

## Genesis 3:20-24

### *The Way Back To God*

During the very turbulent 1960's in our country, a movement arose among a generation who thought they could bring peace and love back into our hostile, violent world.

That movement was based upon drugs, illicit sex, and an artificial brotherhood of all people. The spirit of those times was probably best captured by a line from the Crosby, Stills and Nash song "Woodstock," in which they sang "We've got to get ourselves back to the garden."

Ever since Adam and Eve, human beings have been looking for a way to recapture the setting of peace and tranquility that characterized the Garden of Eden.

Of course, the problem to anyone familiar with the Bible is obvious. We'll never get ourselves back there.

We're all sinners and the heart of sin is selfishness. Rather than the 60's giving us the kind of humanistic Nirvana that many were expecting we got a Pandora's box of hatred, crime, drug trafficking, abortion, broken homes and all the other results that come from a society whose ultimate aim is to seek pleasure.

What's the answer to our desire for peace? Is there a way back to the garden and if there is how can we find it?

I believe there is a way back and we can see it today in **Genesis Chapter 3**.

We're in a study of Genesis and so far we've seen that God created all that is, including human beings in His own image. We saw that Adam and Eve chose to disobey their Creator. Then last week we saw that God pronounced the consequences Adam and Eve would suffer.

**As we pick, up this morning in verse 20 we read: Genesis 3:20.**

#### *I. Adam Made An Amazing Confession Of Faith*

At first glance Genesis 3:20 seems to have been totally misplaced. It seems to have absolutely no connection with what went before it.

In verse 19 God says, *In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread Till you return to the ground, For out of it you were taken; For dust you are, And to dust you shall return.*

And then suddenly Adam pops up and says, "I think I'll call my wife Eve, because she is the mother of all living."

God makes a statement of death and Adam makes a statement of life. What is really going on here?

Ordinarily verse 20 is understood to mean that Adam believed that a race of men and women were to come from Eve, so she's the mother of all living.

But that was rather obvious from the beginning. There wasn't anybody else around so since God had told them to be fruitful and fill the earth it had to be through Father Adam and Mother Eve.

I think the place to begin to understand this verse is with the fact that "Eve" was Adam's name for his wife and not God's name.

The past couple of weeks we've been talking about Adam and Eve but the Bible hasn't called her Eve up until this point.

The first time Adam gave his wife a name was back in **Chapter 2 and verse 23. Look there for a moment.**

There are 2 basic Hebrew words for "man." *Adam* which is used 527 times from which we get "Adam" and *ish* which is used 1432 times. Both those words are normally translated "man."

Here Adam says "she shall be called *ishshah* because she was taken out of *ish*. Her original name was literally "out of man."

But now look over at the first 2 verses of chapter 5. **Read 5:1 & 2**

God called them "Mankind" in the day they were created. That's the word *adam*.

God called the woman "Adam." So here's the \$64,000 question: if God called Eve "Adam, why did Adam call Eve "Eve"?

The names *ishshah* and "Eve" were actually descriptive titles more than names.

The Hebrew word *Chavvah* literally means "life." The name "Eve" is just an Anglicization of this Hebrew word. It came over as Eve.

"Eve" means "life" in the sense of "life giver."

Now remember at this point Adam and Eve didn't have any children. So then why did Adam say she was life and the mother of all living? Remember this is spoken immediately after God's pronouncement of death in verse 19.

The answer comes from the context. Five verses before this Adam and Eve had heard the judgment of God against Satan which we find in 3:15.

### **Read 3:15**

God has said that the punishment for eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was death. Adam and Eve had seen the judgment of God against Satan. Satan had appeared to them as a serpent. Probably not a snake as we know it today. The Hebrew word translated "snake," *nachash* literally means "a shining one."

I think it is safe to assume that this was a glorious, if not the most glorious, creature that God had made.

Suddenly Adam and Eve heard God's judgment and saw this beautiful animal turn into a snake and slide away on its belly licking the dust.

They must have been paralyzed with fear. They saw the serpent's judgment and they were next. What would God do to them? Would He turn them into snakes? Would they die physically that instant?

As they thought about this and then listened in verse 16 to 19 as God pronounced much less of a judgment on them, the promise of verse 15 must have gotten through.

Eve was to have offspring. Eve was to have seed since she hadn't given birth yet that meant she wasn't going to drop over dead any time soon. And since she hadn't conceived yet that meant that Adam was going to be around too.

Not only that, but through Eve was to come someone who was a deliverer. He was going to bruise the head of Satan.

For Adam to name his wife “Eve” the “life giver” was a tremendous step of faith.

God had promised Adam that the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil would cause his death. He told him, *in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.*

And that is exactly what happened. Adam and Eve ate and they began immediately to die physically. Every one of us is growing older by the minute. We are wearing out.

Our bodies and dieing and every beat of our heart brings us that much closer to the grave.

We’ve made tremendous medical advances over the past decades but, still the death rate is the same as it has always been, a flat 100%.

Now Adam realized this was true. God just gave him a promise. “You’re headed back to the dust.” But Adam saw something else.

Not only did Adam and Eve begin to die physically on this day but they actually died spiritually. They were spiritually separated from God. That is why they were hiding and God had to seek them out.

But now God promises them redemption. Salvation always comes by faith. Adam and Eve believed the promise of God in Genesis 3:15 and they were saved. God had just pronounced the sentence of death upon the race, but had also declared that the woman's seed would bring salvation. Adam believed. He confessed his faith by calling his wife the mother of all living, not the mother of all dying.

People often ask, “How were individuals saved before Jesus came?” This gives us a beautiful picture of salvation. It’s the same for every age.

Throughout the whole account of this chapter we are shown that there is only two things we can and must do in regard to the problem of sin. We have a change of mind, that is repentance, and then we believe God.

Throughout the rest of the Bible, before the law, during the time of the Mosaic law,

during the time of Christ, and now after the cross, salvation comes through repentance and faith.

Repentance is acknowledging the facts. Adam had to admit it. "Yes I have sinned." Faith is then laying hold of the promise of God by an act of the will.

Salvation has always been by faith. The basis of salvation was always the cross. The Old Testament saints were saved by what Jesus Christ would do. We are saved by what He has done.

And the object of faith has always been God and his promises.

Adam and Eve believed that there was redeemer coming and God saved them. Abraham believed that God would give him a son through whom all the earth would be blessed and God counted him righteous.

David believed that God would not impute his sin to him because of his faith - and that is exactly what happened. Today we believe that Christ died to pay for our sins and through faith we are born again and made God's children.

Now you might wonder how it is that we know for certain that Adam and Eve believed God and were forgiven at this point.

*I. Adam Made An Amazing Confession Of Faith*

*II. Adam Received A Covering Directly From God*

**Read verse 21**

See the clear steps of the salvation process here.

1. An understanding of sin brought on by the declaration of judgment from God.
2. The expression of faith in the promise and provision of God.
3. Justification. God clothed Adam and Eve with an innocent sacrifice.

Back in verse 7 we saw how Adam and Eve responded to their nakedness after they ate the fruit.

They had been naked from the beginning and stood before God and one another without shame. They were free from sin. They had nothing to hide.

But once they disobeyed God they suddenly stood in a wrong relationship to God and

to one another and felt exposed. So they tried to cover themselves up. At first they made aprons of fig leaves. Later on when God confronted them in the garden they used evasions, excuses, and finally even tried to blame God.

Think about how often we try the same tactics. But the obvious point of verse 21 is that the coverings which we try to make to hide our shame are inadequate.

See, when people realize that they are unrighteous and that God is holy they try to make some kind of covering for themselves.

There are 2 common coverings that people tend to go for.

The first is good works. They figure, "Surely if I'm good enough God will accept me. Doesn't that just make sense?"

Well God's pronouncement is that our good works are just fig leaves. Listen to what the Bible actually says: *For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.* Ephesians 2:8 & 9

*Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt. But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness.* Romans 4:4 & 5

It is not that good works aren't good. Ephesians 2:10 says, *For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.* They are just not good when it comes to dealing with our salvation.

Think about monopoly money. Monopoly money is great for playing monopoly. When you're playing Monopoly you want all the Monopoly money you can get, right? You want 4 hotels on Boardwalk and Park Place. But you can't go over to the M & T Bank across the street and open an account with monopoly money. It only has value in a certain context.

In the same way, although good works are sufficient to make ourselves acceptable to other people and even to honor God after we are saved, they are not sufficient to make us acceptable to God. Good works can't produce forgiveness of sin.

Then there's another type of covering that we're prone to try to cover ourselves with and that's religion.

The religious person says: "I go to church, I keep the 10 commandments (even though most people can't even name them), I've been baptized, I teach Sunday School, I have an uncle who is a missionary."

Again those things aren't bad in themselves. They can be very good if done for the right motive. But doing religious things can't change our heart.

We can make all the little covenants of religion that we want, but to God, outward acts of religion without Jesus Christ are nothing but an apron of fig leaves.

"But" someone says, "I have worked hard at pulling myself up by my own boot straps. I've got my life in order and I'm respected by my family and my community."

God says, "Fig leaves."

"But I read my Bible every day and I go to church twice on Sundays and I always say hello to the person sitting next to me."

God says, "Fig leaves."

"But I give to the United Fund," "Fig leaves."

"But I give blood" "Fig leaves."

"I...I...I..."

"All Fig leaves", says God, "because any thing you can do is powerless to deal with sin."

So what's the solution to this dilemma?

"God" made coats of skins and clothed them.

God did the work, and Adam and Eve received it. They didn't say "Wait a minute, God. We've got fig leaves. We worked hard on these. That's good enough. We don't need your covering. We don't want some skin of a dead animal on us, yuck!"

They received the tunics and allowed God to cloth them.

The symbolism is so blatant it just shouts out from the page.

An animal had to die to provide their covering. For us to be covered with the righteousness of Jesus Christ, He had to die. It was necessary for the innocent one to die in order that the guilty might live.

Just think how this all must have appeared to Adam and Eve. They'd been warned by God not to eat of the fruit or they would die. They ate but they didn't die physically. They died spiritually. That's evidenced by the fact that they ran and tried to hide from God.

They must have expected death because that is what God had promised.

Now remember, up until this point they had never seen death. Not even the serpent died.

And now the death that occurs isn't even their death. They certainly deserved it but instead innocent animals died instead and the one who killed them animals was God.

Two thoughts must have gone through Adam and Eve's mind at all this.

First was how horrible death really is. As they looked down on the bodies of those dead animals and realized the wages of sin is death, they must have realized how horrible sin is too.

The second thought growing out of the first must have been an amazement at the mercy of God.

God had every right to take their lives. They had broken His commandment, and yet He took the life of an innocent victim instead.

Here, right in the beginning, in the book of Genesis, God was showing that it was possible for an animal, an innocent substitute, to die for one sinning individual; one animal for each.

Later at the time of the Exodus from Egypt God commanded each Jewish family to



kill a lamb and put its blood on the door posts of the house to protect that family from the plague of death that God would visit on Egypt.

This broadened the symbolism to show how one animal could die for one family.

A little later when God gave the Law of Moses, He also gave instructions for the Day of Atonement, on which the high priest was to kill an animal as a sacrifice for the whole nation.

Then at last came the day when John the Baptist stood on the banks of the Jordan and pointed out Jesus saying, "Behold the lamb of God who comes to take away the sin of the world."

See, all of those animals were actually signposts. Their blood couldn't really provide forgiveness, but they did point to the innocent sacrifice that would, that is Jesus Christ who tasted death for every man.

*I. Adam Made An Amazing Confession Of Faith*

*II. Adam Received A Covering Directly From God*

*III. God Protected Adam From The False Way*

### **Read verse 22 - 24**

This is kind of strange isn't it?

God seems to have drastically changed his attitude. He has just accepted Adam and Eve, dressed them in the new clothing which He himself had provided, but suddenly He banishes them from His presence, drives them out, slams the door and locks it behind them.

Is something wrong here? It almost seems that God picks back up on His harsh words of verses 16 through 19 and acts like verse 20 & 21 weren't even there.

Well, I think if we read this passage that way we've seriously misread it.

Notice that verse 22 is an unfinished sentence.

God says, *Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil.* God knows good and evil without experiencing evil. God is the measure of goodness. He's

perfect.

Our problem is we can't know evil without experiencing evil. That means we also experience the consequences of evil. God is the measure of all things but we're not.

We think we are. That's why we figure we're not so bad. In fact, we're just as good, or even better, than the next guy. We try to judge everything by the way it appears to us.

And so now God addresses the problem of the other tree in the garden. *And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever--*

What if sinful humans who are doomed to live in shame and loss should eat the fruit from the tree of life and live on in that condition? And God just lets the question kind of hang unfinished as if the result was unspeakable.

Here's God's loving solution. Out go Adam and Eve and an angel guards the tree of life.

Now follow this. He's not guarding the tree because there's no way to life. There is. It just isn't physical. That's why this cherub guards the tree.

Humanity needs to know that the way back isn't a physical way. There's only one way and it's God's way.

Listen to Jesus in the New Testament explain the way. *Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. John 14:6.*

The Book of Hebrews explains it this way, *Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh. Hebrews 10:19-20.*

Here's how it all plays out right here in Genesis.

First, temptation. We all know about that. *For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Romans 3:23*

That's followed immediately by death. *For the wages of sin is death. Romans 6:23a*  
Death grips us and casts a shadow over our lives. It's always before us.

Then we come to repentance. That's where we admit the facts as God states them. *I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish.* Luke 13:3

And finally that leads to faith and God's grace. *Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand.* Romans 5:1-2

We're never going to get ourselves back to the garden. Instead God's made the way to the tree of life through His Son. Revelation 22 describes the tree of life as a place of healing.

Do you know how to find healing? When your spirit's been wounded by sorrow and grief, heartache, and guilt God calls you to come by faith and be refreshed by His living waters.

The Bible puts it so succinctly. It says this, *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved.* Acts 16:31