

DAILY DOSE OF DOCTRINE

December 3-7, 2007



December 3, 2007 **The Fall: Mistrust**

“God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God...”¹

One tends to feel sorry for Adam and Eve. They were, after all, ‘innocent’ – naïve. They had no experience of sin or evil. They could not have known what the consequences of their choice would be. They were taken in by a manipulative tempter. Perhaps if they’d had more information from God, they wouldn’t have made that choice? Perhaps some of this is God’s failure to communicate?

But besides taking the ‘bait’ of God-like knowledge and authority, our first parents bought into Satan’s slanderous attack on the character of God. He intimated: ‘God told you not to eat of it because he doesn’t want you to have this opportunity. God is an oppressive, manipulative tyrant who wants to keep you in a subservient role.’

This was not the God that Eve and Adam knew. Their experience of God was one of love, provision, blessing, empowerment and open communication. Nothing in their prior experience lent credence to the tempter’s insinuations. They had every reason to trust God and no grounds to believe these slanders. If they found the serpent’s suggestions confusing, they could have taken their questions to God. But they did not. They chose to believe the worst of the One who had only been good to them.

In our fallen world the temptation to distrust God is even more frequent and persistent. But faith is still a choice. We can distance ourselves from God in suspicion or we can bring to him our doubts, hurts, questions and confusion. The former brings greater alienation and pain. The latter brings healing and restoration.

¹ Genesis 3:5 (TNIV)

December 4, 2007

The Fall: 'Lust'?

"When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some..."¹

Medieval theologians were heavily influenced by Platonic philosophy, which tended to see the material world as corrupt in comparison with the ideal or 'spiritual' reality behind it. This reinforced monastic preoccupation with the 'lusts of the flesh' such as adultery and gluttony. As a result, one encounters interpretations of original sin which allege that it is rooted in 'lust' and passed on from generation to generation like a sexually transmitted disease.

While this emphasis seems skewed, there is an element of 'sensuality' in the account of the Fall. The fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil was 'pleasing to the eye and good for food'. And the serpent alleged it was desirable for gaining wisdom. How could eating anything so attractive to the senses bring about bad results?

Making decisions involves varieties of legitimate factors, including dealing with our 'senses' and intuitive feelings. But we need to be cautious about letting our attractions lead us astray. How frequently are families brought into great pain because one person chose 'attractions' over faithfulness? Do we foresee the pain of surrendering to some substance or behaviour that becomes addictive and destructive?

The 'attractions' of our senses are a God-given gift that enable us to experience joy in his Creation. But they are a gift to be used with wisdom.

¹ Genesis 3:6 (TNIV)

December 5, 2007 **The Fall: Hiding**

"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, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden."¹

The immediate effect of sin on Adam and Eve was some sort of ill-defined sense of guilt. They did not understand the implications of their action, but they knew things were different. All that had been 'good' was no longer entirely so.

Guilt brings shame and alienation. Did they have a sense that all of creation was looking at them in consternation? Was there instantly a distancing from one another? Fashioning clothing doesn't make much sense, but it expresses a desire to protect oneself by shielding oneself from a world that is suddenly feels hostile.

Neither does it make much sense to hide from an all-knowing, omnipresent God. But we all tend to do it. We push God out of our minds. We lie. We go ahead anyway, as though he wasn't there, as though God could not see or hear what we are doing. But running or hiding is futile. As the Psalmist puts it: *"Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I say, 'Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me,' even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you."²*

How might things have been different for them if they hadn't hidden? If they had hoped in God's love and grace? How might things be different for us?

¹ Genesis 3:8 (TNIV)

² Psalm 139:7,8,11,12 (TNIV)

December 6, 2007 **The Fall: Blaming**

"The man said, "The woman you put here with me— she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it."¹

When hiding from God didn't work, Adam and Eve immediately tried blaming.

Adam pointed two fingers: one at Eve and the other, outrageously, at God himself! "The woman YOU PUT HERE with me..." Then, finding herself on the hot-seat, Eve immediately tried to shift the blame to the serpent.

If we can't cover up our sin, shifting the blame is often the next tactic to avoid the consequences of our actions. At best, blame-shifting severely damages our relationships with others and simply delays the consequences of our actions.

At worst it becomes a worldview of 'victimism', where one is never really responsible for living his or her life. Someone else – our parents, siblings, boss, teachers, ancestry, culture, etc. – is always responsible for the way we are and the things we do. We are to be pitied, not censured.

Pride, mistrust, wrong desires and the like may have been the causes of that first sin. But might the consequences have been different if they had not compounded their guilt by hiding and blaming? If they had taken personal responsibility – not for the whole mess, but for their part in it – could the results have been less disastrous for them and all Creation?

¹ Genesis 3:12 (TNIV)

December 7, 2007 **The Results: Suffering**

“I will make your pains in childbearing very severe; with pain you will give birth to children....Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life.”¹

Suffering, pain and disaster entered the world when we rebelled against God. ‘Labour’ pains are identified specifically: in childbirth and in the toil of eking out an existence in a hostile environment. But the suffering is much more extensive than that. Our continued rebellion against the law of God has led to killing, crime, injustice, oppression, pollution, hunger, etc. Nature itself is off-kilter resulting in disease, accidents, natural disasters and alienation from the animal world.

Pain highlights that there is a problem. If it were not for the pain of a cut on one’s foot, we might continue on, oblivious to the problem, resulting in infection or even more severe outcomes. The pain, though far from pleasant, is a blessing because it calls us to recognize the problem, diagnose it and seek a remedy.

Pain and suffering on this fallen planet are meant to do the same. They are meant to shake us out of the delusion that all is well. They are meant to cause us to seek a solution and be willing to receive it.

When Jesus came, he healed hurts, cured sickness, fed the hungry and calmed the storm. He demonstrated that the Creator was among us, giving us a foretaste of his ability and desire to reverse the effects of the Fall and heal this hurting world. Through his own suffering on the cross, Christ brought that remedy to us – and offers it freely if we will make him Lord of our lives once again.

¹ Genesis 3:16-17 (TNIV)