

What Went Wrong, Part 2
A Message for Trinity Evangelical Free Church
Sunday, October 20, 2019

Introduction

We're continuing our series, "Life Answers in Genesis".

Life is full of questions, and we've learned that we can find answers by merely opening the Bible and reading from its opening pages.

Last week, we began a two-part lesson that looks at the question, "What went wrong?" We're going to continue that today. Here's a picture related to our topic. We'll talk about it in a minute.



We live in the age of the Internet, so I can't help but visit the cyber world to see what people might be thinking about the topics we discuss. I went to a web browser and typed in the words, "what went wrong". I got **one billion, 170 million topics**.

It seems that lots of people are concerned about this question.

Here are the topics that appear on the first page of the search results:

- There are two books with that title.
 - One looks at civilization.
 - The other looks at factory disasters.
- There's a song called "What Went Wrong?".
 - Sadly, the lyrics get a bit colorful, so we can't include them here.
- There's a "What Went Wrong" foundation that looks at problems in struggling countries.
- "What Went Wrong?" is a common question that sports commentators ask when your team loses a big game.

The painting above is entitled, "I wonder what went wrong?" The artist who created it, Erik Pevernagle, apparently pondered that question. Everyone from people on the street with individual problems to sportscasters to artists are concerned with this question.

Most of the people ask the question in context of individual problems associated with losing something.

- Lost love
- Lost money
- Lost property
- Lost something

In part one of this lesson, and in other parts of our series, we learned that really, only one thing went wrong with our world. Everything else stems from that failure. We learned that God created a perfect world and put humans in it. He offered the first humans not only a perfect world, but he offered himself. He was there to walk with humans as they explored and managed the world that God gave to them. They were to enjoy the world, and the God who created it. Sadly, the first humans, Adam and Eve, chose to listen to other voices.

- They doubted God's words.
- They doubted God's power.
- They doubted God's character.

So, they disobeyed.

God should be first, but Adam and Eve tried to be their own gods. They put themselves first instead of God. This disobedience, also called sin, has led to all other problems in our world.

In our next session, we'll look in more detail about the "other voice" that they heard. He's also known as Satan or the Devil, among other names.

We also learned that there is a second question that's often associated with the question, "What went Wrong?"

"How do we fix it?"

As a final review from our first session, you fix it by doing all the things we've been talking about in our series.

- Put God first.
- Put God's values first.
- Put God's Word first.

Those are high-level goals - Perhaps we need to get more specific?

We suggested that, sometimes it helps when solving problems to look at wrong ways people have tried over the years. Then, we can consider the right way. So, we did that in the closing part of the discussion.

Let's continue with that today. We'll discuss "Wrong Ways and Right Ways" to Go About Fixing the Problem.

I. Assume the problem is small and can be easily fixed by our own effort.

If you recall from last week, Adam and Eve realized something was wrong. So, they grabbed some leaves from a nearby tree. They sewed the leaves together into garments, thinking this would fix the problems.

To that approach, God said, "no". God had to provide animal skins.

The Right way: Realize that God must provide the ultimate solution.

In this case the ultimate solution came when Jesus died on the Cross as a sacrifice for our sins.

Now, within this failure lies some deeper problems. We'll see that in our second point. Here's the second bad way of dealing with problems.

II. Hide from God

Last week, we read from Genesis, Chapter 3. Let's read more.

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. (Genesis 3:8)

Adam and Eve had a problem. They knew it. They assumed the problem was relatively small and tried to cover up the problem with leaves. Then, something happened. **God showed up.** There was something about sensing the presence of God that made them immediately realized they had utterly failed to solve their problem.

And then, something worse happened. Adam and Eve felt a new emotion. What was it? Let's read on.

But the Lord God called to the man, "Where are you?" He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid." (Genesis 3:9-10)

Adam and Eve felt a new emotion: Fear. Adam said, "I was afraid, so I hid..."



You're looking at a famous painting by Edvard Munch. I don't think the man here is wearing any leaves, but it's close enough. Fear is universal to all people. Adam and Eve were the first to feel it.

What caused Adam and Eve to be afraid? Adam and Eve were about to learn some things about God: **God is Holy.**

One way to look at the holiness of God is to say that he is pure and free from any evil. That is a wonderful thing. It causes a problem for us, though. When sinful humans sense God's presence, his holiness exposes our sin. Centuries later, the prophet Isaiah saw this. In the book of Isaiah, chapter 6, Isaiah was given a vision of God seated on his throne, surrounded by angels.

And they (the angels) were calling to one another:
"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty;
the whole earth is full of his glory." (Isaiah 6:3)

Now, Isaiah was a good man. He was later used by God to write the largest book of the Old Testament. But here's how he responded when he saw the holiness of God:

"Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips... (vs 5)

When even a righteous and good man sees the holiness of God, his sin is exposed. How much more the two humans who just committed the first great sin?

Secondly, Because God is Holy, **he the authority to punish sin.**

Be sure of this: The wicked will not go unpunished... (Proverbs 11:21)

At some point in our lives, we've all done something wrong. You all know what it's like when we realize we've been caught.

- Maybe it was in our childhood? We did something wrong, and Mom or Dad walked in.

- Maybe it was more recent? You were cruising down the highway at something higher than the speed limit, and flashing lights appeared behind your car?

At that point, you did something -You became afraid. You learned something that the apostle John wrote about in I John:

“...fear has to do with punishment.” (I John 4:18)

Fear says, “I’m in danger”. Here Adam and Eve have just disobeyed God, so they should be in danger of punishment. They didn’t have to be told this. They figured it out on their own. So, they hid. Unfortunately, they were about to learn something else about God.

God is All-Present (Omnipresent) and All-Knowing (Omniscient).

King David wrote about this:

7 Where can I go from your Spirit?
 Where can I flee from your presence?
 8 If I go up to the heavens, you are there;
 if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.
 9 If I rise on the wings of the dawn,
 if I settle on the far side of the sea,
 10 even there your hand will guide me,
 your right hand will hold me fast.
 11 If I say, “Surely the darkness will hide me
 and the light become night around me,”
 12 even the darkness will not be dark to you;
 the night will shine like the day,
 for darkness is as light to you. (Psalm 137:7-12)

God is everywhere. God knows everything. Because of this, Adam and Eve learned an important truth: **You can’t hide from God.**

Trying to hide from God is like playing hide-and-seek with a small child. The little child hides under the bed, but they leave their legs sticking out. God sees you no matter where you are, and no matter what you’re doing. He sees you when you look to the left, and look to the right, and you think that no one is there.

- God sees you when you’re downloading things from the Internet.
- He sees when you’re disobeying traffic laws.
- He sees you when you turn on that show on the TV that you know you shouldn’t be watching.
- He sees you.

So, a wrong way to deal with problems is to hide from God. What is the right way?

Right way: Invite God.

- Realize that you can't hide from God.
- Realize that he loves you.

When we previously read from I John, we didn't read the whole sentence. Here it is:

“But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment.”
(I John 4:18)

This is very practical. Many years ago, when I was facing temptation, I realized something. The first thing I felt was fear. There's something about fear that prevents you from resisting temptation. So, you give in. Then, you feel more afraid. ***I found that one of the first things I have to do when facing temptation is to remind myself that I don't have to be afraid.*** If I'm counseling someone who's struggling with temptation, I tell them: Step One: Calm down. Don't be afraid.

If you have a problem, invite God to help you. Recall that a few weeks back we spoke about Grace. If you are a follower of Jesus, what does God say when you sing? “I love you.” “I forgive you.” Don't run from God. Don't try to hide. Invite him into your problem.

Have you been running from God? Stop right now. ***Invite him into your life.*** There is no better time to invite him into your life than now. Even if you have lots of problems, God wants to help.

Let's move on to another wrong way of dealing with problems.

III. Wrong way: Shift blame.

And he said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?” The man said, “The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.” Genesis 3:11-12

God asks a simple question: “Did you eat from the tree that I told you not to eat from?” Simple questions require only simple answers - Yes, or no.

Adam answers: “The woman...”

Instead of answering, which would mean accepting responsibility, Adam tries to shift the blame away from himself. The problem is, Adam was as responsible as Eve. He was right there with her while the temptation was going on. He could have spoken up. He could have grabbed her arm while she was reaching up for the fruit. Instead, he remained silent. To Adam, and to all the people who follow him, God has a simple rule:

If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn't do it, it is sin for them. (James 4:17)

The fact that Adam didn't initiate the evil actions was no excuse. So, blame shifting isn't the answer. Now, with Adam, there was something even deeper going on. Let's look more closely at what he said.

The man said, "The woman **you put here** (*emphasis mine*) with me - she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it."

The finger that Adam started to point at Eve now points at God. It was God who put the woman in the garden. Before he did that, in Adam's mind, everything was fine. This, in Adam's mind, was clearly all God's fault.

Remember our five sentences?

- God is first.
- God is in control.
- God knows what he's doing.
- God is good.
- God cherishes me.

In a funny way, we all know in our hearts that God is in control. The next question is, "Does God know what he's doing?" Is he capable of making mistakes? If you really trust someone, and they make a big mistake, that's a bad feeling.

But, there's an even worse feeling. It's when someone hurts you, and you find out **it was on purpose**. That's why the even bigger question is, "Is God **good**?"

Adam trusted God, and God let him down. What if God was playing a practical joke on Adam? What if God is like the mean little boy who catches a bug, and pulls off its wings, just so he can watch it squirm? Is God laughing at Adam right now? Adam may think so.

Now, imagine this: God has created a perfect, wonderful world. He gave it to Adam and Eve. He has shown them nothing but love, and generosity. They threw it all away. They rebelled. They sinned. Adam is pointing his finger right in God's face and suggesting that God is nincompoop or practical joker. We'll get to Eve next week, but let's say for now that she's not far behind Adam.

What should God do? Back in 1936 a film came out called "The Green Pastures". It portrayed the story of the Bible as seen through the eyes of poor people in the American south. In the scene depicting Genesis 3 and the Fall of Mankind, the angel Gabriel discusses the problem with God. The angel asks, "Why not doom 'em all and start with some other kind of critter?"

That's surely what God could have done. He could have destroyed Adam and Eve right there and started again with something else. In the movie, God answers, "That's not how I do things."

Why didn't God just destroy Adam and Eve when they rebelled against him? Because of the last of our sentences - Because God cherished Adam and Eve. You see, God could have destroyed Adam and Eve the minute they ate the fruit. But, he didn't do that. He came to the garden, **and he called to them**. He pursued them, even though he knew they were hiding from him. He knew right where they were. He knew right where to go to find them. That's what you do when you cherish something. When you cherish something, you don't want to lose it. You certainly don't throw it away. You pursue it.

God called to Adam and Eve.

Have you had times in your life when our five sentences didn't appear to work? Does it sometimes feel like God isn't in control? Does it sometimes feel like God doesn't know what he was doing? Does it sometimes feel like your life is a long line of practical jokes with you as the victim? Does it sometimes feel like God doesn't care? Feeling that way can make you angry. Have you ever felt tempted to point your finger at God and say, "This isn't fair!" Has it caused you at times to do the wrong thing? *That's why it's so helpful to remind ourselves of these statements when we face problems.*

But what if we fail? How does God respond? He calls out to you. He pursues you, **because he cherishes you**.

There is a wonderful verse in the Scriptures for people who have sinned against God.

If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:8-9)

If we come to God and confess our sins, how does God answer? "I love you, and I forgive you."

Let's pull this section together. One of the wrong ways to deal with problems is to shift blame.

The Right way: Accept Responsibility. Come to God when he calls to you. He is willing to forgive.

Conclusion

So, today we've looked at some wrong ways and right ways to deal with problems.

One wrong way is to Hide from God.

Right way: Realize that you can never hide from God. Instead, invite him.

Another wrong way is to shift blame away from yourself. You eventually wind up pointing your finger at God.

The Right Way: Accept responsibility. Come to God when he calls to you. He is willing to forgive.

In the coming weeks, we'll get into even more specific ways of dealing with the problems faced by individuals and the human race as a whole. But understand, the biggest problem is us. Until we fix ourselves, the other problems will never go away. So, let's concentrate on ourselves right now.

Some say our biggest problem is war.

-Imagine a world where no one wants to fight.

Some say our biggest problem is poverty.

-Imagine a world where everyone is generous, so no one is in want.

Some say our biggest problem is pollution.

-Imagine a world where no one would ever think of throwing their trash on their neighbors.

Until we fix ourselves, the problems of the world will never completely go away.

I always like to give an invitation. If you've spent your life hiding from god, running from God, now is the time to invite him into your life. If you've spent your whole life blaming others and God, now is the time to accept responsibility.

He is calling to you.

He cherishes you.

He will forgive you.

Contact us. We'll tell you how.

To get started, consider visiting the Billy Graham site, [PeaceWithGod](#).

For those who have come to God, it's never wrong to re-commit. Would you do that now? You'll be glad you did. God has wonderful things to show people who follow him with their whole heart.

There are many more answers to be found in our series, "Life Answers In Genesis". Keep reading!

May God richly bless you.