

## **Why Doesn't the World Work the Way It Should?**

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Rich Nathan

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Roots: A Study in the Book of Genesis

Genesis 3:6-24

I want to remind each one of you to vote this Tuesday. This is an important election. There are very important issues at stake. Certainly, among the priority issues for Christians are our concerns for the cause of life. When you go into the voting booth, remember there are many issues that go beyond economics and prosperity. Don't just blindly pull levers or vote a straight party ticket. But do hold up the cause of life as you vote. I could give you the old Chicago Alderman's speech, "Vote early, and vote often" but we just don't have that opportunity.

We also have a couple of things here at the church coming up that I just want to mention. If you are new to the church, do make it a priority to come out next week on November 12 and 19. You can sign up for that in the bulletin.

Finally, and very significantly, I really felt a prodding from the Lord to call for a Day of Prayer here at Vineyard. I think we really do need to pray for breakthroughs, not only for the church, but for individuals. And so what I am going to ask is to have many of the kinships on Thursday, November 16<sup>th</sup>, choose to come to our prayer meeting here. We are going to call a prayer meeting here on November 16<sup>th</sup>. We are going to have a noontime prayer time for those in the area and then we are going to have a prayer meeting in the evening that I will lead beginning at 7:00 p.m. We will pray for a few hours here. You can come and go as you wish. But we really want to take some time as a church to intercede and ask God's presence. We don't call prayer meetings very often, but I really felt an impetus from the Lord. I would like to ask you to jot down that date – November 16<sup>th</sup> – Thursday and come out at noon or in the evening. Some of us will be fasting that day. But we just want to take some time to pray together as a church family.

I want to continue in a series I have been doing from the book of Genesis 1-11 – a series I have called "Roots." I have mentioned on a number of occasions these first eleven chapters of the book of Genesis deal with many of the fundamental issues we are dealing with in the 21<sup>st</sup> century—questions of our origins; where did we come from? What does it mean to be a human being? What does it mean to be a man or a woman?

Today we are going to tackle a subject that is really basic to life in this world. That is, why doesn't the world work the way it should? We are going to read of the story of the fall of our first parents, Adam and Eve.

As 21<sup>st</sup> century Americans, we don't like hearing about sin or even the use of the word "sin." It stings our ears. There are some of you who might be able to look back at your childhood where a red-faced pastor with veins popping from his neck and forehead, pointed at the congregation and screamed at everyone, "You are sinners, filthy, miserable, horrible sinners!" You don't hear that kind of preaching that often any longer – and that's a good thing.

But along the way we have dropped the use of the word "sin," especially outside of church. It is considered way too judgmental. We live in a time that we could call the time of the therapeutic. Everyone has turned into an amateur psychologist. Talk to your beautician or a friend over the lunch table or teachers at school and everyone is an amateur psychologist. We toss around therapeutic words like low self-esteem and insecurity and "he has control issues," and narcissistic. We throw out these psychological terms, these therapeutic terms, so naturally, so reflexively, so easily.

About the only time you actually hear the word "sin" in regular conversation is on the dessert menu of a restaurant where in describing the double Dutch chocolate brownie with chocolate sauce we read that it is "sinfully delicious" or "sinfully rich." And when they are talking about the peanut butter binge, it is "sinfully creamy." Sin is no longer a moral category, it is a caloric category. The only time we sin is when we have too many fat grams or too many carbohydrate points. You have entered the world of food sin. Some of you do feel worse about what you eat, "Well, I really shouldn't eat that," than, perhaps, who you are.

Even in churches preachers have tended to avoid the word "sin" with all of its moral overtones. We use terms like dysfunctional and wounded, diseased. But sin is the Christian explanation of everything that is wrong with the world.

There was a film out some years ago called "Grand Canyon" and in this film this immigration attorney tries to break out of a traffic jam and follow some side route. His side route takes him into a progressively more dark, more deserted area of town. And then, predictably, his very expensive car breaks down on a street where there are five young hoods with their guns and their expensive sneakers. They surround the car and surround him, threatening to beat him. Just in time this tow-truck driver pulls up. The tow-truck driver is a good man. The young thugs get into an argument with him, asking him, "What are you doing?", because the tow-truck driver is about to take away their meal for the evening.

What the tow-truck driver says to these kids raises all kinds of issues of philosophy and life. He says, "Man, the world ain't supposed to work like this, maybe you don't know that. But this ain't the way it's supposed to be. I am supposed to be able to do my job without asking you if I can. And that dude is supposed to be able to wait with his car without you ripping him off. Everything is supposed to be different than what it is here."

It is a profound statement. The world ain't supposed to work like this. The opening pages of the Bible describe the way the world is supposed to work. You read Genesis 1 and 2 and you see the world working according to its created design. A world in which men and women, husbands and wives, connect deeply, intimately, lovingly without hurting each other and without dominating each other, using each other, without abusing each other. In the opening pages of Genesis, you see a world without violence, a world without disease, a world without miscarriages, a world where people love God and they live with a clear conscience before him. In the opening pages of Genesis we read of a world where not only do people understand what is right to do, that they love doing what is right.

Sometimes we know the right thing to do, but we don't love the right and the good. We are not passionate about doing what we ought to do. But, according to God's created design, our hearts are to love what is good, what is right, what is true.

The Jews had a word to describe the world the way it ought to work. They used the Hebrew word "shalom." Shalom describes a world of wholeness, a time of contentment, a time of delight, where people are not always angry or irritated and annoyed and frustrated and bitter – arguing, depressed. Things are working the right way – shalom. The Old Testament prophets always preached about a time when shalom would be restored. When what we used to have would be returned. A time when the crooked would be made straight. A time when the foolish would be made wise. And the proud would be humbled. It would be a time when the desert would flourish and people would go to sleep without guns under their pillows and triple-locked doors. Shalom.

The prophets in the Old Testament looked forward to a day when we would be united as people in a nation and nations around the world – when there would be a uniting. When people from every race and every land and country would live in this world as one harmonious human community – not Jew against Arab and Hindu against Muslim and Protestant against Catholic and White against Black – but as one human community. They looked for a day when people would be knit together in true brotherhood or sisterhood. The prophets looked forward to a day where people would walk again with God and they would lean on God, trust in God and obey God. And most of all, they would love God. They would love God's ways. Shalom. Wholeness. Peacefulness. Contentment. Joy.

I don't know what your vision is for the restoration of shalom. What would it be like if the world worked the way it was supposed to? Certainly Shalom goes way beyond anything the political candidates are offering or ever could offer us. Shalom is way beyond targeted tax cuts. And it is way beyond being able to invest a portion of your Social Security in a private pension. It is even beyond smaller classes in schools or school vouchers. Shalom would mean that whatever government we had, the government officials would be honest and

honorable. They would tell the truth and they would work for people and not for themselves.

Shalom would mean that in business people would support each other's promotions. They would celebrate the success of someone else. For me, shalom would mean strong healthy marriages and kids who were able to preserve their innocence through childhood. Grandparents who would live long, healthy productive lives and would be respected as sources of counsel and wisdom.

Shalom would mean that pop culture would support things like virginity and respect for parents. People wouldn't have to take drugs just to get through the day to dull their pain.

What is your vision of shalom? More junk mail or Spam or Velveeta cheese or artificial mayonnaise or white bread that you can compress into a ball of about this size? I know some of you would say it would be shalom if I could eat anything I wanted and not gain weight. If miracle diets really worked. I could just take a pill and sit down in a big easy chair and have the pounds just melt off.

Certainly, in an age of shalom, big companies would not make huge financial investments in pornography. The New York Times recently reported in a front page article that the biggest purveyors of pornography are not any longer Larry Flynt and Hustler magazine or Hugh Hefner and Playboy Magazine.

Do you know who the biggest purveyor of pornography in America right now is? Do you know what company? General Motors. General Motors makes hundreds of millions of dollars a year selling pornography through its satellite subsidiary Direct TV. Rupert Murdoch makes hundreds of millions of dollars a year with his Echo Star satellite TV. One of the largest purveyors of the hardest core pornography is AT&T.

In the age of shalom it would be unthinkable for the suits in the corporate board rooms to line their own pockets or the pockets of shareholders by marketing pornography. In fact, such a thing wouldn't exist.

I don't know what your vision of shalom is – the way the world is supposed to be – but, certainly, if the world worked the way it should work, babies would not be dismembered inside their mothers' wombs. People would rejoice at the prospect of having a baby. Abortion would be unthinkable. The air, the water that we drink, the soil that we plant things in would be clean and pure and not cause cancer or emphysema or leukemia. There would be no plane crashes or natural disasters.

What we are going to read about today is why we don't live in an age of shalom – wholeness, contentment, joyfulness. If you have a Bible, I would like to have you open to Genesis 3. Let's pray.

A couple of weeks ago I taught about the nature of temptation. We read Genesis 3:1-6. The serpent comes along and tempts the woman to violate God's command to not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. We then pick up the story again in verse 6.

*When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.*

There are several lessons we can get from verse 6. *When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it.* For me the first lesson from this text is that there is a mystery regarding why we make the choices we do. I think verse 6 here argues totally against any kind of determinism concerning a person's sin.

There are predictors of sin. Sociologists have really helped us in understanding that there are predictors of sin. Abused children will often grow up and abuse their kids or abuse their abusers. It happens over and over again. Thirty years down the line after a child grows up, they have the power and the authority. Then the roles get reversed and now the abusing parent is frail and dependent and helpless. What we end up with is often elder abuse. It is a growing national trend. All this pent-up rage gets unleashed on an elderly parent.

There are predictors of sin. Abused kids grow up and abuse others. Alcoholic parents will often have alcoholic or drug abusing kids. Kids who grow up with absent dads will often lack self-control or they will have problems with the law.

There are predictors. Poverty, bad schools and poor employment opportunities are predictors of crime.

But, when all is said and done, and you weigh out all the predictors and all the pointers and signs, there is a mystery in sin – an unfathomable mystery. Because many abused kids don't abuse their children or their parents. And many molested children don't molest other children. And many kids from bad neighborhoods and violent homes with no dads turn out to be productive and loving and blessings for others.

Genesis 6 says there is no determinism, there is no "I had to sin; I had no choice." One of the enemy's greatest lies to debilitate you from fighting against

sin is telling you, “you have to.” You have to follow this determinism. It is all preordained. You can’t win. You can’t resist. You can’t change. You have to do what you have always done and what your family always did.

I will tell you, friends, it doesn’t matter what the social scientist or the politicians or the therapists tell you about the probability and the odds and predictors. There is a mystery in sin. Listen, Adam and Eve were in a perfect environment. There were no predictors of future problems in their world. There were no environmental factors. They had a perfect father. Adam and Eve did not grow up in a dysfunctional family. They had a perfect father whose name is God.

And they had perfect provision. They didn’t grow up in poverty. They had a perfect dad educating them. They didn’t grow up with crime and pollution and violence and pop culture filling their minds with moral garbage. Yet, they chose, even in this perfect environment, to disobey God.

Don’t you see that in yourself? Don’t you see that sometimes it is so clear, you just choose to sin.

Woody Allen was asked once why he had an affair with the adopted daughter of his wife? He said as plainly as it could be said. He said, “Sometimes the heart just wants what it wants.” There is no other reason for why I do what I want to do other than sometimes I want what I want when I want it.

And it is the same with you. No determinisms. There’s no “I had to; I had no choice. I couldn’t help it. I just fell into it.” Sometimes you want what you want when you want it. You see that real plainly because sometimes you choose not to sin in areas that you struggle with and have been defeated in. Sometimes you choose to resist temptation. You and I are not the monsters we could be, if we just kept saying “yes” to sin. We would turn into moral monsters if we just gave ground all the time to what we want.

Sometimes we say “no” to what we want. We don’t steal and lie and cheat as much as we could. Sometimes we do turn off the TV set and choose to pray. Because we know we need to pray. Sometimes we choose to feed on God’s Word. Sometimes we choose to avoid temptation and we choose to be pleasant. Or to send a kind note to someone or to apologize and to acknowledge wrongdoing. Or to return the change to the cashier when she gives us too much change. Sometimes you don’t say to yourself, “This is my lucky day because the cashier just gave me too much change. Praise the Lord.”

And even when you have eroded your will through habitual sin, what we call addictions, even when you have eroded your will to the point where the Bible talks about bondage to sin so that your range of freedom of movement has been progressively restricted, even there, even with the most profound addictions, you can make at least one choice. Alcoholics Anonymous’ first step is a choice to

admit that you are helpless and to surrender to [not to a higher power] Jesus Christ, a person. Even when you are absolutely wrapped up, you still have the liberty of will to kneel down, to admit your helplessness, and to turn your life over to Christ.

You know, some people believe that an emphasis on choice and on the liberty of human beings to choose to do right or wrong is uncompassionate. Some of the social liberals will virtually grant absolution to folks who do the most heinous crimes. A group of young men engage in wilding through a park and they gang rape a woman and then step on her neck to kill her. And you can believe there is going to be someone who says, "Wait a minute, the schools that these young men went to, the lack of opportunity to achieve life's goals, this is the reason for their actions."

But determinism says you have no choice. You poor thing, you had to have an affair. Determinism is ultimately dehumanizing. If all we do is rob ourselves of the dignity of real personhood and the dignity of personal responsibility – I can choose – at the very least I could acknowledge that I am helpless against this power in my life and I can turn my life over to Christ.

Here's the deal. We have a choice regarding whether or not we are going to sin. We don't have to give into temptation. We don't have to blow our stacks when we are provoked. We don't have to get bitter when we are overlooked or offended. We don't have to lash out. We don't have to become discontented and focus upon what we don't have. We don't have to be ungrateful, prayerless, lustful, judgmental, mean. We don't have to have affairs. We don't have to turn our backs on God.

We have a choice regarding whether or not we are going to sin. And even after Adam and Eve, even with sin becoming now a part of our second nature, as it were, and our orientation and bent, still the range of choice remains. But here is an important principle, friends. **You have a choice regarding whether or not you are going to sin or not. But once you exercise the choice to sin, you have no choice regarding the consequences of your sins.**

There are a lot of folks who misunderstand God's grace. They say, "Well, Christianity is all about God being forgiving and grace. It is all about Christ coming and telling us that God loves us. Dying on a cross to pay for our sins." Since the message is all about grace. It is all about forgiveness, they say, "God is gracious. God is forgiving. So here's what I am going to do. I am going to sin and then I am going to ask forgiveness after I sin and it is all going to be okay." It is like the delete key on your keyboard. Oops...I just made a typo...just push delete. Backspace...delete. I've sinned, but God is forgiving. He will delete my sin.

God is forgiving. And God will delete your sins. If you kneel down and you ask God to forgive you on the basis of his son's death on the cross, God will forgive you for anything you have done in your past. Or anything you are presently doing. But we also often have to suffer the consequences for our sins.

Genesis 3 is our story. It is not just the story of our original parents. It is the story of every human being. In Genesis 3 we see this fatal choice to sin or not sin. But once the choice is made and we choose to sin, then the consequences of our obedience or disobedience is out of our hands. It's as if you have a rock and you are deciding whether or not to throw it into a pond. Once you heave that rock and it lands in the pond, you have no choice regarding how far the ripples are going to go. And truly, friends, once you choose to disobey God, the choice regarding the ripples of how far this thing is going to go in your life and in the lives of others is out of your hands.

How far did the ripples go in Eve's life? How far will the ripple go in your life? We see in Genesis 3 that it went far enough to destroy shalom. The world was never the same. It stopped working the way it should.

First of all, it is almost always the case that your sin is going to go beyond you and impact another person. Verse 6, *When the woman saw the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some of it and ate it.* Sin is almost never solitary. It is a lie that this thing just hurts us. Sin almost always drops over and splashes on those who are nearest to us. Sometimes we deliberately involve others in our sin. Sometimes we unintentionally involve others. It just slops over. But sin does slop over.

The truth is, it is no fun to sin alone. Why judge someone else in the church? Why judge the church and critique the church alone? It is infinitely more fun to share your opinions wildly with others. You don't want to just critique your boss by yourself and leave it in the realm of your thoughts. It is much more fun to spread the judgment and bitterness that you feel all around and let it slop over and wash over everyone through your gossip and your slander. That's why the book of Hebrews says, "Be careful that no bitter root grows up." Be careful about this private sin of bitterness. Why? Because it causes trouble. Hebrews 12:15 says that it causes trouble and defiles many.

You see over and over again when someone becomes bitter or aggrieved or offended, it is not just a private sin. You share it with others. You don't want to get drunk alone. What fun is that? Its no fun to smoke pot alone. Sexual addicts almost always involve their wives or their girlfriends in their addictions. Those who are greedy almost always hook their mates or their friends in their greed. "Don't you want that? Don't you want to buy that? Don't you want to acquire that?"



Sin spreads. From Eve to Adam. From parents to children. Kids who grow up in racist homes with racist attitudes often adopt racist attitudes themselves. If you grow up in a home where Mom is treated like dirt or Dad is passive or uninvolved, you take those patterns out into the community whether it is intentional or not.

One of the prayers I have often prayed for myself as a dad is from John 17. Jesus says, "For this reason, I sanctify myself that they, too, might be sanctified." O God, change me. Make me holy that my sin doesn't slop onto my kids. Dads, Mothers, pray that for this reason. I sanctify myself that they, too, might be sanctified.

It goes on to say in verse 7: *Then the eyes of both of them were opened and they realized they were naked so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.* Sin spreads itself to others and one of the consequences of sin is that we move from openness and innocence to covering up. We provide covers for ourselves.

We're talking about shame here. You can't sin at least at first without experiencing shame. If you repeatedly violate your conscience you can start sinning shamelessly. But at least at first you are going to be ashamed of yourself. You are going to experience internal discomfort with who you are. You are going to be uncomfortable around others, especially others who are not living the way you live. From openness and innocence to cover up.

Genesis 3 is our story, is it not? The story of our loss of capacity to disclose ourselves, to be naked and unashamed, to be transparent with one another. I can't let you in on who I really am. Our shame says, "If you knew who I really was, if you knew what I did, you'd hate me. You would despise me and reject me. I can't tell you about my past. I can't let you see the real me. Because if you really knew the real me with all of my self-created cover-ups, I would be rejected."

So in shame people engage in various masquerades. Some of the helpful writing in the area of dysfunctional families, particularly in the area of alcoholic families, is the underlining of all of the various masks that children of alcoholic parents wear to hide shame, to hide pain. Some kids in alcoholic families become the family hero – often the oldest child becomes the one who is going to rescue everyone by being super-responsible and super-perfectionistic and parenting their parents. Underneath there is this core of hurt and anger, but I can't show that. So I will become the hero.

Some people wear the mask of the lost child. The person who is just unimportant and withdraws. Who is powerless and insecure. They are the scapegoat. Upon him the whole family dumps. He is always acting out. The

one who starts abusing alcohol themselves or gets arrested by the police a half a dozen times.

We have all these different masks. Cover-ups. Because you can't admit that you have blown it or that you are afraid or that you are inadequate or confused. Or that we are being overwhelmed by some habit. So we cover up.

One of the great cover-ups is religion. I don't have to tell you who I am, I just need to use enough religious words and become super spiritual, lift my hands a lot, and say, "Praise the Lord" and sing all the right songs and then you will think that I am okay. Religion. Not true Christianity. True Christianity involves being authentic and being honest, letting people in. But religion? How many of us hide under religious practice? I am okay, praise the Lord. I will just smile the smile and quote a scripture.

In fact, whenever anyone is super-spiritual with me, where they are just spouting scripture, I almost always think that at the core there is confusion and anger and frustration and hurt and likely shame that is being masked. What's wrong? What's going on with all this hyper-religiosity? What's wrong?

Another ripple occurs as we move from intimacy with God to fear. Verse 8: *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.* Apparently God used to just walk with men and women. There would be a companionship. There is something very sweet here and touching – walking in the garden in the cool of the day before the sun heated things up and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. *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."*

One of the major ripple effects that you cannot prevent from happening if you choose to sin is that you will go in hiding from God. Much of the energy of humanity is spent in trying to conjure up ways to hide from God. Most people don't know that's what they are doing. Maybe at best they experience the pain of an accusing conscience. And so they try to run from the accusation of conscience and the feeling that "I have really blown it. I have failed. I am not happy." So I have to keep running and finding some way to become happy and some way to dull the accusation of conscience.

I am not saying that everyone knows that they are running from God. But I am saying there is this deep, if you will, psychic wound as a result of sin. One of the consequences is you will run from God. It is an amazing thing. But the nature of our relationship with God does sin as a result of our choice to sin, even when we know that we can go to him and ask his forgiveness. In our minds the friendly face of God changes to one of accuser. God becomes our condemner. The person who wants to ruin our lives.

Before Adam and Eve sinned, they used to walk in the garden in the cool of the day in loving intimacy with their father. They knew God. They knew God's heart and his intention to bless them and to love them. It was a joy to completely surrender their lives to God.

After they sinned, they're running from God and hiding in the brush. And the thought of surrendering their lives to God – Here I am; take me; use me – becomes an afterthought. How many of you have thought in your minds that you don't want to surrender your life to Christ right now? You don't want to surrender it. Really surrender your life to Christ because God will ruin your life. I have heard teaching from teachers who must have bad consciences that said, "You know, if you ask Jesus to really make you a disciple, watch out. Watch out."

Watch out for what? The consequence of sin is that we begin to believe the lie that it is God's intention to take from us. I always think of that text in John 10 where Jesus reminds us that he is a good shepherd. That he came to give his life for his sheep and he says, "I am not a thief. The thief comes to wound and to kill and to destroy. I came to give life and that more abundantly."

When you are running from God and hiding from God, you believe ultimately in your mind the lie that says God is a thief. If you surrender to him and open the door, he will come in and steal stuff from you. He would steal your joy. He would ruin your life. He would probably make you go to the Sahara Desert somewhere. If you really surrendered, he will send you to Saudi Arabia or Bangladesh where you will have to sit in mud or the hot desert sand. And spend the next twenty years of your life learning some foreign language and eating weird food, getting sick.

Jesus says, "I am not a thief. When I break into your house, I break in to give you stuff."

I have joked in the past, when Jesus breaks into your house, you come home and say, "Someone was here." You look into the refrigerator and there is this beautiful roast in there and a German chocolate cake. Who left this? On the mantle over your fireplace there is this gorgeous crock. There is this really nice oil painting on the wall. Who left that? You go upstairs and open your dresser drawers to see if everything is there and there is this gold watch left there. Jesus breaks into your house and he puts stuff in, not to take stuff out – except the stuff that's killing you.

But a ripple effect and consequence of the choice to sin is that we hide from God. And let me share with you a couple of ways we hide. One major way that people hide from God is that they compartmentalize. You just learn how psychologically to drop a wall in your life and divide off those areas of your life that you are regularly disobeying God in and those areas of your life where you are following

him. This process of compartmentalization creates in you a division that runs through your being eventually where your soul is torn in half.

Sylvia Fraizer wrote a book called *My Father's House, A Memoir of Incest and Healing*. She talks about growing up in a Christian home. She says, "He was a man of proper and regular habits, a Christian man who didn't smoke or drink, who helped with the grocery shopping, who never took the Lord's name in vain." Her father was a polite man, a neighborly man. He kept his snow shoveled, his leaves raked and his bills paid. And he also sexually molested his daughter from the time she was four to the time she was twelve. He used to threaten her with the loss of her toys, that he would throw them in the furnace. Then he threatened to sell her cat. Then he threatened to send her away to an orphanage. All of this, if she were to disclose their secret – the secret of incest and molestation.

How do you live like that? The only way is to compartmentalize. To drop the wall. This is an area where God may not come. Where I am hiding from God.

Sometimes we hide from God by just dulling the accusation of conscience. We dull our longing for God. You were created to long for God. To yearn. The psalmist says, "As a deer longs for water, my soul longs for you, Lord." You were created to long for God. Most of us, most of the time, do not long for God the way a thirsty animal longs for water. The reason we don't is because our longing, our yearning, has been dulled by being satisfied with a lot of stuff that isn't God. Our longing has been dulled through satiation with TV. Our thirst has been quenched by fixing up our houses. Or through another sexual experience or some other business conquest. Dulling ourselves by indulging our longings and our hunger for God in all of the stuff of the world. Dulling ourselves is a way people hide from God. Are you dull?

Or do you experience regularly a longing for God? A longing you know can only be satisfied in him? Wonderfully, our Lord is a seeking father. Even though we run and we hide from him, our Father is the seeking father, the prodigal father who cries out for his lost children: Where are you? He doesn't rest content saying, "Oh well, go hide. Go dull yourselves. Compartmentalize. Shut me out. Hide in the brush. Suppress the truth. That's okay. When you are ready to come around then the door is open."

Our father seeks us. He searches us out. He cries out in the garden, "Where are you?" That's what he says to you today, "Where are you?" Are you hiding right now from God? Are you on the run from the Lord, protecting yourself?

Obviously, God knows where we are. I picture this scene as being like a parent who is playing hide and seek with a little child. We see the child hiding behind the sofa, but we want to call them out from hiding, "Where are you? I am looking for you. Where are you?"

The thing about God is that he makes us come out of our hiding place. He calls us, "Where are you?" But we have to come out. And you know, in coming out he is calling us to come out into the light. To come out of hiding is to come into the light of God. And if you have been in a dark room for a while, you know that walking out into bright blazing light of a noon day sun hurts your eyes. You wince. You almost want to withdraw from that noon day sun of God.

That's the way it is when you have been hiding from God for a while to really come to him and open yourself up and say, "Father, this is who I am. I have gotten myself all messed up. I have gotten myself all messed up. I have gotten myself trapped. This is who I am." It hurts.

Unfortunately, a lot of advice that you get and even some secular therapy exists to put sun glasses over your eyes so that the pain of the truth doesn't hurt as much. Much counseling is really giving people sunglasses so that they don't wince at the light. "No, you're not radically wrong. You aren't really that bad. You have had bad life experiences and unfortunate things happen. And you have made a couple of errors in judgment."

To keep from coming to the light, Adam and Eve moved from honesty to avoidance. Verse 11: *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."* The woman you gave me. It is the fates. It is my circumstance. I couldn't help it. It is ultimately your fault, God.

*Then God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" the woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."* The devil made me do it.

Politicians are masters at avoidance. How often have you heard a politician say very plainly, "I did wrong. I am totally ashamed of myself. I betrayed you. I disgraced this high office and therefore today I resign." You never hear that.

Back in 1992 sixteen women charged a United States senator with flagrant sexual harassment. The senator's response was typical. It was Genesis 3. First, I didn't do it. It never happened. Then he attacked the credibility of his accusers. This woman had this going on in her life. And no, that woman is a liar. And that woman has a character problem. And he tried to smear the women. Then when the ceiling began to fall on him, he issued this apology – for years he was groping women and grabbing them in the elevator of the Congress; groping staff members, stepping on their feet while he tried to pull their clothing off; faced with charges from sixteen different women, this senator said he "never intended to make anyone feel uncomfortable....[he said he] would seek professional help." This is what he told the media – this is a direct quote: "I will seek professional help to see if my alleged behavior is related to my use of alcohol."

I didn't do it. And if I did it, I didn't mean it. And if someone interpreted me wrong, I am sorry about their wrong interpretation. And if I did it and it looked like I meant it, it was the result of alcohol abuse, which we know is a disease and I am going in and getting treatment for it.

Shalom is broken. The world is messed up. Father seeks; he seeks us and his seeking is based on our willingness to tell the truth, to come into the life, to tell the truth about ourselves, the truth about our pasts, the truth about our present. The more you live in the light and tell the truth, the more you love the truth and the more you find God not as your accuser, but as your father.

The ultimate ripple occurs in the cursing of the shalom. The world becomes a place that it was never designed to be. The serpent is cursed in verse 14 and then the woman is cursed in verse 16. *To the woman he said, "I will greatly increase your pain in childbearing. With pain you will give birth to children."* Shalom in the Bible is all about being the joyful mother of children in that culture. Shalom especially meant being the joyful mother of a large family. But the consequence of sin meant pain in the place that was supposed to bring joy and blessing. So whereas bearing children was to bring joy and blessing to women, pain ruins the joy.

Certainly, this involves the pain of childbirth itself. But at least a part of the curse, a part of the fall, could include the pain of being unable to bear children. The pain of infertility, of trying to get pregnant and being unable to. The pain of miscarriages – one, two, multiple miscarriages. That is not the way the world is designed. Shalom has been destroyed.

Certainly, a part of the pain could be the pain of having children. The source of our joy can wound us. The pain of a sick child. The pain of losing a child. The pain of a rebellious child.

There is a curse on the shalom of the relationship with our mates. Your desire will be for your husband and he will rule over you. The complementarity and equality of the garden is ruined. The situation of mutuality becomes ruined through domination and rulership. We read here of the tendency of men to dominate and control their wives. And in many parts of the world to view their wives as no more than a piece of property to be owned and controlled, rather than to bless our wives and to cherish our wives and care for our wives.

When it says: *Your desire shall be for your husband* for many women instead of finding life and meaning in their relationship with God, they try to find life and meaning through their relationship with a man. Every time a woman is desperate for a man, they don't care what kind of man, just need a guy – a good guy, a bum, it doesn't matter. I just need a guy – shalom is destroyed. The turning of women's hearts from finding identity and meaning in God to finding identity and

meaning in a man. That ain't the way the world was designed. It is the consequence of sin.

And finally, the man's world is touched. *Cursed is the ground because of you. Through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return.*

There is a curse on the serpent, a curse on the woman and a curse on the man. Work, the joy of being productive, the shalom of the workplace is cursed. Work becomes toil. So many times people will tell me their work is so difficult. They find it so frustrating. The new job doesn't turn out the way you hoped it would. Every time you plant grass, weeds come up. There are thorns. You experience conflicts at work. There is political infighting at work. There is a hassle of getting paid from customers. There are lawsuits. Competitors cutting your legs out from under you. You ask why management is so bad around here at the state or in my company? Why are my students so unmotivated? Why are they so ungrateful, disrespectful and lazy? All the professional mystique is gone. You signed up to be a doctor and you just want to do medicine. And you end up with mountains of paperwork and the threat of lawsuits and insurance companies cutting your legs out and government red tape and bureaucrats. The same thing is true for teachers and plumbers. It is true for secretaries and interior designers and software engineers.

Why is work so frustrating? Because our shalom – the way the world was designed by God to be – has been ruined. Our God sent Jesus into the world to call out from this ruined world people from their hiding places. All the places where men and women and young adults have hid themselves – God sent his son into the world to call out people. To redeem and restore a measure of shalom and a measure of wholeness and healing.

He is calling you out today. Will you respond? God is seeking you. He is calling your name. Will you answer his call? Let's pray.

## **Why Doesn't the World Work the Way It Should?**

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Rich Nathan

November 3-4, 2000

Roots: A Study in the Book of Genesis

Genesis 3:6-24

### **I. A Picture of Shalom**

### **II. The Ruining of Shalom**

#### **A. The Origin of Sin (3:6)**

#### **B. The Consequences of Sin**

##### **1. From Self to Others (3:6)**

##### **2. From Openness to Cover-up (3:7)**

##### **3. From Intimacy to Fear (3:8-10)**

##### **4. From Honesty to Avoidance (3:11-13)**

##### **5. From Shalom to Cursing**

##### **a. The Curse of the Serpent (3:14-15)**

##### **b. The Curse of the Woman (3:16)**

##### **i. From Joy to Pain**

##### **ii. From Equality to Domination**

##### **c. The Curse of Man (3:17-19)**

##### **i. From Work to Toil**

##### **ii. From Life to Death**