

Where Are You? (Calven Celliers)

Read Genesis 3: 6 – 9.

Where are you? Not, what have you done? But, where are you?

God's search for us begins with a very simple question: "Where are you?" A question that brings us right into the very presence of God Almighty, *El Shaddai*.

But let us begin by first putting this in perspective. When you start at the very beginning you find a story of beauty, glory, and perfection – *God created the heavens and the earth ... and it was good*. We were made to bear the image of God's own glory and dignity. We were made to rule and reign with God. We were made to experience the high and holy calling of a relationship with God. We were made to live forever.

Then, in Genesis 3, we are introduced to what is referred to as the Fall. It's all about how we got lost. It's a story of rebellion; sin is defined as rebellion against God. Sin enters the equation when Adam and Eve rebel and walked away from God. From then on, the story of all humanity becomes a story of great rebellion – **Read Romans 5:12**. Through Adam, the inherent inclination to sin entered the human race, and human beings became sinners by nature.

"All of us, who have descended from impure seed, are born infected with the contagion of sin."
(John Calvin)

When Adam sinned, his inner nature was transformed by his sin of rebellion, bringing to him spiritual death and depravity that would be passed on to *everyone* – **Read Romans 3:23**, and because sin entered the world through Adam, so death was passed on to all men – **Read Romans 6:23**.

A gift is the opposite of a wage. We earn a wage; in other words, we get what we deserve. Because we are sinners, we deserve to die. We're not entitled to much more than that. But in contrast, a gift is given as a result of the generosity of the Giver. And in this verse, the apostle Paul highlights for us that the gift of *eternal* life is the result of the undeserved grace of a generous God. A God, who out of His great love for you and I, sent His one and only Son to die the death that we deserved to die, and paid the ultimate price.

Read Romans 8: 1 & 2. It's important for us to understand in this wonderful truth of Scripture that not everyone can say, *'There is now no condemnation over my life.'* Only those *'who are in Christ, who belong to Christ Jesus'* have that assurance. The reality is that some are in Him and some are not. Only by being in Christ does Christ's condemnation become your condemnation. If you want to be able to say now and at the last judgment, *"There is no condemnation for me, because Jesus endured it for me,"* then you must belong to *Jesus*. If you are in Him, what happened to Him, happened for you. If you are *'separated from him,'* you have no warrant for saying that what happened to Him happened for you.

So where are you? In Christ? Free from condemnation?

Which brings us to a struggle that many Christians wrestle with. Many Christians struggle in being assured of their salvation. The problem, however, is that many believers look for the assurance of salvation in the wrong places. Many Christians tend to seek assurance of salvation in the things God is doing in their lives, in their spiritual growth, in the good works and obedience to God's Word that is evident in their Christian walk. While these attributes are fruits of our salvation, they are not what we should base the assurance of our salvation on. Rather, we should find the assurance of our salvation in the objective truth of God's Word. We should have confident trust that we are saved based on the promises God has declared, not because of our subjective experiences.

God wants us to have assurance of our salvation. We should not live our Christian lives wondering and worrying each day whether we are truly saved. That is why the Bible makes the plan of salvation so clear. And I thought it might be helpful this morning to remind ourselves what that plan is.

In God's plan of salvation, first we must understand why we need to be saved. Simply put, we need to be saved because we have sinned. And because God is holy and just, He cannot allow sin to go unpunished. The punishment for sin is eternal death, or put another way, eternal separation from God.

Secondly, God Himself is the only one who can provide for our salvation. You and I are utterly unable to save ourselves and so God became a human being in the Person of Jesus Christ; Jesus lived a sinless life and offered Himself as a perfect sacrifice on our behalf. Since Jesus is God, His death was of infinite and eternal value. The death of Jesus Christ on the cross fully paid for the sins of the entire world, and His resurrection from the dead demonstrated that His sacrifice was indeed sufficient and that salvation is now available.

All we must do is receive it, by faith, trusting fully in Jesus alone as Saviour and Lord of our lives. If you confess your sin, God is faithful and just and will forgive your sins and purify you from all unrighteousness. If you confess that Jesus is both Saviour and Lord of your life, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved! And, the absolutely awesome news is that from that point on you'll never walk alone – **Read Ephesians 1: 13 & 14.**

"When a person admits to his or her sin, asks God for forgiveness, and accepts forgiveness through the saving work of the risen Christ, God commissions his Holy Spirit to enter our lives and to make us secure forever." (John Piper)

And it begins with a very simple question: "Where are you?"

And that's the beauty of the Gospel, God seeks us – **Read John 15:16.** Before we ever seek and find God, He is the one who first draws us to Himself – **Read John 6:44.** Jesus even told parables like the parable of the shepherd going after the lost sheep and the parable of the lost coin to show us how intently God will pursue one lost soul. And once we are believers, God continues to pursue us through His abiding Holy Spirit who leads us in the ways of the Lord and empowers us to walk with God and in obedience to His Word. The Spirit is God pursuing us and enabling us to pursue Him back so that we may have a close relationship with Him and bear spiritual fruit. The Spirit is here to pray for us, He intercedes for us and helps us in our weakness. He illuminates God's Word to us so that we can know God better. He unites us as believers with one another, equipping us to build one another up. He guides us in life and reminds us that we have been adopted by God and can rest steadfastly in hope; trusting that He will fulfil His promises.

God pursues us every day and in many different ways. We do not have to live the Christian life on our own — we live it in close fellowship with God because of the work of Jesus Christ and through the gift and power of the Holy Spirit.

Read Romans 5:8. We had no hope of avoiding God's judgment before Jesus took it for us. God is the One who initiates relationship, God is One who asks *"Where are you?"* It's never a condemnatory *"What have you done?"* but rather a loving, gracious *"Where are you?"*