

THE PACKAGE DEAL

by Ray C. Stedman

Our task in this series of Genesis studies is to find clues to the greatest mystery novel that has ever been written -- the story of man. We are seeking to understand ourselves, both as men and women "in Adam," and also as the new men and women we have become if we are "in Christ." But we must begin with the first Adam because what he was we are. As one German writer put it, "I am delving into Adam in order to unriddle him, and myself."

In this series on *Understanding Man*, we have come to the last of the three stages of temptation. We have been watching the Tempter, as the Shining One, dealing with Eve in the Garden of Eden, and later, through her, reaching Adam as well. We have already noted that the first thing he does is to light a flame of desire within her for what God has forbidden. This is the first step of temptation; it is yet today. No matter how many thousands of years have rolled by since this account in the garden took place, it is still repeating itself in this twentieth century hour. Then we noticed in Stage 2, that when the mind was engaged, as ultimately it must be, it did not rationally consider the facts but it rationalized the desire. It made the doing of wrong look profitable, pleasurable, and even necessary to human fulfillment. How familiar we are with this process! How easily we rationalize what we want to do and make it look reasonable, and even necessary. If you question that, listen to your own excuses, the reasons why you do things. You can't help it; your whole family does it: your ancestry demands it: you are Irish or Latin or something similar. Thus the evil act was finally accomplished in the Garden of Eden. We read "she took of its fruit and ate: and she gave to her husband and he ate," {Gen 3:6b RSV}. When desire, conceived and rationalized, issues at last in ultimate form, it becomes an act or a settled attitude of the heart.

Now we come to Stage 3 in the process of temptation, which the Apostle James tells us is: "...sin, when it is finished, brings forth death," {Jas 1:15b KJV}. Remember that God had said to Adam and Eve in the very beginning, concerning the forbidden fruit, "...in the day that you eat of it, you will die," {cf, Gen 2:17b}. But the Tempter had said to Eve. "You will not die," {Gen 3:4b RSV}. He openly and defiantly challenged God's pronouncement. He said, "your eyes will be opened, and you will become like God," {Gen 3:4b RSV}. The way he said it made it sound like something glorious, exciting, and adventurous. He was saying to them by implication. "When you eat of this fruit you need no longer depend on this old Lord of creation: you will be lords in your own right. You can make decisions like God does. and do what you want to do." This has been the subtle lie that has hung over the whole human race from that day to this. But now the deed has been done, and we come now to the moment of truth. Which view is right? Will they die? Is the devil right? The answer is given in Verse 7:

Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves aprons. {Gen 3:7 RSV}

At first it is the devil who seems to be right. He said they would not die, and when they took of the fruit they did not drop down dead. He said their eyes would be opened and it is true that new knowledge was immediately granted to them. They saw things they had not seen before. Does that mean then that the devil was right? No, because from the moment they ate they began to die -- exactly as God had said: "In the day that you eat of it you will die," {cf, Gen 2:17}. Romans 5:12 says, "As sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, so death passed upon all men ..." This was the moment at which that occurred.

In this present passage we shall discover what we might call the signs of death. Death is not simply the moment when the breath leaves your body and you become a corpse. That is not death in its totality: that is simply the end of death. It is the end of a process which has been going on for some time, the beginning of which was so subtle that perhaps you did not even recognize it. It is this beginning of death which is traced in this Genesis account. The proof that this story of the Fall really occurred is found in the four things which this account reveals as marking the beginning of death. They are found in every person in this room, without

exception, and every person in the world, without exception. These things are present in the whole race.

We all know that when we yield to temptation we experience pleasure. We enjoy the pleasures of sin. But what this account forces us to face is that with the pleasure comes an undesirable accompaniment, a fall-out of sin, which we cannot escape. It is all a package deal. If we choose to take that momentary pleasure, we cannot choose to evade the accompaniment that comes -- death. Here is spelled out for us the four things which mark the beginning of death.

The first one is this, "they knew that they were naked." Now they were naked all along. God did not make Adam and Eve with clothes on, any more than he makes human beings with clothes on today. We come into this world naked. They too came into the world naked, but they did not know they were naked until the Fall. Why not? Because they had never looked at themselves -- their interest was not in this direction. They were self-less. Before the Fall they were concerned about the animals, for Adam had the task of naming all the animals. They were concerned about the garden, and about the work that had been assigned to them. They were concerned with each other, one about the other. But now suddenly they saw themselves. This awareness of self-nakedness is a symbolic way of expressing the fact that this was the birth of what we call self-consciousness. They saw themselves and the immediate effect was to bring shame and embarrassment upon them.

I would like to submit this to you for the testing ground of your own life. Is this not your most serious trouble; this fact that you are conscious of yourself? Is this not where you struggle the most? We all know that when, for a moment or two, we can forget ourselves, we do fine. We can speak, we can act, we can do many things well -- if we can forget ourselves. But then the sense of self comes flooding back over us; we remember ourselves, and we begin to fumble, to stammer, to blush; suddenly we are all thumbs and left feet. Why? This is the effect of self-consciousness. But God did not make man that way. Man was never made to be conscious of himself. His interests were to lie outside himself, he was to be self-less.

This accompaniment of self-consciousness dogs every one of us every day, and the amazing thing is that, to this very day, we discover that clothing helps us. Adam and Eve, when they discovered they were naked, immediately made rough clothing out of fig leaves. They made themselves aprons and covered themselves. Here is the explanation for the fact that the whole human race finds it psychologically necessary to clothe themselves. In mankind's fellowship and intercourse with one another, clothing helps. It helps to make us feel more secure, more adequate, more able to face life. This is why women, when they get blue or discouraged, find it very uplifting to buy a new dress. One lady said, "Whenever I get down in the dumps I get a new hat." And her husband said, "I wondered where you got them." So, like Adam and Eve, we reflect the same thing; we find ourselves making clothes to cover our self-consciousness.

We find this true at the psychological level as well. This is what lies behind the universal practice of creating an impression, projecting an image of ourselves. That is a form of psychological clothing. Physically, clothing is a way of changing our appearance so that we look different than we actually are. So it is with the matter of projecting an image. It is a way of trying to get people to think of us as different than we really are. This is why, at one time or another, we all find ourselves struggling with the matter of being honest, of being open. We find it difficult to be so. We do not want people to see us, or think of us, as we are. That is why we avoid too close contact with one another. We do not want to spend much time with any one person because we are afraid he will see us as we are. You can see how this idea simply permeates the race, and has ever since the moment self-consciousness was born in an act of disobedience.

The second thing this account shows us, present among us because of the disobedience of man, is found in verse eight:

And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. {Gen 3:8 RSV}

Hiding is an instinctive reaction to guilt, and reveals the fact of guilt. When one of my daughters was a baby she had the habit of sucking her thumb. It carried over into late babyhood and we tried to help her with this.

She began to feel very guilty about sucking her thumb and we often found that, when we would catch her doing so, she would take it out of her mouth and hide it under her dress. Now, who taught her to do that? No one. No one needs to teach us such things; these are instinctive reactions. She hid because she felt guilty. Thus here in verse eight is the first description of a human conscience beginning to function; that inner torment we are all familiar with which cannot be turned off, no matter how hard we try. In fact, often the harder we try to ignore it, the deeper it pierces and the more obdurate it becomes. Psychologists agree that guilt is a universal reaction to life, that, without apparent reason or explanation, all of us, without exception, suffer from guilt. This sense of guilt haunts us, follows us, makes us afraid. We are afraid of the unknown, of the future, of the unseen, just as Adam and Eve discovered themselves to be.

But the Lord God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?" And he said, "I heard the sound of thee in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked: and I hid myself." {Gen 3:9-10}

That is the heritage of the Fall, this sense of guilt. It is death at work in human life. But there is still a third aspect of this death revealed here:

He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" The man said, "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate." Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent beguiled me, and I ate." {Gen 3:11-13 RSV}

There is much in these verses which we will pass by for the moment, to return to in our next message, but I want to focus now on the first playing of the oldest game in the world, the favorite indoor sport of the whole race -- passing the buck. The Lord said to them, "What is this that you have done?" And Adam said, "Well, the woman that you gave to me, she gave me the fruit, and I ate. It's her fault." The woman said, "Well, it's not my fault, it's the serpent's fault. The serpent beguiled me, and I ate."

This is the first human attempt to deal with the problem of guilt. Interestingly enough, it is exactly the same way by which we twentieth-century people also try to relieve guilt. See how these factors are all related. It is self-consciousness which is the basic, fundamental wrongness about human life. That is what produces guilt. Our awareness of self makes us ashamed, embarrassed, and guilty. Then in order to evade this sense of guilt, we do what Adam did. We say, "Well, it's not my fault. I'm but a victim of circumstance." He took it like a man -- he blamed it on his wife. And she passed it along to the serpent. But behind both excuses is the unspoken suggestion, very clear in this account, that it is really God's fault. "The woman whom Thou gavest me..." says Adam. If you had never given me this woman I would never have fallen into this sin. The woman immediately passes it on and says, "It is because you allowed the serpent to come into this garden, that's the trouble." Both are pointing the finger ultimately at God and saying, "It's all your fault."

This is where blame always comes. Ultimately it points the finger at God and says he is at fault. Men are simply helpless victims of circumstance. This is what lies behind our urge to blame each other and pin the blame for our actions or attitudes upon some outward circumstance. When my children were little, one of them was engaged in a fight with her cousin. I said to them, "Who started this?" And the boy said, "She did! She hit me back!"

That attitude pervades the whole of society, and the whole of history. It is what I find married couples saying to one another all the time. The predominant problem in solving the tangles of a marriage relationship is to get the two to stop blaming each other. That is the hardest thing to do. But if they do it, the battle is two-thirds won. This is what races are doing today, and is the primary cause of racial strife. Each race is pointing a finger at the other and saying, "It's your fault!" This is what nations are doing in the international scene. We find ourselves universally yielding to this tendency to blame another, and, thus, ultimately, to blame God. Of course, we do not say that. Very seldom do you find a man coming out openly, outrightly, and blatantly saying it is God's fault. But that is what lies beneath the surface; we are blaming God for the whole thing, trying to turn guilt into fate and to make of ourselves mere innocent victims, suffering from a breakdown in creation for which God is responsible.

The fourth result which this account reveals is found in Verses 16 and 19:

**To the woman he said,
"I will greatly multiply your pain in childbearing;
in pain you shall bring forth children, ..." {Gen 3:16a RSV}**

To Adam he said, Verse 19:

**"In the sweat of your face
you shall eat bread
till you return to the ground,
for out of it you were taken;
you are dust,
and to dust you shall return." {Gen 3:19 RSV}**

Pain, sweat, and death. There are the limits of life. These are the prison walls that hem us in, and mock all our hunger and yearning after freedom and fullness. Is it not clear that the whole race suffers from a sense of loss, a sense of limitation? Each one of us, individually, knows this feeling. We know there is more to life than we are experiencing -- and how we crave it. How we long to find it, somehow, some way. We pore over travel folders. We read about new opportunities for work. We join a club, or seek a new relationship with other people. We adopt a hobby. We try desperately to find some way to enter into the fullness which we feel life ought to present to us. We know it is there, but we have lost the way to it. You can hear this panting after life in the present-day revolt of youth.

They are fed up with the materialistic hollowness of the previous generation. They know that happiness, obviously, does not lie in things -- in television sets and freezers and new cars. But they do not know where it is found. Every effort we make, every step we take, every channel we follow to find it, we are flung back constantly by these three things -- pain, hard, grinding toil, and the black wall of death.

Why is it that we all have a sense of needing to hasten at our work? Why are we forever saying, "Let's make the years count, let's use time to the full?" Why do we use calendars and clocks? It is because we realize that we must die. Our time is limited. We have only so much time and we must use it to the full. We are set around by walls we cannot break through. Every effort we make, if pressed too far, results in pain and struggle and death. That is what happened when the eyes of Adam and Eve were opened. They were indeed opened, but this is what they saw. They learned the hard, cruel facts of life lived apart from dependence upon God. They immediately knew that from which we all suffer: a sense of self-consciousness, an awareness of guilt, an urge to blame another, and that terrible, empty, hollow feeling of limitation, a sense of loss. What a cruel and dreary world these factors have produced. They are what the Bible calls "the works of the devil" {1 Jn 3:8}, works which he is free to accomplish because man has given him opportunity in the disobedient act of his heart.

Well, we cannot leave the story there. We must remember that, if there was a first Adam from whose misdeed we all suffer this morning, the good news is that there is also a second Adam, a Man who came to reverse the works of the devil -- to free us, to loose us from their evil control. We cannot close this study without asking ourselves: What does Jesus Christ do about these things? I only wish we could take the time to open this meeting up for testimony so that you, yourselves, could say what he does. But yet I know I speak for the majority in this room when I review these things.

What does Jesus Christ do about my self-consciousness? What does he do about this sense that I must depend upon myself? How does he change the accompanying guilt, embarrassment, and sense of inadequacy that immediately floods me when I realize that I must reckon on myself to meet the demands of life, but I do not have what it takes? What does he do? He turns my eyes from myself to himself. I learn to say, as Paul learned to say, "I am crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I but him. He lives in me and what I do, I do not do out of dependence on myself: it is he at work in me and he is the adequate One," {cf, Gal 2:20}. Immediately that I believe and act upon that, I lose myself-consciousness. I become self-less. There is manifest in my life the outgoing givingness of the self-less Christ. Any moment I am doing that, that will be the nature of the life I live. That will be the nature of the life that you live in Christ. He completely destroys that tormenting

self-consciousness which creates the embarrassment of life.

Well then, what does he do about my guilt? Ah, here is a glorious word! He comes to me when I stumble, when I fail or falter, when I find myself doing what I don't want to do and I loathe myself because of it, and he says to me. "If any man be in Christ there is no condemnation. You don't need to worry, I know that you will do these things. I know that you have given way, and that you will give way; I know this. I know that you don't easily choose good and repudiate evil. I know that, but I love you, and I accept you. If you will look at this wrong thing and simply regard it honestly, as it is, immediately there is no condemnation. You are as loved as you ever were, you are as much mine as you ever were. Don't look back at the past, start right here, now, and let's go on."

What does he do about my urge to blame another person? He helps me greatly at that point. Jesus says to me, "I will give you the formula by which you can work out the problems of your life with other people. First, remove the beam that is in your own eye, then you'll see clearly how to help the other." When I find that in my relationships with another I do not know how to help him, that I know what he is doing wrong but I don't know how to help him stop it, then I know that I am failing to remove first the beam that is in my own eye. I'm not following Jesus' directions. But if I will, if I sit down and say, "What is it I am doing that makes him (or her) act that way to me, what is it I am doing?" then the situation wonderfully changes and I find that everyone begins to act differently to me, the whole world is different. The problem did not lie with others, it lay with me. This is what Jesus helps me see. Openly, honestly, forthrightly, he tells me where the problem is.

What does he do about my fear of pain and sweat and death? Oh, so many of you could answer that, if you had the opportunity. You know what he does. He does not remove you from these things. In fact, you will often times find yourself more frequently in them than perhaps you would have otherwise. The pain is still here, the need for toil, for hard, grinding labor is still there. I know -- and you know -- that there will come a time when we must face the fact of death. I won't be here always. I cannot stand in this pulpit forever. I cannot carry on my work forever. I, too, must come the place where I fold my hands and my spirit leaves this body and I am dead. What does Jesus do about this?

In each circumstance he goes with me into it, and I discover that that which was to me a grievous cross where something within me is put to death and which I fear, becomes a doorway into a new and greater experience than I could ever have dreamed. It is the old story of the cross and the resurrection. You never can experience the glory of a resurrection unless you have first experienced the death of a cross. Pain is transmuted into something different, a quiet peace which, though the pain is still there, makes it all worthwhile. Then, like you, I look back on the painful experiences of my life and say, "Those were the hours when I learned my greatest lessons. Those were the times when God spoke to me as at no other time -- thank God for them." Then I can look at the demands of life for labor, sweat, and toil, and know that those are the moments, too, when I find myself the happiest, engaged in that which produces a great sense of gladness, peace and joy. And, at last, when I cross the river of death, it is but an incident. I know it will be so. It is but an incident, a momentary flash, and then all the greatness of God's glorious promise will begin to unfold in its shining actuality. "O death, where is thy sting, O grave, where is thy victory?" {1 Cor 15:55}.

That is why Jesus Christ came. He finds us as people, human beings, involved in the nitty-gritty, hurly-burly of life, the struggle, the heartache, the grief, the sweat, blood, and tears of life, and he transmutes those things into patience and peace and joy. Christianity is not something to be experienced only in a religious service on Sunday -- that's merely the whipped cream on top -- but the wonderful body of it is mingled with the flow and flood of life itself. That is what makes it all so glorious. Jesus reverses the devil's activity; he releases us from the works of the devil.

What happens when, as Christians, we choose wrong? Well, we experience death. This is inevitable. "The mind of the flesh is death," says the apostle Paul {see Rom 8:6}. If we deliberately choose to disobey our Lord we will experience the four-fold death that follows inevitably in the great package deal of life. It is the law of inevitable consequences which Paul describes so clearly when he says, "Whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap," {Gal 6:7 KJV}. But the glory of the gospel is that the other side is true, as well. "If you sow to the Spirit, you will of the Spirit reap life" {cf, Gal 6:8b} -- and life as you have never known it before. If you sow to the Spirit; if you obey and walk in fellowship with the Son of God, then in this life there comes the

sure reversing of all these evil things we have been looking at and in its place will be the fellowship, the joy, the glory, and the riches which are in Jesus Christ. I find myself struggling to put this in adequate terms. I do not rightly know how to say it -- I only know that it is gloriously true. May God help us to cease our disobedience, to stop challenging the authority of the Word of God, to cease our apathetic lethargy that refuses to venture on the facts that Jesus Christ reveals to us.

Prayer:

Father, help us to understand ourselves and to understand how clearly and relevantly these things speak to our lives and our situation. Grant to us, Lord, the courage to begin right where we are -- now. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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