



Links Players

The Benevolent Gaze of God

Then, the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked, so they sewed fig leaves to-gether and made coverings for themselves. 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 they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the gar-den. But the Lord God called to the man, "Where are you?" He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid." (Genesis 3:7-10)

Have you ever topped a drive off the first tee with an audience of onlookers? Embarrassing, right? Suddenly, your shortcomings are exposed for everyone to see. Your fine golf attire and expensive equipment can't hide the fact that your golf ball didn't reach the next tee box. It can make you want to crawl into a hole.

Shame is a powerful feeling. While the embarrassment felt over a poor golf shot is a bit foolish, the feelings are nevertheless powerful.

We often want to appear superior in every area of life—socially, intellectually, physically, and morally. And when we fail in these areas, shame follows. Shame causes us to hide from those who see us as we truly are.

When Adam and Eve attempted to become like God, "knowing [determining] good and evil," they were suddenly overwhelmed with shame. In response, they covered their nakedness and became cosmic fugitives, attempting to hide from the eyes of the Lord in the trees.

As fallen descendants of Adam and Eve, our instincts are similar. Our strategies, though, are more sophisticated. We...

...work to disprove our shame by performing, achieving, and pretending.

...divert our shame by transferring our pain onto others to make them feel what we feel.

...drown our shame with substances, noise, or activity to numb the feelings of our inner wrongness.

...defend our shame by rationalizing that everyone else does it or by blaming others for our poor choices.

...detach from shame by stuffing our emotions.

...descend into our shame, acting out our sense of wrongness and defining ourselves by it.

...disavow our shame by denying the existence of God and thus any accountability. We then can do what we please.

...destroy our shame by hurting ourselves.

...all are fig leaves and shadows.

When God finds Adam and Eve hiding in their shame, he does not avert his gaze. Rather, He approaches them and replaces their make-shift coverings—“*God made clothing from animal skins for Adam and his wife and dressed them*” (Genesis 3:21). Leather for leaves. Life for death! Innocent blood was shed for the guilty so the guilty could once again approach their source of life.

The Scriptures are replete with the theme of covering. During Passover, the blood of an unblemished lamb covers the doorposts of Israel’s families. Blood covers the mercy seat in the Temple, allowing the people to commune with God.

Paul sums up God’s final redemptive act for covering in Hebrews 9:13-14:

Think about it: if the blood of bulls or of goats, or the sprinkling of ashes from a heifer, restores the defiled to bodily cleanliness and wholeness, then how much more powerful is the blood of the Anointed One, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself as a spotless sacrifice to God, purifying your conscience from the dead things of the world to the service of the living God?

Our shame will not avert the benevolent gaze of God. It only provokes him to have mercy, sacrifice, and love.

Hide no longer. “For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God” (Colossians 3:2). Understand that “you who were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. You have put him on as if he were your clothes.” (Galatians 3:27)

Prayer: Lord, free me from my shame and hiding. May I find rest in your grace and goodness.

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Boo Arnold

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