

Dear Friends in Christ,

Two couples decide to go to a movie. It's a drama with good guys and bad guys. After the movie, they sit down and discuss what they just saw. They start talking about the characters. The question comes up, "Which character did you like the best?" Most likely, there will be differences of opinion.

In Genesis 3, we aren't watching a movie. We are watching real life as it unfolds before you. As you watch, which character do you like best? Adam. Eve. God. That's our question for today:

WHO DO YOU LIKE?

I. The first character is the sniveling sinner

That would be Adam and Eve. In direct opposition to God's command not to eat fruit from the tree in the center of the garden, they had done exactly that. Now they were hiding from God. When God asked them why, Adam answered, "**I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid.**" The real issue wasn't their nakedness, it was their shame over the sin they had committed.

Are we any different? None of us stand out in the WalMart parking lot and shout out all our sins against God. We would be too ashamed to do that; too fearful of what others might think. Thankfully, God invites us to come to him personally and confess our sins to him privately.

Sadly, instead of confessing our sins, we often try to blame someone else for our failings. Adam did that very efficiently. In one sentence he managed to blame both God and his wife. Listen: "**The woman YOU put here with me.**" In Adam's eyes it was God's fault that he had sinned. He's claiming he wouldn't have done it if she hadn't been created. Then he dumps on his wife: "**The WOMAN you put here with me - she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.**"

Eve isn't much better. Instead of coming clean with a humble confession, she blames the serpent. "**The serpent deceived me and I ate.**" She was the first one to use the excuse, "The devil made me do it." That's never the truth. The devil may tempt us, but he never forces us to do anything. We do that ourselves.

Yet our first inclination when we are caught sinning, is to find someone else to blame. We do that rather than admitting our own guilt. So the wife comes home with a dent in the car and blames the guy who hit her, even though she was the one who got a ticket for being too far out in the opposing lane as she was trying to make a left turn. Blaming is our way of trying to escape responsibility for our actions, or to escape punishment. That's a sniveling sinner.

II. Let's consider the gracious God. He gives us ample opportunity to repent of our sins. He's patient with us.

Notice the various questions the all-knowing God asked Adam and Eve. First, he asked, "**Where are you?**" He knew. He was simply trying to get the truth out of Adam.

Then he asked, "**Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat of?**" With that question he was holding out the olive branch, inviting Adam to come clean. But Adam only had excuses.

So finally he spoke to Eve, "**What is this you have done?**" A perfect opportunity for Eve to tell the whole truth, nothing but the truth. She still tried to blame someone else.

God, in his grace, is still very patient with all of us. He knows every sin you and I have committed. Yet, we're still here. He has not yet wiped us off the face of the earth. Instead,

he very patiently gives us time to repent of our sins. Repentance means sorrow over sinning against our God. It means confessing those sins to him. It means trusting in the mercy and grace of our God, that he forgives all our sins.

My prayer for all of us is that we will not try the patience of our God. Rather, I pray that we will all recognize our sins, honestly admit our guilt for what we have done, and trust that our gracious God has forgiven us.

The same one who invites us to repent daily also shows us who our enemy really is. God said to the serpent, **“Cursed are you above all the livestock. You will eat dust all the days of your life.”** But the real issue is not the snake, it is the one who spoke through the snake. That’s the devil. Peter tells us how dangerous he is: **“Your enemy, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.”** In other words, the devil is out to get you and to separate you from God. The Lord’s encouragement is simple. **“Resist him, standing firm in the faith.”**

In speaking to the devil, our gracious God promises, **“I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your offspring and hers.”** Who are the offspring of the devil? That’s every person who tries to tempt you to sin. At that moment, that person is working for the devil, trying to lead you astray from God. May you and I never be tempters like that, working for the devil rather than for God. Instead, may you learn to walk away when someone is tempting you to sin. Learn to say, “No, I believe in Jesus and I won’t do that sin.” Say it out loud if you have to.

III. Sadly, we don’t always resist the temptation. That’s why we need **THE** offspring of the woman, the Triumphant Messiah.

This is the Son of God, Jesus Christ our Lord. This is the one who was bitten by the devil. **“You will strike his heel,”** God told the devil. And on the cross Jesus endured the pain and the suffering of the bites of all our sins. Since every sin is a product of Satan, this was the devil striking Jesus in the heel.

Remember that everything Jesus suffered on that cross was because of us, but also for us. This is God’s plan of salvation. Jesus goes to bat for us because he’s the only one who could do it. He is the only perfect human who has ever lived. The result is glorious. We get the victory over sin and Satan because Jesus did all the work on the cross for us.

Jesus is the triumphant one because he has done what God promised in the Garden of Eden. God told the devil, **“He will crush your head.”** That’s another way of saying to the devil, “The Messiah will break your power.” That’s what Jesus did.

But then Jesus died. What might have happened in hell when Jesus died. Do you think there might have been a celebration among the devil and his demons? It is for that reason that Jesus, on morning of his resurrection, descended to hell to proclaim his victory over Satan. It wasn’t Jesus who lost, it was the devil.

And because Jesus won, we win. Through faith in Jesus Christ, you and I get to share in the victory, the victory of sins forgiven and devil vanquished. Oh, yes, I know that on our worst days, when our sinful self leads us astray, we may not feel very victorious. We might feel like big losers. But in Jesus Christ, the victory is ours. The devil is crushed. In faith, cling to this victory. In faith look forward to experiencing the full victory of Christ, when you and I bypass the gates of hell, and enter the gates of heaven.

So who do you like? I don’t much care for the sniveling sinner that I am on occasion. But I really love the gracious God who gives me a chance to repent, and the triumphant Messiah who removes all my sins. May we all find that same joy every day. Amen.