

A SEEKING GOD By Ron Harvey

TEXT: Genesis 3:9, 10

And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, "Where art thou?" And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.

Example: When I was a boy we would get together in the neighborhood and play hide and seek. And someone would be "it," and the rest of us would go hide. And the one that was "it" would count to 100 and then would try to find us. And I remember while "it" was counting I would go inside the house and I would watch TV. And the one that was "it" would search and search for me. Finally he would give up and start calling, "All the outs in free." And I would then sneak outside and never tell them where I was.

Example: And one time I hid on the roof of my house. And they could never find me. And that worked out well until my Dad found me on the roof. And that was about the last beating I can remember getting as a kid.

INTRODUCTION

The message this morning is entitled, "Hide and Seek." And I take this title from the passage in Genesis where Adam first sinned against God. And when God came to the garden after Adam sinned, God called out to Adam, "Where art thou?" And Adam was hiding in the garden and he was very afraid.

And this is the first story of redemption in the Bible. And you will find that it is not sinful man that seeks God, but rather, God that seeks sinful man; for God came to the garden seeking Adam and he found Adam hiding.

Now we have been studying the doctrines of salvation. And one of the first and foundational doctrines that we have studied is the doctrine of election. And we have discovered that before the foundation of the world, God chose a people for the purpose of redemption. And God has determined to redeem those that he has chosen.

And the Bible in many ways is the story of God redeeming those that he has chosen. And this redemption story is a story of man hiding in darkness and God seeking him out. And God will seek until he finds his people and he will save them. That is the story of redemption.

Now it could be that you have always had a different perspective on your salvation. Perhaps you thought you sought God out, that he was hiding from you and by your diligent search you found him. But listen to the Scriptures,

We love Him because He first loved us.
I John 4:19

And when God came to the garden, he sought Adam, Adam did not seek him.

Listen to the words of Jesus himself,

For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.

Luke 19:10

This is the story of redemption; that Jesus came to seek and save that which was lost. And if you know Him it is because he first knew you. And if you ever came to him, it is because he first came to you. And if you have one smidgen of love in your heart for him, it is because he first loved you.

This is the story of redemption - that Jesus came to seek and save that which was lost.

And it all began in the garden when God came seeking that first sinner. And I want you to notice first,

I. The awful effects of sin.

We are so accustomed to sin, so used to it, so deadened to its effects that we often forget how ruinous it is. And we all know that sin has its evil fruit. Sinners end up with broken lives. God says, "Don't drink to excess," but men drink to excess and they end up as a shriveled and pathetic alcoholic. God says, "Don't commit adultery," but people commit adultery and they end up wrecking their families. God says, "Don't steal," but men steal and they end up in prison. And we could go on and on describing the harvest that we reap when we liberally sow sin.

Now God told Adam, "Don't eat of the tree in the midst of the garden." But Adam ate. And because of his sin Adam was sent out of Eden and consigned to a life of hard labor. And Eve's sorrow was multiplied in childbearing. And there were many troubles that came on Adam due to his sin.

But by far, the most awful effect of sin is that it separated Adam from his Creator.

Example: Adam committed one sin, and then we see him hiding in the garden. He was hiding in the garden because he was afraid. And rightfully so, he had disobeyed the One who made him and he was terrified.

This is the awful effect of sin. It renders man guilty before a holy God. And don't think that you have any desire to see God when you have sinned against Him. If you are in your sins, you will hide just like Adam.

Men have been hiding in darkness ever since this first sin.

Some hide by trying by believing that God does not exist. But God does exist and atheism is a fruitless and foolish exercise.

Some hide themselves in false religions – religions that don't exact such a severe penalty for sin, religions that don't have such a just and angry God.

Some people hide behind cover of their own self-righteousness. And their arrogance and self-promotion only heaps coals of guilt on their own heads.

In that last day, sinners will try to hide in the rocks and in the mountains from God.

And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; And said to the mountains and rocks, fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb. For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?

Rev. 6:15, 16

Yes, Adam hid in the garden. And sinners have hid themselves in all ages from an offended God. Notice that,

A. The sinner is naked before God.

Sins can be hidden to some extent from men, but they can never be hidden from God. And the moment you sin, you stand naked and exposed before the open eyes of an omniscient God.

And in our text Adam says, *“And I was afraid, because I was naked.”*

Yes Adam, you are naked. But God said, *“Who told thee that thou wast naked?”*

Example: Have you ever noticed how a little child has very little consciousness of being naked. In fact, sometimes at a big party, a mother might be horrified to find her child prancing naked in front of all the guests. And he has no sense of shame whatsoever. But when he comes of age, if he were to stumble out naked in front of the guests, he would immediately try to find somewhere to hide.

And Adam came of age that day in the garden when he sinned against God. And suddenly he realized he was naked. And when God came calling he hid himself.

And this will always be the way of man. John put it this way in John 3:19:

And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.

So we see that sinners hate the light.

But when God comes calling, and he will come calling, his light will shine in the dark places and sinners will have nowhere to hide and they will be utterly exposed before him.

And God's light exposes every human being. Whether you are a child of the devil or whether you are a child of God, his light shines in the dark places and exposes your nakedness.

Example: Cain was mad at God and mad at his brother Abel. And he killed Abel. And then God came calling one day and shined the light on Cain's dark deed. And God said, Where is thy brother Abel. And just like Adam, Cain tried to hide. He tried to hide behind a lie and he said, "I know not. Am I my brother's keeper?" And God said, "Thy brother's blood crieth to me from the ground." And God shined his light into Cain's dark secret. And Cain was exposed and he stood naked before the eyes of the Lord.

Example: And David, that great man of God, a man after God's own heart, fell to a beautiful woman and he committed adultery and then he manipulated the death of her husband so that he could hide his sin in a dark corner. But one day God came calling by Nathan his prophet, and Nathan said, "David, thou art the man." And God shined his light into David's dark corner and David stood naked before the eyes of the Lord.

Example: Ananias and Sapphira sold a piece of property and publicized that they gave the profit to the church. But they secretly held back a portion for themselves. And God came calling through his apostle Peter. And Peter said, "Why has Satan filled thy heart to lie to the Holy Ghost and to keep back part of the price of the land?" And God shined his light into the dark corners of their hearts and Ananias and Sapphira were exposed and stood naked before the Lord.

And so, when Adam sinned, God came calling and Adam, the sinner, stood naked and exposed before a holy God.

But, not only is the sinner naked and exposed before God, but,

B. The sinner is condemned before God.

The reason Adam hid himself is that he knew he had exposed himself to the wrath of God. God had been a loving God to Adam until now. He had given him life. He had given him a helper. He had given him every tree that was pleasant to the sight. He had given him a river to water the garden. And most importantly, God communed with Adam day by day in the garden.

But now, poor Adam forfeited all of that. Where once he had the blessed favor of the only, true God - now he had to hide from his fierce wrath.

You see the Scriptures say in Romans 1:18,

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.

And the first sinner understood fully and he hid himself in the garden from the wrath of God.

Example: We used to play baseball in our backyard and in the back of our house there was a big picture window. And my Dad was so proud of that window. And he warned me that we better not hit a ball in that direction. And sure enough, the day came when I wasn't careful and I hit a line drive through that window. Now I was in misery for the rest of the afternoon and I knew that Dad would get home about 6:00 o'clock. And when 6:00 o'clock came around I hid so that no one could find me. And I could hear Dad calling me, but I did not want to come out.

And Adam must have been terrified as he hid himself in the garden. And when God came calling, I know exactly how he felt. He didn't want to answer. But God said, "Where art thou Adam?"

And God's wrath was kindled and Adam stood naked and condemned.

Now God had told Adam, "In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." And perhaps Adam expected God to kill him that moment. But what Adam didn't know was that he had died a spiritual death and that his communion with God was broken. And Adam was a condemned man.

Now God had prepared a place called Hell. And God had prepared this place for the Devil and his angels.

Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.

Matthew 25:41

But now there was one more fit for the flames, because there is a universal principle in God's kingdom,

The soul that sinneth, it shall die. (Ezekiel 18:20)

So we see the awful effects of sin. But now we consider,

II. The graciousness of our God.

You will notice in our text that God came to the garden seeking Adam. And I suppose a greater condemnation would have been if God had abandoned Adam forever. God could have given him over to a reprobate mind. God could have withdrawn his light altogether and Adam could have wallowed in the loneliness and the hopelessness of darkness in preparation for an eternity of torment.

But wait, God has an elect people. And God will seek out his elect and he will redeem them and he will save them from their sins.

Now Adam, hiding in the garden, had no hope whatsoever except that God would somehow undo the consequences of his sin. Adam was now dead in trespasses and sins. He was a condemned man.

But God came to the garden.

Example: There are times when a parent will punish a child and send him to his room. And it must be a lonely and hopeless time for a child to wonder whether Mom and Dad will ever forgive them and if they will ever love them again. But what a wonderful time it is when Mom comes to the room and tells you that she forgives you and that you are still loved after all.

And Adam must have wondered if God would ever speak lovingly to him again or even whether he would ever appear to him again.

You see, this will be the utter awfulness of hell. Sinners will be ultimately and utterly abandoned by God. And God will no longer care for them. And he will turn them out of his house and he will give them up and they will never see his face again. And they will never again be the recipient of his goodness and his mercy and his grace. And he will never provide for them again. And their torment will be more than they can bear.

But, oh blessed day for Adam, God yet came calling. Yes he was angry. Yes there would be punishment. But Adam was not yet abandoned to the abyss.

And so we see the graciousness of a seeking God.

This is amazing grace, that God would not abandon his elect and that he would seek them out and rescue them one by one. And God started with the very first sinner. And he shined his light on Adam and exposed his nakedness. But, then God did a most gracious thing.

Unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them.

Genesis 3:21

You mean the Lord still cares for these first sinners? You mean he still has any regard for them after they rebelled against him and broke his covenant and brought the world of mankind into ruin? And the answer is that God yet came calling in the garden and he covered their nakedness and he clothed them.

And this is the grace of our God.

We can barely forgive one another for a harsh word. But God forgives the vilest sins of his people and covers them by his grace.

He covered the first sins ever committed by his elect and he will cover the last sins ever committed by his elect and he will cover all sins in between ever committed by his elect.

And when his elect are naked and guilt ridden and when they are hiding in the dark corners in fear, he will yet come calling. And he will come calling because he chose us before the foundation of the world. And he made a covenant with himself to redeem his people. And when we sin he will not cast us aside forever, but he will continue to care for us and he will seek us out and he will clothe us.

He has done this for his people now for 6000 years. And if this world continues for another 6000 years he will continue to save his people.

And that is because he is a God of unbelievable grace.

But please note not only the graciousness of God, but note,

III. The seeking nature of God.

God comes calling. One by one, he comes calling on his elect. He came to Adam, he came to Abraham and told Abraham to get thee up and go to a country which I will show you. He came to Moses in a burning bush and said, "Moses, Moses." And Moses answered and said, "Here am I." He came to David. And he came to Elijah. And he came to all his people in the Old Testament. And when we turned the corner of the New Testament Jesus came to the disciples and said, "Follow Me." And he came to the woman at the well in Samaria. He came to the blind man and he healed his eyes and he saved his soul. He came to Zaccheus and said,

This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham.

Luke 19:9

And Jesus also said,

For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.

Luke 19:10

And everywhere Jesus went he went seeking and saving that which was lost, because God is a seeking God.

This is redemption. Children of Abraham are lost and God seeks them and he saves them one by one.

Example: Paul was on his way to persecute Christians in Damascus when God came calling. And God shined his light in Paul's dark corners and Jesus said, "Paul, why persecutest thou me?" And Paul stood naked before the Lord. And God saved him.

And though Paul's salvation was very dramatic, the salvation of every sinner is much the same because God seeks us out and he shines his light and exposes our sin and then he saves us.

Now we have been studying the doctrines of salvation and it is very clear to me that the process of redemption is a very great process that began in the eternal counsels of God when God chose a people for his name. And the Bible is the story of God saving his people one by one. And he began with the first sinner, Adam. And he continues day by day so that in the end, none of the elect shall be lost.

Some Final Thoughts

I. It is a very great thing whenever God comes calling on you.

God would have been completely justified to abandon Adam forever. But, he came to the garden calling, “Adam, where art thou?”

And thank goodness for Adam. For Adam was guilty and condemned under the law of God. But God continued to call on him.

Now let me say, if God never calls on you, then you are in a most desperate way indeed. There are those who live their lives in darkness and God never comes calling. And they are abandoned to their just deserts. And they live in darkness. And cursing and perversion is their lot in life. And if God never calls, then they are given over to their sins and to their eternal torment and there is no hope.

You say, does God give people up? And Paul says God gives the wicked up.

Romans 1:21-28

But, thank God, He always comes calling on his beloved elect. He has not given up on his people. And it is a most wonderful act of grace when he comes calling.

Now sometimes he comes calling to address our sin. And it is not comfortable for the moment. But be very joyful under whatever circumstances he comes. If he comes shining his light in our dark corners, then it is a very great thing, for it shows that the God of the universe is still interested in us.

Example: Remember Peter. He denied Jesus three times and you might have thought that Jesus was through with him. But when the rooster crowed the third time Luke says,

The Lord turned, and looked upon Peter.
Luke 22:61

Now it says Peter went out and wept bitterly. But when the bitter tears were done, Peter should have wept for joy, because the eyes of Jesus were still upon him. Now if Jesus had turned away in disgust, then Peter should weep indeed. But Jesus came to Peter even in this darkest hour as if to say, “See Peter. My Word is true. Believe in me.”

It is a very great thing when God comes calling, for it shows he is still interested in us.

II. Now when God comes calling he may find us many times in very uncomfortable situations.

Adam was naked. And God may find us naked. He may visit us in the middle of our sins. He may come calling when we are least fit to meet with him. Adam was in no good frame to meet with God and so he hid. And this is the way with sinners. They are naked and undone and guilty before God and there are no good excuses. But many times, this is when God comes calling.

III. Sinners prefer to hide from God rather than to meet with him.

Such is the great deception of sin. There is one source of life. There is one source of light. There is one source of joy and contentment. And yet, because of sin, sinners hide from Him, preferring rather to die in their sins and face eternal destruction rather than meet with Him now.

Example: When I broke my Dad's picture window, I would have moved out and become homeless at the age of 12 rather than face my Dad. I would have left the comforts and the safety of home rather than meet with him that day.

And this is the way it is with sin. It will drive us away from God and we will hide from him. And we will go to our grave hiding unless he comes to find us.

IV. Because he loves us, God seeks us and finds us.

For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.
Luke 19:10

Example: Now there is a story of a sheep that wandered away from the fold. And because the Shepherd cared for the sheep, he left the ninety and nine and he went to find the one that was lost.

And this is the way it is with God. He searches out each sheep and he comes calling in due season.

Example: Thank God, my Dad came and found me when I was hiding and ready to run away from home. And after he hammered me he then hugged me. And after he lashed me, then he loved me.

V. When God finds his elect hiding, he shines his light so that his chosen one sees his utter sinfulness, and God says, "You have sinned."

And he calls his chosen to repentance and his chosen ones repent. And he calls them to faith, and they believe.

VI. And then, in loving kindness, God clothes his elect with righteousness so that they are no longer naked.

Just as he clothed Adam with coats of skins, He clothes his elect with the very righteousness of his Son, Jesus.

There is nothing that will ever compare to the unrelenting love of God for his elect. He has determined to save us. He will never abandon us. He will never stop calling on us. He will make us righteous. And he will always be our God.