Contemporary Comments on the Adult Sabbath School Lesson

[Title] A Garment of Innocence
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The innocence of children can often bring a smile to our faces. Carey Kinsolving, author of the newspaper column, “Kids Talk About God”, asked a group of kids: “What would it be like if Adam and Eve hadn’t eaten the forbidden fruit?” He got some delightful responses:

Amanda, age six, said, “Bees wouldn’t sting, bears wouldn’t bite, and bad things wouldn’t happen.”

Chris, age 11, said, “God would walk with us.”

Kelly, age nine, said, “We would be having fun worshiping God.”

Chris, age 10, said, “All our needs would be provided in our backyard.”

And Marci, age nine, said, “You could keep lions and tigers for pets. Mosquitoes wouldn’t bite. The world would be wonderful.”

Unfortunately, Adam and Eve did eat the fruit. Innocence was lost. Guilt and shame were found.

Christian authors Mike Bellah and John Bradshaw believe that shame and guilt are two different emotions. Bellah writes, “Guilt is the unpleasant feeling we experience when we violate our beliefs and values. We can do something about guilt. We can change our behavior. In biblical terms, we can repent. But shame goes deeper than guilt. It touches the very core of our identity. As psychologist Norman Wright puts it, ‘Guilt says ‘I have made a mistake;’ shame says ‘I am a mistake.’” Bradshaw believes that shame is toxic and that it fuels most people’s compulsive and addictive behaviors.

As discouraging as the above may sound, there are people who have found freedom from both guilt and shame. Here are some excerpts from personal testimonies found on the “He Invites” website:

Chris wrote: “My life was an empty shell. My step-dad beat me, abused me and forged me into a person full of anger, hurt, hatred and guilt. Just when I was at the lowest, God reached down and picked me up. With a blink of an eye I was forgiven for twenty-eight wasted years that I chose to use for destruction due to my selfishness.”

Andrea wrote: “For three years I have been living without drugs, alcohol, cigarettes or any other chemicals. Since finding Jesus, I have learned to praise and worship Him and I will not stop until He calls me home to be with Him. He has restored everything the devil had taken and given it back more abundantly. I will always serve Him.”

And an anonymous person wrote: “I felt like I was the lowest, dirtiest thing on earth. I didn't think Jesus could forgive me for all the sin I had wallowed in. About three years ago, I started going to church again, and Jesus touched my life. I turned back to God. Christ forgave me! My life has not been the same since. God's Word actually has changed me!”
These testimonies—from innocent children and once guilt-ridden adults—mirror the experience of Adam and Eve. They were created innocent, perfect, in the very image of God! Their home? It was a gorgeous garden. The animals? They were their friends. And their Creator? The One who came and walked with them every day. Life was…perfect. Only one thing was asked of them: obedience. And they were capable of that. But they failed. The garden would no longer be their home. Animal friends would be sacrificed for sin and their skins used for clothes. And the daily walk with God would be replaced with hiding in shame.

But Jesus’ plan of redemption was already in place! Thankfully, all our garments of guilt and shame will someday be replaced. We will be clothed in robes of Jesus’ righteousness. And as nine-year-old Marci said, “The world will be wonderful.”

~ nc

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