

How Is Your Guilty Soul Clothed? (Covenant of Grace part 1)

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 18 February 2024

Preacher: J.D. Edwards

[0 : 00] Well, together we've preached through the Gospel of John up until John chapter 18, and we've also preached through Ruth and Jonah, and a few other parts in Psalms 1 through 8.

So that's our normal method, but we've taken a special pause now this semester to do a series called Covenant Theology. A covenant, I'll try to give a definition real quickly.

So covenant, it's been described as being more committed and in higher stakes, more binding than a normal relationship, but it's also more warm and more personal than a mere contract.

That's what a covenant is, and the covenant is the way that God has given us to understand who He is. How can a holy God have a covenant with people like us? That's what we're trying to understand from God's Word.

We've seen this sermon text before, Genesis chapter 3, but we saw it with the lens of the covenant of works. We saw the curses that Adam's sin brought on all of humanity.

[1 : 09] Now we're going to see that same chapter, but now with the lens of the covenant of grace. How is it that sinners under Adam's curse can receive grace? So I'm going to read all of Genesis chapter 3, even the verse before and the verse after, but we'll really focus on verse 15.

So this is Genesis chapter 2, verse 25. After God created the whole world, He said, It's very good. The man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

That sounds like an odd verse to start with, but pay attention because that's the theme of our sermon today. So now starting in chapter 3, Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made.

And He said to the woman, Did God actually say to you, You shall not eat of any tree in the garden? And the woman said to the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.

But the serpent said to the woman, You will not surely die, for God knows that when you eat of it, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil. So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired, to make one wise, she took the fruit and ate it.

[2 : 31] And she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. See why it's important?

And they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves loincloths. And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the cool of the day.

And the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, Where are you?

And he said, I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself. He said, Who told you you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?

The man said, The woman you gave to be with me, she gave me the fruit of the tree, and I ate. Then the Lord God said to the woman, What is this that you have done? The woman said, The serpent deceived me, and I ate.

[3 : 36] And the Lord said to the serpent, Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock, and above all beasts of the field. On your belly you shall go, and the dust you shall eat all the days of your life.

I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring. And he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel. And to the woman he said, I will surely multiply your pain and childbearing.

In pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you. And to Adam he said, Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, you shall not eat of it.

Cursed is the ground because of you. In pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the plants of the field.

By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground. For out of it you were taken, for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.

[4 : 43] The man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living. And the Lord God made Adam, made for Adam and for his wife garments of skin, and clothed them.

Then the Lord God said, Behold, the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil. Now lest he reach out his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever.

Therefore the Lord God sent him out of the garden, to work the ground from which he was taken.

He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden, he placed the cherubim, and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.

Chapter 4, verse 1. And Adam knew his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, I have gotten a man with the help of the Lord. This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God indeed. You may be seated. The Bible says that the grass withers, and the flower fades, but the word of the Lord endures forever.

[6 : 02] Let's pray. Father, we are here together, under your word, under the word of God, creator, who spoke, and it came to be.

From your mouth came all of creation. We praise you, Lord, that your word goes forth still today.

We ask that by the power of your Holy Spirit, will your word go forth, and will you cause with power to create anything, Lord, that you desire in our hearts today.

Lord, may we receive the truth that you've given us. I pray, Lord, that each one here, Lord, will hear from you what you need them to hear this morning. I pray that you will give me clarity.

I pray that you will guard my lips, help me to not speak anything untrue, and even in my limitations, Lord, I pray that your Holy Spirit will work in my weakness, and that Jesus Christ will be glorified through this sermon text today, we pray.

Amen. Well, beloved congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, the question I want to put before you today is this.

[7 : 20] How is your guilty soul clothed? You and I are body and soul, and under the curses of Adam, our souls are guilty before the Holy God.

How is your guilty soul clothed? I was going to say that the human species is the only one to wear clothes, and that used to be true.

I remember my dad's a farmer, and I remember the first time we were at a mall in a big city, and this lady was walking a large poodle. It had like a pink vest with a turtleneck, and as it got closer, we noticed it also had pink polish on the nails.

Maybe some of you do that to your animals. My dad's comment, the farmer was just something like, poor dog. In the USA, \$380 billion are spent every single day in covering our bodies.

Clothing and makeup, \$380 billion industry just in America. Around the world, that number is \$3 trillion spent every year on covering our bodies.

[8 : 35] We need to understand what is it that is going to cover our soul? And this is not a sermon against fashion. One of the Proverbs, I think it's Proverbs 21, it says, you know, the drunkard and the sluggard leads to wearing rags.

You know, so it doesn't mean that we should hate, you know, looking nice or anything like that. But it simply means that if our outward efforts are to cover up our bodies, and maybe even it has nothing to do with clothing or style, maybe it has more to do with good works or achievements, and it's not a curse.

If we don't have to do it, if we don't have to do it, we don't have to do it, we don't have to do it, then that's wired into us from the curse. And the bigger question is not how can you make yourself look good on the outside?

The real question is what clothes your guilty soul before the holy God? Naturally, when we're born, our souls are like a neglected orphan under the abusive tyranny of Satan himself.

That's the world a soul is brought into. We see from Scripture that you and I, we were born spiritually naked, humiliated, and exposed to the deadly elements of this present evil age, to use the language of Galatians 1.4.

[9 : 55] That's why our guilty souls need to be covered. So I've done my best with this chapter to pull some truths that I want to put before you and you decide if you think this is true as well.

Number one, as guilty sinners, we work to cover ourselves because we know our sin deserves death. Look at verses 3 and 7.

Let's start with verse 3. See, God made Adam good, but Adam was not immutably good. Adam could fall. And in the covenant of works, God held out to Adam life.

But under that covenant of works, which said, do this and live, Adam sinned. And now all of us are under that same principle.

We have to work, work, work, work, work, work, thinking we can save ourselves. That's what we hear in Galatians 3.12. The one who does these works shall live by them.

[10 : 55] Are our works good enough? Look at Genesis 3.3. God said, you shall not eat or touch the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden lest you die from the lips of Eve.

She was adding on to the law of God. God said, do not eat of that tree of life. That's something God would withhold and give for obedience. She says, we can't even touch it.

She knew the principle, disobey death. So Adam was there ruling over the garden temple that God made and it was a period of probation for him.

He could have had the tree of life offered, but instead he chose, by his free will before the fall, he chose to sin and by sinning to bring death and condemnation on himself and all who would follow after him.

And that includes you and me. Look at the effect of Adam's sin in verse 7. Genesis 3.7. The eyes of both Adam and Eve were opened and they knew that they were naked.

[12 : 05] Their guilty conscience was pricked. You sinned. God gave you a law and you trespassed the boundary. And notice what is their reaction.

What do they have to do now? They sowed fig leaves. They got to work with their own hands to try to cover themselves. Second London Confession of Faith chapter 7 verse paragraph 2 says that man brought himself under the curse of the law by Adam's fall.

And the response of everyone under Adam is that we must now work to cover ourselves before God. In the covenant of works see Adam stood before God the creator and there was no mediator between God and man.

And when he fell he put himself into a position of utter hopelessness. He knew how badly he had broken that bond between him and God.

God have you had that feeling? I have. I have sinned. In an earthly sense I deserve to be put away on an island all alone and flogged for the rest of my life.

[13 : 22] I've sinned against God not to mention the harm I've done to my loved ones and others. George Swinnock a Puritan wrote that innocence at first was man's splendid robe.

How lovely did he look in that heaven spun attire. Oh just to see the garden of Eden with Adam and Eve. God's perfect design for God himself to declare this is very good.

Swinnock wrote but sin caused shame and shame called for clothes to cover it. You and I when we sin when we feel shame for our sin we want to cover our souls we want to clothe ourselves somehow.

We read in Isaiah 64 6 that all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment. No matter what we try to put on to cover our guilty soul it looks like rags because it's tainted by our own sin.

Since Adam broke the covenant of works all mankind is now utterly exposed as being spiritually sick dying isolated. And it doesn't just stay in Eden in the book of Genesis this is all mankind in Ecclesiastes 7 20 we read for there is not a single just or righteous man upon the whole earth who does good.

[14 : 54] and does not sin. How is your guilty soul clothed? If you are not in the covenant of grace through the work of Jesus as your mediator then you are still under the curses of this broken covenant between God and Adam and your instinct and mine will always be I have to work to cover up my guilt and shame.

as guilty sinners we work to cover ourselves because we know our sin deserves death. The second truth I want to put in front of you is this the fall of Adam it was devastating it bound the will of each person under Satan to be naturally incapable of repenting the fall of Adam bound the will of each person under Satan to be naturally incapable of repenting let's read verses 8-13 after they sinned Adam and Eve heard the sound of the Lord walking in the garden in the cool of the day and the Lord God called to the man and said where are you and he said I heard the sound of you in the garden and I was afraid because I was naked and I hid myself he said who told you that you were naked have you eaten of the tree which I commanded you not to eat can you imagine that terrifying feeling as a child we've all played hide and seek and you find a good spot and you're hiding and at night kids often will feel a little bit scared they're thinking something bad could happen and it's that combination they're hiding and they're afraid and I get afraid when I hear something walking up the steps it's a mere human and I don't know what it is they hear the sound of God entering his temple presence this is a penetrating exposing presence of

God the holy God who fills his temple and pushes everything out of its way and that's how Adam fell from being good to being an effaced image bearer of God he not only failed to merit heaven by his obedience but he has also now demerited communion and fellowship with God for himself and for all mankind and the foil is set Adam in darkness hiding in fear he's a disgraced prophet priest and king Adam the king let the enemy infiltrate the dominion God had put him to steward as ruler Adam the priest failed to worship God and instead robbed fruit from God's garden temple for his stomach and Adam the prophet let Satan's lies rule over himself and his wife instead of the authority of God's word now look at verse 12 the man said as God comes to judge

I want you to see how he's incapable of repenting the man says it was the woman that you gave to be with me she gave me fruit from the tree and I ate it there's no repentance naturally in fallen man let's see if Eve is any better look at verse 13 then the Lord God turned to the woman and said what is this that you have done well at least Eve can now blame Adam who did she learn this blame shifting from she says it was the serpent who deceived me and I ate neither Adam nor Eve by nature under the curses of the fall repent you and I are no better either under the curses of sin and death in the words of Micah 3:2 we hate the good and we love the evil that's the bit of our heart see how if we are left in this natural state under the fall there is no way back there is no hope Fred Malone even pointed out further God was not morally obligated to give Adam or his descendants another covenant this is what we deserve this state fallen broken unrepentant and incapable of turning back to God is that how your soul is still clothed today the fall of Adam it bound the will of each person under Satan to be naturally incapable of repenting well here's the good news the third point is this that God promised way back in the garden to Adam and Eve God promised to change the hearts of his people not by their work but by God's sovereign grace God promised to change the hearts of his people not by their work but by

[20 : 34] God's sovereign grace I want to make sure we don't take this for granted still see by nature you and I in the words of Psalm 52:3 we love evil more than good and we love lying more than speaking what is true but we see the good news in Genesis chapter 3 verse 15 that's how we are but God gives this promise in Genesis 3:15 he says I will put enmity between you and the woman God will make the seed of Eve hate the serpent God will make sin loving sinners hate their sin this is something no sinner can naturally work into their own heart this is an early kernel version of regeneration and it happens by the power of the word of

God it's word act God said let there be light and there was light God said and it happened God said I will put enmity in your heart against sin and Satan and it happened we sang this hymn long my imprisoned spirit lay fast bound in sin and nature's night that's how we should be but God's eye diffused a quickening ray I woke the dungeon flamed with light my chains fell off my heart was free I rose went forth and followed thee this is a promise of justification second london chapter 11 paragraph 6 says that justification of believers under the old testament this includes adam and eve it was in all respects one and the same as the justification of believers under the new testament how can that be

Christ hadn't even entered history see God applied Christ future work to regenerate all those elect ordained to eternal life before the foundation of the world it was God all along who was making every believer in every generation willing and ready and able to believe in God through the mediated work of God our confession again says although the price of redemption was not actually paid by Christ until after his incarnation yet the benefits of union to Christ by faith were

communicated to the elect in all ages from the beginning of the world we know this from passages like Romans 4 22 it's God counting faith receiving the promise he gave by faith counting that as righteousness if you receive

Christ by faith it is because God gave unto all those he ordained unto eternal life his Holy Spirit so it was the Holy Spirit in a different way it's not it's not the church it was the Holy Spirit working differently to cause them to believe and to trust this promise and the glorious promise to Adam and Eve and to everyone they passed it on to is that God will change the hearts of his people not by their work but by his sovereign grace has God changed your heart in that way you know that naturally you would not love God you would hate God you know naturally you would spend your Sunday morning any other way why are you here it's because God promised to put enmity in your heart against sin and Satan to speak life and breathe life into you regenerate you and give you the gift of faith in

Jesus Christ the mediator between you and the holy God your creator so you don't get any credit for it all glory goes to God here's the fourth truth I want to put in front of you by this same sovereign grace God he claims a people in every generation as his army against Satan doesn't this remind you of the covenant of redemption we saw this in psalm 110 his troops shall be willing we saw this in Isaiah 53 and notice how this same promise in the covenant of redemption is given words in Genesis 3 15 I will put enmity between your seed your offspring and her seed how does this play out in redemptive history well let's take let's take this exact line these next chapters that follow in the book of Genesis and if we're reading them with this promise in mind here's how it plays out how does

[25 : 49] God with his sovereign grace claim a people in every generation as his army against Satan Cain Cain is Adam and Eve's son he's a child of Satan he will kill Abel who is also the seed of Eve but he will not kill the promise God will give Seth to preserve the promised seed a bit later in redemptive history it's Pharaoh that great reptile of the Nile who tries to kill the male seed of Abraham's line but God preserves his people he preserves an army these slaves he raises up out of Egypt and takes them to teach them you belong to me later on under Elijah the prophet it was wicked queen Jezebel in first kings 18 4 she was a pawn on satan's chess board and she tries to kill off all of God's prophets but God preserves a remnant remember the story of

Esther wicked Haman he orders to wipe out all the seed of Abraham through whom deliverance would come the gospel would be over God would have no seed to carry out this promise to Adam and Eve but God uses the providence he places Esther in the courts of the king and he preserves his people in the gospels we read of wicked evil king Herod who killed the baby boys in Bethlehem trying to wipe out any male seed who would become the king and threaten his throne but God preserved his seed God will win the war our confession states that God communicated faith to every generation in and by the promises like this one and also the types and that's the shadows that are pointing to a greater substance and even by the sacrificial system he's showing them look forward I will fulfill my promise

God preserves and saves for himself in every single generation an army that will go to war against Satan the fifth truth I want to put in front of you is that God saves his people from the curses of sin and death by the costly victory of his promised seed capital promised capital seed it's a person God saves his people how does he do it by the costly victory of his promised seed the last part of Genesis 3 15 says that he the promised seed shall bruise your head Satan and you shall bruise his heel the bruising of the heel speaks to the cost the suffering of Jesus but the bruising of the serpent's head speaks to the victory of

Jesus Christ through his suffering see dear friends the Bible teaches us that your faith in that work of the promised seed that's the only hope you and I have for our guilty souls to be clothed the promised seed of woman would go to battle a great battle between the promised seed Jesus Christ and the serpent Satan himself whom God would use to deliver the promised people Revelation describes who this serpent is describes in Revelation 12 verse 9 it's the great dragon that was thrown down that ancient serpent who is called the devil and Satan notice this description from Revelation 12 he is the deceiver of the whole world he was thrown down to the earth and his angels were thrown down with him and that's how in

Genesis 3 13 he comes to deceive Adam and Eve it was Eve who said the serpent deceived me and I ate so now all those under the curse of Adam's broken covenant of works are still in darkness they are blind because they are being deceived by Satan and that's exactly how we were before

God regenerated and opened our eyes to behold the goodness of God in Jesus Christ when Jesus came to the earth his mission was to bind up the strong man we read in Mark 3 27 he's describing Satan as a strong man the ruler over this world and Jesus bound him up to rescue the souls of the elect the work of Jesus makes it so that the strong man Satan the deceiver can no longer deceive the nations any longer why is it that we believe it's because

[31 : 00] Satan has been conquered he can no longer deceive us the Holy Spirit is poured out for every people nation tribe and tongue whoever has eyes to see be deceived no longer believe in the work of Christ as your mediator I love how this musician put it rhythm and rhyme the woman's seed though bruised and torn did conquer and defeat the ancient serpent's head he crushed beneath his nail pierced feet oh hear the mighty lions roaring shaking hoary trees the murdered lamb his scarlet blood has broken winter's teeth we have the promise that when Jesus Christ returns he will according to revelation 20 10 throw the deceiving devil into the pit the lake of fire and sulfur where Satan and his lying demons will be tormented day and night forever and ever that's the promise in a kernel form in

Genesis 3 15 God saves his people from the curses of sin by the costly victory of his promised seed the sixth truth I want to put in front of you is this that those whom the Holy Spirit regenerates if you are spiritually dead but God has breathed life and caused you to see and believe him you will receive his covenant of grace with gratitude those whom the Holy Spirit regenerates will receive his covenant of grace by faith with gratitude see right now Adam and Eve have a promise how do they respond it's shadowy we can't say with absolute certainty but for them to be in the covenant of grace there must be a response Walt Chantry a banner of truth author he wrote a covenant is a sovereign arrangement of God by which we may be blessed here's how

Adam and Eve respond little hints Genesis 3 20 the man named his wife Eve because she was the mother of all living well we know from Genesis 3 3 you shall eat and you shall die but now he hears this glorious promise I hope Adam's in heaven the only hint we get is he named his wife Eve and Eve in Hebrew is Hava and it means to live to give life living Adam knew I deserve death my wife no line for us we all deserve death but God promised life by grace I want to hope that in believing and naming his wife life knowing they deserve death very well they found peace it's interesting the only insight we get to Eve also relates to giving a name

Genesis 4 verse 1 look at that Adam knew his wife in the biblical sense and she conceived and bore Cain I received a man she said with the help of the Lord our line deserves to be cursed we deserve death stories over with the help the mercy the grace of the Lord he gave me a baby boy second London 7 2 says it God was pleased God was pleased to make a covenant of grace God delighted to stoop down to save sinful souls like Adam and Eve Genesis 4 4 we read that as they raised their sons Abel one of the sons he did bring a sacrifice an offering to the Lord we have to ask where did he learn that what I'm more interested in is the response of God if you have it in front of you look at Genesis 4 verse 4 we read that the Lord he had regard the Lord had respect the Lord accepted Abel and his offering it wasn't the offering that God accepted only that was a means it was a type a shadow something pointing to something bigger and we have a covenant here because the Lord is accepting sinful Abel under the curses of Adam's fall the Lord looked with favor Fred Malone's comment on our confession chapter 3 paragraph chapter 7 paragraph 3 was this what we see here in a shadowy form is the covenant of grace the covenant of grace is the progressive revelation of the gospel of Jesus Christ by farther steps little by little by little is this being unveiled revealed to us through the Old Testament prophets and the covenants of the promise using the language of

[36 : 28] Ephesians 2 12 the multiple covenants of the singular promise all the way through the full revelation of the covenant of grace was completed in the New Testament as the new covenant of the Lord Jesus Christ but it's being revealed and God's giving faith and he's mediating the grace that Christ would accomplish in time and space he's mediating it to every generation not by their works but by the finished work of God the Son how is your guilty soul clothed there's only one way to receive this spiritual clothing and it's at the foot of the cross of Jesus Christ an old English pastor named Charles Spurgeon spoke of the response you will have of gratitude if you see God for who he is and you receive grace Spurgeon wrote we experience that there is no place for comfort like the cross it is a tree stripped of all foliage and apparently dead that's what the cross is yet we sit under its shadow with great delight and its fruit is sweet to our taste and that's because those whom the

Holy Spirit regenerates they will receive this covenant of grace by faith and gratitude well the seventh truth I want to put forward is this that the only hope for your guilty soul today dear friends is to be clothed with Christ's righteousness through his unbreakable covenant of grace that's the only hope for your guilty soul today be clothed with Christ's righteousness through his unbreakable covenant of grace could you put your eyes back on chapter 3 verse 21 notice how in their shame Adam and Eve got to work and they made clothes for themselves but the grace of God is extended and it's covering them by God's work in verse 21 do you see that God made for Adam and Eve garments of skins and God clothed them it's like

God was saying oh Adam oh Eve your sin deserves death but I'm here to teach you that your sin it requires that innocent blood be spilled yes you're exposed in your sin and shame you know you are naked your guilty conscience accuses you by grace I will clothe you I will cover your shame not by your works but by the work of my hands and I will teach you with this substitutionary sacrifice by the work of my hands not yours that I God alone can clothe your guilty soul he would do this by the work of Jesus which the son willingly took up in the eternal covenant of redemption God the son would take on flesh he would fulfill the work that

Adam failed to fulfill so that anyone who receives the grace of God it's by the finished work of Jesus Christ in their place it would be based on the obedience of God the son not the obedience of the sinners like me and you our Lord Jesus Christ did not come as a grown man age 33 simply to go to Calvary and die on the cross he first lived he first lived for you putting himself under God's law to fulfill all righteousness and under the curses of Adam's broken covenant our guilty souls can only be covered with shame and we can only know that we must hide from the presence of the holy God now many of us might think that once God justifies me I now have to go out and work for it but no amount of future obedience can pay off the eternal debt that you and

I owe to God creator we are justified for Christ's sake alone it's his work from beginning to end so that no man may boast we read in Romans 6 17 that by a single offering Jesus Christ perfected for all times those who are being sanctified in the book called the sacred bond brown and keel they wrote that the covenant of grace what it does is it applies to sinners the benefits that Jesus Christ earned for them by his obedient fulfillment of the covenant of redemption take a glimpse back from God's perspective in the words of Isaiah 61 10 God sees you in your sin naked and exposed and in shame deserving death but God says I will greatly rejoice in the

[42 : 07] Lord my soul shall exult in my God for he has clothed me by the work of the son with the garments of salvation he has covered me with the robe of righteousness that's what it brought the son such joy to accomplish he would be the robe he would be the righteousness in his life that God would take pleasure in applying and putting on to you and to me John Owen wrote that it's the love of Christ in mediating the covenant of grace that most reveals to us that God is love God's love is effective and fruitful in producing all the good things that he wills for his beloved John Owen wrote God loves us into covenant and God loves us into heaven if you're in the covenant of grace it's because

God has given you a new heart God has united you to Jesus Christ God has clothed you with the righteousness of Jesus Christ and he's done that all at once he declares you are justified God looks at you and he sees you fully clothed in Christ in that same moment all he sees is the righteousness of Christ what a comfort we have in Jesus that's why we could sing no condemnation now I dread Jesus and all in him is mine alive in him my living head and clothed in righteousness divine bold I approach the eternal throne and claim the crown of Christ my own dear friends respond today in gratitude for

Christ for his work in your place know that by faith alone he loves you into his covenant of grace it's the righteousness of Christ alone that can cover our guilty souls be sure that you are clothed in Christ today let's pray in the words that John Calvin wrote sin to clothe us with his righteousness Lord we thank you for this gift of belonging to you in the covenant of Jesus Christ by grace alone through faith in his finished work in our place amen