"The Solution to Sin"

Genesis 3:8-15

June 7, 2015 2nd Sunday After Pentecost

When we experience various problems in life, we seek solutions. If we can't find a solution, then the problem we are experiencing can get worse and, if serious enough, could eventually destroy us. Sin – living outside and apart from the will of God - is a serious problem for us as believers. By separating us from God, sin can destroy us physically and spiritually, now and forever. So we seek a solution, but what is it?

Our first parents, Adam and Eve, established a pattern for seeking a solution for sin which we still follow today. The first solution for sin they tried was embracing sin. We read about it just prior to our text. Despite being commanded by God to not eat the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden and threatened with death if she did so, Eve chose to listen to Satan's voice of deception through the serpent and follow his bidding. The Word of God says, "So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate." (Gen. 3:6) Eve evaluated the situation, decided that her way was better than God's way, and that she wanted to go her way – so she did and her husband did, too. She probably didn't even think she was sinning. She wanted to do what she wanted to do.

When that didn't work, they tried something else. The second solution for sin they tried was to run and hide themselves and their sin from God. Sin causes mistrust and fear which replaces the trust and free communion with their Creator which they had enjoyed before that. Adam and Eve apparently thought that, if they just withdrew from the presence of the Lord, that would solve their problem of sin. It didn't. They couldn't hide from God and their attempt at hiding didn't make their sin go away.

So, they had to try another solution to sin. The third solution was to attempt to evade responsibility for their sin, blame someone else for their sin, and avoid the consequences of their sin. Adam blamed Eve. It was her fault for what he had done. Eve blamed the serpent. The devil made her do it. Adam even blamed God. It was God's fault for giving him Eve in the first place.

Not much has changed since then. We do the exact same things that Adam and Eve did. We think the solution to sin is to embrace it. We disregard what the Word of God says and redefine actions which we want to do so that they are no longer sin. We see that happening in some of the hot button topics of the day: same sex marriage, transgenderism, abortion, euthanasia, and other things. People do what they want they want to do, even when God's Word condemns it. They don't consider themselves to be sinning because their desires reign supreme.

Before we too gleefully wag our fingers at people who do those things, realize that we all do it on a smaller scale. When we neglect hearing the Word of God, when we gossip and say hurtful things, when we see, say, and participate in things which create lust, when we do ANYTHING contrary to the Word of God, we simply evaluate the situation, decided that our way is better than God's way, and do what we want to do. We probably don't even think we are sinning.

If we feel guilt and shame over sin, what do we do? We do exactly what Adam and Eve did. We become afraid and try to hide ourselves and our sin from God. Often, I have noticed people who have become involved in some noticeable sin suddenly disappearing from the house of God. They don't want to be confronted with their sin. They hope that they can forget about their sin or that God won't notice. We, too, think that if we can keep other people from finding out about our deep and shameful sin that somehow God won't know or notice either.

When we our confronted by our sin, we seek the same solution that Adam and Eve used: we blame. We blame other people for our actions. They deceived me or made me do a certain action so it's not my fault. We blame our situation for our sin. I was raised in a bad environment, suffered economic inequities, or have the wrong colored skin so it's not my fault. We even blame God. So

much behavior – sexual and otherwise – is attributed to God. People say, "God made me this way and God doesn't make mistakes so my behavior must be good. Who are you to judge?"

While all of these solutions to sin are popular and used frequently by many people, even self-professed Christians, they don't solve the problem of sin. At best, these solutions distract us (but not God) from our sin. They give us a false sense of security. They make us think that our sin is gone. It never existed, was never known to God, or has been shifted from us to someone else. None of that is true. Despite our best efforts to redefine sin, hide sin, or blame sin on others, our sin remains.

But God has a solution – one that helps us and actually works in removing sin. The first part of God's solution is to enforce the consequences of sin. God is perfectly holy and just and cannot simply overlook sin, ignore sin, accept sin, or let sin go. It must be judged. Death had been promised by God for disobedience and death is what Adam and Eve got. Something in Adam and Eve died that day – their perfect relationship with God. Later, their bodies caught up with them in death. God would also curse the man and the woman individually. Creation was ruined by sin and man's work in the fields would be difficult because of it. Humanity was ruined by sin and woman's work in giving birth would be difficult because of it.

But the one God really went after was the one who had orchestrated all of this misery by sinning first and introducing sin into the world: Satan in the guise of a serpent. Some of you who are old enough might remember a comedian from the early 1970's named Flip Wilson who did a routine with a tagline that said, "The devil made me do it." It was a funny line which was used an excuse or a justification for doing something wrong. But there's an element of truth in it. While the devil never actually MADE Eve sin (or us either, for that matter), Satan deceives, lies, and tempts us so that we often do sin. He does not force us to sin, but he makes sin seem appealing, right, and good.

As strong and spiritual as you might think you are, you are no match for Satan. He is stronger and much smarter than you are. He has been practicing his craft of temptation and deception for thousands of years. You have no chance against him. He will overcome you with his deceptions and temptations and will drag you down to hell with him.

So God curses the serpent by dooming him to move on his belly and eat dust all the days of his life. God then curses Satan. God says, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel." There will be hatred and strife between the offspring of Satan and the offspring of the woman. But then there will come one Offspring of the woman who would do battle against Satan. This Offspring will crush Satan's head while Satan will only be able to crush His heel.

Jesus is that offspring. He came to this world, not to injure, weaken or merely defeat Satan, but to crush him. He came, not to crush him in his tail or his body, but to crush his head and completely wipe him out. He came, not to flex His spiritual muscles or gain glory for Himself, but to do it for you, for me, for everyone.

Satan's first weapon was temptation by which he defeated Adam and Eve so Jesus took on Satan's tempting power. The very first thing that Jesus did in His ministry after being baptized was to take on Satan and his power of temptation in the desert. Satan threw all of his might at a Savior who was weakened from fasting, but Satan could not and did not win. Jesus resisted all of Satan's temptations to selfishly use his power, to put God to the test, and to give in to Satan for the chance at worldly glory (many of the rationalizations and justifications we use for sin). Where Adam and Eve had failed at temptation, Jesus won. Where we have been overcome by Satan, Jesus overcame the Tempter. Jesus' victory over temptation is our victory over temptation. Satan and his temptations have been crushed. Jesus crushed Satan for you.

Satan's second weapon which drove Adam and Eve and us to try to hide, cover up and blame was sin and guilt so Jesus took on sin and guilt. Although Jesus did many great and wonderful

things in His ministry – healing people, feeding people, casting demons out of people, and even raising people from the dead – the high point of His ministry was when He went to the cross with the sin and guilt of the world on His shoulders. Satan thought he was in control. He was crushing Jesus' heel at this point – inflicting great pain, emotionally, physically, and spiritually – upon him. Jesus took it all for you and for me. Jesus' suffering and death was not a bad thing, but a good thing. His suffering and death was not a failure but a success. Jesus' death was not the result of His sin and guilt, but the perfect sacrifice to pay for sin and overcome guilt. Satan's allies – sin and guilt – were crushed on the cross. Jesus crushed Satan for you.

Satan's third weapon to strike fear in the hearts of Adam, Eve, and every human being to come after them – including you and me – is death. Physical death now and eternal death to follow are God's judgment of and punishment for death. Satan uses death to make us afraid, to doubt God, and to turn to Satan in order to escape death. So Jesus came on to take on the finality of death and free us from fear. The writer of Hebrews puts it this way: "by [Jesus'] death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil— and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death." (Heb.14-15)

Satan's power is broken. Jesus overcame temptation. Jesus overcame sin and guilt. And, in dying, overcomes death. Jesus breaks the power of Satan to hold us in slavery by the fear of death. How? Three days after Satan thought he had won, Jesus won – once and for all – when He stepped out of the tomb alive. In the garden where the tomb was, Jesus fulfilled the ancient prophecy made in another garden long ago. He crushed Satan's head for you so that, even though Satan is still around, he cannot overcome you nor do you any serious damage. He has been crushed for you.

But that doesn't mean Satan has no power. He is a fangless serpent, but can be a frightening one. Steer clear of him. Be in the Word of God regularly so Satan cannot deceive with his temptations. Openly confess your sin, confident of receiving complete forgiveness in the absolution so that Satan cannot use sin and guilt to draw you away from God and drive you into hiding. Be

where Jesus has promised to be – linked to you in your Baptism, speaking to you in the preaching of the Word, and feeding you with His body and blood in Holy Communion – so that you remain free from the curse of sin and the pathetic power of the one who has been crushed.

Martin Luther sums it up well in his well known hymn, *A Mighty Fortress Is Our God.*

No strength of ours can match his might.
We would be lost, rejected.
But now a champion comes to fight,
Whom God Himself elected.
You ask who this may be?
The Lord of hosts is He,
Christ Jesus, mighty Lord,
God's only Son, adored.
He holds the field victorious.

Though hordes of devils fill the land
All threat'ning to devour us,
We tremble not, unmoved we stand;
They cannot overpow'r us.
Let this world's tyrant rage;
In battle we'll engage.
His might is doomed to fail;
God's judgment must prevail!
One little word subdues him.

The Word of God – the Word made flesh – has crushed Satan and continues to subdue him by the Word in the water, on the page, in the pulpit, and with the bread and wine. That is Jesus' work for you. That is the solution for sin. Amen.