

**Sermon preached by Mr. J. S. Green
at Gower Street Memorial Chapel, London,
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**“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.”**

Genesis 3: 9,10

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This is indeed one of the most solemn chapters in the whole of God's Word. It shows to us the sad and awful fall of man, the fall in which we are each involved. It affects each one of us; and but for God's rich and sovereign grace, we must feel the effects of it in hell throughout eternity. O may the Lord enable us solemnly and earnestly to consider these things! It was not God who departed from man; it was man who wilfully disobeyed his Maker and departed from his God.

Adam, in the sad and solemn state and condition that he was in, wished to have nothing more to do with God. He would have hidden himself from the very presence of God. And that is exactly how each sinner has been born into this world - desiring to have nothing to do with God. They will have to do with religion, some of them, on condition that it suits their flesh and their understanding. But they have no desire to have any transaction with that infinitely great and holy God. You and I, my friends, were no different. That was our state and condition once upon a time, if it is not so this morning.

So Adam, after the fall, his sad and awful fall, wished to have no more to do with God. He had a solemn, slavish fear of God in his heart. He had a terrible dread of God, really, because he had broken the command that God had given him. And God gave the command so very, very

clearly to Adam and Eve. And as we were reading in this chapter, Eve had not forgotten the command that God had given to herself and to her husband. She told the tempter the very words which God had spoken to them by way of warning. So it was a wilful breaking of God's commandment. Adam did it with his eyes open. God had warned him of the solemn result if he should transgress.

I admit this is a great mystery, one that I cannot solve, how that Adam should have been created by God as we read: "So God created man in his own image; in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them." They came forth sinless from their Maker's hand. I feel that the fall will ever remain a mystery to our poor minds.

And although Adam was thus created upright and he was innocent, there was in him that capability of falling. That is very clear. Yet I firmly believe this, that God so created Adam and gave him power to resist the devil and to resist temptation, that if he had so willed, he could have remained in his innocence. His sin was absolutely wilful. He could have kept himself from it. And yet he believed the lie of the devil, and thus wilfully transgressed the law of his Maker.

And it immediately had a solemn effect. Before Adam fell, he loved God's presence, he loved to have communion with God. Now he wished for this no more. As I have said, there was a dread and awful fear of God; and so, when Adam and his wife heard the voice of God in the cool of the day, they hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden. But they could not hide themselves from God's all-seeing eye. God knew all about them. God knew what they had done. It was all clear to Him.

And so "the Lord God called unto Adam and said unto him, Where art thou?" Or, 'What hast thou done? In what state and condition do you find yourself now?' "Where art thou?" And we find that there was no repentance in Adam's heart, there was no real sorrow over what he had done. He sought, with his wife, to find excuses. One would blame the

other, and the other would blame the serpent, saying, 'The serpent tempted me, and I did eat.' No gracious confession of what they had done: they were sadly hardened through their sin. They were alienated from God by that wicked work. And so God puts this question to Adam, "Where art thou?"

Very solemn! Adam could not get away from God: he must hear that solemn voice, and God speaks to him then most solemnly. And God said unto him, "Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life." We only have to look around us, my friends, and we see on every hand the sad and solemn effects of the fall. It seems to me that we in our day see the effects of it even more than did our forefathers. Wherever we look, wherever we go, we see the sad fruit of that black transgression that took place in the Garden of Eden opened up to us. And more than that: some of us feel the effects of the fall in our poor hearts and minds. We realise with much pain and sorrow day by day that we are at best but poor, fallen sinners. But what a humbling lesson this is! This is the first lesson we learn in Jesus' school.

And, it is good to be well-grounded in this, and to feel that we are no better than Adam was when God spoke to him. He wished, in that state, to have nothing more to do with God. You were just singing in that very wonderful hymn:

How sad our state by nature is;
Our sin how deep it stains;
And Satan binds our captive minds
Fast in his slavish chains.

And I believe that to be the truth; and some of you feel it to be the truth, and you know that by nature you would have nothing to do with God. You do not want that religion which would be a cross to your flesh.

So man, we believe, fell completely from the image of God. He wilfully transgressed God's holy law, and since that time his posterity has been born in sin and all that alienates from God.

But if this question should be put to us this morning, that was put to Adam, what would our answer be? "Where art thou?" "Where am I?" What have we to answer to the question? Some of you could, I believe, truthfully say, 'There was a time when it was with me as you have described, when I felt I wished to have nothing to do with God. God was not in all my thoughts. My heart, my affections, were set upon the world. Like Asaph said, I was as a beast before Thee, just living for the things of this poor, dying world; careless regarding the welfare of my never-dying soul.'

Some of you may be there this morning, for all I know: careless, indifferent, proud, unrepentant, living your life as you desire to live, not feeling your need of His mercy and His forgiveness, and like Adam and Eve, trying to hide yourself in fig leaves. There may be some natural conviction of sin, and that may make you feel your need of some reformation; and you may have reformed yourself. You may say, 'I am a very different man or woman to what once I was. Once I took God's name in vain; I desecrated the Sabbath, I sought my own pleasure on that day. Things are very different with me now. I read God's Word; I do many things for God; I spend my substance for Him and my strength for Him; and I quite expect when I come to the end of my life God will say to me, 'Well done!' and I shall get safe to heaven.' We have often been told, my friends, that we shall never get to heaven upon reformation. I do believe that where there is regeneration, there will be reformation. But there may be reformation when there is no regeneration; and in that state and condition a sinner trusts to his own self-righteousness, and expects that a holy God will receive him on that ground.

Others have natural conviction of sin. They believe that there is righteousness and judgment to come, and they quite intend one day to serve the Lord, to become religious, prayerful and careful about their souls. But not today! No! Religion would be too much of an encumbrance to them today. It would spoil their carnal pleasures, and so forth; and so it is not today, but one day, later. They promise that one day they will turn, they will acknowledge God, they will pray to Him and read His Word. But that day will never come! Have you thought of that, sinner? 'What?' say you, 'that day never come?' It will never come! You say, 'Shall I never be able to turn from my evil ways and make myself fit to stand before a holy God?' Never!

One young man, you know, who came to the Lord Jesus, and Jesus told him what was required, said, "All these things have I kept from my youth up." The Lord said, 'Yet lackest thou one thing. Go, sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor, and come, follow Me; and thou shalt have treasure in heaven.' He said, 'No; certainly not.' He went away very sorrowful, because he was very rich. He did not wish to take up his cross and follow the Lord. And yet he thought he was tolerably good on account of his good works. Did not the Lord Jesus in his ministry make it very, very clear, "Ye must be born again"? And, except a man be born again of the Spirit he shall not see the kingdom of heaven.

Now Adam had not been born again when God thus spoke to him, "Where art thou?" The poor man knew nothing then of God's rich provision for poor sinners. Nothing stood before Adam but despair, and he felt in his heart enmity against this great God. The devil had indeed, it appeared, gained the day. The devil was envious at the innocency of man in which God had created him. Having fallen, through pride, from the very presence of God in heaven, O how he envied and hated God's creation! He hated man, and he did in a subtle way seek to gain his own ends, and I firmly believe that he thought he had accomplished that. I believe he thought he was wiser than God and had gained the victory.

But he had not. He did not know the rich provision God had made for poor Adam. Neither did Adam at this time!

“Where art thou?” Without hope, without desire after God. That is where Adam was. But where art thou, my friend? Perhaps some of you feel, ‘I am in a most solemn state and condition, if you did but know it. If you could look into my heart, you would see there a heart full of fear, full of trouble, full of distress. I feel I am a poor, fallen son or daughter of Adam.’ Where there is this gracious conviction of sin, there is a closing of a sinner’s mouth. A mere professor usually has plenty to say, plenty of chatter, until God closes his mouth. God has shut some of our mouths. There was a time when some of us, if we could have answered the question, “Where art thou?” would have made this confession: ‘We are lost for ever. Woe is me, for I am undone: I am without hope. I can see, I can feel, I have solemnly broken God’s holy law; I am under its curse. I have nothing to say if God should consign me to endless ruin, as good Watts says in that verse:

Should sudden vengeance seize my breath,
I must pronounce Thee just in death;
And if my soul were sent to hell,
Thy righteous law approves it well.’

Is that where you are, friends? Can you truthfully say that you feel to be a poor, lost, guilty, undone sinner? You may say, ‘There can be no mercy for me. God would not be just were he to be merciful to me, because it would be contrary to His justice and to His law.’ But it would not my dear friends. No! Though it is true you stand justly condemned by a broken law and by God’s justice, yet there is that blessed gospel: there is the Lord Jesus Christ. And I believe the gospel began to be set forth before poor Adam.

God did not let him remain with his fig leaves on. No! Blood was shed. The beasts were killed and their skins were taken, and Adam and Eve were clothed. And that wonderful promise was given to them, I believe,

and they heard that solemn word spoken to their enemy. “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.” There I believe we have the gospel first set forth. And no doubt the dear Lord did preach the gospel to poor, lost, fallen Adam. And he began to see that, although by nature he wished to have nothing to do with God, yet the Lord began to break down his hard and rocky heart. He began to preach to him that everlasting gospel; He began to confound the devil when He set forth His blessed, precious provision for poor, lost sinners. So, my dear friend, you need not despair, although you feel so guilty, so undone, and feel how just God would be in consigning you to endless ruin. There is hope for thee.

And it is indeed a great mercy if you are compelled to go before God in prayer, feeling how undone, wretched and ruined you are in and of yourself. It is good if you feel your own works, your own fancied goodness, can never commend you to God, and you feel your need of the righteousness of Jesus.

Now, whilst some of you may see no clear answer to the question, “Where art thou?” you may be able to say, ‘Although I feel to be a poor, lost, wretched, undone sinner, I am hoping in the Lord’s mercy. I realise, I feel, there is no hope in self, no hope at all, but I just begin to see that there is provision made by God for poor, lost, wretched sinners like myself.’ So you are hoping in God’s mercy. You can say, “I’ll not despair, for who can tell?” You feel how undone you are by nature; you have many a fear in your poor heart, and yet you have had the gospel preached to you.

It is a blessed day in the experience of a poor, feelingly lost, sinner, when he or she first hears the gospel; when that poor sinner feels there is mercy with that great God. Some of you will never forget when God first raised you up from that pit of feeling despair and ruin. You had not that sweet and blessed clear deliverance you have now, but you could see and

feel the dawning of the gospel day in your heart; you began to hear of the Lord Jesus with something more than the outward ear; you began to hear of Him by faith in your heart, and you were encouraged to pray and to seek Him.

"Where art thou?" Hoping in Jesus' blood; hoping in Jesus' merits; believing that at last I shall get safe to heaven and live for ever with God in that blessed place. Now you go on seeking, my friends. "Where art thou?" You may say humbly, 'Once a poor, lost sinner, but now found:

Jesus sought me when a stranger,
Wandering from the fold of God;
He, to save my soul from danger,
Interposed His precious blood.

He has mercifully found me, convinced me of my sins and led me forth by faith to the precious blood of Jesus and to His righteousness. And although in myself still I am a poor, wretched, undone sinner, yet in Jesus I am all fair, and shall one day reach that holy, happy place where He dwells.'

"And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou?" We believe the Lord God in His own time makes this call to each of His people. He finds them; He convinces them of their sins and their lost estate; He closes their mouths as to any hope in themselves; and then with repentance and confession for their sins, He leads them to His dear Son, the Fount of every blessing. May each one of us, if God's will, be mercifully found, mercifully led. And then at last, though involved in the fall, and completely lost and ruined by it, as we are saved through the merits of Jesus, we shall get safe to heaven.

Amen.

[Bible Reading: Genesis 3 and 4:1-15]