

## Victory of the Lamb – February 17, 2019 – Let's Be Real Series

### Genesis 3:12-15 - The Blame Game – Pastor Bill Limmer

I like to play games of all kinds. I am especially fond of sports. What kind of games do you like to play? Share with someone sitting close by you, one of your favorite games to play. We do play and watch a lot of games, from basketball games to card games, to board games, video games. But likely the most popular game throughout the history of the entire world is the game we often play at home, work, school, even church. It is the Blame Game. There once was a little girl of about 3 who was writing on the wall with a crayon when her mom walked in the room behind her and caught her red crayon handed. The mom startled her by asking her abruptly were you writing on the wall? The girl turned with her heart racing and with crayon in hand and responded, "No." Well then who did, the mom asked. She responded, "Andrew did." The mother fired back sharply, Andrew is not at home. The quick thinking little three year old said, Mindy did it. Mindy was the family dog. Three years old and already quiet deft at playing the blame game. Trying to defend a tarnished character as if it were a polished character.

Here is how the first game of blame played out: Genesis 3 **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.** <sup>7</sup> 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.<sup>8</sup> 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. <sup>9</sup> But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?"<sup>10</sup> He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid." <sup>11</sup> And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?"<sup>12</sup> The man said, "The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it." <sup>13</sup> Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate." In this account we find 3 people and one thing we often blame when we fall into sin. Let's start to unpack this reality in our lives.

The blame game often begins as we place ourselves in ridiculous situations to begin with. In the true story I just read, Eve ought to have not even engaged the devil in conversation, turned her back on him and muttered out loud, "is this guy out of his mind. Look at this place. This is paradise. God knows exactly what he is doing. God made everything including me. Oh, how I love him. And you want me to doubt or question the purity of his motives and character." (DA Carson – The God Who Is There) But she didn't do that. And we don't often either. We listen, play with temptation all the time. We see how close we can get before we fall off the cliff because it is so beautiful on the other side of the cliff. Sin is a dangerous deal. Sin is not just making a bad choice. It is rebelling against God. Sin is really de-goding God. It is wanting to take God's place. And that's a problem.

We like Eve **blame our circumstances**. For Eve the circumstance was "the fruit looked good." According to some news reports Officer Matt Rittner would still be alive if his alleged shooter would not have had the circumstance of a dysfunctional childhood. We are walking through the store and we see some nice looking clothes, even though our closet is already and full and our eyes light up because of the circumstance, it is on sale! I would have had more time if it weren't for FB, Insta, Twitter, Candy Crush, Netflix. Etc., Money was tight so I added some hours to my time card. We get angry if the circumstances aren't the way we want them to be. We cop an attitude because the weather wasn't the greatest.

Not only do we blame circumstances for our sin, but we also **blame other people**. For Adam the sound bite was: **“The woman . . . —she gave me some fruit from the tree.** It was her fault. If my boss wouldn't be a jerk, I wouldn't be a jerk. If he wouldn't have cut me off in traffic, I would have had this road rage. If he wouldn't have talked back to me I wouldn't have hit him. If she would have done the right thing I wouldn't have gossiped behind her back. I wouldn't have cheated on my husband if he had been there for me. I'm not excusing your husband for not being there for you but you did what you did. When confronted with doing something wrong because other people were doing it, parents often ask their teenagers, well if they would have run and jumped off a cliff would you have done that too. Think about the next time you want to blame someone for what you willingly did.

Who do you blame for your sin— parents, boss, coach, referees? Joel Embid of the Philadelphia 76ers went off on the refs after their recent loss to the Boston Celtics. We blame the police officer for giving us a speeding ticket even though we were speeding. Ever burned the roof of your mouth with a piece of pizza and blamed the pizza, like the pizza was hiding on your plate and suddenly jumped into your mouth and attacked the roof of your mouth with the hot cheese and pizza sauce.

So we blame circumstances for our sin, we blame other people for our sin and Adam shows us another recipient for our blame. **The man said, “The woman YOU put here with me.”** Adam blames God. Have you ever **blamed God**? Blamed him for a failed relationship? A health issue? Dead end job? No job? Not making the team? A death? People blame God all the time for children dying of starvation in third world countries while they go out to eat, take luxurious vacations and never spend a dime to the cause of ending world hunger.

We blame circumstances, people, God and one more. **When the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”** Eve **blames the devil** for her sin. This hardly ever happens today but the devil is a good starting point. But even that is not a good place to stand. Yes, the devil wants you and me to fail but we don't have to. 1 Corinthians 10:13 **No temptation<sup>[a]</sup> has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted<sup>[b]</sup> beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted,<sup>[c]</sup> he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.** Temptations will come into our life but they are no different than what others experience although the devil will tell you differently).

So we blame circumstances, people God and the devil. **But WHY?** Let's be real. We blame to try to avoid responsibility. I don't want to be thought of as being bad or get caught doing bad. It is in our sinful DNA. So here is what we all do by nature. Self-justification. I did it but it wasn't my fault. We try to cover up guilt by projection – attribute our guilty feelings to others. Repression we try to bury our feelings by external actions, work, and effort. Compulsive activity this is seen in a drive to be successful and evidenced in the workaholic and perfectionist. Obsessive thinking when we accuse ourselves of failing to do the right thing or beat ourselves up for what we constantly think of as mistakes in our lives. Sublimation – this when we work through our guilt in socially acceptable ways – anger is classic – we know what motivates our feelings is wrong but turn it to a cause that seems just – eg anti-abortion

I am humbled by this whole blame game anew. I have played it and played it well. I need Savior and I want a new heart.

So what do we need to do? **Accept responsibility – avoid hypocrisy.** Unlike other games, the more often you play the blame game, the more you lose. Excuses and forgiveness are opposites. What can be

excused doesn't need to be forgiven. When you blame others, just when I do, you give up your power to change. And so you don't need to change if it was someone else's fault that you sinned. Very seldom do you hear this truth, I sinned, it was my choice, nobody forced me, tempted me, or enticed me. I did it because I wanted to. When we blame others, we forfeit the forgiveness and renewal that is waiting for us in Christ. When we sin, we need to be reminded of the teaching of God that nothing can separate us from the love of God, not our sin, so let's not blame. Let's confess and be set free. When we admit our sin we do not limit God's forgiveness. We all need a deep working of God's grace inside of us or we will continue to play the blame game.

Here is the good news. God promised a winner in the blame game. And it is you not because you never blamed anyone, or because you have stopped blaming nor because you excel at blaming. You win because Jesus took your sin, your shame, your blame and willingly paid the price. And this is true for you whether you have been a lifelong Christian or whether this is the first time you have heard about Jesus. Jesus came for everyone. Taking everyone's blame, shame, and sin, whether they know that or not. Jesus even though he had not sin became the greatest sinner of all, taking our blame and our sin, Satan accuses us of sin but Jesus takes away all of our sin. And you know what, Jesus didn't blame you. When he took your sin, your shame, your blame he didn't blame you. He loved you to the point of death. 1 John 2:1-2 **My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. <sup>2</sup> He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.** Reformer quote, **When Satan tells me I am a sinner, he comforts me immeasurably, since Christ died for sinners.**

God's solution to guilt – blood, not yours but God's. Adam and Eve tried to cover up their nakedness with fig leaves. God covered up Adam and Eve with an animal skin. What that means is that blood was shed to cover up their weaknesses and sin. The same is true for you and me. A prophet said of Jesus, **Look, the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.** At the cross Jesus shed his blood so that your sins would be covered, would be forgiven and they are! "God is warring for peace but he entered into our violence. So you look at the cross, you look at Jesus on the cross, and it becomes this tragically perfect intersection of the human story of violence and the story of the God of peace. And God fights the war unfairly. Instead of trying to overpower us, he surrenders himself to us, is crucified, so through his death we have *life*. This is the most unexpected battle strategy that humanity has ever known. God wins the war by losing it (*Erwin McManus*).” Hebrews 9:14 **How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death,<sup>[a]</sup> so that we may serve the living God!** Because of Jesus – You have nothing to prove. No one to impress. Because of Jesus you don't need to hide, you don't need to feel shame, you don't need to blame because through Jesus you have defeated the Blame Game.