this... must be handled by as few people as possible... looking for God's guidance... and not popular consensus.

Gossip... common chatter and personal opinions (that most often are not carefully checked to see if they are Spirit-led) arouse harmful emotions and do damage to the efforts of the elders... who... I once again assure you... are being careful and very prayerful about God's leading.

At least one... of the two people who were confronted... have been contacting several members of our church... with contentions of their own about the leaders of our church. (Adam also pointed his finger, rather than repent.) Please do not participate in their unfounded allegations and gossip.

The right way to stop gossip in the church... is that when you hear any... tell the gossiper that you will take their information directly to the one they are gossiping about... letting them know who is saying it. Gossip that destroys so many ministries... can be stopped... only if God's people allow God to so embolden them to shine a light on gossip. (Evil is perpetuated under the cover of darkness.)

And now I would like to read to you an illustration that a fellow elder wrote... and Friday morning texted me and asked me to read it... at the end of today's message.

BEING IN THE CORRECT LAUNDRY BASKET

When laundry day comes the laundry gets sorted according to how dirty or stained each article is. Each pile will require different machine cycles and different amounts of detergent and bleach. If an article of clothing that is only lightly soiled gets put into the wrong pile it will have to undergo the extra heavy washing meant for that pile of clothes.

likewise, when Jesus cleanses the church there will be different washing requirements needed according to the measure of one's sins. Make no mistake about it when Jesus washes the church, He will make His bride, the church whiter than snow. There are some who might only need a little of God's detergent and bleach and a lighter wash cycle. Others might need more of God's detergent and bleach and a medium wash cycle. Yet others will need special attention because of set in stains, unrepented sins, deeper soiling with ungodly behavior, these will have to undergo God's harshest cleansing method.

When we become involved in other's sins, their ungodly behavior, we are putting ourselves in their laundry basket. When God works on that pile of laundry, that person or

persons, He often uses heaven cleansing methods. If you become entangled in another's sinful behavior, whether you think that behavior is ok or not, you just might find yourself going through God's special cleansing with them.

God's desire is to present His Son a washed and pure bride, a bride that is whiter than snow. Therefore, all of us need to take careful note to keep ourselves pure, clean, a clean that only will take God's gentle cycle to make us whiter than snow. All of us should be very careful not to become entangled in someone else's sin, staying in our own laundry basket.

