

BIBLICAL MANHOOD & WOMANHOOD

FALLOUT FROM THE FALL

Genesis 3: 1-24

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE: Need a dead butterfly or other large insect. Talk with the kids about what "deadness" is like. Why is the butterfly dead? What does the butterfly need? Can the butterfly cause itself to live? Eph. 2:1 says, "As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins." Sin is the cause and the evidence that we are spiritually dead. Can we make ourselves alive? No, only God can make spiritually dead people alive. We are helpless and can do nothing for ourselves. Catechism question: How are we made partakers of the redemption purchased by Christ? Answer: We are made partakers of the redemption purchased by Christ, by the Holy Spirit's effectively applying it to us.

INTRODUCTION

I've been asking myself this past week why I have taken up the task of talking about manhood and womanhood. I know that I am walking in a minefield of potential misunderstanding. I could be stirring up a hornet's nest of controversy. As near as I can judge myself I am motivated to speak on this subject because I care about God, I care about people and I care about Christ's church. God doesn't live in our world. We live in his world. He made us out of his good pleasure for his own purposes. We are bound by our created and redeemed status to honor the God who made us and who has saved us by living in accord with how he has made us. When I read God's revelation of himself in His word I cannot avoid how he describes maleness and femaleness. While men and women are equally made in God's image and valuable to him, yet they are not the same. If we are going to glorify God as men and women, made in his image, we must consider what it means to be male and female. It's not possible to take God serious and not take the question of maleness and femaleness serious.

A second reason I am motivated to talk about this subject is because I care about people. There is not a day that goes by in my life that I am not confronted with the misery that sin has brought into the lives of individuals. As we'll see this morning sin believes that what we want is best and that what God wants is harmful. Not every problem in our lives will be solved by our understanding and embracing our maleness and femaleness, as God defines it, but life will go better if we will.

The third reason I am motivated to talk about this subject is because I care about Christ's church. The church is the primary place on planet earth where God reveals himself. The church is God's instrument for bringing his salvation to the nations. When the church does not live in accord with God's revealed truth, Christ is dishonored and the work of gathering Christ's sheep is hindered. There is a movement within Christ's church, called Biblical Egalitarianism or Biblical Feminism, trying to use the Bible to teach that there are no distinctions between men and women. The method of Biblical interpretation this movement uses undermines the authority of God's word by making what is plain obscure. They are injuring the church by advocating patterns of leadership that fly in the face of the clear teaching of the Bible. Paul says that the church is the pillar and the foundation of the truth and these men and women are tearing out of the Scriptures the plainly taught truth of distinction between men and women, thus harming Christ's church.

John Piper captures my heart in something he said to his church: "It is simply an abdication of our moral and spiritual responsibility to tell young people to avoid negative stereotypes and then not give them a positive, practical, Biblical vision of what it means to be a man and or a woman. And one of the reasons we abdicate our responsibility is because it is the path of least resistance. It's easy to tear down negative stereotypes; but it's hard and risky work to rebuild the positive archetype. No one will criticize you if you poke holes in ugly stereotypes of manhood and womanhood. That's a very safe and customary pastime. But a hundred people wait to be your judge

if you try to develop a positive vision for your daughters of what it means to be feminine, or for your sons of what it means to be masculine. And so by and large we don't do it. And we leave them confused — telling them what it's not but not telling them what it is.”

This morning we are going to consider the impact of sin upon the relationship between men and women. But before we begin I want to quote Ray Ortlund to remind us of what we have seen already in Genesis 1 & 2.

“There is a paradox in the creation account. While Genesis 1 teaches the equality of the sexes as God’s image-bearer and vice-rulers on the earth, Genesis 2 adds another complex dimension to Biblical manhood and womanhood. The paradox is this: God created male and female in His image equally, but He also made the male the head and the female the helper. For clarity’s sake, let me restate my definition of male headship (not male domination): *In the partnership of two spiritually equal human beings, man and woman, the man bears the primary responsibility to lead the partnership in a God-glorifying direction.* That is, God calls the man, with the counsel and help of the woman, to see that the male-female partnership serves the purposes of God, not the sinful urges of either member of the partnership... This profound and beautiful distinction, which some belittle as a ‘matter of mere anatomy,’ is not a biological triviality or accident. It is God who wants men to be men and women to be women; and He can teach us the meaning of each, if we want to be taught.”

There is no question that the ideal male-female relationship that I have attempted to describe from Genesis 1-2 the past two weeks is often an illusive dream. The evidences of confusion, perversion and conflict over sexual identity and the relationships between men and women are everywhere apparent. Genesis 3 shows us the root cause of all the chaos, our own sinfulness. Genesis 3 is one of the most important chapters in the Bible. The better you know what Genesis 3 teaches the better you will know yourself and the world you live in. I would encourage each of you to spend the time reading and reflecting on this history of your ancestors. Read it as if you are Adam, as if you are Eve, because you are. I preached two sermons on this chapter in 1998 that deal with many of the details I am going to pass over in this sermon. My focus is on how sin has affected our relationships as men and women.

MAIN POINT

Sin brings confusion and conflict into our relationships as men and women because...

I. Sin is a despising of God (vv. 1-5)

The very nature of the question in v. 1 shows the contempt the snake, which is Satan in physical form, has for God. He deliberately misrepresents God. This question is asked in the face of the abundance and goodness that surrounds them in this pristine environment. God has been nothing but good and has clearly said they may eat from every tree in the garden, yet the snake casts doubt on the goodness and provision of God. He slanders God’s character by portraying God as stingy and miserly.

Illustration: Say your 16 year old son is invited to a party. You, as his loving parent, decide that he can’t go because there will be no adult supervision. A couple of weeks later your son reports to you that one of the ringleaders of the “cool” clan at school said to him, “I’m sorry you have to live with your parents. Is it really true they won’t let you leave the house except to go to school?” Isn’t this a grossly disrespectful thing to say? This is exactly what Satan is doing. In spite of the enormous evidence to the contrary and the apparent foolishness of the question, he deliberately casts doubt on the goodness of God by asking this question.

A second evidence that sin despises God is seen in the woman’s answer to Satan’s question. She corrects Satan, but not exactly. She leaves out words and she adds words. You can see in her answer that the very question the snake asked has eroded some of her confidence in God. She says, “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden,” – What word did she leave out? She left out the word “all”. She goes on to say the only exception is they can’t eat from the tree in the middle of the garden and she adds, “we may not touch it or we will die”. This is a deliberate misquotation of God! She implies that by merely touching the tree they will die, something God never said. Then, notice how she treats God’s threat of death for eating. There is a word in the Hebrew text that the NIV doesn’t

translate. She literally says, "...or you may die." She calls into question God's commitment to his own holiness and justice. She is saying that God either doesn't mean what he says or is not able to do what he says.

What she does in her answer is call into question God's provision, his command and his faithfulness. She implies that God is not good and in fact harsh and unreasonable. If she was really concerned to correct this mistaken notion of God she would have simply told the snake to take a hike. You don't stand around and converse with someone who treats God with such disrespect.

Illustration: Imagine your son again having been asked in a somewhat condescending, perhaps sarcastic tone of voice, "Is it true your parents only let you out of the house to go to school?" Now if your son is chiefly concerned with honoring you he will quickly tell this arrogant interrogator he doesn't know what he's talking about and he doesn't appreciate his insulting you. He might even add that he is glad to have you as his parents. But if your son is more concerned with his reputation with the "cool" gang or if he's feeling a little resentful about your having said no to his going to the party, he might say something like this. "My parents are just concerned about me. Though they do tend to be too uptight and don't seem to know that I'm 16 and can take care of myself."

In the serpent's response to the woman the gloves are off and the fullness of sin's contempt for God is revealed. "You will not surely die", says the snake to the woman. He declares that God is a liar. God doesn't mean what he says. He's just playing games, trying to hold you under his thumb. Not only does he call God a liar but also implies God is impotent. God can't do anything to you, he isn't going to call you to account for what you do because he can't. You're safe, you have nothing to fear because God can't do what he threatens. He challenges God's power, justice, authority and truthfulness.

Next, he tells the woman the real reason God is withholding this tree is God is jealous of his power and position and is unwilling to share it with them. He is holding out on human kind. This garden is OK but things could be a whole lot better and God knows this but he doesn't want to share with you. He is not good and what he gives is not the best.

Do you see the wickedness of what the serpent and the woman are accusing God of and implying about God? All sin is like this. Sin is not merely an immoral act but it is an anti-God attitude followed by anti-God action. Here is the wickedness of sin. God is perfect and always deals with us in perfect justice, kindness and goodness. Yet we declare God is harsh, repressive, capricious, unkind, unfaithful and impotent every time we violate one of his commands. Every sin is always against God. Every sin is always an assault on his character, his integrity.

Consider with me for a moment the sin of retaliation. One of your co-workers (or sibling or spouse or friend) says something that hurts you. Let's say he does it intentionally. He is jealous of a promotion you received and he says to you, "I'm so tired of how you never help. You just sit around and let the rest of us do the work unless the boss is here, then you work and show her how hard you are working. All of us see it. You may be fooling the boss but you're not fooling me." Now, let's say this is an untrue statement. You are not lazy and what you are being accused of is not true. You respond by telling him in a loud and defensive tone of voice, "You're the one who is lazy." You begin to give him specific examples of where he has fallen short. Then for the next week you don't talk to him and when you see he needs help you intentionally turn your back and walk away. You gossip about him to other workers. In other words, you retaliate, you aim to pay him back for the evil he has done to you. God commands us in I Peter 3: 10, "Do not repay evil for evil or insult for insult but with blessing because to this you were called so that you might inherit a blessing."

Now we all can see how our retaliation is an affront to the co-worker but how does it despise God?

- ❖ You call God a liar, because your actions show you believe your retaliation will lead to greater happiness than if you bless the one who curses you.
- ❖ You declare God is impotent to help you. Your action is more certain to keep this person from harming you than God is able to keep you safe.
- ❖ You declare that God is unjust. He doesn't defend the innocent. You have to make sure you are vindicated, because God can't be counted on to do so.

- ❖ You are declaring God has no right to command you. Who does he think he is telling you to bless the jerk who does this to you? What right does he have to tell you what is moral and immoral behavior? Doesn't he understand how hurt you are?
- ❖ You are despising his gifts to you. You are using the intelligence he gave you, the ability to communicate he gave you, the air he gave you to violate his command.
- ❖ You are despising the death of Christ for sin. You are acting as though the sin committed against you is of far greater consequence than the myriad of sins you have committed against God

All of us, by nature, despise God in this way. It is not surprising then, when we are confronted by other beings made in his image, that we would despise them. We naturally dislike and are distrustful of others because we naturally dislike and are distrustful of the One whose image they are.

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- *And because...*

II. Sin overthrows God's created order

In Genesis 2 it is quite clear that there is an order in creation. God makes man. Then he makes the woman from the man and for the man. Both man and woman are placed in authority over the animals. God is the head of man, man is the head of woman and both man and woman have authority over the animals. But notice in chapter 3 that that order is turned on its head. The serpent, a creature, is clearly in charge of the conversation. He initiates it and directs it to his desired end. The serpent does not address the man, but the woman. He intentionally reverses the order within the male-female relationship. The man, rather than exercising his leadership to put a stop to the conversation, stands passively by while the woman is led astray. Then, the woman gives the fruit to the man and the man, passively eats what he is given, without protest. God and his will clearly takes a back seat. He is not consulted. His opinion does not matter. He is at the bottom of this chain of authority.

Ray Ortlund's comments are insightful: "Mark well what the text says and what it does not say. The text does not say, '...she took some and ate it. Her husband, who was with her, also took some and ate it.' What actually happened is full of meaning. Eve usurped Adam's headship and led the way into sin. And Adam, who (it seems) had stood by passively, allowing the deception to progress without decisive intervention—Adam for his part, abandoned his post as head. Eve was deceived; Adam forsook his responsibility. Both were wrong and together they pulled the human race down into sin and death. Isn't it striking that we fell upon an occasion of sex role reversal?"

When men refuse to take responsibility for directing their relationships with women in a God-glorifying direction, then it is only a matter of time before the devil is going to bring trouble and chaos into that relationship. When a woman rejects, ignores or even fights against the loving leadership of men in her life it is only a matter of time before Satan brings destruction into those relationships.

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III. Sinners will do anything to avoid facing their own sin

Verses 6-7 are among the saddest verses in the Bible. These verses are the cause of all the misery in the world. Satan's promise was fulfilled. They now know good and evil. What is sad about this is that they knew "good" before this; all they discovered by eating was evil and its sad consequences. There is a contrast we are supposed to see as we look at Adam and Eve's vain attempts to hide from God and turn away his accusations. In Genesis 2:25 we were told that Adam and Eve were "naked and not ashamed". This is not, as most modern commentators say, a

reference to their psychological intimacy as a couple. Rather they were innocent of any wrongdoing and therefore were not under God's judgment. It is a statement of an objective reality with a subjective experience. Nakedness throughout the Bible, except in this one verse, is always the result of God's judgement on human sin. Shame is used repeatedly of the condition of being overwhelmed by your enemies or by God. It is the opposite of being blessed. To be shamed is to be defeated and/or judged guilty. It produces feelings of shame but is always the result of an objective reality. So, what we are told in v. 25 is that human beings were naked yet were not under the judgment of God. They were not guilty of anything and so did not experience any of the negative emotions or defensive behaviors that come to people who are guilty of sin.

See how their condition is completely reversed after they eat? Their nakedness now becomes the evidence of their guilt before God and so they seek to cover it up with fig leaves. When they hear God approaching they seek to hide from him by diving into the bushes. If it weren't so tragic this scene would be comical. They think they can cover the guilt of sin with fig leaves. They think they can avoid God's gaze and judgment by hiding in the bushes. Then when God summons the man and the woman before him as their judge they don't come clean, they seek to turn his judgment away by blaming others.

When God asks, "Where are you?", he's not unaware of where Adam is. He is instead asserting his rights as judge. It is his summons to come before him to give account for what has happened. Please notice that God calls for Adam, not Eve, even though Eve is the one who was deceived first. He calls for Adam because Adam is the moral leader in the relationship. God knows and God is going to deal with what has happened. Adam immediately avoids a direct answer and simply tries to excuse his behavior by saying he was afraid because of his nakedness and so he hid. His answer is given in the tone of the person justifying his behavior. "It makes perfect sense that I'm hiding from you God. I mean, I was afraid. What did you expect me to do. Just stand out here in the open and wait for you to come and see me, standing there naked, exposed?" Just in this opening question and response we see how much has changed in God's relationship with man. Rather than the relationship of a beneficent father with his obedient child, we have the relationship of a judge with an accused criminal. No criminal is happy when the judge shows up.

So, God says, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?" Notice the criminal behavior that follows. He says, "It's not my fault. The women you gave me, she gave me some fruit and I ate it." Look at the belligerence in the answer. Look at the accusation. "It's not my fault, it's really your fault, God. If you wouldn't have given this women to me, we wouldn't be in this mess." You have to feel the wickedness in what is being said here. Like a criminal justifying his behavior he refuses to accept any responsibility and instead blames his wife and God. He declares that the woman whom he declared was the best gift God could have given, in chapter 2, is now the source of all evil. The women shows she has been affected in the same way by her sin. When she is questioned she blames the snake, another of God's creations.

Doesn't this describe your life? How much energy do you spend covering up and ignoring the evil you do? When you sin, is this your first response? To say to God and those you've sinned against with tears, "What I did was wicked. I despised God and you. I wanted to do it and enjoyed doing it. I deserve to be severely punished for what I did. I humbly bow before God and those I have injured asking forgiveness but prepared to receive whatever punishment is deemed fit for my crime." This is not how we naturally respond. We tell God that it makes perfect sense that we are afraid and avoid him. We try to explain and justify. We blame others for the evil we have done. This is especially true in marriages. How often have I heard in one form or another, "My evil behavior is justified because of your evil behavior?" Husbands say to wives, "If you'd respect me, then I'd love you." Wives say to husbands, "If you'd love me, then I'd respect you." Sinners will do anything; say anything to escape from the guilt of their sin.

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IV. Sin calls forth God's judgment

Verses 14-19 are the sentencing phase of the trial. They explain why the world is so screwed up and they explain what God is going to do about it. We're only going to look at the end of v. 16. This sentence describes what happened to the perfect relationship that existed between man and woman. God tells the woman that "her desire will be for the man but that he will rule over her." What does this mean? Turn to Genesis 4:7. Here we see Cain being tempted to murder his brother Able. God speaks to him and says in part, "...sin is crouching at the door and it desires to have you, but you must master it." Sin is pictured as a fierce predator desiring to master and devour Cain. He must not let that happen but must resist it and fight against it and destroy it. The same two words for desire and master/rule are used here as in 3:16.

God tells the woman that the result of sin is that she will be in continual conflict with the man. She was created to be his helper. Instead she will try to overcome him, try to get him to do what she wants. She will not respect him nor gladly follow him. She will seek to use the gifts of her femininity to manipulate and dominate the man. At the same time the man, who is supposed to love and provide for and protect the woman will use his power to dominate her, to rule over her harshly. Marital quarreling, domestic violence, emotional distance between those meant to be one flesh, all of this is God's judgement on human sin. Male domination and chauvinism are the result of sin. Feminism, which seeks to deny male headship, is also a result of the fall.

This is how John Piper comments on Genesis 3:16: "So the essence of corrupted maleness is the self-aggrandizing effort to subdue and control and exploit women for its own private desires. And the essence of corrupted femaleness is the self-aggrandizing effort to subdue and control and exploit men for its own private desires. And the difference is found mainly in the different weaknesses that we can exploit in one another. As a rule men have more brute strength than women and so they can rape and abuse and threaten and sit around and snap their finger. It's fashionable to say those sorts of things today. But it's just as true that women are sinners. We are in God's image male and female; and we are depraved, male and female. Women may not have as much brute strength as men but she knows ways to subdue him. She can very often run circles around him with her words and where her words fail she knows the weakness of his lust. If you have any doubts about the power of sinful woman to control sinful man just reflect for a moment on the number one marketing force in the world — the female body. She can sell anything because she knows the universal weakness of man and how to control him with it. The exploitation of women by sinful men is conspicuous because it is often harsh and violent. But a moment's reflection will show you that the exploitation of men by sinful women is just as pervasive in our society. The difference is that our sinful society sanctions the one perversity and not the other."

Male headship and the glad help of females in the great task of honoring God is part of God's good creation. Male domination and female resistance to male leadership are part of the fall. Next week we are going to see how Christ reverses these negative consequences of sin as he redeems fallen men and women and places them into his body, the church.

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MOMENT OF SILENCE

BENEDICTION 1 Thess. 5:23-34