

"It's not my fault."

Rather common words, wouldn't you say? Whenever there's a problem or trouble, whenever there's blame to be laid, there's always someone there to say the blame is not theirs. "I know I'm late, but it's not my fault, there was traffic." "My project's not done, but it's not my fault, I couldn't get what I needed to finish it!" "Someone got hurt, but it's not my fault, they should've been watching where they were going!" "It's not my fault they're upset, they shouldn't be so sensitive!" There's always an excuse, there's always a reason, there's always something to hide behind. This instinct to play the blame game is almost as old as creation itself. So let's go back to where it started. From the very first man, who committed the very first sin.

<Read text Gen 3:8-15>

Adam had created a situation. He stood by quietly while the serpent deceived his wife and allowed her to disobey God. They fell for the same lie we always fall for, that they could be like God. Eve ate from the tree and Adam followed her lead. It was his responsibility as husband and head of their family to stop Eve. To speak up as the serpent laid his web of lies or to catch her hand when she reached for the fruit. He was supposed to take care of her, protect her and that included keeping her from doing wrong. But he did nothing. And as a result he plunged the whole human race into sin.

And now, sin permeated creation. That sin corrupted Adam's mind and his soul. At that point he knew death. Remember "death" means "a separation" and he was separated from God by his new sin. And if that weren't enough, that corruption and that death was passed on to all humans from then on. Before this moment he had the image of God. His thoughts were in perfect harmony with God's will. And now... well, take a look at how far he had fallen in so little time. We know from a few verses earlier in Genesis that he needed to cover himself, and the best solution his massive human intellect could come up with... leaves. And then, God comes in his presence into the garden and Adam, in his God-given wisdom, decided that the best course of action (knowing that he'd done wrong) was to hide from a God he *knew* was all-knowing and all-present. God knew where he was and God was where he was. But Adam still tried to hide.

"**Where are you?**" God asks. God knows where he is, but he gives Adam the chance to come forward, to own up to what he has done. Of course, Adam just continues to show off how far he has fallen. "**I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.**" Adam tries not to acknowledge the 400-pound gorilla in the garden by diverting the subject. Maybe if I don't mention eating from the tree God won't bring it up? But of course God knows, that's why God was there. And God comes right to the point, graciously giving Adam another invitation to confess his sin. "**Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?**" Adam's response drives home the utter depths to which he has sunk. "**The woman you put here with me – she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.**"

Oh, Adam.

Flash back a little. Probably only a few days. God had taken this man and brought all the creatures of the world before him to name. Two by two they went by and as the process went along, the man noticed something. He was unique. The animals all had counterparts. Male and female. He realized he was alone. God had shown him his need, and in his gracious love, God then filled that need. He put Adam asleep and created woman from the rib of man. Woman was created from man and man is no longer complete without her. And when the man awoke and saw his wife, saw the perfect creation God had made to complete him and to help him, man burst into the first recorded song of praise.

And now, that man had disobeyed, that man had ruined God's creation, and his response to his own actions? The woman *you* put here with me God. She started it and she had me eat too. And it's worth noting the words "with me". In Hebrew, there's a simple and common way to express the idea of "with". But that's not the phrasing that Adam uses here. The word *he* uses can just as easily be translated "against" as though with an idea of malice. For all Adam was implying, he might as well have come out and said, "Everything was fine here *God* until *you* put that woman here to ruin me!"

How far. How far Adam had fallen. What he had sung praises about a short time ago he now was accusing God of using to intentionally harm him, rather than just admit he had done wrong. He clung to, "It's not my fault." No matter how flimsy his excuse, he refused to admit he was wrong. And it's so obvious to us, so obvious what had happened and how horrible his response was. How did he ever think he could get away with it?

But it's really easy to look at other people's faults, to look at other people's excuses and say, "How silly, how ridiculous, how flimsy." But when the error is our own, when it's ME who's fouled up, then the fault is really anyone's but mine. Whenever a situation we had anything to do with comes forward our instant reaction is, "It's not my fault!" Maybe not

in those exact words, but as soon as something goes wrong we instantly start to form our defense. Reasons, alibis, excuses, outright fabrications. Anything that will shift the blame off of us and put it somewhere else.

But let's not kid ourselves. We have that sinful nature inherited from Adam. And so the fact is we are to blame more often than not. When there's a problem and we're involved, chances are we had something to do with creating it, no matter how small the part. We're sinful. Everything we do is tainted somehow. And when God passes before us, when we hear him in the garden of our lives, our sinful nature wants to follow the same path as Adam. We realize just how naked we are. We can try to cover ourselves with some "good works" so maybe it will balance out what we did wrong...but no matter how hard we try, every one of them is flawed or tainted with selfishness and sin. We can try to hide from God. Maybe we don't think about him hoping he won't think about us. Or we avoid him hoping he won't find us. In our guilt we might avoid reading his word or coming to worship him regularly because we're afraid of what he might say to us. Afraid because we know he should be angry at us for what we've done.

But no matter how much we try to hide, God knows where we are, and God knows what we've done and left undone. God, in his mercy will not leave us alone in our guilt and sin. He will come to us in the cool of the day. And when he confronts us in his word, sometimes brought to us by fellow believers, then just like Adam we want to try our feeble excuses. We try to rationalize what we've done or we try to find a loophole in the letter of God's law that might cover us. We could get angry at the person who points this out to us just like Adam did to God, as though it were actually that person accusing us or like they somehow are to blame as well. But it won't work. You can bluster and dissemble and huff all you want, and maybe it might make that person go away, maybe it might silence your conscience for a short time, but it doesn't accomplish anything. God knows your heart, and God knows your sin. In the end we still stand before him, naked, exposed, ashamed and on our own, we are damned. God sees us exposed for the dead sinners we are, just like Adam.

There is a better choice. A better option than trying in vain to dodge blame that is rightly ours. We can confess. We have now something that Adam didn't have at that point. We have the promise of a Savior. It wasn't until the end of this conversation between God, Adam and Eve that God gave the first gospel message. The promise of one who would crush the work of the serpent and put the divide back where it belonged; between us and the devil. A promise that sin could be forgiven. And by the power of God's words, we are caused to believe in that promise. We know our savior by name. Jesus. And we know specifically how he has saved us from our sins. We know how he took all our sins onto himself on the cross and paid the full price for them there as he suffered. Everything that really was our fault was taken there and paid for. And we know that his perfect life has been transferred to us. This is the fine linen of the saints, the robe of righteousness we are each given in Christ. We are *covered* before God with perfect garments. God does not see us naked and exposed, with all our shame laid bare. God looks at us and sees the covering Jesus gave us. God sees us in his image again, perfect and holy.

So now, by the power of the same Holy Spirit that brought us to believe this all to be true, we are moved to confess our sins to God and receive a release from the guilt of our actions. We can't do that with excuses and defenses. Even when the dust has settled and our cries of, "it's not my fault!" have convinced everyone else, that won't bring us real peace. The only power that can remove that guilt is the forgiveness of God. Recognize your faults. Admit your mistakes. Confess your sins instead of pretending they don't exist. Be first to come forth with your fault and ask God for his mercy and forgiveness. He will never withhold it. Your sins have been paid for by Jesus and the guilt has been washed away forever. You are at complete peace with God because of what Jesus has done for you.

That peace of knowing our forgiveness and knowing our perfect status with the Father makes us able to live this life differently than the world does. Through the Holy Spirit we no longer have to engage in the unending game of trying to dodge blame and make excuses. Rather we can admit our mistakes and our sins freely to others because we are forgiven. Rather than becoming instantly defensive, angry or looking to blame others, we look first to ourselves and honestly consider, "Am I to blame here? Is there something I did to cause this, or something I should have done that would have prevented it?" We don't do this to increase our guilt. We do it because recognizing our fault allows us to heal in Christ. Confessing our sins and receiving the forgiveness of God is the only way to completely *remove* our guilt. And rather than being angry or indignant at those who seek to correct us, we can instead *thank* them for helping to keep us on a godly path. We realize that God is using that person to help us stay in the faith and to help us live as our Lord wants us live.

Brothers and sisters, as imperfect human beings, we are going to sin. But when it happens, we don't need to cover ourselves with excuses or run and hide from our God. Instead, by the power of the Holy Spirit we can admit our fault, confess our sin and receive from God the forgiveness of Jesus that wipes away all guilt forever. We can freely admit, "It was my fault," because we know in Christ the response of our God will always be, "You are forgiven." Amen.