

# GENESIS 3:9

## GREAT QUESTIONS OF LIFE: “WHERE ARE YOU?”

The LORD God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?”<sup>1</sup>

**G**reat questions are not meant to reveal information to the interlocutor; great questions are meant to compel the one questioned to discover what should have been obvious. All of us have a tendency to wear masks. In fact, the Greek term from which we get our word “hypocrite,” was used of an actor who donned a mask to play a part. Wearing such masks has become an unconscious part of our human condition. Though it is painful to admit, each of us wear masks to maintain a semblance of self-esteem, to maintain a sense of self-control in our daily walk. This is, after all, the basis for the statement Paul provides in the Corinthian Letter. “Now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known” [1 CORINTHIAN 13:12].

Few of us would be comfortable living lives that were emotionally naked; none of us are comfortable exposing our vulnerabilities. We are uncertain what others might think of us if they knew us; thus, we wear masks so that those with whom we associate won’t know who we truly are. Even our spouses only gradually are able to peel away our masks to discover who we really are. If we are uncomfortable appearing emotionally naked before our family, friends and colleagues, you may be assured that it can be even more devastating for an individual compelled to appear spiritually naked before the world.

We imagine that we are self-sufficient—strong and capable of handling any challenge. Modern culture trains us to esteem such self-sufficiency. God is available for tasks deemed too difficult to handle; but overall, we imagine ourselves able to handle any problem. Especially we who bear the Name of the Son of God are careful to avoid appearing as sinful. We readily see the sinful condition of others, easily pointing out their sin; yet, we resist anyone who speaks of us as sinners. “I’m not as bad as...” and we fill in the name of some poor soul whom we deem more blameworthy than ourselves. However, as we spend time in the presence of God—reading His Word and seeking His will in prayer, we discover who we are; and the exposure of the real self is not always pleasant. God strips away the façade we have so carefully constructed to hide our lives; He does so in order to teach us dependence on Him who gives us life.

Throughout the Word of God are a number of great questions of life. God poses the questions, and as we hear His Word, we are compelled to examine who we are. The answer to the questions He poses is sometimes painful, seldom pleasant; however, if we respond wisely and truthfully, the result will redound to our good and His glory. One such question worthy of examination is the first question God asked that is recorded in the Word of God. It is a simple question. God raised the question of Adam when he sought to hide himself from God. God called out to Adam, hidden among the trees of the Garden of Eden, “Where are you?”

**GOD SEEKS MAN; MAN DOES NOT SEEK GOD** — It is a grave error for any individual to imagine he or she searched out God. God may reveal Himself, but no person can discover God. Neither can an individual actually seek God; for in the flesh, the individual is dead to God. The works of the sinful nature preclude searching for God; rather, God seeks man.

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from **The Holy Bible, English Standard Version**, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Ever since the fall of our first parents, people flee from God's presence. Before the Fall, Adam and Eve appear to have enjoyed an intimacy with the Creator that is foreign to our experience. In the verse preceding our text we read, "[The man and the woman] heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden" [GENESIS 3:8]. The wording leads us to believe that God's presence was anticipated and enjoyed daily. Moreover, when God made His presence known, we are left with the impression that the first pair enjoyed discoursing with Him. After sin entered into the world, when they knew of God's presence, they hid themselves! We attempt to hide ourselves from God's presence to this day.

Do you doubt that last statement? Let's do a little exercise and see whether that is indeed the case. Few of us would argue that those outside of Christ want little to do with God. The churches of the nation are not exactly filled with people seeking the Son of God. I had a delightful Dutch gentleman in a congregation I pastored in the Lower Mainland. Gerry had been a sergeant in the Dutch Army during the days before the Second World War.

On one occasion we were discussing church attendance. He told me that before the war, the Dutch churches were practically empty on a Sunday morning. People were far too busy to think of worship or for hearing the Word of God. However, after the Nazis invaded—the very Sunday after they entered Holland—he said all the churches were filled with people. It was a time of deep distress; the people wanted deliverance. Thus, they filled the churches. Of course, that didn't last; spiritual matters were soon neglected as they were before the occupation.

In that respect, the situation wasn't far different from what was observed in the immediate aftermath of September 11, 2001 in the States. In the weeks immediately following that dark day, churches were filled as people prayed and attended services seeking answers. However, within a matter of weeks, the busyness that keeps us from thinking of God or His will reasserted the claim we allow it to exercise over our lives. We were again able to sleep in on a Sunday morning, enjoy a leisurely breakfast as the children watched Sunday morning cartoons, perhaps engaging in some sporting event in the afternoon, or just vegging in front of the tube.

Pastors really don't expect much of nominal Christians—they aren't likely to seek God, except when they are experiencing a crisis. In their estimate, God is a convenience reserved for their use when necessary and ignored the remainder of the time. Assuredly, those who are openly hostile to the Holy One are not prepared to search for Him; they are having far too much fun to waste time looking for God or thinking of His will. However, wouldn't we expect that those who aver themselves to be committed to the cause of Christ would avidly seek God?

Well, Christians who are committed to Christ do go to church on Sunday, do they not? They will be present Sunday morning, though Sunday evening is usually reserved for down time. Most will tolerate the preacher's message on a Sunday morning if he doesn't drone overly long; if he is a good speaker—bonus! Church members will occasionally attend a special meeting, especially if the speaker is scintillating or if there is a great musical group making a presentation; they may even bring guests to share in the entertainment that is presented.

I am not seeking to be caustic or to appear cynical when I say that I have often identified with God's Word to Ezekiel: "As for you, son of man, your people (who are talking about you by the walls and at the doors of the houses) say to one another, 'Come hear the word that comes from the LORD.' They come to you in crowds, and they sit in front of you as my people. They hear your words, but do not obey them. For they talk lustfully, and their heart is set on their own advantage. Realise that to them you are like a sensual song, a beautiful voice and skilled musician. They hear your words, but they do not obey them" [EZEKIEL 33:30-32 NET BIBLE].

If there is a congregational meeting, all the church members will be present; most will assure you of their commitment to the cause of Christ, or they wouldn't be present at a church meeting. The presence of all church members, and others as well, is especially assured if there is some controversy generating strong emotions among the members. One of the surest ways to fill the church building is to let it be known that there is a church fight brewing; people you haven't seen for months, and perhaps for years, will come to make their concerns known.

So, surely we would say that committed Christians seek God. However, announce a prayer meeting and see how many committed Christians make that meeting a priority. I belonged to a congregation with a membership exceeding 24,000 souls. There were two services each Sunday morning—each service saw over 3,500 people present. There was a third service in the evening with another 3,500 people in attendance. There were Sunday School classes that ministered to perhaps so many as 5,000 people and a Sunday evening Training Union that served another 1,500 or so people. What do you suppose was the attendance at the Wednesday evening prayer service? I have been present on more than a few occasions when so few as forty people were present for prayer—and almost always the only prayer offered was from the pastor.

It is not terribly different for us. Do you wonder why this is so? It is not because prayer is hard work—it is! However, those who are called by the Name of God will do hard things when they are challenged to do hard things. It is not because they don't believe God answers prayer—they will quickly affirm their confidence that God answers prayer. I can only conclude that we shrink from meeting God because we fear exposure when we are in His presence.

We fear meeting God. We draw back; it is not merely that we are overwhelmed by awe—it is genuine terror. We know that He is not like us—He can only be described as "Other." We know that we will appear before Him with no place to hide from His penetrating gaze. When we truly pray, we are unmasked. Thus, we shrink from coming into His presence.

Have you ever listened to our own language when we are facing serious difficulties? How often have we said, "I guess there is nothing left but to pray?" Why is it that we speak thusly? We attempt to fix our problems, manipulate the situation so that we can gain an advantage, try to work through the difficulties. When we fail, we will at last resort to prayer. The reason is that though we are redeemed, we are still fallen creatures. We don't spontaneously rush into God's presence because we know that in His presence there can be no pretence.

Perhaps I can convince you that I am righteous and godly. I can control my language and my actions when I suspect you may be watching. However, the secret thoughts of my heart are buried deep within the dark recesses of my life; the most sinful questions, assertions and doubts creep unbidden into my mind. The same is true for you; none of us want fellow worshippers to witness our fears and foibles. We are uncomfortable allowing others to know that we are sinful. However, God knows us. As was true for the Apostle, so it is true for us—we struggle with the old nature. "I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death" [ROMANS 7:21-24]?

There is a comforting assertion that follows this cri de coeur, and we dare not miss it. Responding to his heartfelt anguish, Paul replies, "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin" [ROMANS 7:25]. God sought Adam and Eve when they attempted to hide themselves; and God yet seeks us out when we try to hide ourselves from Him. The Living God seeks out mankind. This is surely the witness of the Psalmist.

"O LORD, you have searched me and known me!  
You know when I sit down and when I rise up;  
you discern my thoughts from afar.  
You search out my path and my lying down  
and are acquainted with all my ways.  
Even before a word is on my tongue,  
behold, O LORD, you know it altogether.  
You hem me in, behind and before,  
and lay your hand upon me.  
Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;  
it is high; I cannot attain it.

"Where shall I go from your Spirit?  
Or where shall I flee from your presence?  
If I ascend to heaven, you are there!  
If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!  
If I take the wings of the morning  
and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,  
even there your hand shall lead me,  
and your right hand shall hold me.  
If I say, 'Surely the darkness shall cover me,  
and the light about me be night,'  
even the darkness is not dark to you;  
the night is bright as the day,  
for darkness is as light with you.

"For you formed my inward parts;  
you knitted me together in my mother's womb.  
I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.  
Wonderful are your works;  
my soul knows it very well.  
My frame was not hidden from you,  
when I was being made in secret,  
intricately woven in the depths of the earth.  
Your eyes saw my unformed substance;  
in your book were written, every one of them,  
the days that were formed for me,  
when as yet there was none of them."

[PSALM 139:1-16]

Thus, I am comforted. Yes, I am sinful; and I detest my sinful nature. Yet, God pursued me; and He pursues you. God is always seeking fallen man. I can testify on the authority of this Word that the True and Living God is seeking you, even now. As Peter has testified, "The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance" [2 PETER 3:9].

The Apostle has written, and we who know Christ echo the apostolic call that was given in **2 CORINTHIANS 5:17-6:2**, "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

"Working together with him, then, we appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain. For he says,

'In a favorable time I listened to you,  
and in a day of salvation I have helped you.'

Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation."

The story is apocryphal, but it conveys a delightful truth nevertheless. At a Presbyterian Church, the elder had asked for testimonies. Among the first to stand and speak was a dear old woman. She was a mother in Israel, known for her devotion to the Doctrines of Grace. Her testimony was stated simply, "I had to work terribly hard to be saved; and Jesus saved me."

With that, she sat down again. The congregation was astonished; the pastor was nonplussed. "How can you say that you 'had to work terribly hard to be saved?'" he asked, clearly astonished.

The old woman again spoke, solemnly intoning the awful truth. "I ran very hard to avoid being captured by God's grace; but Jesus pursued me until He caught me."

Certainly, that is the testimony of each child of God. None can say, "I sought for God." When we reflect on what has transpired, we are compelled to confess, "God pursued me." The Lord God calls us, and we respond to His grace. He seeks us; we do not seek Him.

Assuredly, various hymn writers have echoed the truth proclaimed throughout the Word. We sing of God seeking sinners; and the songs are drawn from the Word that He has given.

"O victory in Jesus, my Savior, forever.  
He sought me and bought me with His redeeming blood;  
He loved me ere I knew Him and all my love is due Him,  
He plunged me to victory, beneath the cleansing flood."<sup>2</sup>

"Of Jesus' love that sought me,  
When I was lost in sin;  
Of wondrous grace that brought me  
Back to His fold again;  
Of heights and depths of mercy,  
Far deeper than the sea,  
And higher than the heavens,  
My theme shall ever be."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> E. M. Bartlett, "Victory in Jesus," ©Mrs. E. M. Bartlett, 1967

<sup>3</sup> Leila N. Morris, "Sweeter as the Years Go By"

"Jesus sought me when a stranger,  
Wandering from the fold of God;  
He, to rescue me from danger,  
Interposed His precious blood;  
How His kindness yet pursues me  
Mortal tongue can never tell,  
Clothed in flesh, till death shall loose me  
I cannot proclaim it well."<sup>4</sup>

**GOD CALLS THE MAN** — If God merely sought us out, confronting us in our sin, it would be more than we deserve. Surely, if we recognised God's presence we would be ashamed of the wickedness of our hearts. The hateful deeds, the strident censure of others, the acrimonious slander that drops so casually from our lips—all would cease. However, our experience and the Word itself teaches us that we do live in the presence of God, though we shove the knowledge of the Holy far from our thoughts. Nevertheless, God speaks to the heart, calling people to Himself.

I want us to think, if only for a brief while, that God calls people to life in His Son. Peter, speaking to those who were drawn by the events surrounding the disciples on the Day of Pentecost, said, "The promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself" [ACTS 2:39]. Focus on the final clause: "everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself." It is nothing short of confession that God does call; and when He calls, those who hear that call are responsible to answer.

Only those who come to Jesus the Son of God in faith possess eternal life. Jesus said, "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him" [JOHN 6:44]. The other side of that coin is presented in another verse where we witness the Master saying, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" [JOHN 14:6]. God calls us by His Spirit, and we are responsible to answer when He calls. That God calls is evident from other portions of the Word of God. For instance, think of one particularly well known passage. The Apostle, in the Letter to Roman Christians, has written, "We know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified" [ROMANS 8:28-30].

Again, painting with a broad brush so that each believer will understand, the Apostle wrote, "God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord" [1 CORINTHIANS 1:9]. You were called into the fellowship of God's Son. You were not born a Christian, nor can you lay claim to being a Christian by accident of birth or by citizenship. Testimony of this truth is provided in the preamble to John's Gospel. "The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God" [JOHN 1:9-13]. The right to be one of the children of God has nothing to do with birth or mere human desire; it results from responding to the call of God.

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<sup>4</sup> Robert Robinson, "Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing" (original text), [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Come\\_Thou\\_Fount\\_of\\_Every\\_Blessing](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Come_Thou_Fount_of_Every_Blessing), accessed 5 October 2012

Let's continue that theme for a moment, for it is too important to risk that someone should miss the point. In the encyclical we have received as the Ephesian Letter, the Apostle writes, "I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift" [EPHESIANS 4:1-7]. You were called, and because you responded to that call, you are now responsible to walk in a manner worthy of the calling you have received.

One final passage before I hurry on attracts my attention. As he pens his final letter to Timothy, Paul urges the young preacher, "Do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God, who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, and which now has been manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" [2 TIMOTHY 1:8-10]. He wants to ensure that Timothy understands that God called us, and in particular He calls to holy office, not on the basis of a desire for a good job; rather He calls because of His own purpose and grace—purpose and grace which were given in Christ Jesus, and that before the world was founded!

Now, all that I've said is in a general sense applicable to each person—male or female! However, in our text, I want you to take special note of whom God addressed! "The LORD God called to *the man*..." Moses is careful to specify that God calls to the man. This seeming anomaly attracts my attention, and it should attract your attention. Ladies, I'm not ignoring you. I am, however, prepared to address males who listen at this time in a manner that holds each man accountable before God for his actions, for what he teaches his family, for the leadership he exercises for his wife and children!

I do not want to belabour the point; but neither do I want to neglect noting that the language ensures that we understand that God was quite specific in addressing the man whom He had made. That fact informs us that God had given Adam instructions, and Adam was responsible to communicate them to the woman whom God made for him. In an earlier chapter, we read of God's communication to the man He had created. "The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, 'You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die'" [GENESIS 2:15-17].

God did give specific instruction to the man, to be certain; and that knowledge made him responsible to inform the woman. In fact, Eve does indicate awareness of the will of God in her response to the serpent's approach. "[The serpent] said to the woman, 'Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?' And the woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, "You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die'" [GENESIS 3:1-3].

"Well," you may say, "she had the essence of the command, though she did garble it, somewhat." Assuredly, she added to what God had commanded, which is serious in itself. However, something is easily overlooked in one verse that follows. Note what is said in the **SIXTH VERSE**.

"When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate" [GENESIS 3:6]. Take your pen and underline this clause: "she also gave some to her husband *who was with her*, and he ate." Adam was present when Eve was tempted; he witnessed what was taking place. This becomes even more evident when we realise that the denouement of the account is sudden rather than gradual. Both Adam and Eve experienced the instantaneous opening of their eyes—they knew good and evil, and the knowledge horrified them. Nevertheless, Adam was silent when she was tempted.

I have spoken on this matter in years past.<sup>5</sup> The fact that the text is careful to note that "the LORD God called *to the man*" substantiates the point that the man bears an awesome responsibility before the Lord. Let me be pointed in stating that the failure of men to be manly ensures that family health falls steadily into disarray. Churches are increasingly feminised (men attend disguised as empty pews), our children are utterly bored and disinterested in hearing of the True and Living God by the time they are fourteen and society is unheeding as it tumbles headlong into a dark, forbidding future—in great measure because men do not heed God's call.

If you are a man, I can say with full confidence that God calls you to be manly. God calls you to use your strength for the benefit of the weaker members of society, beginning with your own family. God calls you to align yourself openly with Him, revealing His character through your life and expressing His power as you lift others. God calls you to exercise leadership within your home and within your church, guarding your wife and your children as you guide them in the Faith, and guarding your church against infiltration by evil people. God calls you to ensure that your children walk with Him; you fulfil His will in this through providing a godly example for them to emulate and through instructing them in righteousness. Your daughters should witness in your life the example of godly manhood so that they are prepared to grow up into vibrant women, knowing that men are to treat them with respect as equal partners in the grace of God. Your sons should desire to follow in your footsteps because they know that you have been leading them into a walk with God that leads to spiritual power and godliness.

Every man listening to the message at this time should be saying before the Lord, "With Your help, O Lord, I will accept your call to lead my wife in this most holy faith. By Your grace, O God, I accept my rightful responsibility to lead my children to walk humbly before You. According to your will, O Lord Christ, I accept your call to be a godly man, lending my strength to advance Your Kingdom and echoing the message of life as declared from this pulpit. This shall be my goal, God being my help. Amen."

**THE QUESTION REMAINS, "WHERE ARE YOU?"** — God called to the man, "Where are you?" Just so, the Lord God calls to this day—not because He does not know where we are, but because we need to respond to His voice. He calls, not because He cannot find us, but because we have absented ourselves from serving Him as we should be.

To men, the question must be asked, "Where are you?" Are you leading your family? Have you dedicated yourself to following the Master wherever He may lead? Are your children walking in the Faith? Is your wife growing in this holy Faith, following your lead? Or has she assumed the position of leadership in your home? Have you accepted responsibility to be the spiritual head of your family? Does the spiritual tenor of your home reflect your desire to pursue hard after the Lord Jesus? These are essential questions if we will honour the Master.

<sup>5</sup> Michael Stark, "The Silence of Adam,"

<http://sermons.logos.com/#q=&content=/submissions/33601&tab=paneTabHome&pane=homePane>.



To each Christian—male and female, the question must be asked, "Where are you?" As surely as God calls men to be men, He calls each individual to life in the beloved Son. How glorious is the promise of life in the Son of God; how awful is the promise of death outside of Him. Recall John's summary statements. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God" [JOHN 3:16-21].

To each one outside of this holy Faith, the question remains, "Where are you?" Some people have rejected the Faith without knowing what the Faith is. Such individuals are to be pitied, for they are acting in arrogance as though they know that which they have never explored. Others have rejected the Faith, though they were exposed to the Faith by godly parents during the years of childhood. They need to beware of the divine warning: "If we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace? For we know him who said, 'Vengeance is mine; I will repay.' And again, 'The Lord will judge his people.' It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" [HEBREWS 10:26-31].

Should you say you are not conscious of the divine call, I would contend that you have heard the call that has been issued in this message. Perhaps you are unwilling to respond, and you may imagine that your reason for refusing to answer is justified. You may argue that because God somehow failed to meet some condition you imposed you are free from acknowledging His call. However, what shall you do when you are summoned to stand before the final, great assize? There awaits a dark day when all who have lived and who also refused to heed His call shall stand before His Great White Throne.

I read of that day in the Apocalypse. "I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire" [REVELATION 20:11-15].

God does not include this description merely to frighten sinners; God tells us of what is ahead to warn us. I have previously told you of God's mercy, citing Peter's pleading words. "The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance" [2 PETER 3:9]. Therefore, God tells us of His mercy that we may take warning and avoid judgement.

If I fail to heed God's warning, is God responsible for my ruin? Am I not the one who bears my own sin? And the more so should I refuse to take to heart God's call to life. Will Thompson wrote a most beautiful appeal to all who would receive it. When the lay evangelist Dwight Lyman Moody lay on his deathbed in his Northfield, Massachusetts, home, Mr. Thompson made a special visit to inquire of his condition. The attending physician refused to admit him to the sickroom. However, Moody heard them talking outside the bedroom door. Recognising Thompson's voice, he called for him to come to his bedside. Taking the Ohio poet-composer by the hand, the dying evangelist said, "Will, I would rather have written 'Softly and Tenderly Jesus is Calling' than anything I have been able to do in my whole life."<sup>6</sup> The hymn was sung, appropriately enough, at the memorial service of Doctor Martin Luther King as he lay in state at the Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, Georgia on April 8, 1968.

Softly and tenderly Jesus is calling,  
Calling for you and for me;  
See, on the portals He's waiting and watching,  
Watching for you and for me.

Come home, come home,  
You who are weary, come home;  
Earnestly, tenderly, Jesus is calling,  
Calling, O sinner, come home!

Why should we tarry when Jesus is pleading,  
Pleading for you and for me?  
Why should we linger and heed not His mercies,  
Mercies for you and for me?

Time is now fleeting, the moments are passing,  
Passing from you and from me;  
Shadows are gathering, deathbeds are coming,  
Coming for you and for me.

O for the wonderful love He has promised,  
Promised for you and for me!  
Though we have sinned, He has mercy and pardon,  
Pardon for you and for me.

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.cyberhymnal.org/htm/s/o/softlyat.htm>, accessed 6 October 2012