

Running From God

Pastor Jim Essian: May 10, 2015

THE PARADOX CHURCH

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?" And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and 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 they sewed fig leaves together and 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. 9 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?" 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."

(Genesis 3:1-13)

The idea of sin is extremely hopeful. In fact, without the doctrine of sin, without Genesis three, we actually we are hopeless. Let me explain: If you look at your life, and you look at the lives around and the world around you, and you look at just how the world is and what's wrong with the world; if you don't have sin, you don't have hope. Our culture is moving more and more towards what's called relativism. Where you look at the world, you look at yourself, you look at others, and you say, "What they're doing is not wrong. They can do what they want, and I'm going to do what I want. And you should do what's good for you, and I'll do what's good for me." And so nobody's wrong. There is no sin. Nobody is missing the mark. Nobody is off. There's nothing to be corrected. There's no course correction that needs to be had, because we're all just kind of doing our own thing. That's relativism. That's hopeless. That's hopeless. Because you look at the brokenness in your heart, the brokenness in the lives around you, the evil and darkness of the world, and if there's no sin that's just the way it is. If there's no sin, if there's no Genesis three, if there's no doctrine of sin, if the relativists are right; we're hopeless then in our brokenness. We're hopeless then in the darkness of the world.

Now, if you have sin, if sin is true, if Genesis three is true; then maybe we can be rescued. Maybe there can be a change; maybe we can turn from something; maybe there is a course correction; maybe there's hope. If sin is true, maybe there is hope. And so Genesis three that's what it's about. It's telling us what's wrong with the world. Genesis three is telling us what the human problem is, what your problem is, what my problem is, what's wrong with the world. And it infuses hope because it says that there is something wrong and there is something that can be done about what is wrong. And so if you want to understand yourself-- and I know you do, because you read the books that you read, and you watch the TV that you watch and have the conversations that you have, because you want to understand yourself. You want to know yourself more--If you want to understand yourself, if you want to understand others, if you want to understand what's going on in the world, you have to understand sin. You have to understand Genesis three. And, in particular, your own sinfulness. And so we are going to look at the doctrine of sin, and I'm saying that I think it's kind of hopeful. It's hopeful.

Now, there's really just one question that I want to ask in the end. The big idea is just going to be one question that I want to ask, or maybe I'll just plead with you--I don't know how it's going to go down. There is just one thing that I want to get across, but until we get there, what I want to do is look at Genesis three, and I want to keep circling it. I want to get in, and I want to look at some of what Eve's doing, and some of what the serpent is doing, and what's happening here. I want to get a full orb kind of look at what sin is, what the human problem is, what's broken in the world; and then near the end, what I want us to do is just kind of step back a few dozen feet and see the whole of it, and I want to ask a question or plead with us for one thing. But I want to build up to that, because I want us to understand what's happening here, and what sin actually is, and see if we can see ourselves in this story a little bit.

So that let's start in verse one of chapter three, and we'll take a look at this again and read part of this text again and get into it. Chapter three, verse one, looking at the doctrine of sin:

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?'" And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

Up until this point Adam and Eve had only experienced pure bliss. It's the Hebrew word "shalom." It's translated "peace" in English, but it doesn't mean just that. It means wholeness and satisfaction and fulfillment. That's all they've ever experience is pure bliss. Paradise.

Everything has been perfect. Their relationship with God vertically was perfect. Their relationship with one another horizontally was perfect. It's all they had ever experienced up until this point.

And in Genesis one, God begins to speak, and He speaks everything into existence. Genesis two, He speaks again, and He says, "Yeah, I created all of this for you. Enjoy it all, but there's one thing I don't want you to do, and that's eat from this one tree in the midst of the Garden." So He speaks a word of command. The only other voice that we've heard so far is Adam singing to his bride, right? Genesis two, he sings to her "bone of my bones, flesh of my flesh." It's a good move. He just sings to her. It's the only voices we've heard so far are God's and Adam's. And here another voice comes in. Another voice speaks into the pure bliss, the perfection, shalom. And we're told in Revelation twelve that this is Satan, the serpent. That the serpent is the devil, the enemy.

Now if you think it's strange that the serpent is talking, I promise you, Eve would have too. This is not normal. Animals don't typically talk in the Bible. Only twice do they talk, which seems like two times too many for many of us that have reasonable, rational, or logical thinking. Balaam and his donkey. That was weird. It was just weird. Serpent talking it's weird. I get it. I understand. Now what you can't do with Genesis three though, is turn it into a myth. You can't turn it into a myth. It's not wanting to be read that way. It's wanting to be read as a historic narrative. Now, you cannot believe it. That's fine, and that's up to you. But what you can't do is say, "Oh, that's a myth." It's not being asked to be read that way. It's not Beowulf. It doesn't read like that. It is not apocalyptic literature like Revelation. It is not being read that way. One major rule in interpreting the Bible and understanding what it says is: How is it being written? What is the genre? This is historic narrative. It's being asked to be read as a historic story. You either believe it, or you don't, but you can't turn it into a myth. And yes, it's weird the serpent is talking.

And notice one more thing, before we get into some of it, that there's no dualism here, right? There is no Satan versus God, good versus evil. That's not happening. Look at verse one again--I just want to point this out--"The serpent was more crafty than any of the beast of the field that the Lord God had [what?] made." He's a fallen angel, created being. This is not God versus Satan, good versus evil, where we're not sure how it's going to turn out in the end. This is Creator. Creation. This is not a war; this is not a game. We are not unsure of who's going to win here. Not to ruin it for you, but we've read the end of the story. We win. God wins, right? This is not dualism, good versus evil. This is a created being, Satan, and it's Creator, God. So, there is no dualism here.

Then Satan, he begins to speak in verse one, and he says, "Did God actually say..." He's saying, "Come on. He said that? He's trying to restrain you? He's trying to command you? He's

trying to keep something from you? He's trying to tell you what you can't do, Eve? Come on! Really? You're your own person; you're a free, autonomous individual; you can do what you want; you should follow your heart, Eve. You should do whatever you want; you should be your own God. Don't let Him tell you what to do. He actually commanded you to do something? He was restraining you in some way? Did God actually say?"

See, what is he trying to do? He's trying to change her attitude. He's trying to get at her heart. He's trying to change her motivations, and her worship, and what she trusts. He never actually says, "Eat of the fruit." Never. He never tempts her to eat of the fruit. He's tempting her to eat the fruit if she wants to. He's tempting her in her attitude. He's saying you don't need to trust God; don't trust God; in fact, trust yourself. He's tempting her to trust herself.

And then she responds. And she does, what many of us do, she gets God's word wrong. She says, in verse three, "You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it." Look at Genesis two, verse sixteen. Did God say that? "And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, 'You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.'" What doesn't he say? He doesn't say that they can't touch it. Now, that seems like a small addition, Eve, saying, "Well, He also said I can't touch it." But it's not, it's everything. Eve is the first legalists. Eve was the first person to add to God's commands. And so she makes obedience to God more restrictive than it is. She completely minimizes all the blessings of God, all the trees that He did give them to eat. She minimizes that. Doesn't even mention that, and then when she speaks of what God did command, she adds to it. She's a legalist. Eve is. "No, we can't even touch it." God never said that. He never said that.

And so she's already beginning to resent obedience. This isn't joyful obedience -- "Oh, I trust God, and I love God, and whatever He says I'll do, because I know He loves me." No this is begrudging obedience. It's begrudging obedience -- "He won't even let me touch it! He's keeping me from fun." See, she's already beginning to have her attitude change. She uses the word, the name for God that the enemy does. She just says God "Elohim." It's like saying "the man upstairs." She doesn't use the personal form of God "Yahweh", the Lord God, my God. She says, "Oh yeah, the man upstairs. He won't even let me touch it." Eve, her heart is already beginning to change.

And so, Satan, the serpent, he latches on and says in verse five, "God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and [you will know good and evil. You will be like God, like God.] So he keeps going, and he keeps going, and he says you can be like God. They already were, right? Genesis one: We were made in the image and likeness of God. They were already like God; they were already reflecting the glory of God and the goodness of God. They were made in the image of God.

What Satan is saying here is: You can BE God; you need to BE God. You can't trust God. You need to make your own way; you need to make your own choices and your own decisions; you should be God if you want to be happy. That's what he is saying. You see, Satan, he doesn't deny the power of God; he doesn't deny the will of God; he doesn't deny even the existence of God. He never once says, "No, God? God? You believe in God? He never said that. He doesn't even exist." He doesn't do that. Satan denies the goodness of God -- "He's withholding from you! He's keeping something from you! Did He actually say that?! Is He actually trying to restrain you from that?! If you want to be happy and satisfied and fulfilled, you got to be your own God. Don't listen to Him; He's not good!" He denies the goodness of God.

See, Satan is trying to get them to trust themselves. God wants them to trust Him. God wants them to trust Him. See, when God put this one restriction on them--one tree that they could not eat from, but it was in the midst of all these other trees that He said they can eat. All the berries and nuts and fruit that they could possibly want. He says you can eat from any tree in this garden except for this one. God, He's blessing them in abundance of good things. He's given them so much. God's like, Oh you're hungry? Here's all this food to eat: Berries, nuts, fruit, pineapples--good things. Oh, you desire pleasure? Here's sex. I'm going to make for you a marriage, a covenant marriage. Adam and Eve, here's pleasure. Oh, you want beauty? You desire beauty? Here, look all around you. I made all of this for you. All this beauty that you see is for you to experience and participate and revel in and to know. All you desire, fulfillment and meaning and purpose in your life; here, I'll put you in the garden. I want you to work it and keep it. Cultivate it to my glory. I want to invite you into what I'm doing all across the earth and the world. My vision for what were doing here is to fill the earth with my beauty and my glory. I want you to take part in that. Here's meaning and purpose. Work this to my glory. Join me. Let's go. Let's go do this.

All their desires, all that they wanted, all the that they had just deep within them in the way in which they were made for, God said, "I got that." You're hungry, here's some food. You want pleasure, here's some sex. You want beauty, look at all this stuff. You want meaning, here's work. He gives them all of that.

But He gives them one restriction: Except for this one tree, don't eat of it. And notice, He never actually tells them why they shouldn't do it. "Here's why you shouldn't eat of it." He never says that. Isn't that kind of frustrating? If He had just said, "Adam, Eve, if you eat of this, everything gets broken. And Eve, by the way, your great great great great great great granddaughter is going to be ticked at you if you do it. Everything is going to be broken. Everything! Don't eat of it, okay?" He ever does that. He never does that, why? Because if they had obeyed, if He had told them that, they would be obeying for selfish reasons. You see, God is wanting them to trust Him. He's wanting to communicate to them and tell them, "Look all that

you are, your life source, where you get your power, where you get pleasure and joy and happiness and fulfillment, all of it comes from me. It comes from me. I'm the giver of all of these good gifts. I am where you are going to find all of those things. You will find them in me. In order to ensure your happiness, I need to be your God, you need to be my people." Satan wanted them to trust themselves. God wanted them to trust Him.

See, if we believed in every moment of every day in every circumstance that God is infinitely and perfectly good, we would never sin. If you believed in every moment in every instance in every circumstance of every day that God is infinitely and perfectly good, you would never sin. See, we don't believe that He's good. We want to be satisfied, and we want pleasure, and we want happiness, and we want to be fulfilled, right? Why do you like money? Why do you like stuff? Why do you like shiny things? They make you happy in some way. In sin, you'll do whatever it takes to get it. Why do you like sex? Why do you like relationships? Why do you want to be approved of and accepted? Why do you want those things? Well, they give you pleasure. And you'll do whatever it takes; you'll even sin to get it.

But if you believed that God was infinitely and perfectly good and good to you, you would never have to. You would never have to sin to get it. You would trust and cling to God to give you those things and to satisfy your desires. Satan saying, "No, no, no. God's holding you down, Eve. If you want to be happy, you need to be your own God. If you obey, you won't be happy." Have you heard that? If you obey you won't be happy. And so God wants them to see that all of this is found in Him. Pleasure, fulfillment, satisfaction--all that they desire. Satan is wanting them to see, "No, no, no. It's going to come through you. You need to trust yourself and not trust God." Do you believe in what God says, or do you believe in what the enemy has said?

Here's how Eve responds: verse six--notice the language that's used--"So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate." Do you notice the language that's being used? Good. Delight. Desire. Make wise--Does that sound like the language of sin? Does that surprise you that that's the language being used? She delights. There is a delight to her eyes, the tree does. Does God delight in things? Does God delight in things? Yeah! Delighting is godly. She has a desire for wisdom. Is God wise? Yeah! God's wise. Being wise, desiring wisdom is godly. Her desires are godly.

See, sin, on the outside, at least on the surface doesn't look all dark and evil-like. Eve, she doesn't put Goth makeup on or her black Megadeth T-shirt and start drinking a bottle of Jack Daniels and club a few baby seals all while shooting up heroine--you know, devil worship. That isn't sin for Eve. No, it's good delights, it's good desires and wanting knowledge and wisdom. The problem wasn't Eve's desires. The problem wasn't Eve's desires. The problem is

where she went to with her desires. The problem is who she went to to have those desires filled. The problem wasn't her desires; it's in whom she trusted. That's the problem. She didn't run to God; she ran away from God, away from His command, and she trusted in herself.

See our desires are good. Your desires are good. Your desires are godly, but your desires are distorted now, because we don't know who to run to with them. We don't know where to go. See, God, He said, "Oh, you're hungry? Here's all this food. Here, eat of it." But with sin, now, that desire for food is distorted. Now, it's no longer just food, it's substance, delighting in--you know, fajitas and guacamole. How good is that? No, because of sin it's distorted now. Now, we medicate with food; we comfort with food; we purge ourselves in our eating, or we starve ourselves from food. Whatever it is, it's on our terms now. How we use food is on our terms. We control it; we trust in ourselves; we are going to use food to comfort or for control. It's no longer to enjoy. It's on our terms now. That desire for food has been distorted.

God said, "Oh, you want pleasure? Here's sex. Here's this covenant of marriage, and here's all these delights in sexual intimacy in marriage. Enjoy." But because of sin that desire is distorted now. Now, I'll just hook up without the covenant of marriage. Without that thing that says when the relationship goes bad, when things get hard, I'm sticking with you. That's no longer there. Sex, that desire, it turns into pornography, right? I don't have a spouse yet. God, you haven't given me a spouse yet. Or, you've given me a spouse, but the spouse doesn't desire me, or the spouse isn't what I want, or the spouse isn't what I deserve, so I'm going to go find this another way. So that desire is distorted. That good thing that we have within us that God created has been distorted. Has there been anything that's caused more wreckage than the distorted desire of sex?

And God said, "Oh, you desire beauty? You want beauty? Here look at all of this that I've created. It's for you. It's for you to experience and delight in and participate in." But with sin that desire is distorted now. Now we want beautiful stuff. We want beautiful things, and we want more of it, and we want to be beautiful. Where before that desire for beauty was really a desire beauty that boomerangs to the beauty behind the beauty. Like, "God is beautiful. Look at all this beautiful stuff that He created! How beautiful must God be!" Now because of sin that's distorted, and now we want to be beautiful. So now it's not, "Look at how beautiful those things are! How great is God!" Now it's, "Look at how beautiful I am. I want to be gloried in." Beauty now turns into vanity because of sin. "I want all of this beautiful stuff, and I want to be beautiful. Look at how beautiful I am; look at how beautiful my things are." Now it's no longer beauty that reveals the beauty behind the beauty. Now it's beauty for vanity sake. It's on our terms, beauty is now.

God said, "Oh you want meaning and fulfillment? You want purpose? Here, work hard. Cultivate this garden to my glory. Join me as I fill the earth with my goodness and my beauty

and my glory.” But now sin has distorted that desire for meaning and fulfillment, and no longer do we work for God's sake, but now we work for ours. No longer do we work so that people might rejoice in God and His goodness, but now we work so that people might rejoice in us.

And so because of sin, because of the distortion of these good, godly desires, now wine becomes drunkenness, and sex becomes pornography, and beauty becomes vanity, and work becomes anxiety. Everything is broken, because of sin and these distorted desires now. And so the human problem, my problem, your problem, the soul deep brokenness that you feel, the mess of your heart; it's caused by distorted desires, misplaced desires, desires that you have that are good, but you're not going to Him for them but something else. That's the problem.

You and I we were made in the image of God, in the likeness of God--Genesis one. And so deep within us there's still those good, godly desires. A faint remembrance of what used to be. You have this sense that things should be different. Have you had that? That's you being made in the image of God. And sins wrecked a lot of stuff, but there's still good desires that you have. You have good desires. Some of you, you don't want to be lonely; you want to be known; you want to be loved; you want fulfillment; you want meaning; you want beauty; you want pleasure; you want joy; you want shalom; you want wholeness; you want to be accepted; you want to be approved of. Those are good, godly desires. God has put those things in you. He's created you in that way, but now because of sin those desires have been distorted.

In James 1:14, "But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it is conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death." Satan was saying if you obey God, you won't be happy; you need to trust in yourself and be your own God. And Eve listened, and she believed. What happened?

Verse seven:

Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and 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." He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" The man said, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate [not a good idea guys]." 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, the promise of sin, the promise of Satan, the serpent, was: If you don't obey, you'll be happy. If you don't obey, you'll be satisfied, you'll be fulfilled. You need to follow your heart,

Eve. Everything will go well with you. Trust yourself. You will be like God. Make your own way. But instead they were naked and they covered themselves in verse seven.

See, before they trusted themselves and not God, before when they got all of their power and all of their life source and all of their pleasure and all that they are from God, before this, before they didn't trust God and trusted themselves, they were naked but they weren't really naked. Tracking with that? They were naked, but they weren't naked. Now, they are naked. Now, we speak of feeling naked or exposed or vulnerable or uncomfortable in our own skin. We speak of shame. They were naked but didn't know they were naked. Now they are naked and they know they are naked. They never had that before sin. Something leaves them, there is a glory that left them, there is a power of life source, there is now a separation between them and in the fountain of life, God, that had flowed into them.

They cover themselves from each other. The fig leaves weren't covering themselves from God--they hide from God. This is them hiding from one another. The fig leaves are protection from one another. It's that wall that is up between relationships now. Now, there's going to conflict. Now, there's going to be disagreement. Now, there's going to be hurt. Now, there's going to be betrayal. Now, there's going to be communication issues. Now, there's going to be strife. Now, there's going to be some distance. Now, there's going to be some vulnerabilities. Now, there's going to be some insecurities. The wall goes up. They're covering themselves. There's going to be selfishness now. Where before they always loved the other, and they always thought of the other; now they begin to think of themselves because they realize they're naked.

C.S. Lewis, he said that "humility it's not thinking less of yourself; it's thinking of yourself less." And so pride, it's not that you think too much of yourself; pride is you are just thinking of yourself too much. They begin to think of themselves too much, consider themselves too much. They are too aware. There's this inordinate amount of focus on themselves now, and selfishness sets in, and sin sets in, and they begin to be divided.

In verse twelve, Adam, he blames his wife. God asked him what happened; he blames Eve, the woman. He even blames God--"the woman you gave me." Sin, that's what it does. It separates, it divides this perfect relationship that they had. This harmonious, horizontal relationship between Adam and Eve is fractured, because of selfishness and self reliance and self dependence. That's what sin does. See, sin can't be in a relationship. Sin doesn't love the other. Sin only loves itself, and so now the relationship is broken.

And so the result of sin is not what we thought. It's not joy and fulfillment and satisfaction, right? Now, hear me when I say this: Anyone grow up in the church or be around the teaching that tried to convince us that sin was not fun? "Sins not going to be fun. You won't like it. That's not good." And you are like, "Well, everyone else is sinning around me, and they

look like they are having a blast." I'm not saying sin isn't fun, because it's distorted desires. It's good things from God. They're meant to be good, just now they are distorted. Now, we are running to something else, trusting in something else and not God for them. That's not what I mean by there wasn't joy, or there wasn't pleasure in it; but what happens is devastation, right? They are divided. There's devastation. There's division. There's blame shifting. There's selfishness now, and even there's fear.

Look at verse ten. He said, I was afraid, I heard you walking in the garden. I was afraid. Adam, he now fears God. The book of Hebrews says that it's a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Sin isn't just something that's going to wreck your life or cause you pain or rob you from joy, though it's all those things. More so, sin is an affront against God. It's the middle finger to the God who loves you and has given you so much good things. Adam is rightly afraid. Not joy. Not fulfillment. Devastated. Broken. Divided and afraid.

And in verse eight, they hide. They hide themselves from the presence of the Lord God. They used to run to Him. Now they run away from Him. They used to go to God, run to God, trust in God. Now, they are separating themselves. They are hiding from God. My little girl, she does this in her disobedience too. She'll get caught in something she knows she shouldn't do, or I'll say, "Hey, woman. Don't do that." And so she'll realize that she's in disobedience; she's sinning. And what she'll do, her head will go down in shame. She feels naked, exposed, shameful. And then she'll start just to separate herself from me. She'll go to the furthest point of the room. She'll even just get out of there and run somewhere else. She's separating herself. She's not running to daddy; she's running away from daddy in her disobedience. That's what Adam and Eve are doing, but what does God do?

Look at verse nine, "But the Lord God called to the man, and said, 'Where are you?'" "Where are you?" He pursues them. He calls after them. He goes after them. "Where are you?" Have you ever heard God call for you? "Where are you?" See, this is what a loving daddy does. I don't leave my girl in her disobedience. I don't leave her in her shame. I don't leave her to follow her own heart, and to do her own thing. I go after her. "Where are you?" I'm calling for her repentance. I'm calling her to stop running. I'm calling for her to stop hiding. I'm calling for her to turn to me, to obey me, to rest in me, to find refuge in me, to have her shame covered by me, for me to love her and to know her and to experience her, for her to come to daddy. That's what I'm doing. That's what God is doing. "Where are you?" Where are you, Adam? He's calling for them. It's the most gracious thing God could have done. This is unbelievably loving. If He would have just left them, He could have given them over to their sin, given them over to their devastation. Let them do what they want. But He doesn't. He goes after them. "Where are you?" God, He pursues them, He loves them, and He calls for them. "Where are you?"

Here is the question, here's the big idea as we step back, and as we've looked at sin, and we just kind of circled it, and we looked at it; we step back now. Here's the big idea: Do you run to God, or do you run away from Him? Do you go to God, or do you go away from Him? Where do you run? Remember the problem wasn't Eve's desires; the problem isn't what she wants; the problem is who she goes to for those desires to be fulfilled.

And so in your suffering, in your frustration, in your desires, do you run to God or do you run away from God? Have you ever noticed how easily you turn from God and how hard it is to turn to Him? It's not easy to kind of drift from God, right? But it's really difficult to be near Him and to run to Him and to feel close to Him. Do you notice that? Literally anything and everything can be an excuse for us to distance ourselves from God, to turn from Him as opposed to turn to Him. Sometimes it's suffering, something goes bad--"How could you let this happen? How could you keep good things from me? How could you let this happen to me?" And we'll distance ourselves from God. We'll keep Him at arm length.

But then the next week it's prosperity that keeps us from God. Everything's fine now; everything's great.; I'm fine. My life's good; everything's good. I'll give God my two hours on a Sunday, but I'm not going to give Him my whole. I'm not going to cling to Him; I'm not going to trust Him for everything. I seem to be making good decisions. My life is going really good right now. So prosperity can keep us from God. Suffering can keep us from God. Anything can keep it. Life gets busy. "I'm a new mom, and I'm trying to figure this thing out." Or "I got a big thing at work; I got a project to take care of." Or "I just graduated from school." There's all these different things that become really excuses for running away from God and not to God. Anything and everything can lead us in that way. It's not easy. We don't fall into a closeness with God or running to God.

Have you ever noticed how hard prayer is? Prayer is one of those things. It's very intimate; it's communion with God; it's communicating with God. How is your prayer life? Prayer is turning to God; it's running to God. Prayer is chasing after God. How's your prayer life? It's not usually very good when we're eating from the tree, right? It's not usually good when we're running from God in sin. How is your prayer life?

Or singing. When we are singing, how is your singing? Not like, is it good, but are you really singing like from your heart singing. And I know that looks different for all of us. I'm not saying we all have to look the same--you know, hand up like the cool Baptist one where you got one hand in the pocket and the other hands up, or just straight up like Pentecostal, two hands up, right? It's going to look different for all of you. But you know what real singing is for you. Like when you're singing from your heart. Singing "He will never fail", and you're clinging to that; you believe that; you're proclaiming that. How's your singing? You know why singing is hard, because singing is coming towards God; it's moving towards Him; it's running to God, and

saying, "I'm going to believe what I'm singing, I want to proclaim it. I want people around me to hear what's true about my God." How's your singing? How's your praying?

Are you running to God? Will you run to Him? Will you run to Him? Or are you running away from Him? David in the Bible wrote most of the Psalms. God, He called David a man after His own heart. Have you ever thought of why? If you look at David's life, you're like, "He did?" Right? He murdered some dude, and he murdered him, because he committed adultery with his wife and got her pregnant and had him killed. And he's constantly facing his enemies; he's constantly in suffering. His life was not very easy, and God said, yeah, "he's a man after my own heart." Really? He is? The murderer the adulterer? Yeah." He's a man after my own heart." Why? Because in his suffering and in his sin, David ran to God. He's constantly talking about God as his refuge, and God is his safe place; God is his stronghold. He's turning to God in his suffering. He's turning to God in his sin. He's turning to God in his prosperity when things are going well. He is a man after God's own heart, because he is running to God and not away from Him.

The rest of the Bible, the rest of the Old Testament from Genesis three till you get to Matthew is just story after story after story of everyone else in Israel not doing that. Right? The whole Old Testament is just one big long story of God's people not running to God, but hiding from Him. The book of Jeremiah that's all that it is. It's God's saying, "You're running for me. You're running for me. You're running for me. You're running for me." The whole book of Jeremiah. Jeremiah chapter two, it says--God speaking--He says, "What wrong did your fathers find in me that they went far from me?" And they went after worthlessness, and they became worthless. Or hypocritically they have turned their back to me but not their face. Right? "Oh, we love you God. We love you." "No we don't. We are going that way, but we're going to act like we love you. We'll sing, but we're not really singing. We'll pray, but we're not praying."

Or in chapter nine, He says, "[they] have stubbornly followed their own hearts." Put that one on instagram. They have stubbornly followed their own hearts. And then over and over again in chapter nine, He says, they do not know me; they refuse to know me; they won't come to me. In chapter seventeen, God says, "Cursed is the man who trust in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart turns away from the Lord." And they hide just like the father Adam. In Chapter twenty three of Jeremiah, "Can a man hide himself in secret places so that I cannot see him?" The whole Bible is one long story of God's people not running to God, but running away from Him.

So do you see this story that's being painted in Genesis three? Do you see it's truth? Do you see yourself painted into it? Can you imagine it? Can you see yourself in it? Adam and Eve hiding amongst the trees, hiding from God, separating themselves from God, not running to God. But God coming after them; God pursuing them; God calling for them, "Where are you?"

It's as if He's saying to Adam, "Where are you going to go? You're going to go to the trees; you're going to go hide yourself in the trees; you think you're going to find comfort in the trees. I created those trees. I gave those trees to you. It was my idea for the trees, and all the trees are going to do is keep turning you back to me, because they won't satisfy. They know what they're meant to do; they're meant to turn you to me. Where are you going to go? Where would you go?" That's what He's saying to Adam. Where would you go? And that's what He's saying to us too. Where else would you go? Where are you running to?

Why aren't you running to Him? What has He done that you would not run to Him? That you would run after worthlessness and become worthless? He's calling for us. He's pursuing us. He's pursuing you and me. See, He calls to us, "Where are you? Where would you go?"

I look back at my life and all the devastation and all the brokenness and all the despair and all the mess that I've caused, it's been caused by this one thing: I didn't run to God. It wasn't my desires; it wasn't what I hoped in; it wasn't what I needed; it wasn't what I wanted. It was who I ran to. It was what I trusted in. Isn't it the same for you?

See, the whole Bible is summed up in Genesis three: Man has turned from God, and God has come after him. Man hides from God, and God pursues him. Genesis three is just the Gospel. It's the good news of Jesus that we speak of. See, Jesus is God come after you. Jesus is God pursuing. Jesus is God's relentless, fatherly pursuit of children who are disobedient and running from their Dad. Jesus is God come after you. Where Adam's sin was to want to be like God, and Jesus's redemption was though he was found in the form of God, he did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but he emptied himself, by taking on the form of a servant, and being born in the likeness of men, he humbled himself unto obedience. Obedience unto death, even death on a cross.

Where Adam's sin was he wanted to be like God, he wanted to be God; Jesus' salvation of you was that He became like you, so that you might become like Him. Where Adam, his sin was not obeying God about a tree; Jesus's redemption was obeying the Father about another tree, the cross. Where Adam's sin was him putting himself in the place of God --I'm going to trust myself. I'll be happy. I'm going to do it my own way-- Adam's sin was putting himself in the place of God; Jesus' redemption of you was putting Himself in the place of man, in the place of you. Jesus is God come after you. Jesus is God's pursuit of you. Jesus is God's megaphone of "Where are you? Where else would you run?"

If you want to run to a tree, run to the cross. If that's where you want to hide, hide under the cross. If you want to hide somewhere, hide underneath Jesus and His grace. He's come after you. Where else would you go? Are you running to God or are you running somewhere else? Turn to God, run to Him, why? Because He's come after you first.

Father, thank you for your grace and your mercy to us. That you would love us in such a way; that you would pursue us in such a way. That by grace, you would come after us. By grace you would love us. By grace you would call for our repentance. There are some men and women in this place that are hiding. Maybe they are shameful, they are exposed, they've been improperly covered. Would you cover them? Would you pursue them? Some believe the lie that you not good. Would you let them see the truth of Jesus and His cross, and how you must be good, He who did not withhold His own son, but gave him up for us. How good you are. Would you do this? Would you pursue us in this place right now by your spirit? Would you pursue us in this way. We pray this in Jesus name, amen.