The Tenderness of God in the Fall of Man

I. INTRODUCTION

A. The book of Genesis opens with the glory of creation. As creation unfolds God repeatedly looks at what He had made and summarizes creation with a single description: it was very good."

   31 And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good… (Genesis 1:31a ESV)

1. To enforce the point, God says it 7 times in the chapter (Genesis 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31).

2. The goodness and greatness of creation is amplified by the fact that it is not man, but the perfect Creator Himself who is declaring it to be “very good.” As humans we naturally delight in creation, but God’s delight shows how special creation is.

B. In Genesis 3, this glorious creation is suddenly and tragically wrecked. Man’s sin sets into motion a dire situation where the good creation is now marred, distorted, and subject to evil. God’s perfect creation is now marred and disfigured because God’s highest creation rebelled.

C. Genesis 3 records the awful consequences of man’s rebellion both on man himself and on creation. Because we have been born after that fall and have only known the fallen world and rebellious mankind, when we read the passage it is easy to focus primarily on God’s judgment in the passage, but there is something else we must also notice in the passage and that is God’s tenderness and profound mercy.

D. God must release His judgments in response to the rebellion, but in the middle of those judgments He reveals His tenderness towards mankind. There are two specific things in the passage that reveal the tenderness of God:

1. God’s desire for fellowship with man.

2. God’s intentional redemption of the calling of the woman.

II. WHERE ARE YOU?

A. Immediately after the tragedy of the fall, God is walking in the garden looking for man.
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. But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?” (Genesis 3:8–9 ESV)

1. Adam and Eve, gripped by shame, are trying to escape the presence of God by trying to find a place to hide.

2. As Adam and Eve feverishly try to avoid God’s presence, God calls out to them “Where are you?”

3. You can hear the pain in God’s voice. He is in the garden looking for fellowship with the one creature capable of true fellowship and that creature is hiding from Him.

4. Gods’ question is the cry of broken fellowship and broken love. Where are you? I miss you. We are so used to broken communion and shame that we do not feel the emotions of the passage.

B. Adam - with his heart pounding at the voice of His Maker - responded to God’s question.

And he said, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.” He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?” (Genesis 3:10–11 ESV)

1. Something terrible has happened. Adam’s shame has overcome his desire for communion with God.

2. God’s response was immediate. “Who told you that you were naked?” God’s question is more than a rebuke. It’s the painful response of broken communion. Yes, in His sovereignty God knew this was coming, but as a person He also feels the pain of the moment. He has lost communion with Adam. Adam is now driven by shame as a result of his sin. Something dark has been set into motion.

C. Genesis 3 records the curses that are let loose in the earth as a result of sin, but that conversation ends with God covering Adam and Eve’s shame.

And the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them. (Genesis 3:21 ESV)
1. This is more than an act of clothing. It was an act that was both practical and symbolic. It shows God’s practical concern for man and his condition. God does not leave Adam and Even naked in the earth. He covers them.

2. The act is also a symbolic act. Nakedness is connected to shame which is the result of broken communion. God covers their nakedness in the garden as a statement that He is going to cover their nakedness and shame in order to ultimately restore broken communion.

D. We tend to read the story of Genesis 3 through eyes of guilt and shame because that has been our experience. However, the story is far more than the story of the fall and the subsequent curses that filled the earth. It is the story of God’s pain over broken communion. He’s looking for man. He wants to know who told man he was naked – in other words who is responsible for their broken communion. He covers man’s nakedness as a statement of His desire for restored communion. God’s tenderness and mercy is apparent throughout the chapter.

III. REDEEMING THE CALLING OF THE WOMAN

A. God’s tenderness is not only demonstrated towards Adam and Even in general, it is also directed towards Eve specifically. The Genesis 3 narrative tells us that the serpent intentionally deceived Eve. Eve is the one who sins first. When Adam is asked what happened, Adam puts the sin on the woman.

12 The man said, “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.” (Genesis 3:12 ESV)

B. Interpreters have offered various reasons why the serpent targeted Eve, but the fact is that the narrative can easily be used to put the primary blame on Eve for initiating the rebellion. This is why Genesis 3:15 is such a powerful verse:

15 I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.” (Genesis 3:15 ESV)

1. In Genesis 3:15 God describes His redemptive plan to crush the serpent and redeem humanity and that redemptive plan will come to pass through the seed of the woman.

2. God specifically redeems the calling of the woman by predicting that it is the woman who will produce the deliverer who will crush evil.
C. God’s tenderness is apparent in the way He designs His redemptive plan. In Genesis 3 it’s is Eve’s fatal decision that sets into motion the fall of man. However, Genesis 3 predicts that it will be through the woman that God will set into motion the deliverance of man. Redemption is going to depend on the seed of the woman. God is going to redeem the calling of the woman.

IV. SEEKING THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

A. The fall of man is one of the most traumatic passages in the scripture. It sets into motion the great tragedies of human history and tells us how the curse enters the earth. If we are not careful we read this passage through eyes of shame and we only see the curse and the tragedy of it all. However, the passage was also written for us so that we can see the tenderness of God in the midst of rebellion.

B. God’s pain is evident as He looks for man in the garden and calls out to him. God’s desire for communion is apparent. He covers man’s nakedness as a statement that He wants to break the curse of man’s shame and self-obsession so that man can turn his eyes from himself back to God and enter into communion again.

C. As God speaks the curses that come as a result of the rebellion, He also promises a deliverer who will come from a woman. This is more than God simply saying that a woman will give birth to a deliverer. God calls the deliverer the seed of the woman. That strange phrase predicts the mystery of the incarnation, but it also emphasizes that a woman will be the chief human agent involved in the appearance of the deliverer. This is God’s tender commitment to restore the calling of the woman and her place in the redemptive story. Eve’s sin will be reconciled. She will not forever be the one who handed Adam the fruit - she will ultimately be the one who gave birth to the deliverer.

D. We are used to reading the Bible through self-focused eyes and so we tend to interpret the Bible through our own emotions and our fallen challenges. However, we need fresh eyes to read the Bible as the story of God and the revelation of who He is. Even in the Bible’s darkest moments we can see the beauty of God’s person shining through. He gave us these stories so we would know who He is and we must drain these stories of every bit of the knowledge of who He is so that we can relate to Him in confidence and love.

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