

# Story #2: Your Death, Pt. 2

## *The Three Stories of the Bible*

Romans 1:18-32

March 4, 2001

Wesley J. Gabel

Everything written in the Bible relates to at least one of three stories. The Bible tells three stories: the story of *your design*, the story of *your death* and the story of *your deliverance*. You were designed by God, in God's image, to be God's children and companions. Accordingly, you are God's passion. You are God's ambition. You are the focus of God because God made you to live as his partner and prince who rules with him and for him. That's story #1. That story is vividly told in the first two chapters of Genesis and alluded to in the rest of the Bible.

The second story is told in Genesis 3 and dominates the rest of the Scriptures. It is the story of our death.

Returning from a meeting one day, I came across the scene of horrendous car accident. A car had pulled out in front of a semi-truck and was hit broadside. I knew that there could be no survivor. Fortunately, only one person was in the car. Unfortunately, she was an active member of my church. The next hours I spent with her family, both informing them with the help of the police and consoling them. Their lives were forever changed.

One act by Adam and Eve was just as decisive as pulling out in front of a semi. It changed everything for us. One act destroyed our relationship as children and companions of God. In a wink of an eye lash, our innocence and intimacy with God was lost. We would never see life the same. That changed vision would affect everything we do, especially our dominion in this world.

When Eve ate fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and gave it to Adam, they saw things differently. The Bible says, "***Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized...***" (Gen. 3:7). They understood things differently. Everything they looked at was shaded differently. Everything had the hue of good and evil. They became judges by nature. They understood everything in moral categories. No longer were their eyes fixed on their heavenly Father. They now possessed their own moral

wisdom. They now acted as independent umpires rather than intimate partners with God. **"Who told you that you were naked?"** God asked them. Humanity now ruled this planet with a separate justice.

***And the LORD God said, "The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever"*** (Gen. 3:22)

Death came not as a malicious curse but as a path for restoration. God wanted His children back. God wanted his companions back. God wanted His princes to convey His blessing to creation. Death would make that possible by bring to an end the rule of God's competitors; and that's what this deadly vision makes us.

Seven times the Bible tells us in Judges that the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord. Fifty times that expression is used in the Old Testament. The problem is not that people fail to do what they know to be right. The problem is that there is a way that seems right in a person's vision, but its end is destruction. Twice the Bible declares that. Our vision is profoundly colored (like these sun glasses). Our vision misses the purity of innocence and the clarity from intimacy with God. Moreover, the Bible teaches, ***"All a man's ways seem innocent to him, but motives are weighed by the Lord"*** (Prov. 16:2).

It was this independent moral vision that inflamed with anger the first-born son of Adam. When Cain saw God accept Abel's sacrifice but not his, he was incensed. "Unfair!" cried Cain. "I'll show Abel." God warned Cain, ***"...sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you"*** (Gen. 4:7). How was sin going to get Cain and dominate him? Through his vision. Cain's vision of good and evil was tainted by a deceiver. It was in a deadly descent. Cain moved along a continuum of deception and domination.

Stage One on this continuum is *the suppression of truth*. Paul wrote about it in Romans chapter one. He said that people are without excuse because God's great power and character are plainly revealed in the created order we see. Their failure to acknowledge and honor God buries the truth so that ignorance and error prevail.

Did you know that this pattern is validated in history? There is evidence of decay rather than progression in ancient history. There has been an erosion in both civilizations and religious thought. Ian Smith observes that the most ancient religions were monotheistic, and the most ancient archeology reveals wonderfully sophisticated cities that degenerated over time.

When people ignored the truth and ruled with their vision, they became *futile in their thinking and darkened in their hearts*. In Stage Two of the Deception-Domination Continuum, people are misled by both their thinking and feeling. Cain's thoughts and

feelings were tainted with deception. He moved down a path of destruction that would dominate his life.

In Stage Three God responds. He stops interfering. He hands over his children to their *sinful desires*. Sin now had Cain. It dominated his attitude and actions. With such domination people become sexually impure. They degrade their bodies and set up all kinds of idols.

At Stage Four of the continuum, God gives his children over to *shameful lusts*. They lose touch with their identity and nature. Their actions bring them harm, but they continue anyway.

At Stage Five God is no longer in their thinking, thus God gives over his beloved children to a *depraved mind*. The mind hatches all kinds of harmful ideas. Dominated now by that ancient serpent and his minions, the human vision of good and evil and the actions from that vision create all kinds of damage. Sin has Cain, and this prince of God takes his brother's life.

There's another view of this continuum. On one side we experience life in our sensitivity to God and his creation; but as that is lost, we rely on sensuality to feel alive. On one end we are alive from our companionship and enjoy contributing, but on the other end we live to consume.

From the beginning God wanted us to understand death. Abel's offering was accepted over Cain's because it involved death. God was teaching a lesson. He was doing the same when he stopped Abraham from sacrificing Isaac; but provided a ram in his place. He was doing the same with Moses and the prescribed animal sacrifices. The term sacrifice(s) appears 308 times in the Bible. Pagans knew death was somehow important. They sacrificed their children to Molech. They'd kill a child and then burn the remains. Perhaps, they thought they were appeasing death.

God, however, was teaching a different lesson. Through sacrifices He wanted people to realize that death was needed but not the absolute end. He was revealing his love for people and his desire that they live. God would provide a lamb that would bring them life. Christ came as that sacrifice. Our death was in our identification with that sacrifice. We'd be reborn with a new vision and life. When we consider everything about us dead in Christ, we then become new. He becomes our Lord and our vision.

Before God made Adam and Eve, he knew all the trouble. God foresaw all the pain. God foresaw death. He knew we'd cost him his son. He made us any way. Why? Because we are worth the pain, we are worth the heartache, we worth all that to God.

Realize your deadly vision. Stop the deadly descent. Embrace the deadly solution. I invite you to the table of our Lord where you can do that. When you take the bread, realize it's Jesus's death giving you life. When you take the drink, realize it's Jesus's blood making

you righteous. As you visit the Lord's table, repeat the words of the Apostle Paul in Galatians 2:20.

***I am crucified with Christ. Nevertheless, I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me. And the life which I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God.***

Are you crucified with Christ? Is your vision fixed in trust on Christ. If so, everything is changing, and you're excited.