

“The Story’s Villain”

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December 7, 2008

In the story of God, the villain is sin and the devil. God wrote the villain into His story. Although we cannot know exhaustively as to why He wrote the villain into the story, we do know the villain will show the power, justice, and grace of God.

Why the villain? “In fiction, villains commonly function in **the dual role of adversary and foil to the story's heroes**. In their role as adversary, the villain serves as an obstacle the hero must struggle to overcome. In their role as foil, the villain exemplifies characteristics that are diametrically opposed to those of the hero, creating a contrast distinguishing heroic traits from villainous ones.” <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Villain>

One of the great problems that exist for many is how God can be the author of the story and still write into the script the villain. I would like to consider three basic ideas present in the storyline. **First**, God is the Creator of all things outside Himself (Gen. 1:1; Col. 1:16, 17). God created everything. He is the Creator. That is His position, role, and function. This is His status. He is the Creator and everything outside of Him is created. Thus, He may do what He wants with what is His, and what He does is always right.

Second, everything inside of creation is for Him (Rom. 11:36; Eph. 1:9, 10). There is no part of creation that does not service God. Everything created exists in subjection to His rule. He may do what He wants with what is His. He can, if He so willed, allow everything to exist independent of Him. He can, if He so willed, allow everything to exist in complete dependency on Him. Or He can, if He so willed, allow everything to exist in co-dependency with Him.

Finally, everything inside of creation will **ultimately glorify Him** (this includes the fall of all, the salvation of some, and the condemnation of others [Rev. 4:11]). This brings us back to the introduction to the villain. The fall of all is for His glory. Remember, transgression will *ultimately glorify Him*. This does not mean that one can say they sin to the glory of God. I personally struggle thinking that sin is operating outside of the author’s intent and that somehow the story did not have sin originally written into the script. If the fall is not a part of God’s intentional purpose to redeem His people, then everything after Genesis 2 is a response to something He did not intend, desire, plan, or purpose. If our only fundamental argument is that such thinking is a violation of man’s free will, then when has man ever been completely free or autonomous?

It is not my intent to address the area of man’s will; however, I would be negligent if I did not make some initial comments. **First**, inherent to the image of God in man is the ability or faculty of choice. Thus, everyone, everywhere, at all times has the power of choice. **Second**, to deny man’s will is wrong. To place it on the same level as God’s will is wrong. Regardless as to what any of us might believe about man’s will, we should not see it as being equal to or superior to God’s will. Man’s will cannot trump the eternal purpose of God. **Third**, no one, apart from God, has total or absolute freedom of choice. Our choices are limited. **Fourth**, how

the will of God interplays with the will of man is, for me, a mystery that I do not understand but I willingly accept.

As this relates to our thoughts in this study, mankind chose to rebel against God by rejecting His expressed will and yet in the choice carried out God's will. Again, what the interplay was between these two wills I do not understand, but I willingly accept.

It is necessary for us to interpret each episode as a part of the ongoing story and not in isolation from each other. If we fail to see the big picture and make the necessary connections it will have profound consequences for us in our understanding of the entire storyline. Thus, whatever purpose for the villain's role in the story, it must be viewed as an integral part of the whole and not isolated from other elements within the story.

What the "villain" does is show how the rift between God and man is so vast as to disqualify humanity from ever hoping to achieve resolution apart from the divine initiative. The intent is to show how sin is a part of the story. Genesis 1 and 2 presuppose Genesis 3. Chapters 1 and 2 are setting us up for Genesis 3 through Revelation 22. There are four thoughts inside of Genesis 1, 2 and 3 that prove this idea.

First, this can be seen in their enjoyment of God's presence (Gen. 1:26, 27). God immediately paints a picture of intimate communion. Genesis lays down the idea of covenant and relationship from the start. He created mankind in order that they might enjoy His presence. God placed man in the Garden in order that man might worship and obey Him. Mankind served as a vice-regent for God. It is hard for us to fully process the interchange between God and man prior to sin, but Adam and Eve would fellowship with God in the cool of the day. This paradise was not because of the absence of pain and suffering or the presence of every notable pleasure, but rather the very presence of God and the enjoyment of such by Adam and Eve. This is what sin will destroy.

Second, this can be seen in a singular prohibition (Gen. 2:16, 17). God places in the Garden of Eden a test for Adam and Eve. God could have absent such a thing if He so willed. Adam and Eve made thousands of choices every day and everyone was completely moral. There was only one choice that would introduce death into the world and it was to violate this singular prohibition. The test was to see whether or not they would obey God or their desires. Before sin happens, God is already speaking of "death." When we read the statement in Genesis 2:17 it presupposes we know what death is or that Adam and Eve had an idea as to what this entailed.

Third, this can be seen in having no shame (Gen. 2:25). Neither Adam nor Eve had any shame. There was no guilt between them. This is what sin will destroy. It is important to read 2:25 with 3:1. We are being set up by the author of the book for the events that are about to transpire. Finally, this can be seen in the presence of a tempting serpent (Gen. 3:1).

Although our immediate text does not tell us how the serpent became the tempter, he is brought into the story with relative ease. We go from the "very good" of Genesis 1:31 to "Now

the serpent was more crafty” (Gen. 3:1). Nothing up to this point is surprising. The story is building up to an initial climax whereby the first test will be played out. Satan, through the serpent, tempts Adam and Eve in the one area where the prohibition exists. He continues to tempt us in those three areas. Everything is perfect and now something dark enters the story. The serpent immediately attacks God’s integrity and position as Creator.

Sin is rejecting God’s will and accepting self-will. This is sin at its essence. When we read the Lord’s Prayer in Matthew 6:9, 10 these two elements are present. Whose honor do we desire, whose kingdom do we want, whose will do we seek: God or ours? In the garden, Adam and Eve sought their glory, their kingdom, and their will. In all temptation we are confronted with the accepting of God’s will or the rejecting of the same. What we find in Genesis 3 is the relationship of temptation to the Word of God and to the Will of man. But the issue is still whose will are you going to obey? That which God permits is for our pleasure and that which God prohibits is for our protection. Anytime you disobey God’s declared will you will forfeit peace.

With sin comes death. Just as sin is a part of the story so also is death. “**Genesis 3 explains the human dilemma**. All the problems in the universe have their origin in the events of this historic account.” <http://www.biblebb.com/files/MAC/90-233.htm> The following message was delivered at Grace Community Church in Panorama City, California, by John MacArthur Jr. It was transcribed from the tape, GC 90-233, titled "What is Sin?" (Genesis 3:1-7).

God tells Adam and Eve that in the day they disobey they will die. Based on what we have already seen, we can begin to understand what is meant by “death.” There are six statements helping us comprehend what this “death” entails.

First, this can be seen in Adam and Eve rejecting God’s will (Gen. 3:1-7). Death is living under self-will. This is the essence of sin and it is the face of death. Adam and Eve determine that they know better than God as to what is best for them. This continues to be the essence of our fallen condition.

Second, this can be seen in their attempt to cover their nakedness (Gen. 3:7). Death is living with shame and guilt. Humanity is fully aware of this shame and guilt and have determined and attempted to do whatever is necessary to cover it. But all of their determinations and attempts have failed. This is the rise of world religions where the true God and His purpose have been rejected.

Third, this can be seen in them hiding from God (Gen. 3:8-10). Death is living with fear. “The Lord had evidently visited the garden and communed with Adam and Eve on many occasions prior to the fall. This time, however, the sound of God walking in the garden aroused fear rather than joyful anticipation.” (John J. Davis, *Paradise to Prison: Studies in Genesis* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1975], 92). Ever since this moment in time, “The natural inclination of the heart is not to seek God but to hide from Him” (Rom. 3:11).

Fourth, this can be seen in their refusal to accept responsibility for their sin (Gen. 3:11-13). Death is living with self-deception. Sin refuses to accept responsibility for its choices. Self-will

is self-rule. In self-will you are the ultimate authority and no one can hold you responsible. You are the law.

Fifth, this can be seen in the pronouncement of sentence against them by God (Gen. 3:14-19). Death is living with suffering and misery.

Sixth, this can be seen in their expulsion from the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:23, 24). Death is living with separation. This is what was lost with sin and this is what God will restore in salvation. Mankind's quest to be "like God" removed him from being "with God."

Lest we think what we have here is an ancient tale that has no bearing on who we are and where we currently exist, let us finish the story. The Bible describes all of humanity as sinners by identification (Rom. 5:12-21). The Bible knows of only two types of people: those **in Adam** and those **in Christ**. And not only are we sinners by identification, but also by participation (Rom. 3:9-23).

Although we might argue that it is unfair to be blamed for something we did not do, the Bible makes it equally clear that we are active participants in an open rebellion against the rule of God in and over our lives.

We struggle in understanding how sin can be a part of the story, yet our ability to comprehend the grace of God is significantly stunted until we see sin as a part of the story.

It is always difficult to end the story here without telling you the rest of the story. I will leave this study by simply noting how from the very beginning God planned a deliverer and deliverance. Two passages will simply be noted. First, God provides for a future deliverer (Gen. 3:15). Second, God provides immediate deliverance (Gen. 3:7, 21). Let us take hope knowing that God is coming with a deliverer and deliverance.