

March 11/12, 2000

Where Are You?

Genesis 3:8-24

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What's the image that comes to mind when you think about God and how He responds to your sin? Do you get the image of an angry, agitated, disgusted father who wants to take his child by the shoulders and shake him a little? A lot of Christians have that image of God. When we do have that image, it causes us to hide from God.

It's interesting in Genesis 3 to see how God responds to sin. If the Bible is God's self-revelation, which means this is what God wants us to know about Himself, then Genesis 3 is the first peek at how God responds to us when we sin. I don't see that kind of a God at all. As a matter of fact, the very thing that the serpent tried to get Adam and Eve to doubt about God is the very thing that comes out all the more powerfully once Adam and Eve have sinned. What I find in Genesis 3 is the kind of a God that a sinner should long for.

In Genesis 3 we see what God says about Himself and how He responds to sin. Remember in the first seven verses Adam and Eve were made to doubt the goodness of God. They gave into temptation. They believed that they could be like God and decide for themselves what is right and what is wrong. They rebelled against God and sinned and plunged, not only themselves, but the human race, into sin and death. God promised that sin would bring forth death.

They were told that they could be like God, but as soon as they sinned, they realized they're not God and we find them hiding from God in Gen. 3:8: "And they (*Adam and Eve*) 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." Verse 8 opens with a beautiful description of God strolling in the garden in the cool, or literally, the breezy part of the day. It is a picture of the end of the day when it was cool and most pleasant that God would meet with Adam and Eve. It was "their time" – a time when they could be together and just enjoy one another.

It's important to realize that, as this story unfolds, God knows what Adam and Eve did. God knows everything about it. But the passage unfolds in this drama in order to teach us some truths about God. So every word is carefully chosen in such a way that we learn what God wants us to learn about Himself. This opening picture is God's way of saying that there was the beauty of this relationship. This was "their time".

The problem is that God is strolling through the garden, now in the evening, and Adam and Eve were nowhere to be found. They're hiding from God. They found out that they cannot be like God and now they're afraid of God. But they're not just hiding, they are hiding among the trees. That's not in the passage by accident. There's been a great emphasis on the trees in Genesis 2 and 3. We were told in chapter 2 that God created the trees as a symbol of his goodness; as a way to say, "You may eat freely from all of these trees." They were symbolic of the goodness of God that had been poured out on Adam and Eve in abundance. But now they're taking the very things that God gave them to remind them of His goodness, and they're using those to hide from God.

I thought about that and how true that is. How often we take those things which God has given us to remind us of His goodness, and we find a way to use those things to hide from God. Take, for example, something we've been wrestling with in Genesis 1-3 and that is the mind, the intellect. One of the ways we're made in the image of God is the ability to think and to reason. We've talked about the conflict between creation and evolution, and how many have used what is the gift of God's goodness, their intellect, to try to explain away God – to reason away God. We understand that people buy into the theory of evolution because science supports it so well. They buy into the theory of evolution because there is a need to hide from God. They do not want to admit that there's a God and they might be accountable to that God.

It isn't unusual for me as a pastor to run into people who consider themselves to be intellectuals, and they will say, "I just can't believe the Bible-- it's so full of errors." And I will usually say, "You know, that's interesting. I've given most of my life to studying the Bible and I've never found one of those. Could you show me?" And they always give the same answer, "Well, you know, actually I've never read the Bible." That's not an intellectual problem. That's a spiritual problem. They're just using the intellect to hide from God. We do that with sexuality. We do that with pleasure. We do that with material things. We do that with just about everything that God has given to us to demonstrate His goodness. Somehow we use it as a way to hide from God. Even religion is a good way to hide from God. We can create a religion in order to recreate a God who makes no real demands on us and doesn't affect our lifestyle. It's just a way to hide from God.

Verse 9: "Then the Lord God called to the man and said to him, 'Where are you?'" I love verse 9 because of what it teaches me about God. The question is: Where are you? The question is not: What have you done? Remember, God knew what had happened. God knew where Adam and Eve were, because He's God, after all. But the question is very carefully worded. If the question were, "What have you done?" it would be a question about performance. That's not what's the issue here. The question, "Where are you?" is about relationship, and that is what's happened. Sin has caused separation between God and His children, and God is longing to bring His children back. So the question reflects a Father, a heavenly Daddy, who's looking for His children. This is the time that He used to spend in the garden in the evening with Adam and Eve. When God arrives in the garden and they're not there, the question is: "Where are you?"

This is the picture that's portrayed so well in the New Testament when the father of the prodigal son longs for his son to come back home so he can wrap him in his arms of love and say, "Welcome home." This is also the New Testament picture of the good shepherd. Even though 99 sheep are safe and one is lost, he will go looking for the one that's lost. Because he wants to find that one sheep and carry it back to the fold.

I would guess that if some of you were to be honest, in the quietness of your heart, you can hear the voice of God saying, "Where are you? Where are you?" Sin causes us to hide because sin brings shame and we hide from God. What God wants is to restore the relationship. This isn't a picture of an angry father who is just waiting to grab you and shake you and wonder why you disgust him so much. This is a Father who loves His children and wants to restore the relationship. He's saying, "Come on home. Where are you?"

Last year when we were at the Berean National Convention, one of our pastors, Doug Wiebe and his wife, Sarah, were there and received a phone call that two of their children were lost or had been unaccounted for several hours. No one was sure where they were, and of course we were quite concerned about that. They were calling back and forth, trying to decide what to do, and the children were gone for quite a few hours before they were finally found. But at one point, Doug came in to where we were and he sat down at the table, and he made an interesting statement. He hit his fist on the table and said, “You know the number one reason why I want to make sure we find those kids is because I want to punish them for breaking my rule.” No, of course, he didn’t say that! As a matter of fact, he wasn’t thinking about that at all. When their children were lost they were not thinking about them breaking rules and wanting to punish them. What they were thinking was: “These are our children and we love them and we want to know that they’re safe.” What they were most concerned for was for the children to come back and be safe.

That’s the picture of God here. This is not a God who is wanting to pour out His wrath. This is a God who is missing the relationship and is saying to them, “Come home. Where are you? There’s no need to hide.” But sin brings shame and shame brings the urge to hide, and Adam and Eve were hiding from God. Verse 10: “And he said, ‘I heard the sound of Thee in the garden and I was afraid because I was naked. (*Naked is talking about their shame.*) So I hid myself.’ And He said, ‘Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree which I commanded you not to eat?’ ”

Of course God knows all of this, but He’s trying to get Adam to confess his sin and admit what he did. Notice the emphasis God puts on the fact that He had commanded Adam and Eve not to eat from this tree. In other words, the enemy said, “You can be like God.” And Adam and Eve bought into that and God is now re-establishing some boundaries and saying, “It doesn’t work that way. I’m God. I commanded. You disobeyed.” And there is going to be a great emphasis on that in this passage where God is saying, “I’m God. You’re not. That’s the way it’s going to work.” That is emphasized when God reminds Adam what happened here.

When we get to verse 12, I find myself getting irritated with Adam. Adam, who was so passive in verse 1-7, now becomes quite verbal and mouthy. I wonder how Adam could respond this way to God? Look at how Adam responds in verse 12: “And the man said, ‘The woman who Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me from the tree and I ate.’ ” Do you hear what Adam is saying? This is the same thing we are hearing all the time in our culture. Adam is saying, “It’s not my fault.” God calls Adam to account and we say, “Adam, just come out from the trees and come to God, reconcile this relationship and restore.” But Adam won’t do that, because when we’re filled with shame, then we’re filled with blame. He’s saying, “It’s not my fault.” Adam didn’t have parents to blame, so he had to blame his wife. But it’s more than that. As a matter of fact, Adam does blame his parent. Because his parent is God and that’s really who he is blaming. He says, “God, the woman, you gave me, gave me the fruit that I ate.” Who does Adam think he is, talking to God like that? If I were God I’d take him off the face of the earth quickly. I’d say, “Adam, who do you think you are? Let’s start over.” But I’m not God and we’re all thankful for that.

One of the reasons verse 12 irritates me so much is because I meet these people all the time. I meet people who won’t be accountable for their own actions. They won’t be accountable for their own choices. All I hear is, “It’s not my fault.” They blame their

parents, they blame the circumstances, they blame everything. But they won't be accountable. And what we see is that we don't have to do that with God. God is just looking to restore the relationship. "Adam, we don't need excuses. Just confess your sin." We've figured all kinds of ways now to decide why our children aren't disciplined and are unruly and naughty. If our children won't behave, we just slap a label on them and say, "It's not their fault." We need to understand that doesn't do our children any good, because they will be held accountable before God for their choices. They need to understand that they are responsible for their choices.

But the #1 reason why verse 12 irritates me and the #1 reason why I don't like Adam in verse 12 is because I see that guy in my mirror way too often. That's why it really irritates me. I figure out all kinds of ways to rationalize my behavior. I figure out reasons why it really wasn't my fault and it really isn't sin. I know how easy that is to do. The picture we have of God is a loving heavenly Father who is saying, "You know, there's no need for all that. You sinned. Confess it. Let's restore this relationship." But when there's sin, there's shame, and when there's shame, there's blame and we're trying to hide somehow from God.

In verse 13 God addresses Eve and Eve does well – she just says it like it is: "Then the Lord God said to the woman, 'What is this that you have done?' And the woman said, 'The serpent deceived me and I ate.'" (*That's pretty much the way it happened.*)

Then in verse 14 God starts addressing the serpent: "And the Lord God said to the serpent, 'Because you have done this, cursed are you more than all the cattle and more than every beast of the field; on your belly shall you go, and dust shall you eat all the days of your life.'" It was believed when someone was said to eat dust that was the ultimate act of humiliation – the ultimate act of defeat. So God's making a statement that, at this moment when the serpent may have thought he had won his greatest victory, God said, "You will suffer your greatest defeat. You will be humiliated for eternity."

Verse 15: "And I will put enmity (*a strong word that means hostility*) between you and the woman and between your seed and her seed, he shall bruise you on the head and you shall bruise him on the heel." In that verse he's talking about the seed of the serpent (those who rebel against God) being in conflict with the seed of the woman (those who would lead godly lives) and there will be this battle played out. The ultimate expression of the seed of the woman would be the Savior, the Messiah, who would come along and who would crush the head of the serpent. There is a reality that sin brings forth death, and God said that it would. God could have backed off and said, "You made your choice and now you have to die with it." But instead He said, "This is the choice that you have made, and Satan now has brought death into the world, but I'm going to turn around and raise up the seed of the woman." The Bible later identifies the seed of the woman as Jesus Himself who would die on a cross and defeat death once and for all. Therefore, Satan's head would be crushed, even though Satan would bruise him on the heel. It's the first statement that hints toward the coming of a Savior. Even though death now reigns, God would do what only God could do to bring life.

Then He talks to the woman in verse 16: "To the woman he said, 'I will greatly multiply your pain in childbirth, in pain you shall bring forth children. Yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.'" I think these statements refer both to the pregnancy process and also to the delivery process. There would be pain in carrying a child,

which has to do with things such as miscarriages. And then there would be pain in the delivery of that child.

Then it says, “Your desire shall be for your husband and he shall rule over you.” I take both the words desire and rule to be negative words. They’re used in Genesis 4:7 to talk about sin having the desire to take over Cain, which is really not desire in a positive. Instead, it is the desire to dominate, take over, to control. Rule is used in the sense that you must dominate – you must rule over. So it’s a picture that, at one time, there was this beautiful harmony between the man and the woman, as God intended. But now, because of sin, she will have the desire to take over his role. He will then put her down and there will be this conflict. And we’ve seen that in every culture all down through the ages – conflict between men and women; between male and female.

In verse 17 God then talks to Adam: “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, ‘You shall not eat from it’” (*Again, there’s an emphasis here of: “Adam, I’m God, you’re not. That’s where we got into trouble.”*) “Cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field; by the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, ‘til you return to the ground, because from it you were taken; for you are dust and to dust you shall return.”

He’s talking to Adam about the fact that whatever is necessary to sustain life will come with great difficulty. At one time Adam was ‘one with creation’ and in harmony with creation – before there was sin. Now it will be a battle in order to provide what is necessary to live.

When I look at those three different paragraphs: to the serpent, to the woman and to Adam, I find myself asking the question: What’s the bigger picture here? What is really being said by God? We understand that there are consequences to sin. Because death was introduced, there is disease, heartache, pain, murder and all of the things that are consequences of sin. So what’s the point of this focus here?

In Genesis 2 the emphasis is on life and that God breathed in the breath of life. And God gave Adam and Eve everything for life. It was everything that we could have ever wanted. He promised, though, that sin would bring forth death. When Adam and Eve sinned, it brought death and all of the consequences with that. So God introduces the reality that one day He will do what is necessary to defeat death and offer life. That is the promise of a Messiah. But there is also this understanding that the only way that we, as sinful people, can go from death to life is if we understand we are not God and we need a Savior. If we say, in this lie, that we can do it ourselves and be like God, we will die an eternal death.

So God says, “Out of my goodness I’m going to do what is necessary to remind you that I’m God – you’re not. And that you need a Savior and I’ll provide that.” So that at the very moment of conception, all the way through the birth of life, and all the way through what is necessary to sustain life, God says, “I’m going to bring pain. I’m going to remind you that you’re not God. Every time you experience that pain, you are going to be reminded that you need God. That you need Me and you need the life that only I can bring.” Understand that these consequences are not out of God’s wrath; they are out of God’s goodness. It’s God’s way of saying, “I need to do whatever is necessary so that you will remember that you need

Me. Because if you don't remember that, you have no hope for life. Therefore, I'll provide a Savior and I'll do what is needed so that you will realize your need for a Savior."

It's interesting in the Bible how often leprosy is used as a picture of sin. There is an interesting fact about leprosy that you may not know. When you see pictures of people who are lepers, often they have sores and big wounds and missing fingers or toes, and it's really quite a gruesome sight. But did you know that the leprosy really isn't causing that? Leprosy simply deadens the nerve endings so people can't feel any more. And once people can't feel any more, they self-destruct. Because if I no longer feel pain, then I start to bruise, and cut and damage and break. I bump into things and I don't know that it hurts, and soon I will self-destruct. That's why you see lepers reach into a raging fire and pull something out, because they don't feel it. In the end, it is the fact that they don't feel pain that leads to their destruction.

You see, that's what God is concerned about. That we will think that we can be like Him. God has brought enough pain into the world to remind us that we're not God. These are the consequences of sin, and we are in need of a Savior, because that's the only hope we have for life. As a matter of fact, the following verses indicate very clearly that Adam understood that.

Verse 20: "Now the man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all the living." Now where does he get that? That's a very positive statement. But the last thing that God told Adam was, "Adam, you're dying. You were dust. You will live. You will go back to dust." So where does Adam get the idea to call Eve the mother of the living? It's because Adam understood exactly what God was saying. Adam understood that, by faith, God said He's going to bring whatever is necessary to win the victory over death and there is hope. So rather than calling Eve the mother of the dying, Adam calls her the mother of the living. That was Adam's way of saying that he had faith in what God just said to him. It's a very powerful statement.

Verse 21: "And the Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them." That's about God shedding the blood of the innocent animals in order to make a covering for Adam and Eve's sin. Of course it's a beautiful picture of the coming of the Messiah. That one day the very Lamb of God would shed His innocent blood so that the sins of the world might be atoned for (might be covered – might be forgiven). It's a beautiful picture of the fact that there is hope and there is forgiveness. There is, now, the chance for life, even though sin brings forth death.

Verse 22: "Then the Lord God said, 'Behold, the man has become like One of Us, knowing good and evil; and now, lest he stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever (*meaning live forever in his sin*).'" What God is saying there is not that Adam and Eve became like God in experiencing evil, because God has never experienced evil. It's again saying that they can be like God and decide for themselves what is right and what is wrong. God is saying, "I could have a tree of life and leave it in the garden and also leave them in the garden, but they've decided for themselves that they'd make up their own rules. They might eat from that tree. They'd live forever in that state of spiritual death." So God says that the only way to prevent that is to get them out of the garden so they will realize they are dying and realize their need for a Savior. That is what God does. Even putting them out of the garden is an act of God's goodness.

Verse 23: “Therefore the Lord God sent him out from the garden of Eden to cultivate the ground from which he was taken. So He drove the man out; and at the east of the garden of Eden, He stationed the cherubim, and the flaming sword which turned every direction, to guard the way to the tree of life.” God was determined to make sure that Adam and Eve knew that there is life, but that life can only be found in Him. So, from the moment of conception to the birth of life, through whatever it takes to survive in life, there will be pain as a way of reminding us that we need a Savior. Because if we don’t come to grips with that, we will die an eternal death. Even moving them out of the garden was an act of God’s goodness, so that they would know that and be transferred from the kingdom of death to the kingdom of life.

The New Testament tells us very clearly that the fulfillment of what God promised was Jesus Himself, the Son of God, who came to earth, shed His blood on a cross for the sins of the world. We don’t have to live eternally in shame, hiding from God. The Bible tells us that when we confess our sin before God, our sin is removed from us as far as the east is from the west. Corrie ten Boom used to say, “Our sins are buried in the Sea of Forgetfulness and then God posts a sign that says, ‘No fishing allowed.’ ”

When the Bible says that God remembers our sin no more – that God forgets our sin – it doesn’t mean that He forgets intellectually. It means He forgets in the sense that He no longer holds that sin to our account. No longer in the relationship is there any sin between us and God. Even though there may be natural consequences to those choices we’ve made, the relationship is restored. The relationship is right. God remembers that sin against us no more.

We have to accept the fact that, if we have confessed our sin before God and that sin is remembered, it’s not because it’s remembered by God. Because God remembers that sin no more. That is a reflection of the goodness of God.