

GOSPEL HIGHWAY

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Satan's Strategy, God's Remedy

3. Man's Folly

So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. (Gen. 3:6)

Why does Satan continue to use the same basic approach to ensnare people? The first reason is because his arsenal is limited in size. The number of weapons he has is limited. He cannot act differently from his nature. He will continue to lie, to use trickery, to murder souls. He is no doubt powerful, but God has put a limit to his power.

There is a second reason why he continues to use the same strategy. And that is that man cannot act contrary to *his* nature! Satan knows that! Man has inherited the same sinful, foolish nature from his parents. He continues to fall into the hand of Satan in the same basic way that Adam and Eve fell. Imagine how Satan must be laughing as one after another of the children of Adam falls in the same predictable way!

Just as there are four steps in Satan's strategy, there are four steps to man's tragedy.

Desiring forbidden knowledge

First, we note that man is so foolish in desiring forbidden knowledge all the time. It has been said that curiosity has killed more cats than the cats have killed rats. The same might be said of man. Curiosity has killed more souls than the souls have killed sins!

Consider what happened to Adam and Eve. Satan said to Eve, "You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil (Gen. 3:4-5)." Eve probably knew that Satan had gone too far in suggesting that God was trying to withhold something good from them. But her curiosity had been aroused. Her senses were tingling with life. She would not go so far as Satan to use the name of God, but she did think that the fruit would make her wise. She therefore ate the fruit, and passed it to her husband who also ate. You know what happened after that -the eyes of both of them were opened!

This is where we see the same trait in men today. We know the value of knowledge, and we teach our children to pursue knowledge. In the past, knowledge was pursued for its own sake, to make one wise. Knowledge was regarded as more precious than gold. Today, we continue to pursue knowledge, but it is no longer for its own sake. It is no longer done to make one wise. Instead, it is pursued in order to equip one to earn more money, and have a better life. Whatever the ultimate motive may be, we continue to pressure our children to pursue knowledge. And we have been doing so without any qualification added. We have failed to warn them that some knowledge is not worth having - that some knowledge is definitely harmful and should not be pursued at all.

We are warned in the Bible to flee from all forms of evil. There is, in fact, specific teaching about the need to avoid harmful and worthless knowledge. In 1 Corinthians 14:20, we are told, "Brethren, do not be children in understanding, however, in malice be babes, but in understanding be mature." Be mature! Do not be children in understanding. This is written in reference to things that are good, and right, and of spiritual benefit. But in things evil, be babes. Be as ignorant as you can about evil things.

You see now how important it is to warn our children to avoid knowledge that is evil. Certain experiences in life are not worth having. Your friends in school may be boasting of their experiences in "chasing the dragon", which means to take drugs by inhaling their fumes. Experiences of that kind must be avoided, for it takes just one such experience to cause you to crave for more! By that stage, you are already hooked - addicted to the drug - and it will be extremely difficult to break away from it. Parents, warn your children about it! Teach them not to envy their friends, and never to succumb to their provocation. Avoid them!

Such experiences are certainly not worth having. Many are the people who today are smarting over their foolish exploits. They are suffering from a guilty conscience because of a particular incident that had occurred in their lives. They are regretting over the fact that they had lacked self-control. They had allowed curiosity to get the better of them. They had succumbed to their carnal desires. They had craved for forbidden knowledge, and they have been bitten! You know very well that that experience of yours had turned you into a different person from what you were before. You are not the better for it, but you have become worse off. Not all knowledge is useful or helpful!

Think of the child who is at home with her mother. Her mother says, "Child, stay here in this room while Mummy goes upstairs for a while. You may play with your toys or read your books. But do not open the window since it is night." Once the mother is upstairs, the child begins to wonder what it looks like outside the window. Curiosity gets the better of her. She places a chair below the window, unlatches it, and throws it open. To her great horror, she finds not a beautiful scene of mountains, blue sky and green trees, but utter darkness! She jumps as an owl hoots. She jumps again as a bat flies past. She cringes back in fear as a large moth lands on the window pane. She quickly slams the window shut, and trembles in terror. As her mother comes down she rushes to her, and clings to her, sobbing. "Mummy, I am frightened. It is so dark outside." "What have you done? Have you opened the window?" asks the mother. Of course she has! And she is that much the worse for it! Her life is now changed permanently. She is no longer the same as before. She now goes to bed fearing the dark. She has nightmares of owls hooting, bats flying, and moths landing before her face.

Is this not your experience? You have craved for forbidden knowledge. You have allowed curiosity to get the better of you. You have lacked self-control. You just couldn't stop yourself from experiencing the pleasures of the flesh... Oh, what a fall you have had! How you regret it now! But it is too late! Every time you are reminded of that past experience, you blush within yourself. You feel such a pang of shame and guilt coming over you. What others do not know, you know... And you know that God knows! That explains why you are so unhappy! That is why you feel the weight of sin upon your conscience!

Attempting to cover yourself

Man's foolishness is shown in another way - he attempts to cover up his own nakedness. When Adam and Eve discovered that they were naked, "they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings (v. 7)." They probably chose the bigger leaves, and used twines to sew through the base of each leaf. They probably covered their lower waist, and their breast, and where else we do not know. They probably found that the leaves were so inadequate, for when the wind blew, they became exposed. They probably decided to sew also the ends of the leaves, but found that the leaves tore as a result of too much sewing. They probably had to sew new ones as before but the leaves were unable to keep them from the cold. Oh, foolish man and foolish woman! How can leaves be good enough for them?

You see that they were missing the point all together. It was not so much their physical nakedness that was the problem, for they had been naked before this and had not felt ashamed. It was after they had sinned against God that they knew shame..., and guilt..., and fear! Their problem was much worse than they had thought. It had to do more with their nature than with their physical nakedness. They had now a twisted and filthy nature, caused by their disobedience to God. Their good relationship with God was now severed. They had become enemies of God! Satan had scored a victory over them!

This is what has happened to you. You have a guilty conscience because of not obeying God. You have done what you knew to be wrong. You have acquired knowledge of the dark world. You are now reaping the fruit of your sins! And you are still trying to cover up your sins? All your attempts will fail! All your good works will not make up for your sins against God. All your attempts at righteous living will not be able to change your corrupt nature. It is useless trying to cover up your nakedness!

Hiding from God

There is another way by which man shows forth his foolishness -that is to try and hide himself from God.

God used to appear in the form of man and interacted closely with Adam and Eve. The appearance of God as man is called a "theophany", i.e. "a manifestation of God". In a theophany, God assumed human form temporarily. This was in anticipation of the coming of the Son of God, who would take on human nature permanently. Jesus Christ is both God and Man, in one Person. Here, God appeared in the garden of Eden to seek out Adam and Eve. We are told in verse 8, "And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden."

That is what sinful men and women, and boys and girls, continue to do. Like creatures of the dark, they scatter at the first appearance of light. They are unable to bear the slightest amount of light. It hurts their eyes. It exposes their filth. But it is foolish to run away from the light. We are not meant for living in darkness. We are made to have fellowship with God - to glorify Him and to enjoy Him forever. Yes, it is a fact that you have fallen. It is a fact that you have badly hurt yourself and cannot cure yourself. But why should you be running away from the only person who can do you good? Why not come to God and face the consequences of your sins? Why not cast yourself upon Him for mercy? You remember how David sinned against God and was confronted by the prophet Gad with three alternative punishments. What was David's reply? He said, on that occasion, "I am in great distress. Please let us fall into the hand of the Lord, for His mercies are great; but do not let me fall into the hand of man (2 Sam. 24:14)." David was very wise in his choice. He knew that he could not escape from the punishment of God, for God is just and has to punish all sins. But he knew at the same time that God is merciful, and it was far better to fall into *His* hand than into the hand of man.

Do you have such a conception of God? Do you realize that God is full of mercy and pity towards sinners like you and me? You would remember the parable of the prodigal son. The wasteful son squandered all that he had and ended up eating pig-food. When he came to an end of himself, when he could do nothing else to help himself, he thought of his father's home. He decided to return, although with so much fear and trembling. There he is, dragging himself home in such a pathetic manner! And what do you think the father is like? Is he angry and fuming, waiting to beat up his son, to disown him and drive him away? You know the story! The father is longing for His son's return. He is peering into the distance, and he catches sight of his son! He quickly runs down the road to his son, falls on his neck and kisses him. Oh, friend, our Father in heaven longs for your return to Him!

But see how foolish the sinner is! He is trying to hide himself from God. That is why God takes the initiative to seek out the sinner. God came to Adam and Eve and asked, "Where are you?", "What have you done?" It wasn't that God did not know where they were and what they had done. God is all-knowing. His purpose of confronting them with these questions was to awaken them to their senses, to make them acknowledge their guilt, and to cause them to trust Him in order to be saved.

It is foolish of sinners to try and hide themselves from God.

Doubting God's solution

Man shows forth his folly in another way - that is, to doubt that God has the solution to their problem. Remember that your sin is against God. You have lost the right to be in friendship with Him. Nothing you do will be able to put the situation right. In His mercy, God has revealed to us *His* solution to our problem. He has shown that a life must be laid down in the place of the sinner so that he might live.

Blood must be shed for the cleansing of his sins. A sacrifice is needed in order that the sinner might be forgiven. This is in order that the justice of God might be fulfilled. God must punish sin. He has arranged for a Saviour to be punished on behalf of the sinner so that the sinner may go free.

This, God reveals in verse 21, "Also for Adam and his wife the Lord God made tunics of skin, and clothed them." An animal was put to death for the first time. The skin of the animal was made into proper coats to cover up their nakedness. These were certainly better than the coverings of leaves that they had made. Adam and Eve did not have to feel cold any more. And their nakedness was now covered up.

We must note that there is a deeper message than that. God was not only covering up their physical nakedness. He was actually teaching Adam and Eve that from that time on, they had to approach Him by way of animal sacrifices. The system of animal sacrifices practised by all who would approach God was introduced at that time. It did not begin with the time of Moses. Moses only began putting down in writing what had been practised all along by generations of people who worshipped the true God.

The system of animal sacrifices was to point man to the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. He was revealed in due time as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. But man finds this hard to believe. He continues to doubt and reject the solution that God has provided. Today, we continue trying to cover our own nakedness in our own way. We hide ourselves away from the God who alone can save us. And when God's solution to our problem is revealed to us, we doubt its efficacy. We question its effectiveness. We want to rely on our own wisdom and ability to save ourselves.

That is why God has to deal with each one of us in a certain way, to awaken us to our senses!

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