

“Adam and Eve - Find the Cause of Our Problems”

There is a movie called “Ben-Hur” currently playing in theaters. It is a remake of the 1959 movie starring Charlton Heston, which had won 11 Oscars. As in this case, it is common for successful movies to be remade. I am not sure about this movie Ben-Hur, but most remakes do not get as much attention as the original, and neither are they valued as much. It is the difference between “the Original” and “the Copy”.

In February, I went on an Israel tour. Those who had come from a Europe tour mentioned that “As I thought, Israel is on a different level”. What do you think makes it different? Most of Europe’s culture, music, architecture, and art has been influenced by christianity. Israel is the origin of Christianity. In other words, that is the original. It is the difference of “what is passed on” and “what is born and developed there”.

There are countless documents written about humans. Even the characters of books and movies are so. Books and movies show what the characters thought, said, and what actions they took. But the first original record of humans is in the bible. In particular, the person we will be focusing on today can be called the original human being. Today, we wish to hear some very important words of the bible from them. We will go back to the time of creation.

The bible, which starts with the words, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” depicts that God created the world in 6 days. 2 weeks ago, I introduced the words of director Akira Kurosawa. As he had said, it is impossible for us humans to create from nothing, and everything we do create comes from what we see and hear. However, the creation of the heavens and earth was indeed from nothing. And at the very end of his creation, as the crown of his creation, God created Adam, and from Adam, Eve. So to speak, they are the beginning of us humans and our original.

They lived in the Garden of Eden, which God had provided for them. It provided everything they needed to live. They were told that they could eat from any tree except the one tree that is in the middle of the garden. One day, as they were living such days in the garden, the following happening occurred.

Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden’?” The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’” “You will not certainly die,” the serpent said to the woman. “For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” 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. 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, 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.”

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.” Then the Lord God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.” (Genesis 3:1-13)

As we all know, this is the story of the first humans, Adam and Eve, tempted by Satan to eat the fruit they were told not to. From this, we will be looking at a few things. First, **“the problem occurred in the greatest of circumstances”**.

The Problem Occurred in the Greatest of Circumstances

When reading Genesis, we come across things that are unimaginable to us today. One of them is that the people of that time lived as long as 912 years or 905 years. (Genesis 5:8-11) It is beyond our common sense today.

It was a time when the earth was still brand new. These surprising life spans were of those who lived in such pristine environmental conditions. A time when air pollution, UV rays, chemically contaminated foods, and harmful radiation did not exist. The human body was also brand new, with no threats of illnesses such as asthma, cancer, or stroke. They lived in a stress free environment with pure air, walking the garden, and cultivating the land. In such unimaginably perfect environment, they lived their unimaginably long life.

And so, until the global environmental destruction of the great flood of Noah, the long life spans continued. But after the flood, the life spans of humans decreased to less than half its original length, and continued to gradually decrease until the limit of the human life span was set to 120 years. (Genesis 6:3) When examining the limit of the human life span scientifically and medically, it is approximately 120 years just as it is written in the bible.

A problem occurred in the Garden of Eden, the place of perfect environment and circumstance. Here we are taught an important lesson. A lesson that “problems occur even in the greatest of circumstances”. No worry of economic problems, with organically grown finest quality foods, a personal gym at home, receiving the finest possible education, and both work and income is stable. Even if so, problems will occur. It is important to improve one’s circumstances, and change them at times. But just this change alone does not guarantee that everything will go well. Problems are always present in whatever path we take. Yes, but why is it that problems are present wherever we go? Our second point is, “facing the Cause of our problems”

Facing the Cause of our Problems

It was a serpent that crept up to Adam and Eve. The bible says that the serpent was more crafty than any of the animals in the garden. In Genesis, the serpent is said to be Satan. He first approached Eve and with his clever words Eve ate the fruit, also giving the fruit to Adam, and he ate it.

Until then, they had lived without covering themselves. Yet, from the moment they ate the fruit, they realized that they were naked, felt ashamed and covered themselves with fig leaves. They also felt fear towards God, and hid themselves.

We live having inherited this “shame” and “fear”. It is in our daily lives to hear the words “father, you’re embarrassing” or “I shake in fear when I think of that person”, and such human emotions become the subject of books and movies. This “shame” and “fear” that was born in the hearts of Adam and Eve was the first and original. And how this “shame” and “fear” came to be, to find the source, is no doubt the beginning to the resolution of our problems. Yes, to find the “cause” of the problem is the major premise to resolution.

To the two who had eaten the forbidden fruit, God asked, **“Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?”** (Genesis 3:11) Adam answered, **“The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.”** (Genesis 3:12) Hearing this God said to the woman, **“What is this you have done?”** The woman said, **“The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”** (Genesis 3:13)

Adam said that his reason for eating the fruit was because of “the woman you gave me”, that the cause was “you”, towards God. And at the same time, “because this woman gave me the fruit”, that the cause was in Eve. How about Eve who was pointed a finger at by Adam? She said that she was “deceived but the serpent and ate”. Needless to say, the thought going through their mind was “It’s not my fault, I am a victim. The cause of this problem was in God, was in this woman, and in the serpent.” This was their claim.

When I was young, I often rode on my bicycle. In grade school, upon returning from school I would always ride my bicycle to wherever I wanted. The bicycle was my legs. But as I continued to ride it, many parts would break. The most common was a flat tire. When I got a flat tire, I would always take it to the bicycle shop to have it repaired but as I continued to watch the old man fix it, I learned to fix it myself. Some of you may have experienced this but when a bicycle tire goes flat, you remove the tire from the wheel and take out the tube inside. As you know, the tube inside is full of air and thus carries out its purpose. To go flat means that there is a hole in the tube. And so it is important to find where the hole is. It is not the tube as a whole which carries the problem, but the hole the size of the eye of a needle, and so we find the hole. For this we fill a tub with water and submerge the tube. Then we are able to see the bubbles of air leaking out of the hole. That is the cause of the problem. If we know the cause, all that is necessary is to patch the hole with the same material as the tube. The air will no longer leak from there.

The flat tire will not be fixed if the rider looks to the bent handle to fix the problem or the pedal. The first step is to find the cause of the problem, and only after it is found can it be repaired. This is the general rule to fixing a flat tire, and also the general rule in resolving any other problem.

Adam and Eve did not obey the words of God and ate the forbidden fruit. And they placed the cause and blame on “God”, “Eve”, and “the serpent”. It seems that us humans have made an error in the first problem solving situation. And just as one button put in the wrong hole, we continue to make an error in our attempts to solve our problems.

Clearly both Adam and Eve are passing off their responsibility. And only the serpent which lay at the very end point of the blame held its silence. This is because to the serpent it was its motive of deception. With the thought of passing the blame inputted into humans, it became difficult to find the true cause of the problem and fix it. To pass off responsibility is to look away from the true source of the problem, never to coming to a resolution, and that unsettled problem will

continue to exist, gradually growing, or causing more problems. Consequently, distrust will grow between those involved, leading to anger and resentment. This will cause disorder within the human world, feeding its hatred. To Satan, it must be an extreme delight to have seen not only that they ate the fruit, but for them to have passed on the blame.

Recently, North Korea conducted its 5th nuclear experiment. It has been criticized by countries all around the world. To these accusations, North Korea's reply was 'that the United States provoked them into nuclear missile development' and that this is 'their response to hostile powers, including the United States.' in other words, the reason for their nuclear experiments lies on the United States and other countries, and thus justified. Occurrences such as these are not limited to North Korea, happening as we speak in every nation, and not only within countries, but within ourselves in our daily life. We have inherited the actions of Adam and Eve.

Us as believers say this is the “work of evil spirits”. The bible does recognize the existence of evil spirits and so do we. And certainly they do have some influence in our world. However there are somethings that can be questioned when being said that “it is the work of evil spirits”. It is not uncommon for problems to arise from our stubbornness or incompetence rather than by evil spirits. From the view point of an evil spirit, it would be a delight to see us blame them for every problem. Because as long as we are blaming the evil spirits, we are unable to expose the true cause of the problem, and unresolvable, the problem will continue to exist, leading to more disorder.

Then what was the true cause of the problem that Adam and Eve had blamed saying “it is because of God, because of Eve, and because of the serpent”? It was a problem in the heart of Eve who took the fruit and ate it, and the problem in the heart of Adam who did nothing to condemn this action and accepted the fruit. The serpent did act as the trigger for this situation but the the one who had taken the fruit and eaten it was no one but themselves. As long as misdirected thoughts like “the reason why I ate it was because the woman you gave me” problems like these will continue.

When I was a child there was a riddle like this: “What continues to chase you no matter how far you run?” Yes, the answer is “shadow”. Wherever we go our shadow follows us. In the same way, our heart follows us wherever we go. Even in the most perfect of circumstances, our heart still resides. It is the villain. Many of the problems we trouble about is from our hearts.

Starting today, we will continue our service messages on the theme of “Life's Crisis Management”. We will continue to look at the problems of many others like Adam and Eve. Rather than viewing them with the thoughts like “that is why that person..” or “this person is..”, please reflect and consider your own heart. The longest relationship we have is not with our partner or family members or children, but ourselves. No matter the good or bad circumstances we are put in, our heart will always be with us.

A man bought a bookshelf from Ikea. Ikea furniture must be assembled themselves. He confidently opened the box and began to assemble the parts. But when he tries to tighten the screws, they wouldn't tighten. He continues to try but they would not tighten. He grumbles saying how the shelf is a piece of junk and eventually gives up, leaving it in the garage. The bookshelf site for years collecting dust.

Did the man buy a defective product? Were the screws too small for the holes? Was there an error that occurred during its packaging? No. The man just did not know which way to turn the screw. Screws are turned right to tighten. But the man had continued to turn the screw left. The man had not noticed this and so the shelf sat in the garage collecting dust, never to be used.

This is a story I made up. Most everyone knows which way to turn a screw so something like this will probably never happen. But is it not true that things like this happen in our daily life? Because we do not seek to find the cause of the problem, the problem is left unresolved in the garage of our heart collecting dust. Does anything come to mind?

As I mentioned earlier, our problems occur even in the greatest of circumstances. Thus, the problem may not lie in our circumstance. The problem lies elsewhere.

When a police officer investigates a crime what does he do? First he inquires the people closest to the victim including their family and friends. Why? Because they may know something or they may even be the culprit. To be “close” raises the possibility. Then they look for any witnesses. They ask whether there was anyone suspicious spotted in the area at the time of the incident. Why? Because there is a high chance that they are somehow involved in the case. To put it simply, the police officer investigates who was near the victim around the time of the incident or at the scene in that frame of time. This is the investigation that takes place in order to solve an unsolved crime. Then they hear the alibis of the suspects, checking them off one by one.

These are the steps one must approach a problem they wish to find the cause of. If there are problems occurring wherever we go, what is it that we must investigate? Yes, the first person we must examine is ourselves. It happens everywhere; in other words, the person always there is yourself, so we have no alibi. We first start there but if the cause of the problem is not there, then we move on to the next possible cause.

If during this time our heart is shone down on by the Lord, thoughts such as, “because of the work you gave me..” or “the person you bound me with..” or “the person who told me such story too good to be true..” or “because this person brought me such thing..” and other thoughts like the words of Adam and Eve are brought to light in our hearts. And we are tempted to believe such statement to be true, that they are the cause of the problem. No one wishes to face the fact that we ourselves are at fault or that we have made a mistake. But, if the problem truly does lie in ourselves, we must work on it to resolve it.

Do you in the garage of your heart have an unfinished shelf? A shelf we have given up on completing? The reason being because that time there was that problem which could not be solved, and we put it on hold. Let me tell you some good news. The shelf we have left in the garage of our heart can very much still be used. We can still make use of it.

Back then, we may have claimed that “this is the cause of the problem”. Yet as a result, the problem was left unsettled, left as it was. There is no such thing as a dead end. So let us reexamine it under the light before God once more. Will you submerge our heart into the water of life in the hands of God, to find the hole which had been left unfound? For this, please use the method we spoke about 2 weeks ago in the message “Need for a quiet time in front of God”, several times over. There's always a silver lining waiting to be found. It is never too late to recover through God.

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Problems occur under any circumstance. And everyone wishes for a resolve. And in those times, we must find the true cause. If that is the problem that troubles us, the person closest to the problem is ourself. If that is the case, the first place to inspect is our heart. Adam and Eve missed this chance and because they directed the blame to someone else, the problem was left unresolved. Consequently, this largely effected their children, and their children’s children. Lets continue this story in two weeks. May the Lord shine down upon us, and may we find the true cause within our problems we carry today. Let’s pray.

Translated by Shirah Vogt