

I HAVE A DARK SIDE I MUST UNDERSTAND

Genesis 2:8-9, 15-17; 3:1-24; Romans 7:14-25

INTRODUCTION:

A. [The famous cuckoo bird never builds its own nest.

- It flies around until it sees another nest w/eggs in it & no mother bird around.
- The cuckoo quickly lands, lays its eggs there, & flies away.
- The thrush, whose nest has been invaded, comes back.
- Not being very good at arithmetic, she gets to work hatching the eggs.
- What happens? Four little thrushes hatch, but one large cuckoo hatches.
- The cuckoo is two or three times the size of the thrushes.
- When Mrs. Thrush brings to the nest one large, juicy worm, she finds four petite thrush mouths, & one cavernous cuckoo mouth.
- Guess who gets the worm?
- The full-sized thrush ends up feeding a baby cuckoo that is 3 times as big as it is.
- Over time, the bigger cuckoo gets bigger & bigger, & the smaller thrushes get smaller & smaller.
- It's never hard to find a baby cuckoo's nest.
- You just walk along a hedgerow until you find dead little thrushes, which the cuckoo throws out one at a time.]

B. We learn in the Bible, that spiritually speaking, we've got two natures in one nest.

- And the nature that we go on feeding will grow, & the nature that we go on starving will diminish.
- We each find ourselves in a spiritual struggle, even after we've come into a relationship w/the Lord.
- In fact, we could say that each & every one of us has a dark side.
- And even as we find ourselves trying to please God, thoughts, emotions, & actions sometimes come to the surface that we know are not in keeping w/our faith commitment.
- Today, I hope to come to an understanding of how we got to this point, & what can be done to overcome the dark side of our lives.

Transition: There are 3 basic phases that mankind has gone through since the creation, & by examining these we will learn how to better deal w/the struggle that is so much a part of our everyday lives.

- 1st, is the phase we're labeling...

1. SERENITY

- To live a life of serenity means that you live in peace, calm, undisturbed & unchallenged by conflict.
- This was the life that God created for us in the beginning.
- A life that knew nothing of the spiritual struggle.
- READ 2:8-9; 15-17

A. God caused an unlimited variety of trees to spring up in the garden.

- The "tree of life" gave life -- even eternal life -- when eaten (3:22).
- The "tree of the knowledge of good and evil" was placed in the garden to give man the opportunity to exercise his freedom of choice.
- Every tree was appealing, but only one was prohibited.
- This tree gave man the occasion to express his obedience & love for God.
- There was nothing inherently evil about the fruit of the tree.
- On the contrary, the eating of this tree gave its partakers a knowledge which God Himself possessed (3:22).

B. God gave Adam & Eve a life of serenity, but He also granted them a very special freedom: He gave them the freedom to choose.

- They were not created as robots, they were created in the image of God & w/the freewill to make their own decisions.
- They were created to have fellowship w/God, but the exchange of love always requires the freedom of the recipient to respond to or reject that love.
- To institute freewill, to give mankind an opportunity to respond to or reject His fellowship, God warned, "If you eat of the tree of the knowledge of good & evil, you will die."

C. Unfortunately, this life of serenity soon ended as we shall see.

- But the good news is that this age will return for those of us who come to Christ for salvation.
- Paradise is on the horizon for those who have teamed up w/Jesus.
- Revelation 2:7 "To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God."

- In at least some fashion, heaven will be a return to the Garden of Eden.

Transition: So we see mankind was made for serenity, but regrettably Adam & Eve moved into our second phase:

2. SEPARATION

- READ Genesis 3:1-24

A. Satan, in the form of a serpent, tempted Eve in much the same way he tempts us today.

- Vs. 6 shows she was tempted by her desire for the fruit, it appealed to her senses, & it also promised her something beyond her present experience -- the wisdom of God.

- In effect, the temptation was to substitute what God had freely given, fellowship, love, serenity, in exchange for a life of self-reliance.

- The temptations that come to us are the same -- no matter what form they take, they are always designed to take us away from fellowship w/God & to become men/women/children who are dependent only on ourselves.

- In short, it is a reversal of God's plan - rather than man being made in the image of God - we choose to make God in our own image.

- And rather than accept the great generosity of God our Creator & rejoicing in the fellowship He grants us, we find ourselves, like little children, reaching out our hands for more.

B. Adam & Eve gave into the temptation & serenity ceased.

- They chose to walk away from God, & God honored their choice.

- God does not force us to walk down the right path.

- He simply shows us the right way & lets us decide whether we will follow the directions He has given us, or if we will head out on our own.

- Unfortunately, Adam & Eve chose the path of self instead of the path of God.

- And we, as their spiritual ancestors, all have made that same choice when we have chosen to sin against God.

- Romans 3:23 informs us that we have "all sinned & fall(en) short of the glory of God."

C. To help us better understand our separation from God it will be helpful for us to grasp five areas of alienation that resulted from Adam's sin.

1) Psychological Separation: Man from Himself - READ 3:7

- Before sin, there was no shame, no guilt, no self-consciousness.

- But now the man & woman are ashamed.

- Human shame is a feeling of distress at our deficiencies, deformities, or absurdities--real or imagined--and especially at the uncovering of these things.

- It is also a feeling of distress at the uncovering of things once held private.

- Our text suggests the joining together of these sources of distress w/a few words of great sorrow & mystery: after they had sinned, Adam & Eve "realized they were naked."

- For the first time in their lives they could not stand scrutiny.

- It wasn't merely that they flinched when their partner's gaze dipped southward; it was also that they had trouble looking into each other's eyes.

2) Spiritual Separation: Man from God - READ 3:8-10

- Before sin, man was comfortable being w/God.

- There was no running from Him, no hiding, no desire to be away from His presence.

- But once they sinned, the comfort level was gone, & they foolishly thought that they could hide from the presence of the Creator of the Universe.

- The spiritual separation that we feel today began w/Adam & Eve.

3) Sociological Separation: Man from Man - READ 3:11-12

- When God challenged Adam, he took it like a man -- He blamed his wife!

- For the first time they found themselves at odds w/each other -- "It's all Eve's fault."

- Marital strife, abuse, divorce, lawsuits, gossip & war were all introduced by the virus of sin.

4) Environmental Separation: Man from Nature - 3:14-24 (DON'T READ)

- The world was thrown off kilter because of sin.

- This was the beginning of weeds, erosion, floods, droughts, tornadoes, earthquakes, & viruses which began to make life miserable.

- Romans 8:19-22 informs us that the creation itself waits in eager expectation for a return to Eden & serenity.

5) Physical Separation: Man's Spirit from His Body - READ 3:19

- From this point on Adam & Eve began the process of physical death.
 - They were banished from the garden & their bodies began to age.
 - What was once united, body & Spirit, is now separated.
 - The spirit lives eternally, but the body's days are numbered.
 - And so it remains, until the return of Christ when body & spirit are reunited as one.
- Transition: So here we have two phases of mankind's existence -- Serenity & Separation.
- You & I & all who follow Adam exist in the third phase.

3. STRUGGLE

- Ever since the Fall of man we have been involved in a spiritual struggle.
 - Even those of us who have turned our lives over to Christ find ourselves in turmoil.
 - Paul described it well: (READ Romans 7:14-25)
- A. If we are to overcome, we must understand the basic truth of our depravity.
- Parents must recognize that their children will not naturally do what is right just because they avoid negative influence.
 - They are born w/a predisposition toward sin.
 - Proverbs 22:15 "Folly is bound up in the heart of a child...."
 - Psalm 51:5 "Surely I was sinful at birth" (speaking of his inclination toward sin)
 - We need to understand that we all have a dark side.
 - Evolution says that man is getting better -- that if the right environment is provided man will choose the good.
 - But the Bible teaches us that we have a bent toward evil.
 - Laws, discipline, & punishment are necessary to curb our sinful nature.
 - And most importantly we must recognize this sinful nature within ourselves.

B. Here are four truths about our sinful nature.

1) I have inherited a sinful nature that, if unrestrained, is Capable of dreadful evil.

- I think we've established this.

2) I need Jesus Christ to Transform my sinful nature.

- (2 Cor 5:17) Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!
- (Gal 5:24) Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.
- The good news is that w/Christ on my side, & w/my willingness to rely on Him instead of on my own goodness, I can overcome.
- It is simply a matter of letting go & letting God.

3) As a Christian, I rely on the Holy Spirit to Empower me against the daily struggle w/my sinful nature.

- (Rom 8:9) You...are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you."
- You see, God knows that we can't do it on our own.
- He's not sending us out like lambs to the slaughter.
- He is empowering us to prevail over the forces of evil by relying on the Holy Spirit who indwells us.

4) I look forward to Heaven when the struggle will be over & the Victory won!

- (1 Cor 2:9) "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him"
- Heaven will be the beauty of the Garden of Eden restored.
- Heaven will be the perfect fellowship w/one another -- no sham, no pretense, no self-consciousness.
- Heaven will be the freedom to walk & talk w/our Creator: Perfect fellowship w/God.
- In heaven we will be completely free from the sin nature & its consequences.
- (Rev 21:4-5) "He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." {5} He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."

CONCLUSION:

- We all have a dark side -- we're capable of the most horrible crimes.
- But greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world.
- There is no sin so horrible that the blood of Christ cannot wash it away.
- There is no sin so bitter that He can't transform it.
- No matter how grievous or minor you think your sin is, you need Christ to cleanse you & transform you into His image.

- Paradise is waiting for you.