

The Power of His Personal Presence

*"Now the serpent was craftier than any other beast of the field that the **LORD** God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, '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.' "*

*"And they heard the sound of the **LORD** God walking in the garden 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."*

Genesis 3:1-3, 8

The power we want is not the power we need. Notice the two names of God in verse one – LORD and God. The term for God is the word – **Elohim**. **Elohim** is used all through Genesis 1 -2 to refer to the Sovereign, all-powerful creator who spoke and the worlds came into being. The same creative power is demonstrated when Jesus turned water into wine, raised the dead and healed the sick. Christians greatly desire to see this kind of power demonstrated by God in life and circumstances. This power is amazing, spectacular and inspiring, but this is not the power we need to resist the devil, overcome temptation and live a faithful life to God – Adam and Eve case in point.

The second term, LORD is the Hebrew word – **Jehovah** (The Tetragrammaton indicating the four Hebrew consonants that indicate this name for God). This is often called God's proper name; I like to call it God's *personal* name. This name is included in Gen. 3:1, disappears in verses 1b and never comes up through verse seven. It then reappears in verse 8. The whole conversation Eve has with Satan talked about God but this only referred to Elohim, the all-powerful creator God of Gen. 1. Eve and Satan had the very first theological roundtable discussion: they talked about the nature of God, biblical theology, theological ethics, and epistemology (how can we know God). When all is said and done the result was a huge moral failure on Adam and Eve's part. In our churches we invest heavily in teaching systematic theology, biblical theology, morality and ethics. But, like Eve, the end result for many is when all is said and done, they immediately go out and are making choices (like Eve) that result in huge moral failure. The power Eve talked about was not the power she needed to resist Satan and bear up under temptation. So this begs the question - is the problem that theology and doctrine and teaching on morality doing nothing? Maybe it is not what we are doing, but what are we missing.

The power we need is the very power we flee from. In Genesis 3:8 we have this strange statement, "*And they (Adam and Eve) heard the sound of the **LORD** God walking in the cool of the day...*" This statement is intended to communicate the *personal presence* of God. The Sovereign creator (God) now draws near to Adam and Eve in order to meet "face to face" and fellowship with them. But now, because of their moral failure we are told, "... the man and his wife hid themselves from the **presence of the LORD** (Jehovah) among the trees of the Garden. Even here our human logic would plead with God (Elohim) to do some all-powerful creative miracle to rescue and fix the situation, but this is not the power they need. If Eve had called a "time-out" in the middle of this theological discussion with Satan, called God over so that he would draw close to them, I believe that His very presence (without even saying a word) would have ended the conversation and solved the problem of being tempted to eat the fruit. Why? Because of the power of His personal presence. In hindsight, Adam and Eve were desperate for the all-powerful Elohim to fix their problem but instead God simply chooses to *draw near with His personal presence*. The power of his personal presence is sufficient to bring repentance, forgiveness, healing and restoration. But now Adam and Eve are "afraid" and ashamed of what they have done and *flee from His presence and hide themselves from the LORD God*. God's presence is clearly very powerful, but now, because of sin they flee from God.

Adam and Eve had relationship with God, but did not understand the power of His personal presence. Every Christian has a relationship with God, but if we do not understand the power of His personal presence we can talk all the theology, Bible, doctrine and ethics we want and still experience overwhelming failure – not because we do not know truth, but we are not experiencing the truth of the power of His personal presence in our life. This is why Jesus talked so much about “abiding in Him” and we are told that the Spirit of God dwells in us. Apart from the power of His personal presence we can do nothing –

Pastor Brad