Hiding From God — Delivery Transcript

Genesis 3:8–13 (ESV) · Wes Terry · Sunday, March 19, 2023 · *The Fall*

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All right. Thanks to the team for leading us this morning. If you have your Bible, we're going to be in Genesis chapter 3. You can go ahead and be turning there. And if you don't have a Bible there might be one tucked under the chairs and if there's not one tucked under the chairs there'll be a copy on the screen that you can follow along with. As a church we've been going through the book of Genesis over the last couple of weeks and months and over the last couple of weeks in particular we've been looking at everyone's least favorite chapter in the Bible which is Genesis 3 and it's everybody's least favorite chapter because of the contents talks about sin and shame and nobody likes to talk about their sin and their shame.

It's one of the most secret things that most people kind of keep close to the vest but it's been a fruitful enterprise I think because it exposes in Genesis 3 the nature of sin, how it gets us, how temptation works, and our response. And so week one we looked at the nature of temptation and in week two we looked at the nature of sin. And this week we're going to look at the response to sin and the human response. It doesn't matter who you are, when you were born, who your mom and dad were, what your growing up was like, every human being tends to respond to God when they sin the exact same way.

It's inclination— Kind of, what do you call instinct— What the animal world would be like is instinct in the human world when it comes to sin. And it's in Genesis chapter 3, verses 8 to 13. But to give you a little bit of context, we're going to start in verse 6. So what are we doing? Two responses. We're not just going to see our response to God when we sin, but we're also going to see God's response to us. And we're going to do things a little bit differently this morning than we normally do.

After we look at our response to God, I think I'd like to lead us into a time of response through prayer. And then after we respond to the Lord through prayer, we'll do the other half of the sermon or the final third of the sermon and look at God's response to sinners and

then have another time of response. So just a little heads-up, a little bit differently this morning, but I think it'll be fruitful for us. And so the two responses, God's response to sinners and sinner's response to God. Picking up in verse 6 to give us a little context, Eve is there staring at that tree of which she was not supposed to eat, and "when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it"—the tree—"was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and" she "ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.

Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And" so "they sewed fig leaves together and" they "made themselves loincloths. And they 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. But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, 'Where are you?' And he said, 'I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.'" So those of you just joining us to catch you up on the storyline, if you're unfamiliar with the story of Adam and Eve in the garden in Genesis chapter 2, God creates everything.

He places man and woman in this garden, he gives them this incredible opportunity to enjoy his creation. You can eat from any tree in the Garden of Eden. Just one tree I don't want you to eat from, which is the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. It was the one single prohibition. They had it good, they were married, they were naked, they were not ashamed, perfect relationship with God, perfect relationship with each other. And then in Genesis chapter three, out of nowhere, the serpent comes along and begins to have this conversation with Eve about "Did God really say?" and begins to argue with her about God's prohibition—was it really what she thought it was, and would he really judge her like he said that he would judge her, and would there really be consequences.

And eventually, as they had that conversation, temptation won over. They succumbed to temptation. God was dethroned in Eve's heart and Adam's heart. His word was deconstructed, the good was redefined. No longer was it God's design that was good; it was the tree that was good, as we see in verse 6. It was the tree that was appealing to the eye and desired to make one wise, and as a result of that succumbing to temptation, they sin against God. And sin is tricky like that. Sin always starts out sweet, but as you see with Adam and Eve, when they take and eat, verse 7, their eyes were opened and they knew that they were naked.

Sin starts out sweet and then it always leaves a bitter aftertaste. It's kind of like diet soda. I don't know if any of you guys drink that nasty stuff. Aspartame, you know, promises to give you that sugary sweetness and it starts out sweet, but then it always has that nasty bitter aftertaste. And it poisons you and probably gives you cancer from what I understand. But that's kind of like what sin does. It starts out sweet, but it leaves a bitter aftertaste and

eventually we respond. And how do we respond? We respond just like Adam and Eve respond.

They did four things. Number one, they see. Their eyes are opened. They go, "Uh-oh." They then cover themselves. They make this vegetarian underwear and try to cover up their nakedness. They realize that's not sufficient, and so they run from God to the trees in the garden, amongst the other trees that they were supposed to eat from, and then as they're hiding or they're running from God, they begin to hide in those trees because they're afraid of the Lord. So the four things are: you see "uh-oh," cover, run, and hide. And we've looked at some of these responses in last week's messages, but we're actually going to focus in on this week that final kind of hiding method.

And before we get to the nature of their hiding and the nature of their response, I think it's just important to note, because you might, like me, when you read this passage kind of scratch your head and go, like, "Oh, silly rabbit. Silly Adam, silly Eve, you can't hide from God. Who do you think you are? I mean, honestly, God's everywhere, He can see everything. You didn't honestly think you could hide from God." And yet even though we tend to think that we do the exact same thing and we are not literally hiding from God in some trees wearing vegetarian underwear, like I said, they were doing.

And maybe, you know, that's a liability for us because we read that and say, "Well, I would never do anything like that." And yet we do hide from God, every single person who's ever lived sins against God, and when we sin against God, we see "uh-oh," we cover, we run, and we hide. I remember when I first got into the pastorate, it was my first year being a senior pastor, and I had developed this friendship with a young man in our church and he was just, you know, brilliant, charismatic, very popular, successful.

And I kind of saw him as potential to be a future leader in our church and really respected him a great deal. And then I remember one day getting the phone call. And he had engaged in some sinful behavior that absolutely ruined his life. And the cops were on their way to his house. He called me over to the house and was telling me what was going on and he ruined his world, he ruined his family, he lost his job, he lost his reputation, everything was in shambles. And I remember sitting there, he had his head in his hands.

I remember like it was yesterday, and it felt like his head was about to touch the floor because of his just despondent, despairing look he had about him. He was disheveled and he was saying, "Why, why, why, why did I do this? How could I have done this? I've lost everything." He said, "I told other people not to do this. I knew better. I've made these precautions." And yet there he was, His world ruined because of sin. And all I could think, when he was asking those questions, I didn't have an answer.

I didn't say anything back. But the only thing that was going through my head was the amazing, intoxicating power of sin. That it can lure you in, make you feel like you're invincible: "It'll be okay for me. I'm the exception to the rule. I'll get away with it." It is literally an intoxicant. Just like alcohol gives you this Superman syndrome—like, "It's not going to— I'm special. I'm unique." It makes you think that you'll get away with it and then you wake up. Every drunken stupor is followed by a sober morning.

And he woke up and he realized that his world was over. And it was interesting. He did exactly what Adam did. He began to bargain with God. He began to hide. He began to cover. He was dreaming up all these fanciful "maybe this will happen" and "maybe this legal thing will work" and "maybe I can get out of this." And he was even bargaining with me, asking me to do certain things and I just remember thinking to myself, sin drives you crazy— Or, I'm sorry, sin first makes you a fool, and then it drives you insane.

The life of sin is intoxicating. Then the response to sin is insane. And that's exactly what you see with Adam and Eve. Look again in verse 8 of chapter 3: they hear 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. And so the life of sin is intoxicating. How sinners respond to sin is insane. First, sin makes us fools. Then sin drives us mad.

Now I want to show you this in Genesis and I hope to show you this in your own life and maybe for many of us before it's too late, before sin's consequence really has its full effect like it did in the life of my friend. Adam and Eve went from craving God's presence to fearing it. They went from unashamed to ashamed. They went from walking with God to running from God. And they went from looking for help to hiding in shame, and we do the exact same thing. Instead of running to God for help to deal with our sin, we run away from God to hide in shame because of our sin.

And we are a little more sophisticated than Adam and Eve in that we don't go and hide amongst some literal trees wearing vegetarian underwear, but we hide nonetheless. I was thinking about how do we hide from God and how have I tried to hide from God in the past and even today, how do I hide from the truth about my sin and my guilt before a holy God? And I came up with a couple of examples. One of the most common approaches in church world is to what I'm going to call glamorize your sin.

And what this is, is where you call sin something other than what it is. Instead of a sin being a vice that is terrible and needs to be removed from your life, you make sin a virtue, as in, "It's not that bad. It's actually a good thing that I'm doing this thing that God doesn't want me to do." And you say, "Well, yes, that sounds crazy," and yet we do it all the time. We'll say things like, "I'm not greedy, I'm just careful." Or, "I'm not angry." "I'm not going to deal with the sin of anger in my life because I'm just a passionate person."

We refuse to deal with the sin of rudeness in our life, and we say, "I'm just being clear." Anyone ever heard that one before? "I'm not contentious. I'm just defending the truth." Instead of dealing with the sin of anxiety, which— Jesus says, "Don't be anxious." To be something Jesus says don't be is at least some form of sin. And so we don't call it the sin of anxiety, we just call it stress from work. Instead of dealing with the sin of pride, we call it confidence. When we do this, we're hiding from God.

We're hiding from the truth about our sins and we're deceiving ourselves in the process. And what it is, is we don't like that bitter aftertaste of sin. So since we don't like that feeling we get when we feel like we're guilty, we water it down, we kind of clean it up, we do whatever it takes to make it seem less than what it actually is. We glamorize our sin. We take the sins that are a grievance to the Holy Spirit in our life and we glamorize them. We make them out to be something better than what they actually are.

The second thing, and maybe this is a little more common, not so much in the church, but a little bit more in the culture, is to normalize our sin. And this approach is where we take something that we know is grievous to the Holy Spirit, but we say, "Well, everyone else is doing it, and my sin is not actually as bad as everyone else's sins, and so it must be okay." We kind of normalize our sin. And again, this— I know a lot of people struggle with anxiety, so I want to be careful here.

Some people even being treated for anxiety. But there is forms of anxiety that are clearly sins against the holy God. It's a sin of "I don't think God's going to take care of me. I don't think God's sufficient. I don't think God knows what's best for me," and so you get anxious and stressed, and that is the sin against the holy God. But what happens is because anxiety is so rampant in our culture, we say to ourselves, "Well, everyone else is anxious, everyone else gets treated for anxiety. I guess it's just the nature of the beast.

I guess it's just something I got to live with, and so it is what it is," and you normalize it. When it comes to something maybe a little more easier to identify as a sin like lust or sexual immorality. We'll say things like, "Well, everybody else looks; so long as I don't touch, you know, I'm okay." Or maybe you're someone that's in the throes of some kind of a pornography addiction or alcohol addiction, and you say, "Well, everyone else is watching porn. All the other kids my age are doing it, all the other adults, all the other married adults that are unhappy in their marriage, they're doing it.

Well, I might as well do it as well." "No one else is waiting until they're married. I might as well not wait either." Rudeness or meanness: "I know I can be an absolute bear, but it's just my personality type. There's lots of people like me in the world." You justify it, you normalize it. "Nobody else wants to tell the truth, so this is my service to the world. Somebody's got to do it." When it comes to greed and selfishness, this is very common. We'll say things like, "I

know I probably can't afford it, and I know that if I make this purchase, I can't honor God with my finances.

I can't give to the Lord. I can't honor the Lord with my wealth. But everyone else has this kind of house. Everyone else drives this kind of car. Everyone else wears those kind of clothes. Everyone else's kids goes to that kind of school. And so I have to as well." Knowing that it's grievous to the Holy Spirit, knowing it's a clear violation of what God wants you to do, you normalize the sin, and now it's okay. But you're being deceived. You can put as much paint and makeup on your sin as you want, but it's like putting a dress on a pig.

It's still a pig even if it's wearing a dress and lipstick. You can normalize it and justify it to yourself and to other people, but what works on everyone else doesn't work on the Lord. And the most common approach and the most blatant approach is to just plain old rationalize your sin, to justify your sin through acts of rationalization. This is the most common approach in the church and in the culture. We rationalize our sin by saying things like, "If I confess my sin, if I deal with my sin, the costs associated with coming clean are greater than the damage it's going to create if I just continue in sin.

In other words, if I tell my wife what's going on, I'll lose her. I'll lose my family. I'll lose my job, and I'll lose my reputation. So I know I'm doing something I shouldn't be doing, but so as to not cause harm there, I'm just going to persist in my sin. It's not worth losing everything." Or we'll say things like, "I know this is not right. I know that I'm sinning against God, but God has to know I'm not as bad as I used to be." Anyone else said this one before?

"I used to watch pornography every day of the week. Now it's just once a month. Now it's just once a week. And so God's—maybe he's not as mad about it. Maybe it's okay now." You just kind of rationalize it. Or we'll say things like, "I know that this is a sin against God. I know I'm dishonoring God in this area of my life, or if that's your finances or sexuality or your mouth or whatever the case may be, but I'm good everywhere else." Anyone ever said this one before? "I'm not sinning here, I'm not sinning here, I'm not sinning here, I'm not sinning here.

I know I'm sinning in this one area, but since I'm good everywhere else, maybe God's okay with it." And you're deceived. In fact, oftentimes when you're persisting in sin and you know you're persisting in sin, you think you're good everywhere else, you're not. You're deceived. And the sin in your life has intoxicated you. It's made you think things are better than they actually are. And you're hiding. We all hide. We normalize it, we rationalize it, we glamorize it. And no matter the approach, we're ultimately deceived. We think we're better than we actually are.

We think our sin is not as bad as it actually is. It gives us a false sense of righteousness and a false understanding of our own wretchedness. You may think you're doing fine everywhere

else, but more likely your sin has blinded you to the reality of your actual spiritual condition, you think you're clothed when you're naked, you think you're hidden when you're actually exposed, and you're fools—we're fools to think we won't actually be found out. Because God sees everything. He knows everything. It's like lighting a fire in your bedroom and shutting the door and pretending like it's not about to burn your house down.

You are crazy to think, "Well, if I expose my sin now, I'll lose my family. It's better if I keep it concealed." You are foolish to think that that sin can be contained, that it won't eventually burn the house down anyway. You're hiding. But that's not the only way they hide. They also hide in verses 11 to 13. I'm sorry, that's not the only foolish thing that they do. The second foolish thing that they do is they play the victim and they point the finger. If you look in verse 11, God comes to Adam in the garden hiding.

He says, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" And then "the man said, 'The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.' Then the Lord God said to the woman, 'What is this that you have done?' The woman said, 'The serpent deceived me, and I ate.'" So sin makes us fools and then it drives us mad. Instead of running to God for help, we run from God to hide, and instead of taking responsibility, we shift the blame and we play the victim.

Instead of confessing our sin, we cover it up. Instead of owning our sin, we point the finger. They excuse themselves and then they accuse one another. First, Adam blames Eve, which I think is somewhat hilarious. This is the same Eve that he wrote a love song to a couple of days before. "Oh, bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh. So amazing. I love you forever." And then the very— I don't know how many days later, "It's her fault, it's her problem. She's been twisting your words. She's been talking to snakes.

She's been jacking up my life. I was better off single." You know, he's arguing with the Lord. It sounds like most people's first year of marriage, to be honest. "Bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh." "I can't stand this person." Everyone's marriage, except mine, obviously. But— kidding— if that was your first year of marriage, I always tell people during premarital counseling, 12 months from now, I want you to come back and see me, because that's when you'll actually need counseling. And I've had a couple of people take me up on it.

But he blames Eve. And then Eve doesn't do much better. She blames the serpent. And it's interesting. Adam blames Eve, but in blaming Eve, who's he ultimately blaming? "It's the woman who you gave me." And Eve's blaming the serpent. And who made the serpent? It's plain as day, Genesis chapter 3, verse 1: the serpent was the craftiest of the animals that— who made?—the Lord God had made. So in both cases, they're pointing their finger at the Lord. "It's his fault. Your word was not clear enough. He twisted my arm," and she's not taking responsibility for her twisting God's word.

She's just pointing the finger, playing the victim. Sin makes us fools. Who are we to think that we can blame God for our problems? And yet this culture of victimhood has been embraced by our culture, hook, line, and sinker. We are a victimhood world. None of this is to discount true victims. The Bible is clear when it comes to true oppression and true victims. God sides with the victims and he resists the oppressors. However, how many of us play the victim, not because we are the victim, but because we got caught with the juice of our sin running down our chin.

How many times do we point the finger, say, "It's not my fault that I am who I am or I did what I did"? Sometimes like Adam, we'll blame other people for our sin. "If they had just been there, if she had just loved me better," or "if he had just loved me better, if she had just given me more respect, if I'd just been given a chance, if I hadn't gone through the divorce, if I hadn't gone into debt." Sometimes we blame our circumstances, like Eve: "It was the serpent."

Or, "I'm just stressed out. I got a lot going on. Things at home have been difficult. I don't get paid enough. I don't have as many opportunities as the next guy. If you had been through what I've been through, you'd be doing the exact same thing." Or, "It's just my personality type. It's just the way that I'm wired. I take after my mom." Sometimes we blame people, sometimes we blame our circumstances, and sometimes we blame a combination of both. Lamech in Genesis chapter 4, verse 24: after Cain and Abel have their episode, Cain kills Abel.

Lamech is an offspring of Cain, who kills Abel, and he kind of says, "My dad is who my dad is, and I'm kind of like who my dad is. My dad had vengeance, and my vengeance is seventy-sevenfold[1] what his vengeance was. It's just the way I was raised, it's just my DNA." Is it nature, is it nurture, is it people, or is it your circumstance, or is it a combination of both? Sometimes we'll blame a combination of both. But if you chase the trail long enough, no matter who you blame— And it's as if we want to blame anyone or anything other than ourselves, our children, our spouse, our workplace, our boss, our raising, our opportunities that we didn't have, or the government for what it does or doesn't do, irregardless of who you blame, the ultimate accusation is always against God Himself, because he's the one who made you.

He's the one who put you where he put you. And you're mad at him: "If you would have given me better parents, if you would have given me a dad, if you would have given me this financial situation, if it hadn't have been for you doing what you had done." And that's a crazy thing to do. It's a foolish thing to do to blame God for your problems. Some of your problems are not 100% your fault. That's absolutely true. But the temptation to point the finger and cast the blame can shield you from taking responsibility that is yours to take.

And instead of taking it, you shift the blame and you blame the Lord, or you point the finger at God. Now what I want us to do before we get to God's response, I know that's heavy, but I think sometimes we need the Lord to speak to us plainly so that we can actually wake up and see. This room's full of people. A lot of you come to church here every week. Some of you are leaders in the church. Some of you are deacons. There's a temptation to deceive yourself that you're not hiding and that you're not guilty, when the reality is we're all sinners.

We all hide. We have different types of sins. We have different inclinations toward different types of sin. But I want us to worship the Lord this morning through an act of introspection, of just through prayer, asking the Holy Spirit, as David did in Psalm 139, "Search me, O God, and know me, and see if there's any unclean way in me." Adam knew he was hiding. I think for a lot of us, we don't know we're hiding because we never stop to think. When's the last time you really examined your heart for some ugliness that got stuck in here because you thought it was sweet going in and you haven't realized the bitter taste of what it's done to you and your relationship with God and the relationship with the other people in your life.

And so I'm going to ask Taylor to lead us through a time. And I just want you to bow your heads and close your eyes. I'm going to do the same right up here. And I want you to ask the Lord to show you if there's any way that you're hiding—glamorizing your sin, normalizing your sin, justifying your sin. And then if the Lord exposes some sin in your life, I want you to listen to what you do with it. Do you point the finger? Are you quick to shift the blame?

And if so, would you just ask the Holy Spirit, "Help me to see my responsibility in this thing that grieves the heart of God"? And after we've had some time to do that, we'll move on. The altar's open. If you want to come and lay something before the Lord, maybe you know immediately, right as I was talking about this, immediately you know what's in your life that's grieving the Lord. And you sense like today's a day where the Lord really wants to set me free from the sin of my life.

And you want to come and confess that before the Lord, you can do that. Maybe you have a son or a daughter, someone that you love, and you know that there's something in their life that is ruining them and it's ruining their family and you want to come and intercede for them. But let's spend some time dealing with the seriousness of our sin as God exposes it in our hearts. So right there where you're seated, you can respond. The Bible says in 1 John 1 that if we say we have no sin, then we make God a liar and we deceive ourselves.

And so as you pray, if there's nothing that comes to your mind, then it may be that you're the one deceived. So would you ask the Lord to help you to see what you need to see, so as not to make him a liar, so as to not grieve him in the way that you're living your life. Sometimes it can be helpful to think about your world in different layers. Sins in the home, sins in your relationships, sins of your eyes, sins of your mouth, sins of your hands, sins of the heart, sins of your feet.

[Time of prayer.]

Lord Jesus, you say blessed are those who mourn because they'll be comforted. And you said, blessed are the poor in spirit, because they are the ones that will inherit the earth. Or theirs is the kingdom of God. You promise that you are near to the lowly, to the one that is broken and contrite in spirit, that is a person that you will not deny. And you say that if we'll come to you and we'll confess our sins, that you're faithful and you're just to forgive us of our sins and to cleanse us of all unrighteousness.

And so we pray that you would not just make us aware of our guilt, but that you would also make us aware of your grace, that you would not just show us how we're hiding, but that you would show us the foolishness of hiding. Because you're a God who sees us. And you don't just see us, but you love us. And you offer rescue and forgiveness and reconciliation if we'll just confess, if we'll just be honest, if we'll just agree with you about the facts. And so we pray you would continue to do that now as we continue to look into this passage and you reveal your character to us through your word.

And we pray it in Jesus' name. Amen. Here we go. The second response in this passage is God's response to sinners. Sinners respond to God with two acts of madness. They run from God instead of running to him. They don't get his help. They instead hide. The second thing they do is they shift the blame and point the finger. God's response to sinners is the exact opposite. Instead of— We run from God; instead of running from us, he pursues us. He runs to us. We shift the blame and point the finger.

He actually offers mercy and grace. Man's response is to run and hide. God's response is to seek and to find. Looking at chapter 9—or chapter 3, verse 9—it says, when the Lord God— "But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, 'Where are you?' And he said, 'I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.' He said, 'Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?'" And so God's response to sinners displays grace upon grace.

When our sin pushes us to run and hide, God's love pushes him to seek and to find. And if you notice what God does in that passage we just read. It really is quite something. It's easy to look at this and think that God is kind of coming in this accusatory, angry way, but he is not. His approach to Adam displays grace upon grace upon grace. If you look at the three things that he does, he walks, he calls, and then he questions. Think about him walking is a demonstration of grace because he could have done the opposite of that.

Walking is this idea that he comes gradually, inconspicuously. Adam hears the sound of the Lord, then he runs before the Lord actually arrives. If you look at other times in the Old Testament or New Testament when God comes in judgment, it's always quick. It's always unannounced. The day of the Lord's like a thief in the night. It is not what you see in Genesis

chapter 3. You see God walking. And notice when he walked. James Montgomery Boice says he doesn't come in the middle heat of the afternoon when we are the most tired.

He doesn't come in the darkest of the night when we are the most afraid, but he comes at the most pleasant time of day in the cool of the day, when we are most likely to receive his coming as a gift of kindness and a gift of mercy. You see Adam and Eve run from God because they hear the sound of him in the garden, but they're not running because of God's way of approaching. They're running because of their awareness of their nakedness. God comes graciously. I think this is a good word for us.

Those of you who are parents, especially, if you have a son or a daughter or a child who's aware of their sin, they're aware of their brokenness. Oftentimes the response of the Lord in those types of situations is to come with gentleness and kindness, not meanness and accusations. It's the kindness of the Lord that leads to repentance. Now, if your son or daughter is not aware of their sins, that's a different question. But when they know they're broken, the Lord comes walking graciously. He also calls. I think that's a demonstration of grace in verse 9.

He calls out to them. He had every right to say, "If you want it your way, have it your way. Bye," and left them in their sin to their consequences, but he doesn't. He doesn't leave them, he pursues them, and he calls them. And they're not calls of accusation. They're not calls of "How dare you? Who do you think you are?" They are calls that are invitations to confession and forgiveness. And that's why ultimately I think Adam— He says, "I knew I was naked. I did what I shouldn't have done, and I was afraid of you because I'm not sufficient.

I'm guilty." And maybe this morning as the Holy Spirit's been working in this time of hearing his word, this is God's way of calling you. You can hear his voice. Maybe when you were praying earlier, the Lord was saying to you, when he would bring those sins to your mind, he wasn't coming in an accusation judgment kind of way. He was exposing the brokenness. He was showing that it is a grievous thing to him, but in doing that he was also calling you. And he's saying, "Come home. This is not you.

This is not what I want for you. Come home." And then he questions, and the questions are also a demonstration of grace. He says, where are you? Who told you? And did you eat? Where are you? I see this as a question of Adam's current condition. He could have said something else, right? He could have said, "Are you dumb? What were you thinking? How dare you? Was I not good enough?" He doesn't go there. He says, "Where are you?" That's such a gentle question. It's an invitation for Adam to agree with God about his current condition.

"I am not where I need to be. I am separated from you. I blew it. I had everything. It was so good. And then I foolishly thought it would be better doing it this other way, and now I

realize your way is better. My way was wrong." That's what repentance is. It's agreeing with God about the facts: "I'm not where I'm supposed to be." Then he asked the second question, who told you? That's a question of Adam's ultimate authority. The word "told" is a word of authority. It's an invitation for Adam to agree with God: "You're the real boss.

You're the rightful Lord. And we dethroned you and put ourselves in your place. We dethroned you and we listened to the serpent." And if God was to ask us that question this morning, who told you? For some of us, we would have to say, "I stopped listening to you a long time ago and I started listening to him. I started listening to her. I started listening to culture. I started listening to my own selfish ambitions. I've taken you out of your proper place of authority." So this is an invitation really for Adam to say, "I'm sorry, Lord.

You're the Lord of my life. You're the one who tells me what is and what is not good. You are the source of truth and goodness and beauty." And then finally, the most important question is, did you eat? And this is a question of Adam's moral culpability. It's an invitation for Adam to agree with God that he was personally responsible for the sin in his life. No more blame shifting, no more playing the victim, no more pointing the finger: "I personally take responsibility for the brokenness in my life for which I am personally responsible."

That is the most important thing you can do in your relationship with the Lord. It may be true that you are victimized by some people or some circumstance. It may be true that not every brokenness in your life is all your fault. But to the degree that it is your fault, it is a gift of God for Him to reveal that to you and for you to say, "I own it. That's on me." Because the tendency is to shift the blame and to point the finger and to excuse yourself, but you will not find salvation there.

You will not find salvation anywhere other than being honest with the Lord and agreeing with the Lord about your moral culpability and the brokenness, the things that's caused the brokenness in your life. Ultimately, Adam missed this opportunity. If God were to ask us that question this morning, what would be your response? God's gracious response to Adam's sin acted as an invitation for Adam's repentance. Even as sinners foolishly run from God, God graciously runs to our rescue. But God's grace and salvation requires genuine repentance. What is genuine repentance? It's a couple of things.

It's a genuine agreement with God: "You're right." It's a genuine surrender. God says, blessed are the meek. Those are the ones who inherit the earth. It's a turning over of your life to say, "God, it's yours. It's always been yours. It's never been mine. Who was I to think that it was? I give it back to you." And then it's what the Bible calls faith, which is an act of obedience or a willingness to believe God enough to actually do what he says. And ultimately for Adam, he missed that opportunity, but for us, we have the opportunity to do what Adam was not able to do, which is to agree with God that we're sinners, to surrender our life to His Lordship, and then to exercise genuine faith by believing something very specific, namely

that Jesus Christ died on the cross for our sins, and three days later God raised him from the dead.

Adam's coverings that God made for him ultimately point to the truth about Jesus Christ. And salvation comes from repenting of sin and trusting in Jesus for salvation. And it's the opposite of sin. Sin starts out sweet, but it has a bitter finish. Confession starts out bitter, but it finishes with the sweetness of God's grace. When we sin, we usurp God's authority to do whatever we want, but eventually we're left enslaved to our sin. In repentance, we've got to give up our autonomy, submit to God's authority, but eventually we're liberated from sin and free to live as we most deeply desire.

As Jesus said in the Gospels, whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. And so if this morning the Lord's calling you, he's saying, "Come home." And you're saying, "Man, I see it now. I see it. And I know I try to cover it. I know I've been trying to hide, but I'm done hiding. I'm going to repent before the Lord." How can I make my sin bitter, and how can I see Christ as something sweet? And I think the answer to that is to look to the cross.

Thomas Watson, the old Puritan, said, "Till sin be bitter, Christ will not be sweet." And so you'll never find within yourself, within your own power, the ability to choose Jesus or to believe on Jesus. You don't contribute to your salvation in that way. Rather, the Holy Spirit, when you look to the cross, when you see Jesus there, paying the penalty for your sin, when you see Jesus as the opposite of Adam— Adam blamed his wife so that he could get off. Jesus does the opposite. Jesus takes the blame so he can save his wife.

When you see that, when you see that he doesn't point the finger, but that he takes the blame, the blame that we deserve, the judgment that belongs to us, when you see that, you see your sin for what it is. It's a terrible thing that Jesus absorbed the penalty for on the cross. You'll see the ugliness of your sin, but you'll also see the love and the mercy of your Heavenly Father. Because He loved you enough to send His Son into the world, to do what you could not do, and die in your place for your sin.

And when you look to the cross, you see both the bitterness of my sin and the sweetness of God's grace. And as you look to the cross, if the Holy Spirit begins to draw you to repent of your sin and to put your faith in Jesus Christ, then this morning the most important thing you can do is to make that decision: to surrender to him, agree with him on the facts, surrender to him as your Savior and Lord, and prove it through an act of faith to actually step out and say, "I'm following Jesus.

I'm going to give my life to Jesus." Some people get tripped up about publicly responding to Jesus for salvation, but everywhere in the Gospels when Jesus calls for a response, it's a public response. It's never private. And so this morning, if you sense the Holy Spirit calling

you to salvation, then when Taylor comes up and we have a time of response, there's an opportunity for you to make that public by coming to the front and saying, "I want to give my life to Jesus." Maybe for you it's not the choice to be saved, but it's the choice to start growing in sanctification again.

Maybe you've been stuck in your faith because you've been stuck in your sin and you've been stalled out in the Christian life and you have not moved an inch because you refuse to repent of what you know is a sin before the Lord. And it could be an addiction, and I get those can be complicated, and I know that maybe you got victimized and you're dealing with bitterness and anger, and you're trying to get better, but you're also stuck in that rage. And I know it's messy and I know it's complex, but this morning the Holy Spirit's calling you to repent of that, to own for yourself what belongs to you to own.

Then respond to the Lord this morning by surrendering to Him and taking enough initiative, having enough faith to do what He tells you to do, which may mean forgiving that person. It may mean having the conversation. It might mean dumping the boyfriend or the girlfriend. It might mean confessing to your spouse. That's how you know you really believe, as you do what the Lord says. And so as we respond to the Lord, as the Holy Spirit invites you, I want to ask you to respond to him in a way that's fitting.

Lord, we thank you for this time. We give you this invitation. We ask you—

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1. Transcript note: spoken as "fourfold or tenfold"; Lamech's boast is "If Cain's revenge is sevenfold, then Lamech's is seventy-sevenfold." (Lamech is a fifth-generation descendant of Cain, not his son.) Source: Genesis 4:17–24 (ESV), BibleGateway. ↩