

*Shame, Separation, and Blame: Genesis 3:7-15*  
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## INTRODUCTION

This morning we're going to look at Genesis 3:7-15. Some of you may be wondering how long we're going to be in the book of Genesis, because at the rate we've been going so far, it may seem like we'll never get to the end. But I want to calm your fears by telling you that I plan to pick up the pace significantly as we move on. These first few chapters are so fundamental to our understanding of the Christian life that I can't justify skimming over them.

So far, I've preached 7 sermons on Genesis, starting with an Introduction to the book. Then a sermon looking at the question, "Why Did God Create?" That was the week of the Virginia Tech shooting, and it seemed appropriate at the beginning of our study of creation to ask why God would make this world in which evil things like this happen. And the answer we find in Scripture is that God does all things for His own glory. And the presence of sin and evil in the world serve to highlight God's glorious attributes in a way that wouldn't be possible otherwise.

Next was a sermon on God's Good Creation, then a sermon on God's Rest (chapter 2:1-3). Then, God's Design for Manhood and Womanhood in the remainder of chapter 2. And then two weeks ago we started our study of chapter 3. The first sermon on chapter 3 was on God's Providence Over Evil, which is a wonderful and comforting truth, to know that God controls every single action and event in the universe, even those that are sinful and wicked and evil. So when the trials come in life, we can live with a confidence in God's providence. For those who are trusting in Him, He has ordained those trials for our good. He will use those trials to make us more like Jesus. And He will use all the events in this universe ultimately to glorify Himself, which can be seen most clearly in the death of Jesus Christ. The most evil act in all of history, and yet the most glorious event in all of history.

That brings us up to last week, when we looked at verses 1-6 of chapter 3 and focused on two themes in those verses. First temptation, and secondly pride. My plan now is to preach three more sermons on Genesis 3. This week on verses 7-15, next week on verses 16-24. And then I want to spend another week talking about the effects of the Fall. As Adam's descendants we have inherited his guilt and corruption. His sin is imputed to us. Every person born into this world, except Jesus Christ, is a totally depraved sinner as a result of Adam's sin.

That's a brief overview of where we've been and where we're going in the next couple weeks.

### **Sin produces shame and guilt (v. 7)**

There are four points I want to make this morning, and the first is from verse 7, Sin produces shame and guilt. Verse 7 tells us that "the eyes of both were opened." This happened immediately after they ate of the forbidden fruit. It was a result of their sin. This shows that the serpent's statement was partially true. In verse 4 he had said, "You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." Now that they have eaten we see that, in fact, they have not died, and their eyes have been opened. But the reality that they now

see is not at all what they were hoping for. Even though they haven't died physically, they HAVE died spiritually. And they have NOT become like God, as the serpent promised. They now have a knowledge of good and evil, but it is not like God's knowledge of good and evil.

God knows good and evil in the sense that He is the definition of good, and He also understands evil as that which is contrary to His nature. But Adam and Eve came to know both good and evil in a very different sense. They DID evil. Before they had been innocent, and had no experience of evil. They only knew the good. But now they have disobeyed God's command and have lost their innocence and have entered into a new experience of both good AND evil.

At this point Adam and Eve experience a very rude awakening. In their lust for autonomy and self-sufficiency, they had envisioned becoming like God. They thought there would be great delight in rejecting God's Kingship over their lives. They expected excitement and power and independence. Just like the expectations we all have when we're lured into sin. We think, "Oh, this will be so satisfying. This will give me pleasure, or power, or independence." But sin never satisfies like we think it will.

Their eyes were opened, and what does it say? That they had become gods? That they now had divine knowledge and wisdom? That they were now equal with God and did not have to answer to Him anymore? Did they experience exhilaration and excitement? No, the first thing they experience after eating of the fruit is shame. Talk about anti-climactic. They eat of the fruit thinking, "We're going to be like God." And immediately after they eat, they are struck with an overwhelming sense of self-consciousness and shame. In chapter 2:25, before the Fall, it says, "the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed," but now they are both very much ashamed. The shame of their sin produced a desire to conceal their nakedness. They wanted to cover themselves up.

So they "sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths." This is almost comical, as we picture our first parents trying to cover themselves up with fig leaves. But it's also very convicting as we think about the ways we try to cover up our own guilt and shame. Adam and Eve thought they could fix the problem themselves. They thought they could do some work and cover over the offense. And ever since mankind has been attempting the same kind of thing. Instead of running to God in repentance and pleading for His forgiveness, we want to handle things ourselves. I'll fix the problem. I'll cover the shame. I'll take away the guilt. And as humans we have come up with all kinds of bizarre ideas about how to do this. Various religions and philosophies and psychologies have been constructed to take away our shame and guilt. But they are all fig leaves. If you think coming to church, in and of itself, is going to remedy your shame problem, then you're wearing an outfit of fig leaves. Or if you think baptism will solve the problem, or putting money in the offering basket, or helping others. Those are all good things if understood properly. But in and of themselves, they are not the answer. They are feeble attempts at covering up the shame and guilt that only God can take away.

The question, then, is "What are you wearing?" Later in the chapter, we read that God clothed Adam and Eve, which is a vivid picture of how God clothes us with the righteousness of Christ if we put our faith in Him. That is the only clothing that matters.

Don't pretend that the fig leaves will cover the shame and guilt of your sin. Only Christ can bear that guilt and cover us with a perfect righteousness.

**Sin separates us from God (vv. 8-10)**

Next, in verses 8-10 we see that sin separates us from God. Here we see the spiritual death that the Fall brought about. Adam and Eve did not die physically until much later. But they did die spiritually when they disobeyed God, and this death happened immediately. They were separated from God. A huge wedge was driven in between them and their Creator.

The fellowship that was so sweet and delightful is now fraught with division and strife. Surely before Adam and Eve sinned, they must have rejoiced to hear God walking in the garden. They had no shame or guilt or self-consciousness. In their innocence and goodness they enjoyed God's rule over them. But now everything has changed. They are no longer innocent. They are no longer good. Their eyes have been opened to the experience of evil, and they are filled with guilt and shame. And so now when they hear God in the garden, they run and hide.

Again, their shame causes them to do things that are laughable. First they assemble these ridiculous outfits from fig leaves, and then they think they can hide from the all-seeing God. They shuffle off behind some trees to avoid the presence of the Lord.

Sin causes us to run away from God, rather than run TO Him. Romans 3:11 says "no one seeks for God." That's our condition as sinners. Ever since the Fall, we are all hard-wired to turn away from God and hide from Him. We won't admit our guilt, but we just try to cover it up and hide from anything that might expose it.

That's why, for instance, we're naturally inclined NOT to read the Bible, or study the Bible, or hear the Word taught or preached. That's why we don't want to be vulnerable with people who are going to speak the truth to us. Because our sinful nature wants to hide from truth. John 3:20 says, "For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed." That verse describes Adam and Eve following their sin, and it describes all of us prior to God's work of grace in our lives. On our own, we want to cover up our sin, justify our sin, revel in our sin, and we avoid with a vengeance anyone or anything that threatens to expose our sin. Just like Adam and Eve, we try on our own to cover up our shame, and then we foolishly try to hide from the only One who can actually cover our shame. That's our sinful nature. We run from God until God pursues us and calls us to Himself.

In verse 9 God is pursuing Adam. He called to him and said, "Where are you?" Of course, we know that God was not ignorant of where Adam was. God knows all things. It's foolish for us to ever think that we are hiding things from God. At every moment He knows where we are, what we're doing, even what we're thinking. So God did not say, "Where are you" because He needed to find out where Adam was.

But it was a way of saying, "Why are you trying to hide! Come here and explain what you have done. You have to answer to Me." God is calling to the man. It's similar to chapter 4:9, where the Lord says to Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?" It's not as though God didn't know that Cain had just killed his brother Abel, but it was a way of calling him to account. "I know what you've done, and I'm holding you responsible for it."

The same thing is going on in God's question to Adam. He is calling him to account. Adam answers, in verse 10, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was

afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.” It’s significant in Adam’s response that he does not confess his sin. Instead of admitting his guilt and asking for forgiveness, he tries to conceal what has happened. But ironically, his words of concealment actually indict him. His attempt to avoid the root issue actually shows his guilt. Because it was Adam and Eve’s disobedience that brought shame and then made them want to hide. So Adam’s statement that he was afraid, because he was naked, and so he wanted to hide; that statement reveals a devastating divide that now stands between the man and God. There is now a massive separation. Innocence has been lost, and the man’s shame causes him to run away from God rather than run to Him.

It is so important that we understand the gravity of our sin, that sin separates us from God. God is holy, He is separated from sin. And He is righteous and just, so He must punish sin. And that means that all of us, in our sin, deserve God’s punishment and deserve to be separated from Him forever. Those who never put their trust in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sin, will experience that punishment and separation. They will spend eternity in hell, where they will be cut off from the presence of the Lord. But for those of us who are in Christ, we are no longer separated from God. The relationship is restored, and there is peace. Because “while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). Sin separates us from God, but Jesus Christ bridges that infinite chasm.

#### **Sin causes us to blame others (vv. 11-13)**

The third point about sin that we see in these verses is that sin causes us to blame others. In verse 11 God probes more deeply into the matter with a couple follow-up questions. “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?” Again, God is not asking because He doesn’t know. But He’s trying to lead Adam and Eve to confession. That would have been the proper response at this point, simply to acknowledge their sin and plead for forgiveness. But instead they play the blame game.

Adam starts. Remember, he is supposed to be the spiritual leader in the husband-wife relationship. He should have been protecting his wife from Satan’s attack, but he didn’t. And now he should be leading them to repentance, but instead he blames her. “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.” Isn’t this sad? Not long before this, Adam had rejoiced over Eve, “This at last is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh.” He was ecstatic that God had made Eve. But now sin has severely tainted that relationship.

Adam does (barely) admit that he ate the fruit, but the statement as a whole can hardly be called a confession. He is blaming the woman, because she gave the fruit to him. But he’s just digging himself into a deeper hole of guilt. The fact that she gave the fruit to him and he ate just shows that he has failed as a husband. He failed to protect his wife and lead her in obedience to God.

What’s remarkable about Adam’s words is that he doesn’t stop with blaming Eve. He blames God as well. “The women whom *you* gave to be with me . . .” Adam wants to place the blame as far away from himself as possible. Eve gave him the fruit, and God gave him Eve. So God is ultimately responsible for his sin. WRONG! It was wrong for Adam to blame God for his sin. Adam just wanted to pass the buck. He viewed himself as a victim. If God hadn’t placed him in the garden with that woman, he wouldn’t have sinned. That was his reasoning.

Eve follows suit and blames the serpent. “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.” Both of them pass the blame along to someone else. And that’s the way we try to justify so much sin in our lives. We think, “I wouldn’t lose my temper if it wasn’t for so-and-so. I wouldn’t struggle with lust if there weren’t so many sensual images in our culture. I wouldn’t worry so much if I just had more money. I wouldn’t get impatient if circumstances were different.” We’re trying to pass the buck, either to another person, or directly to God. God’s in control of this, so it’s His fault that I’m sinning in this way. But that thinking is so wrong and so dangerous. It’s just another man-made device to try to cover up our shame and guilt. And it keeps us from humbling ourselves before God to repent and seek forgiveness.

Augustine commented on the way that Adam pushed the blame onto Eve, and he wrote, “Nothing is as characteristic of sinners as to want to attribute to God everything for which they are accused. This arises from that vein of pride” (Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Gen 1-11, 86). Pride makes us blame others, because we don’t ever want to admit wrongdoing. We never want to accept the blame ourselves, so we look for someone else to blame, even if that someone else is God.

Adam and Eve should have humbly confessed their sin and asked for forgiveness. And that’s what we should do as well. Don’t blame others for the sin that’s in your own heart. Acknowledge it. Recognize how serious it is. And then look to Jesus Christ for forgiveness.

### **Sin is not the last word (v. 15)**

We’ll close by looking at verse 15, which contains a great message of hope. We’ve looked at three negative effects of sin (it produces shame and guilt, it separates us from God, and it causes us to blame others). But fourth, and finally, sin is not the last word. In verse 15, in God’s pronouncement of a curse on the serpent, we surprisingly find the first Gospel message in the Bible.

God says 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.” On one level, this enmity between the serpent’s offspring and the woman’s offspring refers to two groups of people. The serpent’s offspring are the reprobate (the unsaved), and the woman’s offspring are the redeemed. In chapter 4 we already see this hostility playing out in the relationship between Cain and Abel. And throughout Genesis, and throughout the history of the world, there have been these two humanities. The community of the redeemed, and those who oppose them.

But God’s words in Genesis 3:15 also point to something more specific, because the offspring of the woman ultimately refers to Jesus Christ himself, who is the head of this redeemed community called the church. So this verse is saying that Christ will bruise Satan’s head, and Satan will bruise Christ’s heel. This is the Gospel message, that Christ was put to death in order to triumph over death. Christ’s victory was not easy. He was tortured and crucified, and Satan thought he was triumphing over Christ. But those events did not signal Christ’s defeat. Rather, it was in this way that Christ triumphed. Satan may have bruised Christ’s heel, but Christ bruised Satan’s head.

As Hebrews 2:14-15 says, “Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself [Jesus] likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.” Jesus died to defeat death. And

because He died, we don't need to fear death. He took our punishment on Himself, so that we don't have to try to cover our own shame, and we don't have to be separated from God forever, and we don't need to blame others. Because our shame, our guilt, our blame, our punishment, was all placed on Jesus' shoulders as He died on the cross.

What a gracious God we have, that immediately after the Fall into sin, He gives a statement of hope. He foreshadows the Gospel. He is a gracious and forgiving God. He forgives all who admit their own sin, all who confess their sin and repent of it, and ask Him for mercy. So don't try to cover your own shame and guilt. Don't try to blame others. Trust in Jesus. Put your hope in Him. He has crushed Satan's head and has triumphed over sin and death.