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A New Word from the Old Testament: Spam Blocking

Genesis 3:1-13

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Last winter we ate it all chopped up as hors d'hoerves at Elsi and Bob's Tacky Party they had for the Worship and Tech Teams. It comes in a can. Just last week I got my first on my church computer. And Friday night I was watching TV and received promises from about 14 earthlink employees pledging to take care of it for me. (They sounded so sincere, they all but said they were going to devote their entire careers to it). Spam. Unsolicited junk email that comes over your internet connection on your computer. The first computer spam in recorded history was an "ancient" system at MIT in 1971). Generally, spam is email advertising – junk mail, for some product that eventually finds its way to your computer screen. There are a number of ways you can find yourself on a spammer's email list. Last year, the US government passed legislation (the CAN Spam Act) restricting spamming, but the laws have yet to be seriously enforced. Some research has found 96.7% of all emails are spam and predicts the amount of spam received by the average consumer will increase to 3,600 in two years.

Spam itself is a big problem. And we're not even talking about pop ups, viruses, or spyware, which is programming that is put in someone's computer from the internet to secretly gather information about the user, the websites they visit, and what they do online. Then those who monitor us can sell the information to other interested parties. It's a mess, and I don't understand how it works. But there's one thing that is really ironic to me...

Why is it that we can be so careful and concerned about what comes into our computer and on onto our screens, but we don't give a second thought to the rest of the information we hear that comes into our mind and then comes out in our words and actions? Why? Because we've fallen for it from the beginning...

NIV Genesis 3:1 Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?" 2 The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, 3 but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'" 4 "You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman. 5 "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." 6 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. 7 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. 8 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. 9 But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?" 10 He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid."

11 And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?" 12 The man said, "The woman you put here with me-- she gave me some fruit from the tree,

and I ate it." 13 Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

This account begins after the Lord gives the covenant of marriage to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.

1. The serpent had the gift of craftiness. Maybe that's why Satan worked through it. Now Adam and Eve weren't defenseless. They had the gifts of fellowship, and the gift of surviving craftiness. But look how subtle the serpent is: It's all under the radar screen – like spam. And it caught Eve unaware. Notice how he gets Eve alone. He isolates Eve from Adam, so there's no opportunity to strengthen each other. Isn't that like sin? When you're alone, without support, is when you get picked off. Think of the last time you were tempted. Were you alone, or with other Christ followers? Now listen to what the serpent asks. "*Did God really say...?*" (as if God would have said something else). His question leaves gaps...maybe God doesn't know what's best.
2. Eve replies, telling the serpent the one thing involved in the covenant with God– not eating from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. Before we go on, let's put to rest a big question: Why would God even put that tree there? Putting the tree in the Garden was not a trap or a test; given the fact that God created humanity in his own image, the tree was a necessity! We were created physical, spiritual, and moral beings. Without the tree, Adam and Eve would've had no choice; just puppets, with nothing of God's image like valuing, loving, choosing between good and bad, or good and better. To be truly like God, Adam and Eve had to have the choice and opportunity to choose. Adam and Eve may have passed that tree hundreds of times, until Eve's spam blocker failed when Satan entered the Garden...
4. "*You will not surely die.*" The serpent is basically saying "God lies!" Let's guess at God's motives, and approach it from a selfish stance.
5. God doesn't want you to eat, because "*You will be like God...*" It's the ultimate irony, because they already WERE like God! Do you see what's happened? Through the course of this small dialogue, Eve began thinking "Is God withholding information from me???" – Is God selfish? Should I be doubting God's motives... After all, Satan makes it seem good. "*You will become like God, for your eyes will be opened...*" Well, when you put it that way; it's good to "have our eyes opened." Eve thought she was pursuing something good, even though God said otherwise.
6. Satan gets Eve to focus on the desirable thing – the fruit. Eve saw – her eyes were directly on the forbidden fruit. (We learned it was a banana tree because it was "a-peeling.") "There's no harm in looking" is false. Temptation often comes through the eyes. And men especially respond visually. That's why TV is so powerful. That's why pornography is so aimed at men, because of the visual nature of men. 1 John 2:16 "*For everything in the world-- the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does-- comes not from the Father but from the world.*" In other words, for those of us after the Fall, after death entered in, even our senses became distorted – our eyes especially. The sin isn't just "out there." Then the Bible says "*And she ate.*" What happens next? Eve gives it to Adam. In one and the same verse, Satan turns the sinner into the seducer. Don't think you can choose to sin and not have it adversely affect those around you. People like to drag other people down with them – for company, if nothing else.
7. What next? Well, their eyes were opened. They were experiencing sin that leads to death. They knew they were naked and felt guilty. So, **THEY TRY TO HIDE IT:** They sewed fig leaves together. That was our first attempt at covering up our sin, guilt and shame. So many of us are in this stage – "just don't let 'em see you sweat." We deny it, we cover it up with nice things like trips and cars and fancy homes, we try to distract other people and ourselves from the guilt and pain caused by our sin. Sometimes it works. But hear this: No human effort can hide sin from God.
8. Adam and Eve realize that they can't cover up their sin and shame, so instead, they hide themselves. They heard God and ran for cover. For the first time in their lives, they feared God. Before sin, hearing God's voice was their joy and delight. "*Where are you?*" He was lost, that's where he was. If you are in the hide & seek game, give up! Especially if someone is praying for you – give up, because you can't cover it up. God specializes in finding us. Now, will he find us in our sin, or will he find us in the forgiveness he gives us? "*Where are you?*" (Like God doesn't already know! It only shows how much God desires to be in relationship with people.) Good News: God never coerces or forces himself on us, and Satan cannot either. God respects the power of choice. It was a factor in the Fall, and it is a factor in

salvation. I wonder who among us is God lovingly calling “Where are you?” Maybe today is your day. You can put your faith in God’s Son, Jesus Christ!

9. *“I heard, I was afraid, I hid!”* For the first time in the universe we hear words like “afraid, hid myself, “shame.” God’s original design did not include those words, but the broken relationship leads immediately to words like those.
10. And what does God say? *“Who told you?” “Who told you?”* Now listen to this: **There is nothing we know, except what we’ve been told.** Who’s been telling you stuff? Where do we get our information? Are you reading your Spam messages? And believing them? Who have you been talking to? What are you watching? Who told us about ourselves and others? (Millions of Jews just 60 years ago, millions of Tutsi Rwandans just 10 years ago, thousands of terrorism victims even today, all killed because someone told them something like “You are superior. They are a threat. You aren’t good enough. You must kill. The underlying messages are surprisingly sick and simple – even ridiculous. What spam have you let influence your thinking?)
11. Then he gives his excuse. Rather than confess his sin, Adam plays the first ever round of the blame game. Could he come up with anything meaner? The woman You gave me (Blaming God), she gave me (blaming Eve), and I ate (finally confessing it). If you are in the mode of regularly blaming other people for your troubles, consider that a warning: you sound like Adam, caught in the very first sin. Look and see who you are listening to. Even when you know you’ve been caught red-handed in your sin, it is *always* somebody else’s fault.

Three chapters from the beginning of the Bible the serpent appears for the first time; three chapters from the end of the Bible he is seen for the last time. The results of his work are seen on every page in between. And it goes something like it did in the Garden:

Behind every action is a belief of spam. I’m going to get a divorce. I’m going to get drunk. Your actions are based on the belief: What I’m doing will make me happier than what God says. Who are you listening to? If you are believing that “You’re not good enough, or God can’t accept you, or you can’t trust the Bible,” you must recognize it for the spam it is. That’s not God’s voice! That’s not what God has said! Because of the nature of God, God can only give you his best for you. Whenever we sin, we’re acting on the belief “I’m going to be happier disobeying God than obeying him.” That’s the belief. There’s a belief behind everything you do. If you go have sex outside of marriage there’s a belief about that that’s causing you to do it.

Behind every sin is a lie of spam that I’m believing. When you sin, at that moment, you think it’s the best thing to do. You’ve been deceived. But you think it’s the best thing to do. “Why did I exaggerate just then? Why did I lie just then? Why did I cover up just then? Why did I accuse just then? Because at that moment I thought it was the best thing to do. It was a lie, but I had been deceived. When your kids do something dumb or rebellious, at that moment, they are being deceived. When we look around, we can see behavior. What is the lie behind our actions? When you see someone who is arrogant and prideful, what is the lie that they are believing?

Change always starts in the mind. All through the Scripture. Be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” The way you think determines the way you feel. The way you feel determines how you act. We must change our beliefs first. The battle for sin always starts in the mind. You must see the lie you are believing. What is the false lie you are believing?

The Bible word for changing your mind is “repentance.” (This isn’t the guy on the soapbox with the sign saying “Turn or burn!”) It doesn’t have to do with change your behavior. It is meta-noia. Change your mind. Changing your beliefs, your values, the way you look at life. The modern word for repentance is “paradigm shift.”

When they fell, Adam and Eve sure experienced a “paradigm shift.” The account ends in tragedy: Adam and Eve leave the Garden in exile, toil, and pain. But not without God naming his plan for calling them home, even within his judgment. God is a God of justice. After the sin, God asked no more questions. He judged Satan then and there and declared war upon him. In the declaration, Adam and Eve heard the Gospel

message for the very first time. *3:15 And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.*" It was the very first promise and prophecy in the Bible. Humanity itself would be the instrument through which God would work for Satan's defeat and doom. God would become a Man to accomplish his victory. Because when this was recorded, it was always the offspring of the man, the fact that the prophecy names the "seed of the woman," leads many scholars believe to be a reference to the virgin birth of Jesus, would put a final end to both sin and Satan.

Sin is real. Sin sends out its spam messages to us. Remember God's question "Who have you been listening to?" The only spam blocker for your situation is a change of mind. Quit hiding. God can't help but offer you his best, and that's his Son, Jesus. Believe in God. Receive his messages of faith, hope, love and forgiveness. And then live like God originally intended for you.