



## Key Scripture Passage

### Genesis 3:8-13

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. 9 But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?" 10 And he said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself." 11 He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" 12 The man said, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate." 13 Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

## Commentary on This Week's Text

Dietrich Bonhoeffer describes in his little book *Temptation* how temptation works:

"With irresistible power desire seizes mastery over the flesh; it makes no difference whether it is sexual desire, or ambition, or vanity, or desire for revenge, or love of fame and power, or greed for money. . . Joy in God is extinguished in us and we seek all our joy in the creature. At this moment God is quite unreal to us, he loses all reality, and only desire for the creature is real. Satan does not here fill us with hatred of God, but with forgetfulness of God. The lust thus aroused envelops the mind and will of man in deepest darkness. The powers of clear discrimination and of decision are taken from us. The questions present themselves: "Is what the flesh desires really sin in this case?" "Is it really not permitted to me, yes — expected of me, now, here, in my particular situation, to appease desire?" It is here that everything within me rises up against the Word of God."

This is precisely what happened to Eve in her treatment of God's word in the dialogue with the serpent. She first *minimized* the freedom God had given them to eat from the trees of the garden, then added a *strictness* to his word that simply was not there, and finally *softened* his word in regard to the certainty of death should they sin. Eve's revisionism left her open to believe the lie of Satan against all her experience of God's goodness. Thus she rose up against his word, took the fruit and ate it, and gave it to her husband. Her husband's transgression of God's word had greater culpability because: 1) God's word had been given directly to him before Eve's creation, 2) he was present with Eve during the temptation (as evidenced by Satan's consistent address of Eve with the plural "you"), and 3) Adam, in self-serving passivity, allowed his wife to partake while he looked on. Then, seeing that she did not die, he partook. Adam was not fooled, as was Eve (1 Timothy 2:14). His rebellion was an informed, eyes-wide-open, self-serving rejection of God and his word. Unspeakable rebellion.

The carefree nakedness that went with their perfectly transparent character and their unfettered harmony with God and each other dissolved. “Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths” (v. 7). Both Adam and Eve, in fact, died right there at the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, while the taste of the fruit was yet on their lips. Commentator Henri Blocher explains: “In the Bible, death is the reverse of life — it is not the reverse of existence. To die does not mean to cease to be, but in biblical terms it means, ‘cut off from the land of the living.’ It is a diminished existence, but nevertheless an existence.” Since dying is existing, Adam and Eve’s existence was now one of death. And not only that — sin immediately penetrated every sphere of their being, like colored dye sprayed into a glass of water. They were at once utterly sinful.

Paul was probably thinking of Genesis 2:17 (“you shall surely die”) when he wrote Romans 6:23, “For the wages of sin is death.” And he certainly had in mind this very instance when he wrote, “Sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned” (Romans 5:12). Paul’s assertion that “all sinned” describes an action that was completed in past time. We “all sinned” in Adam when Adam sinned. And because of this we also died, as also seen in Paul’s words elsewhere: “And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience” (Ephesians 2:1-2). We, too, entered the world dead and depraved, since sin colors every part of our existence, so that we hide from God rather than seek him (Romans 3:9-18).

In an instant the original couple passed from life to death, from sinless-ness to sin, from harmony to alienation, from trust to distrust, from ease to dis-ease. It did not take a day. It happened in a millisecond! Adam and Eve, as our parents, were genetically, historically, and theologically every man and every woman. They are all of us — not only in their original sin, but because the way they attempted to deal with their sin is the pattern with which we attempt to deal with it today. And the way that God dealt with Adam and Eve is the way he deals with us.

So there the first couple were, in their ridiculous fig leaf loincloths, slouching around paradise lost. God then confronted them in a graciously gentle, remedial way. And in their confrontation we see our confrontation.

## **Seek and Hide**

### *God Seeks*

Though God is everywhere present in creation, the garden of Eden was the special place of God’s presence on earth, much like the later tabernacle and temple. Eden contained the garden of God’s presence, and the garden of Eden was prophetic of and will be ultimately fulfilled in a new and universalized garden where God dwells (Revelation 22:15). Here in Moses’ writings the garden-tabernacle (and by implication temple) association is especially evident in the fact that when Adam and Eve were cast from the garden, cherubim were placed at its entrance to prevent their return access (3:24), and in the later tabernacle statues of cherubim were placed on either side of the ark in the Holy of Holies. Significantly, the function of the cherubim as guardians of the divine sanctuary reappears in the Holy of Holies of the Jerusalem temple.

Therefore, because God was present in the garden, we must not imagine that the opening line, “And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day” (v.

8a), indicates that God came down to the garden. He was already there. It was his earthly palace, his garden-temple. What the couple heard was “the rustle of God’s step” (to quote the commentator Von Rad). It was the sacred sound that they had heard before and that had so filled them with joy but now brought dread.

### *They Hide*

“And the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden” (v. 8b). At the sound of God’s approach, they sensed that their fig leaves were not enough and crouched deeper among the good trees of God’s bounty. What a pathetic delusion for anyone, then or today, to imagine that it is possible to hide from God. The psalmist tellingly asks: “Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!” (139:7-8). We all know this, but when we disobey we naturally succumb to silly ideas like Jonah and jump ship “to flee . . . from the presence of the LORD” (Jonah 1:3).

Unbelief spawns the ontological delusion that we can be where God is not. And more, we think we can privatize our thoughts, denying the fact that “You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar” (Psalm 139:2). Sin brings hiding and its multiple pathologies. Even as Christians, we can become mastered by the we-can-hide-from-God delusion. How utterly pathetic Adam and Eve were because they were literally hiding from the “face” (“presence,” v. 8) of God whom they had regularly seen and known and loved.

### *God Finds*

God sought - they hid - and God found. “But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, ‘Where are you?’ And he said, ‘I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself’” (vv. 9, 10). God’s “Where are you?” was remedial, like a father’s question to a naughty child hiding behind a door to avoid his face. The “where are you?” really asks “why are you there? Is that where you should be? Come out and face me!”

So Adam, realizing that God had found him, rose from his hiding-place, shamefaced, wearing his ridiculous fig leaves, mumbling his reply. And his wife crept out slowly after him. God drew Adam from hiding rather than drove him from it. The initial question was not an indictment like “where are you hiding?” but simply “where are you?” There was no hint of accusation. God nudged Adam to come to his senses. The process was full of grace. Notice that Adam’s response contained no admission of wrongdoing. He only said, “I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.” It is apparent that at that moment he was more aware of his nakedness and shame than of his sin against God. Adam had undergone a profound change, but all he could do was express his fear and shame. The only thing that Adam truly confessed to was a feeling, namely fear. Of course, he knew he had broken God’s command, but in his new self-focused state he was more concerned about how he felt than about his sin against God. This self-focus and shrinking from God remains part and parcel of our fallen condition. No one seeks God; every one flees God (Romans 3:11). Even fallen man’s apparent seeking is not after God but after the idolatrous god of his own making. Fear and shame and flight are the incurable result of the fall. We only begin to deal with them when God says, “Where are you?” Perhaps God is calling you from your hiding — “Come out of your hiding place, from your self-reproach, your covering, your secrecy, your self torment, from your vain remorse” (Bonhoeffer).

## **Futile Excuses**

As we shall see, God addressed the man, then the woman, and then the snake in the order of their responsibility. Adam bore the primary responsibility. Having begun gently, God then pressed the issue with two questions. First, “Who told you that you were naked?” (v. 11a). Was it the serpent? Was it the woman? Someone or something told him that he was naked. Then came a second question: “Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?” (v. 11b). The question was a grace-laden arrow to the core of Adam’s being.

### *Adam’s Excuse*

Satan originated the lie, a real whopper, in his temptation of Eve. But here Adam told a shameful whopper of his own: “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate” (v. 12). These are the words of a man who was spiritually dead. This is wicked! Remember Adam’s ecstasy when he first laid eyes on Eve? “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man” (2:23). These are the first human words recorded in Scripture and the initial poetic couplet. Such a helper - such intimacy - such oneness - such joy. She was his human universe. But now - “she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.”

“It’s her fault, God. Don’t blame me.” Adam was so calculated and so cold. So long, marital bliss. Adam would live for nearly 930 years more. They would settle things. But paradise was lost! But the blame didn’t stop with Eve, because Adam also accused God: “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave . . .” “God, you put this dangerous creature at my side. I’m not guilty, God. You’re guilty!” In doing this, Adam was like Satan, who had argued that a better God would not withhold anything from his people. Here Adam implied that a better God would not have given him Eve. Implicit blasphemy. And Eve’s excuse followed the pattern of Adam’s shift of blame - “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.” But her excuse is not as shameful and pathetic as that of Adam. She did not say “It’s this ‘man’ that you gave me,” and she didn’t insinuate that God was at fault. Still she, like Adam, did not accept blame. Note at this point that neither Adam nor Eve showed a hint of contrition.

### *Passing the Buck*

Will Rogers once remarked that there are two eras in American history - “the passing of the buffalo and the passing of the buck.” Actually, the passing of the buck took place in primeval history as well. And it has remained endemic to the human race. We all understand from our own hearts that to err is human; to blame it on others and upon God is even more human.

### *Circumstances*

We sometimes blame God for placing us in circumstances that we regard as too much for us. Some students cheat, rationalizing that God is to blame for giving them a difficult professor and a busy schedule. Some thieves steal, blaming life and God for their stealing, “God, you know my weaknesses, but there it was. Why did you allow it?” Consider the adulterous man who blames God for the ingredients that led to his sin - his depression, his poor self-image, that woman, the faraway place, his loneliness.

### *Disposition*

The most common delusion is that “God has given me passions and appetites so strong that I can only yield to them.” “It’s my God-given hormones. My passions, my appetites, my intelligence, my proclivities, my insecurities, my experience, my energy — these together leave

me subject to sins that barely tempt others. God made me this way, so what can I do?" Such thinking is from below.

### *Victimhood*

If you read Adam's sin through the lens of today's world, you see the language of victimhood - Adam as the poor victim of the woman and of the God who gave her to him. The modern version goes like this: "God, you're responsible for my situation that has left me so susceptible to sin - my upbringing, my abuse, my inept parents and teachings." Given this thinking, only God is responsible for sin.

But according to Scripture no one from Adam to the last man on earth will ever get away with passing the buck. Listen to James, the Lord's brother: "Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am being tempted by God,' for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one" (James 1:13). The perverse justifications of sinful humans will not ultimately hold water. Adam's pathetic attempt, no matter how deceptively rephrased by us, will not suffice. We must never say, or even imagine, that God is tempting us.

The Genesis reality and the New Testament reality is this: "But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death" (James 1:14-15). We cannot blame God. We cannot blame anyone else. And we cannot blame the devil. So what are we sons and daughters of Adam to do since we share such solidarity with him in our sins that we are thoroughly sinful and utterly responsible and blamable? What is the answer?

May I suggest that in a sense we are to blame Jesus! Or more accurately, we are to rest all our blame on him. How so? Paul explains, "If, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man [the first Adam], much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man [the second Adam] Jesus Christ" (Romans 5: 17). Our second Adam was the one man in history who never tried to pass the buck, because as a sinless man he never needed to pass on the responsibility for sin. Rather, as our sinless God-man and Messiah and Savior he said, "Pass the blame to me." The buck stopped with Jesus. We see this so clearly on Calvary's three crosses. Blameless Jesus hung between two blameworthy thieves. Christ hung as the innocent among the guilty. But on that hill a miracle happened. One of the thieves ceased cursing and began to listen. And before he died he declared Jesus to be guiltless, saying, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom" (Luke 23:42). During the ensuing darkness of Calvary, that guilty man's sins were lifted from him and placed on Jesus. His blame stopped when it rested on Jesus. The so-called buck of our guilt stopped with Jesus, the second Adam. Have you stopped passing the buck? Have you said the guilt for your sin is yours alone? And then, have you passed it on to Jesus?

## **Questions for Group Discussion or Personal Study**

- According to Dietrich Bonhoeffer, how does temptation work in our lives? Does temptation create a hatred of the things of God and of God himself or something else?

- Many people have taught over the centuries that Eve's deception was the reason that humanity fell. Do you think she shoulders the majority of the guilt for humanity's first transgression or was Adam even more culpable than she was? Why?
- Why do Adam and Eve attempt to hide from the presence of the Lord? Does it make any sense whatsoever for them to attempt to do that? But do you think we often attempt to hide from God when we have sinned? Can you think of an example in your own life when you have tried to literally or figuratively run from the ever-present God?
- Adam's pathetic excuses to the face of God in light of their transgression are merely the beginning in a long line of humanity's attempts to pass the responsibility for our own actions on to someone or something else. What are some of the things that we as humans try to blame for our sin, and why must we ultimately admit that we alone are to blame for our sin? And then most importantly, what must we do with that sin?
- Do you believe a person truly understands the message of the gospel if they continually run from God in their sin? Do you truly understand the message of the gospel?

## Family Catechism and Scripture Memory

New City Catechism Question: *"What does the law of God require?"*

Answer: *"Personal, perfect, and perpetual obedience; **that we love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength; and love our neighbor as ourselves.** What God forbids should never be done and what God commands should always be done."*

Scripture Memory Verse: *"Jesus replied: 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.'" - Matthew 22:37-40*

Song of the Week: "But God" - The Village Church

## Weekly Unreached People Group

Every week, in this space, we highlight an unreached people group somewhere in the world. Please consider spending some portion of your prayer and reading time during the course of the week praying for the highlighted group. Pray that their hearts would be softened, that the Lord would provide laborers to take them the good news of the Gospel, and that they would come to

know the glory of that Gospel and of Christ himself and be saved. Pray also that your own heart would be softened for the reality of the nearly 6,000 people groups that have not heard the Gospel and consider what part the Lord is calling you to play in fulfilling our common command to be about making disciples of all nations.

This week's unreached people group are the **Luoluopo of China**

<b>Population</b> 46,000	<b>% Christian</b> 0.00%	<b>% Evangelical</b> 0.00%
<b>Largest Religion</b> Ethnic Religions (100.0%)	<b>Main Language</b> Nisi	<b>Progress</b> No Known Believers

### Identity

Although they have received status as a separate ethnic group in Vietnam, the Southeastern Luoluopo have not been so fortunate in China where they are considered to be just one subgroup of the massive Yi nationality. The self-name of this group is Luoluopo. Southeastern has been added to distinguish this group from the other Luoluopo groups in China who speak completely different languages, even though they share the same autonym.

### History

According to Vietnamese sources, the Luoluopo migrated to Vietnam in two different waves: one in the fifteenth century and the other in the eighteenth century. This suggests that the Luoluopo have been living in southern China for more than 500 years. In recent years, many of the Southeastern Luoluopo in China who live near the townships or in the valleys have started mixed communities with the Han Chinese and are rapidly losing their language and culture.

### Customs

When a Luoluopo dies, his or her relatives organize a "dance of the spirits." They believe this dance will help the soul find its way back to the resting place of its ancestors. At the dance the son-in-law of the deceased carries a bag on his shoulder. Inside the bag is a cloth ball which represents the head of the deceased person.

### Religion

The Luoluopo are a very superstitious people. Even their homes are arranged to reflect this. The altar to the "spirit of the house" stands against the back wall. A room on the right side contains a bedroom with a fireplace and the room on the left side contains the kitchen and the ancestral altar. The oldest surviving member of each family is expected to maintain the altar and to faithfully execute all the ancestral ceremonies and rituals. In addition to their intricate system of ancestor worship, the Lolo believe in two gods who created the world, Mit Do and Ket Do. Ket Do created the entire universe and mankind, while Mit Do governs the earth and watches over the Luoluopo.

### Christianity

The Southeastern Luoluopo are one of the most neglected and gospel-starved peoples in the region.