May the Holy Spirit ever strengthen your spirit

*But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves.*

 2 Peter 2:1

False prophets were a problem throughout the Old Testament times. It’s hard to imagine since it was easy to spot a false prophet by his predictions not coming true; and they were to be stoned. The problem became that the people liked what the false prophets told them, so they accepted their excuses and twisted words and ignored the command of God.

Peter warns us that this trend will continue with false teachers. They existed during his day; they exist today. Unfortunately, people still like what they hear, so the false teachers of the prosperity gospel pack stadiums. They are fairly easy for the Christian to spot and avoid.

But we must be careful to recognize those who teach lies that sound good; that sound like something that lines up with the Bible. This is why we must know our Bibles and have fellowship with other Christians; we help each other to recognize false teachings.

Peter even mentions that some will deny Jesus. This includes the ones who say that Jesus was a really good man and good teacher, but that He wasn’t God. This is denying Jesus. No matter how good or knowledgeable someone sounds, if they deny anything the Bible tells us about Jesus, they are of the antichrist spirit.

Peter gives us good reason to stay away from such people; God will bring destruction upon them.

In Christ’s love

John

 3-6-22

Genesis 3:1-24 (5)

This is an extremely important chapter in the Bible. It lets us know why we are in the predicament we are currently in: why evil exists in the world and why it has such control over us. From this account we gain the knowledge of why we need a Saviour, and it prepares us for the coming of Jesus Christ. This chapter also lets us know that God isn’t fooling around when it comes to sin; sin has tremendous consequences and requires God to act in judgement. All sin must be punished. But we also learn of God’s mercy. Interspersed with the judgement are acts of kindness and compassion, of caring for the people He has created, and the beginnings of the promise of salvation.

The serpent and satan are cursed for their involvement in tempting Eve into disobeying God. We spent a lot of time last week on verse 15, which is the first glimmer of the Gospel in the Bible. Among other things, the seed of satan is satan himself and the seed of the woman is Jesus. In time to come, satan wounded Jesus, symbolized by the bruise to the heel; while Jesus dealt a death blow to satan. Satan is still active and dangerous and our enemy, but he is already defeated; and one day Jesus will come back to establish His Kingdom and satan will be done away with entirely.

So, God has handed out judgement on satan and now in verse 16 He turns to the woman. We’ve considered how Eve fell to the temptation of satan and disobeyed God; she then tempted her own husband. There is plenty of blame to go around and Eve has her share.

First, the Lord increases the pain of her childbirth. Apparently, this process would have been no more than uncomfortable, but now it will be in pain. Back in verse 6, the woman had looked on the tree and found it good and desirable and a delight to the eyes. She disobeyed the Lord in the pursuit of her own pleasure. So, her judgement focuses on the unique gift God gave to woman, what should have been her greatest pleasure, bearing children.

The wording of the Hebrew here allows for more. There is a sort of sorrow with the woman that takes several forms. In addition to the pain of childbirth, the nine months of carrying the child can be uncomfortable. And, in general, women tend to worry more than men; especially regarding their children. This is part of the judgement that carries on to this day.

Well, the obvious solution to avoiding the pain of childbirth is to avoid the husband. But God took care of that. “*Yet your desire will be for your husband, And he will rule over you*.” Even though the result is painful birth, a woman tends to desire her husband and wants to bear him children.

Remember also from verse 6 that one of the reasons Eve took the fruit was the desire to be wise; to be like God. This is pride. The husband ruling over her is a judgement against her pride. Although it was God’s original plan for the husband to have the leadership role in the family, that’s what it was: leadership. It was done in kindness and caring and in love. Because of sin, there is a harsh edge now and the word “rule” is used.

Notice God’s mercy; the idea of submission is the wife to the husband, not women to men. The judgement itself is limited. But we all know that through history, women have often been treated as second class and not given the same rights as men. This is due to the fall, this is due to sin in the world, it is not part of God’s judgement. I bring this up because the argument is sometimes made that women should be submissive to men because it says so in the Bible; that’s obviously a lie of satan.

Next God turns to Adam. We considered before that he was present when Eve was being tempted by satan and he failed in his role because he didn’t intervene to protect her. Instead, he stood and watched, and when he didn’t see anything happen to her, he disobeyed God and ate of the fruit himself. We noted that when Eve ate, nothing happened; but when Adam ate, that’s when their eyes were opened and they saw that they were naked.

Adam shared in the guilt of sin along with Eve and the snake; but Adam bore the responsibility. He neglected his role of leadership and of protecting his wife; then he disobeyed a direct command from God. He had been called on to rule over the earth and subdue it; he was to act for God as one created in His image. Here he has failed miserably by disobeying the One who gave him some authority over His own creation.

We mustn’t miss what’s happening in verse 17. “*Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you.*” Think back to verse 12 with Adam’s answer when God confronted him with his sin. “*The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate*.” With sin comes the natural tendency to blame someone else. In verse 12, Adam manages to blame both God and Eve.

God let it go at the time but now He comes back to it. “*Because you have listened to the voice of your wife.”* God is putting the blame right back on Adam where it belongs. He is the one who made the decision to eat, it makes no difference that she offered it to him: He chose to disobey. There is nothing wrong with listening to your wife, as long as it doesn’t violate God’s commands.

Adam had also blamed God because He had given him the woman in the first place; but God lets Adam know that doesn’t fly either. Nothing is to override God’s commands, even if it’s a beautiful gift from Him.

God pronounces judgement for Adam’s sin. The ground is now cursed because of him. Adam is made from the ground and now it is cursed. This is sin; this is what sin causes. Its effects don’t remain with the one who did it. Its effects are far reaching. We see this all the time in the world where one person’s wrongdoing causes someone else harm who had nothing to do with it. We feel this is unfair; and it is. But that is sin, that is evil; it is not fair. That is something we need to consider: Every time we sin, it adds to the overall evil in the world, it helps to bring about pain and destruction of others who are not involved with us; it is unfair, but it is real.

Whereas Adam was given the responsibility to work in the garden and tend to it, it was pleasant work and it yielded abundantly. Now, it is toil; now the yield isn’t guaranteed. Work was not a curse, it was a joy; and one day, it will be a joy again once God removes the curse through Jesus. Work is still not a curse; it’s just that due to the fall it is wearisome now. Our natural tendency is to avoid work, but that is not the call of the Christian. We are to work; both in daily labor to earn our bread and to advance the Kingdom of Heaven. And we are to do all our work as if unto the Lord.

Anyone who tries to have a garden knows that this judgement is still in effect. A lot of time is spent pulling weeds and plants that we didn’t put there. It is hard work to till the ground and keep up with tending the plants; a lot of sweat is involved. Even then, there is no guarantee of a harvest: lack of rain, storms, a late or early frost, or the bugs and rabbits and deer that wipe out all our work in a few hours. Our food is no longer hanging there for the taking; we labor for it.

God had told Adam that if he ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil that he would die. A spiritual death took place immediately but they remained physically alive. In verse 19, God reminds Adam of the consequence of his disobedience: he will die. When he dies, his body will return to dust, it will revert back to what he was made from. That is the ultimate power of sin; it brings death. Because of what Adam and Eve did in the garden, all people must face death. How beautiful that with belief in Jesus Christ, our enemy death simply becomes the way to eternal life in the presence of Jesus.

Verse 21 says, “*The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them*.” Perhaps the first thing to notice here is that in order for God to make garments out of skins, some animals had to die. Here is the first physical death in the world. Adam and Eve would have seen the result of their action affecting something else besides them; something that was innocent.

Earlier, we thought about the ridiculous attempt the first couple made to cover themselves, somehow fastening leaves together. This shows us mankind’s silly attempts to cover our own sins. Notice that God must do it. God had to make proper covering for the man and the woman; in the same way, it must be God who effectively covers our sins. This comes about in the Old Testament animal sacrifices, where the blood of the animals covered the sins of the people so they could be in God’s presence. Of course, it wasn’t until the perfect sacrifice of Jesus that we could be cleansed of the guilt of our sins and be covered in Christ’s righteousness.

We also see more of the mercy and caring of God here, in spite of the heinous sin just committed against Him. Instead of throwing Adam and Eve out into the harsh world naked or wearing their fig leaves, He provided them proper clothing. Clothing that adequately covered and protected them.

A couple weeks ago, I made the statement that I believe that Adam and Eve were saved; I believe that their souls are currently in heaven and they are awaiting a bodily resurrection. Let me explain why. There are basically two things required for salvation: a blood sacrifice and faith. For we who are Christian, Jesus is our blood sacrifice and our faith must be in Him. For the Old Testament saints, their sins were covered by the sacrifices of animals and faith in God. Jesus’ complete atonement was then retroactive back to them.

Here in the garden, a blood sacrifice took place when the animals were slain in order to make clothing for Adam and Eve. It provided not only a proper covering for their bodies, but also for their sin. Now, back in verse 20 it reads, “*Now the man called his wife’s name Eve, because she was the mother of all the living.*” “Eve” means “life” or “living”. So, Adam believed God that Eve would still bear children. Her judgement was pain in childbirth not loss of childbirth. In naming his wife Eve, Adam demonstrated his faith in God.

Later in chapter 4 verse 1, Eve gives birth to Cain and says, “*I have gotten a manchild with the help of the Lord.*” Here Eve demonstrates her faith by giving God credit for the gift of a child. For both of them we have a blood sacrifice and a demonstration of the faith necessary for salvation.

Of course, what we see ultimately in the death of these animals is a foreshadowing of the sacrifice of Jesus. The innocent die in the place of the guilty.

Yahweh’s final words and action in this account appear to be judgement, but are actually mercy. And we should thank God every day for what He did here. God said, “*Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever”—*

Let’s note that God uses the plural “Us”, He is not speaking to angels or anyone else, He is speaking to Himself. This is another indication of the Trinity here in the creation account.

Adam and Eve have sinned, they have disobeyed God and eaten from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Consequently, even though they had some intellectual knowledge of evil before, now they have experienced it and the shame that comes with it, and the physical deterioration it causes. As long as they remain in the Garden, they have access to the tree of life. God sees that the people might eat from this tree and live forever. In our Bibles, there is some indication of a pause at the end of this verse, perhaps a line or a colon. It’s as if the thought is too horrible to finish or consider.

To eat of this tree now would mean that mankind would live forever in his fallen state. He would never have a chance to be made right with God because he wouldn’t be able to experience the consequence of his sin: death. Think about how we are now, how our bodies change as we age. With the aches and pains and infirmities we have now, what would we be like at 200 years of age; or 1000. To live forever as we are now would be unbearable.

In His great mercy, God banished mankind from the Garden and blocked the way to the tree of life. But also in His great mercy, God has another tree of life for us. This tree of life once died for us to cleanse us of sin, but now lives again. We are allowed to partake of this tree of life, who is Jesus Christ.

To partake of Jesus will first purify us and then give us eternal life, so that our eternal life will be good and not constantly frustrating as this life is. And there is one more blessed gift from God. He will create a new heaven and a new earth, and Revelation 22:2 tells us that the tree of life will be there. So, one day, we who believe on Jesus Christ for salvation, will get to see what the fruit tastes like.

Prayer

Merciful and powerful God, we praise You for Your justice and Your perfect judgement. We take comfort knowing that You are always fair and that You are never capricious in Your decisions or actions. You possess perfect wisdom and knowledge, and all You do is true and righteous.

We confess that we, Your creation, have turned from You and deserve Your just wrath. We have no goodness of our own by which we can be saved. How we thank You for Your mercy, by which You fulfilled Your justice in Your Son Jesus, in whom only we can be saved.

Now, we Your people who are properly clothed in the righteousness of Jesus Christ, seek to do the work You have ordained for us from before the beginning of time. With the help and guidance of the Holy Spirit, we will accomplish our work, and bring You glory.

It is in Jesus’ name we pray

Amen