

## God's Answer To The Blame Game

1 John 4:9-10 January 31, 2010

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Thus far we have looked at the lie that says we find acceptance and love as the result of our performance in life. Our inability to rise to the level of perfection results in the fear of failure. We have also seen the lie that we must have the approval of others before we can feel good about ourselves. This lie results in the fear of rejection. Today, we will look at the third lie that says, ***“Those who fail are unworthy of love and deserve to be punished.”*** Naturally, this belief results in the fear of punishment. The fear of punishment motivates us to point the finger of guilt away from ourselves by casting blame on another.

### I. The Blame Game

The Blame Game did not originate at the corporate headquarters of Mattel Toys. The original patent was issued to a young couple somewhere in the Middle East named Adam and Eve. According to the historical document of Genesis, Adam and Eve listened to the temptation of the Serpent who was Satan in disguise. They ate of the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil which their Creator had forbidden them to do. The instant they sinned, life on earth changed forever...for them and for all their descendants, including us.

The scripture says: ***“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”*** (Gen. 3:7). For the first time Adam and Eve experienced shame. (*Next week's topic*). When they heard God approaching they hid themselves. Not only were they ashamed, they were guilty of disobedience and were afraid of what God might do. God knew exactly what had happened but he wanted Adam and Eve to own up to their disobedience. ***“Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?”*** (Gen. 3:11). Listen carefully because for the first time in human history blame is going to be used as a defense mechanism. The man said, ***“The woman you put here with me - she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it”*** (Gen. 3:12). Did you catch that? Adam not only blamed “that woman” but he blamed God. He was saying, God if you hadn't given me that woman, I would not have disobeyed you. God wasn't finished, he turns to the woman to get to the bottom of it and she promptly tries to protect herself by blaming the serpent: ***“The serpent deceived me and I ate”*** (Gen. 3:13). Hence, “The Blame Game” was created.

**Blaming others is woven into the fabric of our fallen human nature.** Children do it naturally and adults rarely out grow it. We see it in the work place where a flawed project is blamed on another worker who is not where in sight. The need for self protection causes the first worker to blame another. We see it in politics when one administration constantly blames the previous one. We see it in marriages when one partner can never take responsibility for his or her own actions and blames everyone and everything else for his own poor choices.

The Blame Game is a bit more destructive than a game of Monopoly or Chutes & Ladders. Motivated by the belief that ***“Those who fail are unworthy of love and deserve to be punished,”*** some feel it is their job to not only point out the failures of others but to inflict punishment and to withhold love and acceptance. Some may see themselves as licensed by God to met out punishment. The delivery of punishment might be harsh and abusive, or, subtle and passive aggressive. They might dispense punishment through jokes, sarcastic statements, or silent sabotage all the while feeling quite justified in doing so.

Blaming and punishing others is often an attempt to focus attention on others in order to protect oneself from

taking responsibility or from admitting their own failures. Even gossiping is the attempt to take a superior stance above those being gossiped about while desiring that some form of justice or punishment be applied to the person being talked about.

Since we are convinced that someone has to take the blame for failure, what if we are the one who failed? We have a couple of choices, we can refuse to own up to our shortcomings and blame someone else even if it is a lie. Some people have built walls of self protection so high that they never admit to any failings. Nothing is ever their fault. These folk manifest an aroma of arrogance and superiority.

The other option is to constantly blame oneself. Since persons who fail are worthy of punishment, they feel compelled to practice self-condemnation and self punishment. We all communicate through talking. Generally, our speech is civil, considerate, and G-rated. I take that back, R-rated speech seems to have moved up on the acceptability scale. So we talk to others and convey information.

But we also communicate with ourselves through “self-talk”. The person who feels deserving of self-condemnation due to their own failures will say things to themselves that they would never say to another person. A person who is soft spoken and kind to others may be extremely harsh and abusive to themselves. They may verbally beat up on themselves until they are a bloody, emotional mess. What do you say to yourself when you are trying to inflict self punishment? Does it ever help?

Mind you that these folks truly believe they deserve the pain they inflict on themselves for they have no one else to blame but themselves. They also tend to believe that if they punish themselves harsh enough and long enough, that God will go easier on them. If sin separates from God and must be punished, then surely when we are aware of our failures in life, we deserve to be punished. So, we’ll just help God out and put ourselves through the torture chamber hoping that God will let us off a bit more lightly. Is this the way we as children of God are suppose to handle our shortcomings and failures in life? Not at all!

## II. God’s Answer to The Blame Game

It is fairly common today, even among some who go by the name of “Christian” to hold to a view that says, “*We are all trying to get to heaven, and it doesn’t matter what you believe as long as you are sincere, because God is a God of love and will accept everyone.*” I believe people come to such a conclusion based on the subtle conviction that we as human beings, enlightened as we are, are actually more loving and accepting than is the God portrayed in the Bible. If we can not envision ourselves punishing others....especially by keeping them out of heaven for all eternity...then surely a loving God won’t either. This liberal or post-modern or politically correct view has permeated our society and many churches. Is this view correct? Will all will be saved in the end?

Let’s drop back to our passage in Genesis. What did God say would happen if Adam and Eve disobeyed and ate of the tree of good and evil? God warned them that the consequences of their disobedience was “*for when you eat of it you will surely die*” (Gen. 2:17). Once they sinned what happened? They were filled with shame and guilt and began blaming one another, and they were kicked out of the garden, and spiritual and physical death became the norm for planet earth. If God was a “good ole fella”, he would have said to Adam and Eve, “*Oh, that’s alright! I really didn’t mean it. Nothing is going to happen. Go on and live your life and you and yours will be just fine.*” That is not what history records. History is the record of the results of sin’s curse, the judgment which man brought on himself. God is a God of justice and of wrath. We dare not try to remake God into our own image or likeness, such would be the height of arrogance!

John tells us that God is both a God of Love and a God of Wrath. “*Whoever believes in the Son has eternal*

***life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him***" (John 3:36). Yet in I John 4:8b he states, "***God is love.***" The wonder of the cross is that the Love of God found a way to satisfy the Justice and Wrath of God so that we could be forgiven. Our sin is real and it separates us from our Creator and it must be dealt with or else we will experience the punishment we fully deserve.

Except, there is nothing we can do to remove our personal guilt. All of our self-punishment amounts to nothing. Only God can provide a way and He did by coming in the form of Jesus. ***This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved god, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins***" (1 John 4:9,10). The unique, one of a kind Jesus, God's only Son, God come in the flesh, innocent and sinless, went to the cross in the greatest act of love the world has ever seen or ever will see. He went to the cross as our atoning sacrifice.

The KJV translation of verse 10 uses a word which is not very familiar to us: ***propitiation***. Jesus went to the cross as a ***propitiation for our sins***. A propitiation was a sacrifice designed to appease the wrath of God, to satisfy God's righteous character and his demand for justice. Jesus' death paid the penalty of our sin and opened up the way for God to forgive us. God's justice and his mercy are equally satisfied.

God no longer holds anything against us. We are completely forgiven and accepted by the Father. He does not look upon us with eyes of judgment. He lavishes love upon us as an adopted child now a member of his family. We are fully accepted and are to live in light of our new identity. Therefore, we can live without the fear of punishment and we have no business punishing ourselves. To punish ourselves either verbally or through some self-inflicted pain is to deny the sufficiency of the cross. We no longer have to avoid the fear of punishment by blaming others. We can own up to our personal shortcomings, and when necessary, ask for forgiveness and welcome the same from a loving Father who has already forgiven us! Neither do we have to try to punish others for their failures. It is not our job; it is God's job and He alone can do it justly. When Satan tries to defeat us by accusing us of our sins and failures, we can claim the truth, that we are fully forgiven and completely accepted in Jesus Christ, and that we have every right to live in the joy, peace and freedom of a child of the King!