

**Reading:** Genesis 3

**Theme:** Challenged by God!

The devil's deceit and falsehood had been realised all too late. He had promised so much, but had lied and instead of being as God, Adam and Eve, at God's approach, experienced a new and most alarming sensation and feeling – abject fear of God and they hid! God graciously called to them so that they would consider their state and position. This is the first overture of grace in the Bible. God could justly have, there and then, sent them into eternal damnation, but He did not and called on them to consider where they were. The question put by God in v9 was not a question revealing His ignorance, but a demonstration of His grace. He knew full well what they had done and why they were hiding, but He was dealing with them in grace and mercy and would continue to do so in the following verses.

Yes the relationship between man and God, God and man had been broken, spoiled and we saw how this began to show itself as man tried to hide from God. We will see more of this broken relationship from man's point of view and see later how God's relationship to man had changed. This change was not due to any change in God as He is unchangeable, immutable in nature, being and character. This change in relationship with man is a necessary expression of His own unchanging perfection and holiness. It is a response, the inevitable response of God to that which is contrary to His unchanging holy nature, being and character. From v10-12 I want us to note 3 things, but only 2 this evening:

### **1. The Expression of Fear** (v10)

Adam responded to God's question (v9) and we have the first recorded words of mankind in sin as he answers the question of God regarding the approach and presence of God. Adam answers

as to why they would try and do the impossible - to hide from the all knowing and all seeing God! At first glance this answer will seem to be the answer and confession of a dejected and humbled man. Yet very soon we learn he is not prepared to confess his sin and wrong, but makes excuses. Here is the answer of Adam, the newly fallen man and he does not give an open and straightforward expression. Sin made man a coward, an evader and an artful dodger as he tries not to answer God's question, but evade it by his words. It made him hide behind half-truths and deceit. Adam spoke some things that were true, but he didn't speak the whole truth – but dodged it! We can see him framing his words craftily as did the devil when he spoke to Eve and glossed over his answer by saying true words which camouflaged gross lies!

Adam does not own his guilt in response to God's question to consider his condition and yet in effect he does confess his guilt by owning his fear and his sense of shame. One commentator surprised me by writing in this way *“His excessive stupidity appears in this, that he fails to recognise the cause of shame is his sin; he, therefore, shows that he does not yet so feel his punishment, as to confess his fault.”* (John Calvin) Adam is more concerned with the consequences of his sin, rather than the seriousness and offence of what he had done. He had deliberately disobeyed God, rejected and spurned His care, love, kindness and all His provision for him and Eve. Such did not bother him, but he focused his concern on being aware of his nakedness!

The sin, the breaking of God's command is put to the background and the consequences of his sin are brought to the forefront. Sin is always deceptive and will always deceive us. Even when confronted with God's presence, Adam and Eve were more concerned about the consequences of their sin, rather than

the sin itself. These first words, intentions and thoughts of fallen man are still about today. The pattern was set there in post-fall Eden. Mankind will grieve and mourn over sin's consequences more than the sin itself. Mostly people sorrow for being caught, being exposed and not so much for their crimes - *e.g. boy caught stealing apples by going through a person's garden, taking the neighbour's cooking apples and then coming back the same way he went in. When confronted and in tears, was asked what his mother would say, he said she would give him a good thumping as she'd already made the pastry!*

Sadly people when confronted by God in and by His word will grieve over being exposed and made to feel uncomfortable by God's word, but often will not grieve over their sin and rebellion against God. Sin always puts barriers up between people and God and can never bring peace with God. The Lord says there is no peace for the wicked (Isaiah 48:22). People will try to excuse, justify, their way of life, will redefine actions as good and yet their consciences can still trouble them, still give them no peace and there is a sense of unease in their lives.

As we have seen, the devil held out to Adam and Eve that they would be as God and would not be answerable to Him, but he lied to them and he still does. There is a day when all must appear before the judgement seat of God and give account to God as an individual. We read in 2 Corinthians 5:10 "*For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due to him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.*" and in Hebrews 9:27 "*Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment*". That is a solemn consideration and as Adam and Eve found out, there is no escape from God.

Years ago in an MFI store there were some doors marked with yellow notices saying “*No Escape*” and it was not referring to their sales techniques! These were doors that went into cupboards and internal storerooms and were not to be used in case of an emergency or fire. We are to realise that without the Lord Jesus as our Saviour there is no escape for us from God’s judgement and eternal punishment. There is a day coming when God, in Christ Jesus, will sound His voice and all in the graves and all living will be called to the Day of Judgement. Not one of us here on earth can imagine the horror and terror of that day if we have to face God in our sin, this is especially for those who have known the way of salvation and neglected or rejected it. Even for such religious ones, churchgoers, nice people there will be no escape from God and the day of His judgement.

At God’s call Adam expressed his fear and the reason why he hid. Now there was no longer joy in his Creator and God, no longer a desire to walk and talk with Him. Now fear, even terror reigned and he must hide away. All his attempts at covering his unease within himself, his feelings of unease with his wife are all in vain when confronted with the presence of the Lord. That which once would have been his delight - to hear God walking in the garden, now caused him fear, he had to get away and hide.

The broken relationship between man and God showed itself from within Adam in his fear and trying to hide from God. It still does! We, as humans, with a fallen nature, know fears and phobias which pre-fall Adam would never have known. Sin brought in fear for not only Adam, but for all mankind and the beautiful relationship between man and God is broken and causes Adam and his descendants to fear and hide from the Lord.

What about us this evening? It is easy to think we can hide from God. Many shelter behind what they do, who they are, or what they feel, or even what they have been through. Yet deep down we are really afraid to meet God. If God was to call us to meet Him, with a shorter or longer notice being given of our death, then no matter how arrogantly and bravely we die, within milliseconds of our death there will only be cringing fear at His majesty, purity and otherness. We are to call on people not to deceive themselves, or to be deceived by the devil's lies, for all outside of the Lord Jesus will be terrified before God, will want to hide and yet will have to answer His questions as did Adam and all will fear God, but it be too late to do anything about it. Moving on we see:

## **2. The Examination of Grace** (v11)

Adam was stubbornly and deceitfully refusing to own his guilt, so God in this question graciously draws out from him his confession. *"Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree from which I commanded you not to eat?"* God was aiming to get Adam to recognise and own that his fear and hiding were caused by his disobeying God's command. God did not need to ask Adam this question. He knew all too well what Adam and Eve had done. Matthew Henry wrote *"Note, Though God knows all our sins, yet he will know them from us, and requires from us an ingenuous (candid or frank) confession of them; not that he may be informed, but that we may be humbled."*

Here God reminded Adam of the command He had expressly given to him in the garden not to eat of that particular tree (2:16-17). I do not know if you like the films or books about Sherlock Holmes. He is usually presented as having a deerstalker hat, pipe and also a magnifying glass. Yet he most often, in the stories at

least, sees and notes things that others overlook and often uses his magnifying glass to show to others. Forensic science has moved on remarkably since the time of writing of the Sherlock Holmes' novels and we have devices, machines, tests that reveal things invisible to the naked eye and can identify even DNA structure.

God, by His questioning and examination of Adam, was bringing Adam to look at what he had done in disobeying God. Adam saw through the magnifying glass, the electron microscope, the telescope of God's commandment and realises what he had done. When we examine sin through the Commandments of God, we will always see sin appears as most plain, vile and distinct as sin. It showed Adam and Eve what they had done most clearly. The 10 Commandments and the word of God show us our failure to keep God's commands and live as we should as His creation. The Westminster Shorter Catechism says in Q. 14 "*What is sin?*" A. 14 "*Sin is any want of conformity unto, or transgression of the law of God.*" i.e. we do not do what God wants and we do what He forbids!

We are, as Christians, to live according to God's moral law - not to earn our salvation, nor to keep or secure our salvation, but to show our love for God and express the new life He has given us in our salvation. If we are not Christians, then the Law of God is a measuring mark against which our life is measured. Take the 10 Commandments - how many of them have we kept? Look at them seriously, let them examine, scrutinise our life. Have we ever had any god before the Lord? No? Really! It means that we will have actively and deliberately kept God as our only God 100% of all the time of our life. Have we made idols? Has anything or anyone distracted us from 100% worship of God and devotion to Him?

We could go through the rest of the 10 Commandments - the positive i.e. conforming to God's Law and the negative as we break God's Law. People do not like this as they feel it is too high a standard. Sadly we do not even begin to realise how high a standard it really is. The Lord Jesus explained further how it is applied to our lives by God, as He applies it to our thoughts, desires and emotions and He expects these areas to be conformed to His Law. In the Sermon on the Mount the Lord Jesus points out that if we feel hatred for someone, then God views it as murder; if we lust after someone, then God views it as adultery or sexual immorality. Now we realise we are in trouble!

God's examination of Adam was that of grace as He gently, graciously showed Adam his sin to draw out his confession of it. In fact God made it easy for Adam to own his sin in the question He asked him *"Have you eaten from the tree from which I commanded you not to eat?"* It was a straight forward question and it deserved a straightforward answer! A simple "Yes" was all that was needed!

When David was confronted later on in the OT by Nathan the prophet concerning his sin of adultery with Bathsheba, the murder of Uriah, David acknowledged it and wrote in a Psalm of penitence (51:4) *"Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight"*. The whole of Psalm 51 is a Psalm of penitence, as is Psalm 32. This is what Adam needed to do. A simple and honest confession was called for, but as we will see as our third point next time in v12 *"The Excuses of Adam"* sin causes him to duck, dive, dodge, evade and sidestep the issue, the question and even to pass the blame onto someone else!

Have no doubt that God was questioning Adam in grace with the aim to bring him to see his sin and need. If we have un-confessed sin in our lives and feel it acutely, then realise God is dealing with us in such a way, as uncomfortable as it is, then we are to ask Him to search us, to examine our heart and to bring us to the place where sin is confessed, forsaken and dealt with by trusting the Lord Jesus as our Saviour. As believers we are not to hang on to sin in our lives as it ruins our relationship with God, with other believers and people. Here 1 John 1:9 applies *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”* As believers we are to hear what God says in Proverbs 28:13 (NKJV) *“He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy.”*

If anyone is not a Christian then you have to own to God you have wrong in your life (sin), tell Him of your sorrow for such, that you want rid of it, its guilt and deserved condemnation and ask Him to forgive it because of what Jesus has done for you, to make you clean, a new creation in Jesus and to be given His perfect holiness in place of your sin. This He will do if we are sincere with Him. We call it conversion, born again, saved – but it is a work of God in our life that transforms us. Yes it has to be worked out more and more as time goes by as we want to live to please God and the Lord Jesus and we aim to be like Jesus and tell of all He has done for us.

We are to learn from Adam and not try to hide from God, but own our sin and seek His way of reconciliation and restoration – with God there is forgiveness and He is to be feared (Psalm 103:4) – that we may not seek that free and gracious forgiveness and end up condemned! What a thing to miss out on and the joyful sweetness that comes with it!