

### Genesis 3:8-13

We are continuing this morning with our study of Genesis, picking up at verse 8 of chapter 3, and working through to verse 13 of the same chapter. Now, if you have been with us from the beginning of this series, then you will know that we are taking a look at the first 11 chapters of this very important book, in hopes of understanding some of the main themes that form the basic biblical plot line, and indeed, - the plot line of the whole world.

In the first 2 chapters of Genesis we have seen that *at the center of God's purposeful, creative work are two people who are privileged to live in God's beautiful and abundant world and are generously commissioned to live in relationship with God and AS his images - filling the creation with others who bear God's likeness and then managing God's creation on His behalf, and for His own glory.*

Beginning with chapter 3 of Genesis, this happy story takes a sudden turn for the worse, with the introduction of sin and evil into God's perfect world and the beginning of what theologians call "redemptive history" - which is simply the story of how God fixes everything that got broken from Genesis 3 onward.

Last week we looked at the opening seven verses of this chapter where we watched the temptation of the first woman and man in the garden, and then their giving IN to that temptation, and finally the beginning effects of all that upon them - effects whose impact and significance will become increasingly obvious as the Bible unfolds. But the overall message of those first seven verses can be summarized like this: *Attempting to base your life on anything OTHER than the revelation of God leads to disastrous consequences.*

The verses before us this morning - verses 8-13 - build on that foundation and show very clearly that *the disastrous consequences of sin extend to the personal, interpersonal, and spiritual and cannot be hidden from God.* The verses which follow, 14-24, will go even further to show that *God's holiness requires that he confronts sinners and addresses their sin but that even in the midst of that judgment, there is still mercy and a future hope.*

But our focus this morning, once again, will be on verses 8-13 - looking at some of the initial and particular consequences of sin and the impossibility of hiding these things from the Creator. Before we look at that, let's pray together.....(Pray and read passage)

While the precise moment at which the man and the woman crossed the line from sinless humanity to *fallen* humanity is not absolutely certain - I mean, was it when they ate, or was it at some point before when they determined in their heart that they *would* eat - or even before that, when they began to question and doubt God's Word and God's good intentions for them? - at whatever point sin *precisely* entered the picture, the point at which the *consequences* of sin began to manifest themselves is much more certain.

The text of Genesis tells us that there was a specific moment where the effects of sin

“kicked in” so to speak. And it all began with an “opening of their eyes” - not, of course, referring to a *literal* eye opening as their eyes were no doubt functioning perfectly well, but referring instead to a change in their *perception*, a change in the way they *interpreted* what they saw and experienced. Their perception became *tainted*. It became skewed in an unhealthy direction.

The immediate consequence of this changed perception was the fact that they could no longer look upon one another or walk about - in their natural, nakedness - without feeling some sense of shame or embarrassment. Concerning this, Alec Motyer helpfully writes,

*Having come to knowledge on the basis of sin, instead of on the basis of holiness...no knowledge is now pure. Everything suggests a [possible] corruption. The old openness with which they had lived with each other, literally “naked and unashamed”, is replaced by a secretive awareness of self, and a desire to retire from the other, to hide, to retreat from the old un-self-protective mutuality....Innocence has changed, but not into God-intended holiness, rather into fear, as each with “urgency and desperation” seeks protection from the gaze of the other. The world seen on the basis of disobedience and evil is very different from the world seen on the basis of obedience and good....*

Motyer is alluding to the fact that the introduction of sin into the human experience has brought with it all sorts of new - and distressing - possibilities: the possibility of doubt, the possibility of not trusting others - even one’s own Creator!, the possibility of deceiving and being deceived, the possibility of conflict with yourself, the possibility of fear - all sorts of things are now part of the human equation. Evil is no longer merely theoretical, it is *real*.

It’s like being in a zoo and discovering there is a lion in the African Safari exhibit. Now as long as the lion is in the enclosure you feel safe and secure. To be sure, he IS a menace - but only a theoretical one. But if out of the blue someone comes up to you shouting, “The lion has escaped, he’s running loose somewhere in the park!” If someone tells you THAT then, suddenly, the evil is no longer theoretical or potential - its actual, it’s loose, all around you. That reality introduces a whole new range of feelings on your part - you want to run, to hide, to protect yourself in some way.

In a similar fashion, now that the man and woman have sinned evil is no longer a theoretical possibility, it is a real menace - around them and even within them. The lion is truly out of the cage. And so, that new reality generates all sorts of new feelings - shame, guilt, a desire to run, to hide, to self-protect.

And those realities enter into and affect even the legitimate relationship that exists between the man and the woman. Indeed, if the Creator’s good intentions and purposes could be doubted - which they were - if *that* relationship could be questioned, then surely it was at least possible for the man and woman to doubt and wonder about the reliability of each other. And so a certain tentativeness enters into that relationship, a feeling of vulnerability begins to creep in. The desire to hide and self-protect is nurtured this feeling that perhaps complete transparency and open-ness might not be the best thing. Perhaps taking some protective measures might be the way to go.

And so they seek a covering of some sort, making use of some fig leaves to conceal the

most private and intimate parts of themselves - that which is related to their sexuality. And this covering they no doubt regarded as adequate - at least in terms of each other. To be sure, the shame, and guilt, and desire to hide are all still there - but these things were rendered at least manageable for the time being.

But then God shows up - "And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day." Now one of the fascinating things about this verse is that, *after* God shows up, even though they have already dealt with their nakedness and have made coverings for themselves - they still run and hide.

Now, as we'll see in a minute, there is more going on here than just their sense of nakedness, but for the moment I want to stay on this point: the simple fact that the coverings they made seemed adequate when it was just the two of them but *inadequate* when God showed up. Why is that? Why is it that when God arrives on the scene, even though they are covered up, they give in to this uncontrollable desire to run and hide?

Well, it's fairly obvious why they run and hide, isn't it? Because they both know that they haven't fixed the problem. They have not addressed the *real* issue. They hadn't undone what they had done or dealt with their actions - only the *consequences* of their actions - or at least the consequences most relevant to them.

If God hadn't shown up, they might have been able to go on pretending that things were okay for quite some time - going about the place, as they were, looking absolutely ridiculous with these fig leaves draped around their waists. But God *does* show up and they can't pretend anymore, and the fig leaves just won't do. So they run and hide.

Now, there's more to be said about the man and the woman, but let's shift gears for a moment to think about God's part in the story. As one commentator has observed, God's arrival in the garden was not just an afternoon stroll - it was God on a mission. Here is God, the very first missionary, seeking out these people who have been endowed with his own image - distorted and disfigured though that image had now become within them.

And, when God arrives in the garden he is, of course, fully aware of all that has happened - He is, after all, *God*. And so, while he does indeed ask the man, now in hiding, "Where are you?", it is obviously not for God's benefit that this question is asked. Rather, the question is asked for the man's benefit. Right? God knows where the man and the woman are, and why they are there. But he wants them to see what he sees. He wants them to appreciate the gravity of their situation which, as yet, they clearly do not.

And so, rather than charging into this garden and marching straight up to the man and woman, pronouncing sentence upon them, God graciously approaches them with a question - drawing them out, or at least presenting them with the opportunity to step forward and come clean.

Well, with this question, "Where are you?" we are witnessing, as one writer has noted, *the beginning of redemptive history* - a history which is not the story of people in search of God

but the story of the God who comes looking for his people - and will continue to do so over and over again, right through the centuries, culminating in the life and ministry of Jesus - the Shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep, who also came to seek and save the lost. The beginning of all that can be traced back to this question - the very first question which God asks in Scripture.

And so God confronts the man - who represents the couple - by means of this question and it is obvious from the response that the man knows *exactly* what God is asking. I mean, in response to the question, "Where are you?" the man doesn't say "Over here" or something like that. Rather, he responds as if God had asked him a *why* question. God asks *where* he is, and the man responds by saying *why* he is, where he is. So, the man is clearly aware of what God is after.

"I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked, and I hid myself". Now we've already considered some of the dynamics regarding the committing of sin and feeling naked, and wanting to hide, etc. So, we won't go over all of that again.

But what I *do* want you to see at this point is what the man does NOT say. The man doesn't say, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, *because I disobeyed you*, and I hid myself." The man says nothing about that. He doesn't admit here to any wrongdoing. He only talks about the *condition* that resulted from his actions, not the action itself. Do you notice that? In other words, he is still trying to hide what he's done, trying to deceive God, trying to avoid dealing with the real issue.

Well, of course, God is not at all thrown off by this attempted mis-direction play. He "keeps his eye on the ball" so to speak, and asks "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" Once again, God asks a question he already knows the answer to. Once again we see in this an illustration of His grace and patience toward His exasperating people.

And, once again, when given the opportunity to come clean, the man balks. He ducks and weaves and dodges and twists. In response to God's very direct question, the man gives a very *indirect*, elusive answer. The man said, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate." As Hamilton says, the man, who has blatantly sinned and is the guilty party here, makes himself out to be the *victim* - the victim of the woman's actions, and the victim of God's actions.

First of all, he points the finger, at *God*. Imagine the audacity - reminding God that it was He who created the woman for the man - as if to say, "You know, God, if you hadn't brought her to me, none of this would have *ever* happened." And then as if that alone is not enough - he goes on to "remind" God that it was the woman who gave him the fruit. She was the one who led him astray and enticed him.

And so, it is only *after* implicating both God and the woman, in his own sin, that the man, finally, at the last possible moment, and in extremely minimalist fashion, admits - "I ate". Again,

as if to say, “Yes, okay, I did it but only after all these other things happened. I mean....come on.... you can hardly blame me, can you?.....”

The man demonstrates here a fundamental unwillingness to admit his own wrongdoing, to accept responsibility for what he has done. As Cassuto points out, the man’s attempt to shift even part of the blame to the woman is as cowardly as it is pathetic since it doesn’t at all explain his failure to resist the will of the woman. In other words - yes, she did offer the fruit to him - but he still chose to take it and eat it. Nobody held a gun to his head and made him do it. He did it because he *wanted* to do it - which is the very thing he is unwilling to admit to God.

Well, from there, God turns to the woman. Now, He is not finished with the man, as we will see next week, Lord willing. But He wants to get to the bottom of all this, so He keeps moving on. With the woman, he asks a different question, and yet one which is driving at the same idea: “What is this that you have done?” And, following the lead of her loser husband, the woman points the finger somewhere else - to the serpent who deceived her - and than admits, at the last, that she ate. Again, the woman’s desire is the same as the man’s: to avoid taking responsibility for her actions and to cast herself in the best possible light, not as the guilty party, but as the poor victim of another’s deception.

And so, with that last statement by the woman, the principal characters in this sordid drama we call “the Fall of Mankind” have all been exposed and from this point, God will begin to measure out his just and justified response to this frontal assault on his person and purposes.

But *that* will be the focus of our study next week. For the remainder of our time *this morning*, let’s summarize some of what we have seen and spend a couple minutes thinking about some of the implications of these verses for God’s people.

For starters we need to think about how these verse would have been significant for the people who first *received* them - the people of God, with Moses, in the wilderness. They have left behind the land of Egypt and their former slavery, they are now on the edge of the Promised Land, after 40 heart-breaking years of wandering around in the desert as a result of their faithlessness and disobedience and refusal to enter and take the land when God *first* brought them to it decades before.

These people do not need to be told that the world is a fallen place. They do not need any proof that sin is real. They have seen and experienced these things first hand - in themselves, and in others as they suffered for 400 years under the cruel hand of Pharaoh. They did not need to be told that these things were real, but they did need to be told where these things came from in the first place and, more importantly, whether their situation was hopeless and futile, whether they were an aberration in the scheme of things, whether there might be some rival power or entity out there that might threaten to undo all that God is doing. They needed to know those kinds of things.

But more than that, in hearing and receiving these accounts through Moses, their leader, they would have seen where their own sin and suffering came from, they would have been reminded of how at the root of all this was an unwillingness to accept the revealed will of God,

they would have been reminded of the danger of adding to or ignoring God's Word in any way, they would have been reminded that no one can sin with impunity.

And so here were these people, about to enter into a land that was their special place - a paradise of their own. And just as in the garden, they too were the recipients of God's revealed will - even more extensively than Adam and Eve. And the question for these people was this: Would they hear this account of the man and the woman and learn anything? Would they see that their remaining IN the land, and in fellowship with their covenant God was linked to their responsiveness to him through his revealed will? These accounts would have been very important for God's people in Moses' day.

For God's people in our own day, just as was the case in other ages, these words provide a sobering description and explanation for why we are the way we are, and why we behave the way we behave, what the requirements are for remaining in God's paradise, and why we, personally, will never be able to meet them.

Who can look at these verses in any detail and not be forced, all along the way, to hang your head and admit that you are not a stranger to any of the behaviors displayed here in and through the life of the first man and woman?

Who among us has not doubted the goodness of God and the trustworthiness of God and, as a result, attempted to take matters into our own hands, choosing to rely upon yourself and your own ability to secure whatever it is that you feel you must have - only to make a royal mess of things in the end? Who has never done this?

Who among us has never been guilty of adding to what God has said, or of regarding our own impressions and ideas as being equal to God's revealed will, or, in actual fact, as being more important than what God has said?

Who among us has not allowed our own personal fulfillment to stand in the place that belongs only to God and, in pursuit of that pathetic idol, have ignored God's countless blessings and undeserved goodness toward us already?

Who among us has never known the experience of guilt and shame, has never felt fear, has never wanted to hide or run away because of those things?

Who among us has never attempted, when confronted by our own sin and failure, to shift the focus away from our own actions and, instead, onto our condition, away from what we have done and onto what we are feeling?

Who among us has never tried to avoid responsibility for what we have done? Who among us has never tried to shift the blame from ourselves onto others and made ourselves out to be the victims, rather than the perpetrators?

Can anyone in this room look at these things and doubt, for a single moment, that these people are *your* people, *your* ancestors? Can you look at this picture, and see these characteristics, and honestly say that you don't see the family resemblance here? IS THIS NOT US? Are we not the heirs of these people? Does their blood not run through our veins?

And do not people today - still - in an effort to hide their nakedness before God, and to conceal their guilt and shame, go out and find all sorts of ways to try and cover it up, all sorts of ways to assuage their bruised consciences and tender egos, to convince themselves that everything IS alright, and everything will BE alright?

Do we not see this same sort of moral and spiritual schizophrenia all over the place in our own day - on the one hand, we see people who are willing to acknowledge the existence of pain, and evil, and broken-ness and shame and guilt - a kind of "nakedness" - and yet, at the same time, unwilling to admit the real problem - that the personal/psychological disintegration we experience and the social distortions that we endure are all symptoms of a deeper and fundamental spiritual/cosmic disruption - that the creatures are in rebellion against their very own Creator? Isn't this all around us? People will readily admit they are not perfect, and in the very next breath, deny that God has any place in this, or any ultimate claim upon any of us.

And just as for the man and the woman, these pathetic attempts at self-covering, self-atonement, at running away, or hiding, or shifting the blame, or victimization - which is just another form of blame-shifting - all of these attempts at Fall-management are a kind of self-covering that enables us to just keep our consciences in check. They are the "fig leaf" by which we are able to just manage our interactions with one another. But these tactics and methods only remain effective so long as it's just us in the picture - comparing ourselves WITH ourselves, measuring ourselves BY ourselves. As long as that is happening, people are able to maintain the illusion of "okay-ness".

Until God shows up. When God shows up, our attempts at self-covering and self-righteousness, and our pathetic half-measures and fig leaves are all shown up for what they are - completely inadequate. When God shows up, we begin to see things, for the first time, as they really are, not as we imagine them to be.

And knowing these things, and seeing the way things are ought to move us with both gratitude and compassion. With gratitude because we realize that it is only because God has shown up in our own lives, only because he has pursued us, and not let us get away with our fig leaves and our blame shifting and our denial of responsibility - it is only because of those things that we have any hope. As we will see more completely next week, it is only because God has determined to deal with our sin *personally* and to *personally* provide a covering for us that *is* adequate - it is only because of those things that we have been forgiven - in spite of ourselves.

But if there is a motivation here for gratitude, there is also a motivation for compassion - evangelical compassion towards those who do not yet know the Lord Jesus Christ. Right? Because the reality is that we are surrounded by people who, like Adam and Eve, think they have dealt with or ARE dealing with their stuff - and they are not. And they only live in that illusion because God hasn't shown up yet to deliver them from it. We need to pray that God will be

merciful to them now. We need to pray that they will not end up like the pitiful people in Revelation 6:15-16 who, when confronted by the awesome presence of God preferred that they would be crushed by the mountains rather than stand un-protected, completely exposed before the penetrating gaze of a Holy God.

So, we need to pray that God will use us to make His Presence very real to people today, through the Gospel, so that they too can come face to face with our Great God, have their consciences laid bare by His Holiness, and then be comforted and covered by His Goodness and Grace and Patience and Mercy.