

Belgic Confession 17 – Rescue of the Runaway Bride

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: There is really nothing that could properly illustrate the God's rescue of mankind. But let me give you a glimpse. You've probably heard of the foolish youth who decided against his parents' instruction and had his ear pierced by the "neighborhood basement ear-piercer." Soon his ear lobe became severely infected. It gave him a fever. His response was to try to hide from his parents because he knew he would be in trouble. His parents saw that he was avoiding them so they called him to see what was wrong...and then they found out. They had to immediately rush him to the emergency room to get the doctors to fix his ear and the infection. He was healed. Though his parents were angry and disappointed in him, because they loved him, they helped him.

This is a mild illustration of what God did for man. But the story of man is much deeper. Man was more than sick with a spiritual infection...he was dead in his sins...hopeless...heading for hell...running from God...but then help came. This is what you will hear about today from God.

Our headings are:

Fallen Man Hides From God

Gracious God Helps Man

Man Gets Hints of Salvation

Our goals are: That you **know the danger in which you were** when you ran from God, and that you **appreciate how God came after you and helped you.**

We believe that our most **gracious God**, in His admirable wisdom and **goodness**, seeing that man had thus thrown himself into **physical and spiritual death** and made himself wholly miserable, was pleased to seek and comfort him, when he trembling **fled from His presence, promising him** that He would give His Son (who would be born of a woman) **to crush the head of the serpent** and to make him blessed.

Fallen Man Hides from God

1. Adam became spiritually dead (separated) from God when he ate the forbidden fruit. In doing this, he broke the Covenant God had established with him.

Hosea 6:7 (ASV) But they like **Adam** have transgressed the covenant: there have they dealt treacherously行事诡诈 against me.

2. Because of guilt and shame, Adam tried to hide from God. He was as terrified of God because he broke God's law.

Genesis 3:9 Then the LORD God called to Adam and said to him, "Where are you?" 10 So he said, "I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself."

It is natural to hide when you are ashamed of your sins. God made man with a conscience良心. Even though your conscience was injured by the fall, you still feel shame and guilt. This is why a murderer might cry and feel guilt.

3. Adam's vain attempt to run and hide from God was useless - God found him. Who could hide from God? His eyes are everywhere. **It was no secret to God what Adam and Eve had done.**

4. Adam tried to sow fig leaves to cover his sense of shame. Some have thought and taught that Adam and Eve covered their bodies because they were guilty of a sexual sin. But that is not the case. In fact, they were taught to reproduce and fill the earth. They covered their bodies because they realized the price of sin. **They knew the temptation**...not just of sins of pride and greed, but all sins, including sexual sins. This was also for future generations. **But Adam needed another covering. He needed not only a covering for his body, he needed a covering for his soul.**

5. Lessons:

a. All your sins of your past...all the dirty thoughts you have had, all your adulteries, all your thefts, all you idol worship...are never secrets to or hidden from God. Nothing surprises God. There is nothing that God does not know. It is therefore futile无用 to try to hide from God, as man still likes to do today. And yet, how good God is that he came to you!

b. Like Adam, you needed a better covering – a covering for your soul.

c. But wisdom directs you to acknowledge the danger in which you were apart from God's grace.

Gracious God Helps Man

1. Even when God knew of how miserable and repulsive 可惡 Adam and Eve had become, yet he came after Adam and Eve and offered help to them.

This is what God did to their descendants, Abraham.

Genesis 17:7 "And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you.

God did not ask for permission to enter into covenant with Abraham.

2. But why, what was God's motivation for helping Adam and all the people he represented?

a. God's grace. What is grace? Grace is unmerited favor, undeserved 不配得 kindness, unearned benefit from God to fallen man. There was nothing about man that made him worthy of God's grace.

b. God's goodness (tender mercy). What is the difference between "grace" and "goodness?" "Goodness" emphasizes the fullness or depth of God's grace. He has "bowels of mercy."

3. How does that grace and goodness come?

They come from the life and death of Jesus Christ. So grace and tender mercy were not free. They were only free to you. They came at a great price – that price which was the life of Jesus Christ.

Luke 1:76 "And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Highest; For you will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways, 77 To give knowledge of salvation to His people **By the remission of their sins 因罪得救, 78 Through the tender mercy of our God,** With which the Dayspring from on high has visited us; 79 To give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, To guide our feet into the way of peace."

4. God's desire to re-establish the covenant with man was not based on any attempt by man to make things right with God.

Man was totally unable...even if he wanted to. Abraham couldn't do it and he didn't want to do it.

Exodus 24:7 Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read in the hearing of the people. And they said, "All that the LORD has said we will do, and be obedient."

This promise was made by the initiative 主动 of God; God had to go after man. But make no mistakes about it: After God entered into covenant with man and he enable him, he required that man respond and fulfill his covenant duties.

Deuteronomy 26:16 "This day the LORD your God commands you to observe these statutes and judgments; therefore you shall be careful to observe them with all your heart and with all your soul. 17 **Today you have proclaimed the LORD to be your God, and that you will walk in His ways and keep His statutes, His commandments, and His judgments, and that you will obey His voice.** 18 "Also today the LORD has proclaimed you to be His special people, just as He promised you, that you should keep all His commandments,

5. Lessons:

a. The covenant only started with one side. God had to come to man. This is why Arminianism is so wrong. It assumes man has a desire and can cooperate 合作 with God. Lies!

b. There is no room for man's pride, knowing that all he has was given to him by God, and knowing that he was unworthy of everything he received from God. Just as God looked for Adam and gave him hope, so God looked for you when you were in your state of sinfulness.

Luke 19:10 - For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost

c. Even when you stray as a believer, the Lord never leaves you. He always searches for and binds up the straying sheep. This is a beautiful picture from Ezekiel.

Ezekiel 34:11..."Indeed I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out. 12 "As a shepherd **seeks out his flock on the day he is among his scattered sheep,** so will I seek out My sheep and deliver them from all the places where they were scattered on a cloudy and dark day. 13 "And I will **bring them out** from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land; I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, in the valleys and in all the inhabited places of the country. 14 **I will feed them in good pasture,** and their fold shall be on the high mountains of Israel. There **they shall lie down in a good fold and feed in rich pasture** on the mountains of Israel. 15 "I will feed My flock, and I will make them lie down," says the Lord GOD.

Man Gets Hints Of Salvation

1. Adam and Eve did not know of Matthew, Mark, or Luke, but they were not left stranded 困境 in darkness of the salvation God promised them. God gave Adam and Eve the "Proto-evangelium." "Proto" means "first," so it was really the first evangelism...the first Good News to man. It is sometimes called the "Mother Promise."

2. How was this “first knowledge” given? God spoke to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden and to Satan, telling them how this would happen!

Genesis 3:15 And I will put enmity彼此为仇 Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall crush your head, And you shall crush His heel!."

While Adam broke the covenant, God sent Jesus (the woman’s Seed) to reestablish the covenant that Adam broke. Adam did not keep the covenant, so God promised a substitute to keep it for him. You can call this the renewal of the covenant that God initially made with Adam.

3. Specifically, Christ’s heel would be crush by Satan when he died on the cross to pay the penalty for breaking the covenant. But it would not be a permanent wound, only a “heel” wound. And Christ, the Seed of the woman, would crush Satan’s head. That would be a mortal wound. This act by Christ would destroy the relationship that Satan made with mankind and give Christians the strength to keep fighting the Devil and his children. (By the way: You are not to believe in the “brotherhood of mankind.” Some of mankind are your enemies who daily work to destroy you directly or indirectly.)

4. Later, this covenant would be more fully fleshed out with Abraham and prophets after him. We can say they were “bigger and bigger hints” of God’ salvation than that which Adam had.

Genesis 22:18 "In your seed [Jesus Christ] all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice."

God looked for Abraham and established his covenant while Abraham was a fire worshipping pagan异教徒.

Luke 24:44 Then He said to them, "These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me." 45 And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures. 46 Then He said to them, "Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, 47 "and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

So this covenant was not only between Abraham and God, but with all Abraham’s descendants as well...all who would leave their former lives to come and worship God.

Conclusion:

After Adam and Eve sinned they hid themselves from God as if to say: “God can’t see us. But God, in his grace and loving mercy, went after them and provided a way out from their sin. God gave them, on the very day that they sinned, a way out, and gave them the first hints of how they would be saved.

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ:

1. Today you have a full record of that “grace and loving mercy” through Jesus Christ in the Bible.

2. So accept the danger in which you were and grab hold of God’s grace.

3. Your neighbor is also in danger and is running in the wrong direction. He needs help to look to Jehovah. How will he know unless you tell him? You see, the church is not a private organization from private members. Live to serve. Fight to destroy the work of Satan and his seed. Bring the seed of Satan, who had sold themselves to Satan, back to the Seed of the woman. Yes, work to rescue the runners.

If you are not a Christian, let me use an illustration from Pastor Dieleman: One Mercedes Benz TV commercial shows their car colliding with a cement wall during a safety test. Someone then asks the company spokesman why they do not enforce their patent on the Mercedes Benz's energy-absorbing car body, a design evidently copied by other companies because of its success. He replies matter-of-factly, "Because some things in life are too important not to share." So I am sharing this good news of salvation through Jesus Christ today. Will you accept it?