

GENESIS 3:8-13 *And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. [9] Then the LORD God called to Adam and said to him, "Where are you?" [10] So he said, "I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself." [11] And He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?" [12] Then the man said, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate." [13] And the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."*

- There are words from God to man before this account in Genesis, but this is the first dialogue between God and man recorded in the Scriptures. It is essential, therefore, to see dialogue as a necessary part of prayer.

- Prayer, basically, is simply conversation with God. There are always only two people represented in true prayer, you and God -- and no one else. There can be many people, but real prayer is always a conversation directly between a single human being and God himself.
- There are many kinds of prayer - intercession, thanksgiving, supplication, and various forms of petition, etc., but fundamental to them all is simply a conversation, a dialogue between an individual and God.
- This is what Jesus had in mind in his great teaching on prayer in the Sermon on the Mount. He said, "When you pray, go into your closet, and shut the door, and pray to your Father who is in secret." "Shut out everything else. When you pray do not let anything else interfere. Do not be involved with thinking about other things or people, but talk only to God himself."
- Prayer is a conversation, simple and direct, between you and God himself.
- Notice this prayer starts with God. It is the Lord who comes into the garden. It is the Lord who calls out for man. Prayer, therefore, begins with God. In many ways, that is the greatest truth about prayer that we can learn from this incident, because all through the rest of Scripture.
- It is always a mistake, therefore, to think that we are called on in the act of prayer to do something to God, or that we are being summoned to persevere in prayer to such a degree that we, as the saying goes, "pray through" and persuade a reluctant God to do or not to do something that He has set His heart upon. That is not prayer. Prayer, as in this first instance in the Garden of Eden, begins with God. It is God who calls. It is God who helps.
- There is the biblical picture of prayer -- it begins with God. That is why, when we feel a need or a desire to pray, or to set up a disciplined habit of prayer, it is God who has begun that. He has planted that desire in us and we are responding.
- God asks three questions: Question #1 - "Where are you?" - What an important question!. God is teaching us by this means that, in this sin-cursed earth in which we human beings must now dwell, it is important that we frequently ask ourselves, "Where am I?" and evaluate what is going on in our lives. Where am I in this journey through life? What's happened to me? Am I really walking closely to the Lord? Am I living a Spirit filled life? That is the first important question we need to ask frequently of ourselves. How wonderful that God teaches man this about himself.

- [10] So he said, "I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself."
- [11] And He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?" God's second question is equally significant: "Who told you that you were naked?" That is a very perceptive question. God implies, "I didn't tell you, but somewhere you have learned this. You never knew it before."
 "Somebody told you that. You didn't find it out yourself because it has been true for a long time and you didn't know it. Somebody has been talking to you." Thus the Lord God in his mercy and compassion has led this couple to an understanding that there is a tremendous need in life to discriminate in the voices we listen to. I do not know anything more important today than to understand that there are voices in this world we must reject. There are pleas made to us continually that we must set aside. We must not listen to them. We must close our ears to them because they are the voice of someone other than the Lord our God.
- [12] Then the man said, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate." [13] And the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate." - In response, Adam and Eve begin the age-old game of passing the buck. Adam took it like a man -- he blamed it on his wife! Eve took it like a woman -- she blamed it on the neighbors! Hidden in each of their responses, however, is the implication, "You're to blame, God. 'The woman whom You gave.... She gave me the fruit and I ate it.' 'The serpent whom you allowed in the garden deceived me and I ate.'" This is the beginning of that natural tendency that every one of us feels to minimize our guilt, to blame someone else for what we have done. Yet, somehow, I think that misses the point of what this text is saying, for, in each case, both Adam and Eve were reduced to three little words that are of great significance here. Both of them end their feeble effort at justification with these words of acknowledgment, "and I ate," There is the responsibility that they acknowledge was theirs. They made the final decision. They are trying to find some excuse for the pressure they were under, but ultimately they have come to the place where they acknowledge it, "Yes, we did it. We ate of the fruit we were forbidden to take of."
- Then everything changes instantly. God now is no longer probing; there are no more questions. He assumes the role of defense attorney. He turns now and focuses upon the serpent and begins to curse him, announcing certain unavoidable consequences that will follow the man and the woman because of their wrongful choice. These are always there when we choose wrong.
- Nevertheless, God announces that He will be with them in it; He will go through the hurt and the heartache with them. The scene ends with the Lord God himself tenderly fashioning clothing out of the skins of animals to clothe Adam and Eve in their nakedness.
- This is a beautiful account of the forgiveness of God.
- The great lesson for us to learn is that it was the act of prayer, the beginnings of a dialogue, painful as it may have been, that permitted the Lord God to break through the misunderstanding and the confusion of their situation and help them to see where they were in reality and to accept his forgiving grace and restoring love.
- That is what prayer is about. - It is a way of bringing us back into relationship to the Lord our God.
- There are times when we hide ourselves as Adam and Eve did. Notice the voice of God that refuses to let us go, but gently calls us out to deal with our infirmities and enables us to find the place of cleansing and forgiveness and restoration.