

Hide and Seek

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[0 : 00] So, I wonder how many of us have experienced shame in our lives. What we experience shame over, why was it we felt shame?

And what it was that we did about it? We maybe tried to hide it in some way. We maybe tried to run away, to hide, to cut ourselves off from those we knew.

We maybe did a whole number of things to try and cover our shame, to try and run from this experience that we had.

Now, this account here, known as the fall of humanity, is where the first humans, Adam and Eve, turned their backs on God.

And all of a sudden, everything begins to unravel before them. Now, I don't know what you did with your shame, what you do with your shame.

[1 : 12] But here in this account, we see God pursuing His people. We see God promising a rescue. And we see Him providing a covering for their shame.

So, let's dive in and see what takes place in this account. So, we've got three headings. Of course, we do. What else would we do without three headings? The first heading is sin.

Now, sin is maybe, for many people today, an old-fashioned idea. Really something that only the kind of loopy religious fundamentalists go on about.

Sin is something that's not thought much of. Maybe a shrug of the shoulders. Maybe celebrated today. But there is space in everyone's life for this notion of sin.

It doesn't take much. Maybe we are wronged by someone. Maybe more seriously when it comes to people who abuse, people who steal, people who kill.

[2 : 26] And we rightly recognize that as sin. But what the Bible wants us to see, and what comes out in this passage, is that sin isn't just a problem out there with the really bad people.

But that sin is also a problem in our own hearts. And sin isn't, you know, necessarily the fact that we're as bad as we could possibly be.

That we're doing the worst possible things. And that in reality, we do no good. That's not what sin is. But sin, at the core of it, is that we reject God.

And that from that comes behaviors and lifestyles and patterns and attitudes which run contrary to what God wants for us.

We see here that the path to rejection of God taking many steps. The first is that we see the doubting of God's Word. So the snake in verse 1 comes in and slithers his way in to sow doubt.

[3 : 38] Did God really say? Did God really say that you must not eat from any tree in the garden? And straight away, Eve becomes off balance.

You know yourself, if someone questions you and you go, Did it really happen like that? Am I misremembering things? And now all of a sudden, doubt and cloudiness come into the picture. But what Satan, what the serpent has just asserted is a load of nonsense. Chapter 2, verse 17, God says essentially, Have your fill.

Go, eat from the trees of the garden. Just not from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Eat from any other tree you like. That's yours to have and to enjoy.

But all of a sudden, with the words of the serpent, doubt comes in. The Word of God is questioned. The goodness of God is questioned.

[4 : 40] And straight away we see how Eve is now deceived. How that doubt that was sown is just causing chaos. Verse 2, We may eat from the trees in the garden.

So far, so good. But God did say you must not eat from the tree that's in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die. And all of a sudden, it's misremembered.

And now Eve is on shaky ground, and now doubt comes in. Did God really say that? Then there is a rubbishing of God's Word. Verse 4, You will not certainly die.

Don't be silly. Don't be silly. You're taking all that way too seriously. Not only a deception to get Eve to question, but now just flat out rubbishing and rejecting what God has said.

And then you have the bigging up of the benefits of rejecting God before leaving Him. Talking about the advantages of leaving God behind. Your eyes are going to be opened.

[5 : 47] You're going to be like God knowing good and evil. It's a good thing. You want this, surely. So you see the trajectory of things. There is the doubting of God and His Word.

There is then the rejection of God's Word, and then bigging up the benefits of rejecting God, that this is surely a good thing. And all of a sudden, Satan is deceived, and Eve falls for it, hook, line, and sinker.

She goes the whole way and falls for it. Now, for some of us, most likely, most of us, it won't be as a conscious decision as that.

We're maybe not even aware that we're doing it. But it's something which we can easily fall into as well.

Certainly, in the rubbish in God's Word, it's maybe, that's all a bit much, isn't it? I mean, God surely isn't really all that serious about that.

[6 : 54] That seems so unimportant. So, why would God care about that? I mean, maybe you look to someone else who you see as someone who really takes their faith seriously, and you think, they just take all that a bit too seriously.

We can all do that. And then, of course, like Eve, we and others fall into action, which shows this rejection of God.

What comes out of our rejection of God is that we do and say things that are contrary to God's Word. And these things, unsurprisingly, then bring shame into the picture, as it does here.

Now, Joe is just sounding out interest for Discipleship Explored. You might have done Christianity Explored, which is another course organized by this chap, Rico Tice.

And on this very topic of sin, he's got this session, this video, and he says, imagine that your whole life is up on a screen for all to see.

[8 : 06] Fellow church members, neighbors, your children, your parents, your spouse, everything's on display. Now, there's going to be some things you're going to be very proud of.

The time where you graduated from university, perhaps. Times of kindness and generosity towards others. But then he says, there's going to be things that you're not so proud of.

Things, in fact, that you're maybe embarrassed about or ashamed of. Those things that, if only they knew, that would really, oh, you'd want to run a million miles away.

You'd want to leave the country. Every thought that we've ever had, good and bad, every action we've done, maybe those things in secret that nobody else knows about, all on display for everyone to see.

The time you said a cutting word to someone in an argument just because you knew it would really sting. The lie you told because it was just more convenient. All of us have done wrong.

[9 : 19] All of us have turned our backs on God, gone our own way. I mean, we would all at the very least admit that we're not perfect. We have not done perfectly that which God has commanded.

And all of our failings, all of our sins are symptomatic, as I say, of that rejection of God, that turning our backs on God, that attitude which says, no thanks.

I'm in control of my own life, thanks very much. What I say goes, we have that here in Adam and Eve, doing things their own way.

And I'm sure we can all think of times in our life, maybe even in the last week, where we've done things our own way and not God's way. And again, sometimes that is maybe a conscious decision.

We're maybe aware that we shouldn't go down this path, but we want to do it, so we do it anyway. Or maybe sometimes we're just sleepwalking into this.

[10 : 32] But behind it all is a lack of regard for what God has said in His Word. That sin, that sin brings shame, which is our second point, shame.

Now, we read from chapter 2, verse 25, just to highlight this, because it becomes relevant as we read through Genesis 3.

Adam and Eve are naked and they feel no shame whatsoever. Now, this was the reality of life for Adam and Eve, something we know nothing about.

they were naked and they felt no shame. Now, of course, it's talking literally about nakedness. But the thing that this communicates is that everything was transparent out in the open because there was no reason to fear.

There was no reason to feel ashamed. There was no reason for embarrassment for anything that we've done. At this point, the human race was at harmony with one another.

[11 : 35] At this point, the human race was at harmony with their God. There was no fear, embarrassment, shame, nothing to hide. In their nakedness, the most vulnerable that you could be with another person.

And yet, they did not feel a hint of shame. There was not, at this point, a harsh word said in an argument. There was not a, this is your turn to watch the kids.

I've been doing it for so long. This is your turn. There was none of that. Nothing to fear. All things were out on the table. There was nothing to hide. Yet in verse 6, the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food, pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom.

She took some and she ate. And then down to verse 7, then the eyes of both of them were opened and they realized they were naked. so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

All of a sudden, it just begins unraveling. And all of a sudden, there is something to hide. Now, I don't remember, I don't know about you, if you remember being a child and doing something really naughty that you knew that you shouldn't have done, but it was just really fun and you thought, let's do it anyway and then you get caught.

[13 : 06] Now, at that point, the feeling is not one of, like, giddy excitement and giggling because this is so fun. It's shame. It's embarrassment because you've been caught.

You've been found out. I remember I was maybe five years old. It was December sometime and I had a friend round to the house and we thought it would be a great idea to eat all of my chocolate advent calendars, all of my brother's chocolate advent calendars and all of my sister's too.

It was fun until we got caught. Until we got caught and all of a sudden, we were very shamed as we ought to have been.

We didn't feel proud or happy. We didn't feel like laughing then. We felt shame. Now, going back to the Rico Tice analogy of your whole life being up on the screen, yes, there will be things that you're going to be legitimately proud of, but there's going to be some things which, imagine, your neighbor or your friend or your spouse seeing that.

The shame you'd feel. We've all done things that we're not proud of. We've all done things that bring shame. What would you do if people found out your deepest secret?

[14 : 37] That thing that only you know about. Those things in secret. You might try to cover it up and bury it.

Bury your shame and make yourself look more presentable. We see in verse 7, they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves, Adam and Eve did.

They were naked and they feel no shame. Sin enters the picture and all of a sudden there's something to hide. They feel shame and so all of a sudden there's something to hide and just as their nakedness points to harmony between humanity, harmony between one another, harmony between humanity and God, so their covering shows that something isn't right, that there is something to hide, that there's something to be afraid of.

Now, the big news at the end of last year was the COVID inquiries, right, with the Scottish and UK governments didn't learn very much but there were, one of the reasons for that were there were messages deleted, there were messages redacted, there were messages that were refused to even be given.

Now, of course, the inquiry's ongoing, I'm not getting political here at all, but when we delete something, when we hide something, it shows there might be something to hide.

[16 : 08] Now, how do we do this in our lives to try and cover our shame? It might be coming to church and putting a bit of a brave face on.

It might be busying ourselves with church stuff. Coming to the morning and even if you're especially keen the evening service, the midweek prayer meeting or Bible study, serving on rotas, seem to be a really excellent, committed church member, but really is a front for the shame which lurks

beneath.

We might do it more God-ward as well and think, well, God's going to be pleased with me, more pleased with me than they are this church member over here who, to be honest, isn't really pulling their weight.

isn't really turning up as often as I am. We think, God's surely going to be more pleased with me.

God's going to look at me and, I know I've done bad, but at least I turn up, at least I serve.

So, we might cover by outwardly appearing to be better than we are. but another one, we might run and hide.

[17 : 39] Verses 8 and 9, then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day and he hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden.

But the Lord God called to the man, where are you? So, they run and hide from God because they hear him coming. You know, as we sung in Psalm 139, I mean, a total fool's errand.

God sees us, knows us inside out. There's no hiding. There's no running. But run and hide they do. Now they have sinned and that harmony that they enjoyed between themselves and God, the peace in that relationship ruptured.

They run and they hide. They run and they hide because they fear God and not in the sense of a godly honor and respect and reverence and a desire to live out what he has said, but they are absolutely petrified.

They're petrified because they're aware now of their shame before a holy God. They run and they hide. Now, how might we do that? And personally, it's very easy to not pray when we feel shame before God.

[19 : 02] How can God accept me? How can God be still patient with me even now? I've done it again. That thing I said I wouldn't do, I've just gone and done. How can God put up with me?

How can God accept me and take me in again? Maybe we're not scared, maybe we're just embarrassed. And again, running from God outside the church and for those who are not Christians, it might show itself in that people are generally willing to try anything apart from God to make themselves happy, to see fulfillment in their lives.

Sooner placing our hopes in riches or possessions, sooner placing our hopes in political movements, sooner placing our hopes in people, in meditation, in a whole number of things, trying anything, and then maybe that doesn't work, and so then it's on to the next thing.

But God, that's never generally in the thinking. We can easily run from God when we feel shame.

And another one which I think is probably the most relatable to most of us is we might blame shift to take the heat off us.

Verse 12, the man said, it's the woman you put here with me. She gave me some fruit from the tree and I ate it. So Adam goes on the offensive straight away.

[20 : 46] It wasn't me, it was her, it was that woman, it was her over there. And even more shockingly, it's the woman that you gave me. God, this is ultimately because of you.

You gave me that woman and that woman gave me the fruit and I ate it. And then Eve, okay, what's this? Well, it was a serpent.

The serpent deceived me and I ate. Now, of course, to some degree, Adam and Eve take ownership. They both say, and I ate it. But they're kind of looking for an out.

They're looking to kind of absolve themselves to some degree that although, yes, maybe I admit I did eat it, but it was really their fault.

And we could all do this. You know, we might blame it on our circumstances. I'm sorry, I lost my temper. I'm just so tired. Really stressed at work.

[21 : 46] There's lots going on. Or maybe we face a whole number of temptations and we go, it's just, it's the world. There's so many temptations out there.

Or we might blame those around us. We might go, they just really do my head in. They really push my buttons.

And now you're not totally absolving yourself of the blame, of course, but you're kind of hoping that someone else will. You're right. You are tired.

You just need to get a bit more rest. Or, you're right, they are kind of annoying. How do you respond to the shame that you feel?

Do you try and cover up with an outward performance, perhaps? Do you run and hide from God, from those around you?

[22 : 50] Do you blame shift? Ultimately, trying to steer the blame away from yourself. I can be guilty of all three. We have all done wrong.

We all feel shame. But what happens in this account is a beautiful picture of what God does with our shame. And our third point, salvation.

Now, one thing I'm not going to touch on now, but it's for another time, is just the curses of humanity, curses on humanity that we see from verses 14 and following.

You don't need the Bible to tell you life is hard. It's full of hardships, of sorrows, of pain, of difficulties, suffering, and loss, and grief.

But it's all out here. Now that sin has entered the equation, there is now consequences in life. There is now suffering. There is now striving.

[23 : 52] There is now pain. So there are consequences for our sin, which we all experience to this day. Everyone to a person experiences. No one is exempt from.

What else we see in this passage is, you know, we've seen that Adam and Eve, before they sinned, they were naked, they felt no shame. We see that they sin, they turn their backs on God, and all of a sudden, shame is entered into the equation, so they cover themselves up.

They knew they were naked, they knew something wasn't right, so they cover themselves up. Now, what do you expect God to do in this? God is the wronged party.

God is the one who has been sinned against. What would you expect them to do? Well, how do we tend to respond when someone wrongs us? We might explode at them in a blind rage.

We might give them the cold shoulder, the silent treatment. But verses 8 and 9, God goes looking for them. God goes looking for them.

[25 : 07] Where are you? Where are you, he says, and imagine it, I mean, someone wrongs you, acts sinfully against you, maybe they lied to you and you found out through other means.

Would you go after them? Many of us wouldn't. We would probably feel maybe not so brave to do something like that.

We maybe wouldn't have the courage to do that. And maybe if we're a more confrontational type, maybe we would. Maybe we'd be going after them. Though Adam and Eve goes running, though Adam and Eve hide, though Adam and Eve blame shift, God goes looking for them.

It's like that story that was read from Luke 15 of the shepherd leaving the 99 to find the one. The shepherd doesn't go, you've made your bed, now the lion is tough.

Doesn't say, well, they've made their decision, I'm not going to go after them. No, the shepherd goes looking for the one who wandered away.

[26 : 19] So it is with us. So it is with us. God comes looking for us when we have run away. I mean, that's the gospel in a nutshell.

Romans chapter 5 verse 8, God demonstrates His love for us in this, whilst we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Not when we had it all together, not when we polished our lifestyles, not when we thought rightly of Him, when we were yet sinners, Christ died for us to come and rescue us. Though God is the wrong party and we're the guilty party, God comes after us. If God was not like this, we couldn't hope to know Him.

We couldn't hope to know Him. And if you are wondering this morning, far from God, God is out looking for you because He wants to bring you home.

He wants to bring you back. He is not standing there with the arms folded saying, tough, you've made your decision. Go away.

[27 : 34] no, God comes looking for you. You might delay coming back thinking, I've wronged Him again. How can He possibly want anything to do with me?

I've made promises to Him and I've broken them. I've made commitments to Him and I've not followed through. How on earth can God possibly want anything to do with me?

Isn't that remarkable? That God has this heart of mercy for those who wander and those who stray. That He doesn't say, well, you've burned your bridges. You made your decision. God goes looking for you, not because you deserve it or have earned it.

No, you don't deserve it. I don't deserve it. But yet He continues to do so. He has a heart full of mercy for sinners like you and me.

[28 : 38] If you are walking away from God this morning, God is coming looking for you and He's calling out to you. Where are you?

He wants to welcome you back. Do you hear His call this morning? Listen and come back to you. He is calling you. And He's calling you back to Himself.

And the way that we can have promise that we can come back into the presence of a holy God, even though we've sinned, is because He promises this rescuer. In verse 15, He will crush your head and you will strike His heels.

Speaking to the serpent, I'll put enmity between you and the woman, between your spring and hers. He will crush your head and you will strike His heel. And throughout the Bible, we see this enmity and conflict between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman, Eve, but it is the seed of Eve that prevails.

the cross. Yes, it is the heel of Jesus, if you will, that is struck. He is injured, He is wounded on the cross.

[29 : 55] But yet, through that, Satan, sin and death is destroyed, it is no more. And really, just on the theme of shame as we see it going on, we get a glimpse too of the work of the rescuer.

Verse 21, the Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them. The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and he clothed them.

So, chapter 2, verse 25, they're naked, they feel no shame. Sin enters the picture, they cover themselves up because there is now something to cover.

cover up, they run scared, they made coverings for themselves. In reality, when we do any one of those things, covering up, running away, blame shifting, it's kind of like when you get a stain on your shirt and you get a wet cloth and you smudge it, but all that does is amplify the stain, it makes it worse, it doesn't make it better.

Yet, God takes our stained, sin covered, ripped up covering, which instead of amplifying our shame and amplifying our guilt, he provides us with a new covering, a clean and a fresh covering that does cover our guilt and our shame.

[31 : 27] God looks at Adam and Eve in the covering that they have made for themselves and says, no, that's just not going to do. that's just not going to do and he removes his covering from them and he provides them with a far greater covering, a far better covering that covers their shame.

The coverings that we make for ourselves doesn't deal with our problem, doesn't deal with our shame, but God gives us a covering which is so much better.

On the cross, Jesus Christ shed his blood for us and the great swap was made, he took our sin and he gives us his righteousness with which to stand before God, a righteousness which is as if we'd never sinned, as if we'd kept God's laws perfectly.

Our own righteousness makes for rubbish coverings, fig leaves, if you will, but God made him who knew no sin, sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God in him.

If our faith is in Jesus Christ this morning, God looks at us and he doesn't see our manky stained coverings that we have made for ourselves because he gives us a better covering in his son Jesus.

[32 : 53] He sees the perfect spotless righteousness of his son Jesus Christ on us. there's not even a thread loose on our covering.

Now there's two things to say here and then we'll close. The first and very obvious thing, if you are carrying shame this morning, hand it over to Jesus. It's not yours to carry.

We can't carry it. We might run from God. We might blame shift. We might cover it up with an outward display of religious performance. But that won't do.

God offers you one much better, far better, his son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Give your shame to him and he will provide you with a new covering for your shame.

One which truly deals with your deepest and darkest shame so that your shame and your sin is removed from God's sight. Jeremiah chapter 31 and verse 34, I will forgive their iniquity and I will remember their sins no more.

[34 : 03] When we trust in Jesus, that shame that we were once carrying is no more because instead we have been covered by Jesus' perfect righteousness.

The second thing to say, I'm not is that in Aberdeen there are tens of thousands of people carrying shame for things they've done, for things they regret.

There is no answer apart from Jesus Christ. To blame shift, to run away from God, to try to cover it up is no good. It won't be covered up. Yet Jesus offers them a covering for their shame. how good it is then to offer that out to others. Who is there in your life? Friends, work colleagues, neighbours, family members, who need to hear this good news of grace, that their shame can be taken away.

Our core team in Leaven have been going through a book by a free church minister, Thomas Davis, called God is God and you are you. And in it he quotes someone called Becky Pippert who says that, you know, evangelism seems like that thing you wouldn't do to your dog.

[35 : 29] I don't know if you can relate to that. Evangelism maybe feels a bit daunting, a bit scary on our part, but maybe it just feels like it's not a nice thing to do.

We maybe feel a bit awkward about it. But when we remember what good news we have, surely it's not something that we feel embarrassed about, that we feel, I don't know if I should share this or not, but surely it becomes the best thing in the world.

Because as I said, there are tens of thousands of people in this city carrying shame. You have one, the Lord Jesus Christ, who offers to deal with that shame, who offers to cover that shame.

What good news that is to bring to those who do not know him, who carry shame. Now, I'll close with the words of Reverend Adam Foreman, who was the first ever minister of leaving Free Church back in the 1840s.

He said, when there was no eye to pity and no hand to help, God's own eye pitied and his arm brought salvation. What a gospel we have to enjoy, to receive.

[36 : 47] What a gospel we have to go and to share. What a glorious God we have who removes our shame and our sin from us. Let's pray. Father in heaven, we confess to you this morning that we are so easily taken to running away and hiding from you, trying to convince ourselves that in our religious performance that you are somehow pleased with us.

Lord, instead, help us to run to Jesus, who provides a perfect covering for our shame, for our sin, and help us to go forward in that covering, confident and assured of your love towards us, of your grace for us, that we may serve you all the days of our life.

In Jesus' name, amen.