

Where Are You? 9-24-06

Genesis 3:8-13 (NIV)

8 Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. 9 But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?" 10 He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid." 11 And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?" 12 The man said, "The woman you put here with me--she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it." 13 Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

God had given Adam and Eve everything they needed to be content. He had filled the garden with fruit bearing trees, provided the perfect climate, and even given them a choice to obey and live or rebel and die. Last week we looked at the subject of evil and discovered that it is not a creation of God but the turning of the heart away from the goodness of God. (Matthew 15:19) The fallen angel, Lucifer, planted a seed of discontentment in the heart of Eve. It is a poison that he is infected with and knows how to communicate to others. Seeing her weak response, he challenged the very word of God, the word that had created all things. (Colossians 1:16) Eve gave in to that discontentment, desiring something she neither needed nor would even be good for her. In her newly discovered lust, she took of the forbidden fruit. But she didn't stop there; she gave it to Adam as well. They both realized they were naked and tried to cover themselves with aprons made from leaves.

8 Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. The story of the serpent and Eve's conversation now over, the text returns to calling God YHWH Elohim, the covenant God who is near. He was walking? What are we to make of that? God is a spirit, but God is manifested physically in His Son. (John 4:24) The Apostle Paul wrote that Jesus is the manifestation of the invisible God. He went on to say that Jesus is the firstborn over all creation. (Colossians 1:15) That doesn't mean that He was created first for He is eternally with the Father. (John 1:1) Firstborn is a position in a family. The firstborn is the heir. He is the one who carries out the responsibilities of the father, at times even representing him while he is living. So we can see this One walking in the Garden as none other than Jesus. Theologians call this appearance a Christophany.

Jesus was physically present to walk and talk with them and probably did so on a regular, perhaps daily basis. He was Emmanuel to them, God with us, as He would be again in Israel at the incarnation. Does that not make the rebellion of Adam and Eve even more heinous? Imagine having everything you could possibly need and a daily morning walk with Jesus. Then along comes this talking snake that says you are missing something. But you know that experience, you don't have to imagine. That is our life! We have everything we need. (Philippians 4:19) You say you don't

Commented [notes1]: 19 For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander.
Matt 15:19 (NIV)

Commented [notes2]: 16 For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him.
Col 1:16 (NIV)

Commented [notes3]: 24 God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth."
John 4:24 (NIV)

Commented [notes4]: 15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.
Col 1:15 (NIV)

Commented [notes5]: 1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
John 1:1 (NIV)

Commented [notes6]: 19 And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.
Phil 4:19 (NIV)

take a walk with Jesus? Why not? How much easier to be deceived if you aren't taking your daily walk with Him!

Instead of running out to meet Him, they hid. This is a normal reaction when we sin. Some people avoid church because of this very reason. They are in sin. They know they are rebelling against God, being their own god, going their own way, and the presence of God makes them uncomfortable. But it isn't just coming to church, it's even praying, or being still, any place His presence might break through and convict them. That is why they avoid some of you as you lovingly but boldly proclaim that their need is Jesus. So they live a life of hiding from God, from conviction of His Spirit. (John 16:8)

There are two types of people in the world. There are those who love His presence and those who hide from it. Jesus said as much in John 3. ¹⁹ *This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil.* ²⁰ *Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.* ²¹ *But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God.* John 3:19-21 (NIV) We'd like to come up with a third category, one of walking back and forth from darkness to light, but Jesus didn't say that. Everyone is either hiding or seeking His presence. (Job 31:33)

⁹ *But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?"* Do you think for a minute that Jesus didn't know their physical location? He is asking much more than that. He is giving them a chance to search their hearts and repent. Why are you where you are? Why are you hiding? Why are you avoiding My presence? He often comes to us with the same question. Where are you today, hiding or running to meet with Him?

¹⁰ *He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid."* God is addressing Adam first. He is the head of his family. He was responsible for conveying God's word to Eve. Adam didn't take the opportunity given to him by God. He should have said, "I rebelled against Your one command and was afraid of the justice I deserve. I repent. I was wrong. Have mercy on me." Instead he set a pattern that you have seen played out over the millennia and even in your own life. He made an excuse. "Uh, I was naked so I hid." What? Did he think Jesus never saw him in his birthday suite? Did he think Jesus was going to lust after his body? What a pathetic response! God could have struck them dead the instant they ate the fruit, but God has redemption in mind. (Hosea 13:14) It is sad that we can be so deceived by sin that we doubt the good intentions of God and hide.

We make pathetic excuses as well. "I wasn't happy. Surely God wants me to be happy." "I couldn't resist." "I tried as long as I could." The Apostle Paul tells us that we all face the same kinds of temptations, but that God always provides a way out of them. (1Corinthians 10:13) Temptations abound in the world today, but for everyone God has promised an escape. But if we fail, if we give in and don't take the escape given us, don't hide. Don't make a pathetic excuse. Don't make it worse by remaining in the darkness. Run to His presence and seek forgiveness. He

Commented [notes7]: 8 When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: John 16:8 (NIV)

Commented [notes8]: 33 If I have concealed my sin as men do, by hiding my guilt in my heart Job 31:33 (NIV)

Commented [notes9]: 14 "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. Where, O death, are your plagues? Where, O grave, is your destruction? I will have no compassion, Hosea 13:14 (NIV)

Commented [notes10]: 13 No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it. 1 Cor 10:13 (NIV)

promises that if we will just confess our sins, that He will be faithful and just to forgive us and cleanse us. (1John 1:9)

¹¹ *And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?"* Jesus is giving them a second chance to confess and repent. The first round with the simple "Where are you?" was met with an excuse. That means Adam had to be thinking that Jesus didn't realize what had happened, so Jesus gets right to the point with them. "Look, I know you did it, otherwise you wouldn't see yourself as being naked. You did what I told you not to, didn't you?"

You would think that standing in front of the all-knowing Creator, confronted with their sin, they would do like David did with Nathan and confess. (2Samuel 12:13a) You would think they would break down in tears and on their knees plead for forgiveness, but they now have the knowledge of evil. They aren't very skilled in it yet, but they are getting a heck of a start. Now the blame game begins.

¹² *The man said, "The woman you put here with me--she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it."* "It's my wife's fault. How do you say 'no' to your wife?" This is the second dumb answer from Adam. He has had two chances now to face the fact that he intentionally rebelled against God, and he is still making excuses. This is fallen human nature. It's in you and me as well. "Why did you gossip?" "I was just telling them so they could pray for that situation." "Why did you cheat on your taxes?" "Everyone else is doing it and I don't want to pay more than my fair share." "Why did you cheat on your spouse?" "Because they weren't meeting my needs!" Will Rogers said there have been two great passings in America, the passing of the buffalo and the passing of the buck. Actually the passing of the buck started right here in the garden. It's the blame game. It's never your fault. It's the culture of victimhood. It is always someone else's fault, right? It's the way you were raised, your God given desires, or the influence of a friend, anything but sin in your own wicked heart. We just refuse to face the fact that we gave in to the allure of evil.

The spotlight of conviction falls on us and we whip out our mirror and reflect it on to someone else. Watch the way Eve does it. ¹³ *Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."* The devil made me do it! I was tricked. Yeah right! Tricked into giving in to the desires already in your heart. Blaming the devil doesn't cut it. Maybe she wouldn't have gone so far had he not been there egging her on, but the desire to do it and gullibility to follow through came right out of her heart. (Jeremiah 17:9)

Even though Adam and Eve were standing in front of Jesus, the eternal Son of God, they were still hiding. They blamed everyone else but themselves. Ultimately this goes back to blaming God. We see it in Adam's response, "the woman YOU put me here with..." (my emphasis) What happened to that first poem uttered by man, "Bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh. She shall be called woman for she was taken out of man." Instead it's now, "God, You created her. You stuck me here with her. Now You want me to accept blame? No way. It's Your fault." Sounds kind of harsh but it is the same stupid thing any of us do. Every time we make an excuse

Commented [notes11]: 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.
1 John 1:9 (NIV)

Commented [notes12]: 13 Then David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD."
2 Sam 12:13 (NIV)

Commented [notes13]: 9 The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?
Jer 17:9 (NIV)

for our sin and blame another for our circumstances we are ultimately blaming God. (James 1:13) Our perspective of what we have has been so skewed by our sin sick heart that all we can think of is what our heart is lusting after. God never tempts us. James tells us that each of us is tempted when our own evil desires drag us away. (James 1:14)

Commented [notes14]: 13 When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; James 1:13 (NIV)

Commented [notes15]: 14 but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. James 1:14 (NIV)

If we would just count our blessings what a difference there would be in our attitude. If we would appreciate all that we do have, our lust would look so out of place. Are you having a hard time doing that? Come with me to India next June. You'll never complain about traffic again. Eat meatless curry on japati or rice every meal for two weeks and your meals in America will seem fit for a king. You may just need something to compare your life to. But you don't have to go that far. Go on a mission trip a few hours south of here. Suddenly your house will look like a mansion, your income like that of a rich man, and your car like Rolls Royce! But it isn't even about possessions, it is about the fact that He is willing to walk and talk with us through all the things we face in life. Get a glimpse of other places praying to lifeless idols, the hopelessness they feel, and suddenly your prayer life will seem invaluable to you. (1Timothy 6:17)

Commented [notes16]: 17 Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. 1 Tim 6:17 (NIV)

In the authorized version, Job 9:20 tells us that if we justify our self, our own mouth will condemn us. If we say we are perfect, we prove our self perverse. That is what Adam and Eve were doing, and that is the same thing that we do when we justify our wicked hearts. We are saying we are not wrong, in other words, we are perfect. That just shows how perverse we have become. Adam's mouth condemned him. Eve's mouth condemned her. Every time we excuse our sin by blaming someone or something else, we condemn ourselves.

Commented [notes17]: 20 Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me. Rev 3:20 (NIV)

What should they have done? When Jesus calls to us, "Where are you?" we should come running with confession and repentance. The consequence of sin would have still been there. They still would die, and the earth would still come under the curse, but their fellowship with God would have been quickly restored, and their lesson quickly learned. That is our greatest asset in this life, our fellowship with God. When we play the blame game, we avoid learning the lesson we need to learn, but worst of all we lose our fellowship with God. Until we face the fact that the rebellion came from within our own wicked hearts and turn from that, our fellowship with God will not be restored. (Revelation 3:20) You can't hang onto the idea that God is keeping good things from you and expect to hear answers to prayer. (Hebrews 11:6)

Commented [notes18]: 6 And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him. Heb 11:6 (NIV)

Commented [notes19]: 27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. John 14:27 (NIV)

Commented [notes20]: 5 You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. 1 Thess 5:5 (NIV)

Where are you today? If you long for the presence of the Lord in your life, be at peace. (John 14:27) You are a child of the light. (1Thessalonians 5:5) What a wonderful place to be. Life may be difficult, and there may be a million things about it you would like to change, but you have set your heart on things above and not on things of the world. (Colossians 3:1,2) The peace that passes understanding is yours. (Philippians 4:7)

Commented [notes21]: 1 Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts Col 3:1 (NIV)

Commented [notes22]: 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Phil 4:7 (NIV)

If you are hiding, if you would rather stay out of the powerful convicting presence of God, please consider this. The only place you will be truly free is in His presence. Sin will master you, or Jesus can help you master it. (Genesis 4:7) He longs to set you

Commented [notes23]: 7 If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it." Gen 4:7 (NIV)

free if you will just come into His presence and lay your sin out before Him with a cry for mercy. (John 8:36) In the stillness He will speak to your heart.

Commented [notes24]: 36 So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. John 8:36 (NIV)

Christian, if you are out of fellowship with the Lord. If you don't walk and talk with Him, it is probably because you have justified some sin in your life. It's not worth it. Whatever it is, it can't be worth it. God doesn't tell you not to do something because He wants to withhold something good from you. He tells you not to do things that are harmful to you. Justification is denial, but it doesn't change the fact that sin is rebellion against God and His goodness. Step into His presence and come clean. (Psalm 32:5) Stop justifying what you know is sin, and let it go this morning and turn away from it and fellowship with the Lord can be restored.

Commented [notes25]: 5 Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD"-- and you forgave the guilt of my sin. Selah Psalms 32:5 (NIV)

One man never passed the buck and accepted all the blame though He alone had never sinned. He was hung between two thieves that were guilty. One of them listened to this man and watched him as he died and said, "This man has done nothing wrong, but we deserve our punishment." (Luke 23:41) He finally faced the fact that he couldn't justify his sin any longer. Then the One on the cross in the middle in gracious mercy took that thief's blame and along with it yours and mine. (Isaiah 53:6) When we stop trying to pass it off on others, Jesus will take it upon Himself. He said to the man who faced the fact that he deserved what he got, "Today, you will be with me in Paradise." (Luke 23:43)

Commented [notes26]: 41 We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong." Luke 23:41 (NIV)

Commented [notes27]: 6 We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. Isaiah 53:6 (NIV)

Commented [notes28]: 43 Jesus answered him, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise." Luke 23:43 (NIV)

What a contrast! The first Adam insisted it was God's fault. The second Adam was willing to graciously take all the world's blasphemous guilt upon Himself so that we might once again walk and talk with Him in the cool of the Garden. ⁸ *Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden.* ⁹ *But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?"*

He wants to be Emmanuel now, God with you and you and you. That should be so exciting to us. We are involved in this great battle for the souls of men. The angels roar with excitement as each soul is won. The saints that have gone before us watch in anticipation. (Hebrews 12:1) Some of us on the field act as if we can't hear the crowd. We don't walk with our team leader, Jesus. The team huddles with Him to hear the next play and we are just wandering around downfield. Our team scores as an enemy team player changes to our side. The crowd roars and we just smile and say, "Oh, that's good." But those with Captain Emmanuel are just as elated as those in the stands because they see them with eyes of faith and even more, they see the Captain's joy. (Hebrews 12:2) They are so anxious to hear the next play, hoping it will involve them in some way. "Where are you?" Some are actually listening to distracting suggestions of the captain of the other team. Why would anyone want to do that?

Commented [notes29]: 1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Heb 12:1 (NIV)

Commented [notes30]: 2 Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Heb 12:2 (NIV)