

Hope Through the Curse

Scripture: Genesis 3:14-15

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It was many months ago, of course, now that we completed our study of the New Testament, wrapping up the gospel of Mark. Having spent forty-plus years studying the New Testament together, we have a very clear view of Christ. We recognize Christ. And because we have such a clear view of Christ from the New Testament, we can find Him in the Old Testament. It is only those who know Him well from the New that can find Him easily in the Old. And so I told you we were going to do that, we were going to go back to the Old Testament and we were going to follow the trail that Jesus established on the road to Emmaus when beginning at Moses and the prophets, and in all the holy writings, He spoke to them of the things concerning Himself. And we asked the question, "If Jesus explained the things concerning Himself from the Old Testament, where did He go? Where did He start? What passage did He choose, or passages?"

And so we began our own road to Emmaus journey. We've been diverted a little bit along the way. That's all right; we're going to take a good straightforward run at this, starting this evening. Now admittedly, we have gone through Isaiah 52:13 through 53:12, that great portion of Scripture, because that's the high point of the Old Testament disclosure of the person of Christ and His work. Everything about Him that's important is in those verses in Isaiah. And as I told you at the time, that's the heart of the book of Isaiah. We had an absolutely great time doing that. If you haven't listened to those ten messages, you might want to do that. That's the...that's, as one writer said, that's prophecy outstripping itself. That's the ultimate prophecy of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Having started at the pinnacle there, we now are going to go back into the chronology of Scripture and see Christ being revealed from the very beginning. So open your Bible to the third chapter of the book of Genesis, Genesis chapter 3. Everything in chapter 1 and chapter 2 is good. Chapters 1 and 2 describe the creation. They describe the very creation account, six-day creation. Chapter 1 gives us the six days of creation, and chapter 2 gives us detail about the creation that God did on the sixth day, creating man and the animals. And when it's all said and done, it is good. What God created was good. Everything in His created world was good at that point.

But in chapter 3, everything goes bad, fatally bad, terminally bad, historically bad, inescapably bad. And all human beings who will ever walk on this earth are affected by what happened in the third chapter of Genesis. It is the explanation of why things in this world are the way they are--why there is so much evil; why there is so much sin; why there is so much corruption; why there is disease, deformity, and death; why there is conflict, hatred, war; and why there are disasters of all kinds that

fall upon man. It all comes from this third chapter.

Let me read it to you, at least down through verse 16: "Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, 'Indeed, has God said, "You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?"' The woman said to the serpent, 'From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, "You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.'" The serpent said to the woman, 'You surely will not die! For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you'll be like God, knowing good and evil.' 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 desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate. And the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings.

They 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. Then the Lord God called to the man and said to him, 'Where are you?' He said, 'I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself.' And He said, 'Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?' And the man said, 'The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate.' Then the Lord God said to the woman, 'What is this you have done?' And the woman said, 'The serpent deceived me, and I ate.' The Lord God said to the serpent,

'Because you've done this, cursed are you more than all cattle, more than every beast of the field; on your belly you will go, and dust you will eat all the days of your life; and I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel.'

To the woman He said, 'I will greatly multiply your pain in childbirth, in pain you will bring forth children; yet your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.'"

Therein just a portion of that third chapter is the Fall. I'm not going to get into that. Suffice it to say that Adam and Eve lived in a perfect world, in a state of innocence, free from sin, until they fell to the temptation of Satan, a temptation to call into question the integrity of God, the righteousness of God, the goodness of God, the wisdom of God. They became doubters of God. They fell and with them the entire race fell.

Satan, who led that temptation, of course, had by this time--probably very, very soon before this--fallen himself out of heaven. He was the covering cherub; he was the heavenly choir director; he was one of the holy angels who desired to be equal to God, who elevated himself, according to Isaiah 14

and Ezekiel 28. He wanted to elevate himself to be equal with God, to be adored and worshiped as God is. And you know that God cast him out of heaven, along with a third of the angels, according to Revelation 12, and they constitute the demon forces that pervey their corrupt evil against God and all divine purposes, and against men.

Judged already in heaven and cast out, Satan shows up on earth. And in this passage, he is the agent that brings about the temptation that causes the Fall of the entire human race. Paul puts it this way, "As in Adam, all died." Here, having caused this sin, he will be cursed a second time. He was cursed the first time and judged when he was thrown out of heaven, and now he is to be cursed and judged a second time. I want us to focus on verses 14 and 15 for our study, because in the curse that God pronounces on Satan is the first expression of gospel hope, salvation hope, deliverance from sin and Satan--embedded in a curse is the hope of mankind.

Obviously this is a momentous chapter. It is the true and accurate—listen--the true and accurate and *only* account of what happened in the garden that plunged the entire human race into sin and cursed the whole creation. It is the record by the pen of Moses, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, of the reason the world is so full of evil--how it came to be. And I just read the story.

Moses tells us here the story of sin coming into the human family, and its consequences are massive, incalculable. Adam and Eve, in fact, by their sin set in motion a spiritual avalanche that carries the whole human race down and buries them in death. Here is the explanation of why the world is, the way it is. Why human life is the way it is. Why the planet is so deadly dangerous. Everything from the behavior of man to the presence of deadly microorganisms and apocalyptic hurricanes. Everything that is bad and evil and corrupt and devastating and deadly is because of what happened in that third chapter. We've all been plunged into a spiritual death; we've all been plunged into physical death, from the moment we are born we begin to die. We are all born dying and dead, dead spiritually and dying physically; we have no hope of life if all we have is the Fall. And yet here in this very chapter, which chronicles the Fall, we have embedded in the middle of the curse the promise of the Savior, who will break the curse by crushing the tempter.

From this chapter on, the rest of the Bible is the record of God's grace and mercy and loving kindness to sinners. The rest of the Bible is full of God's appeals to sinners to repent of their sin and to come to Him as the One who forgives, is merciful, gracious, loving, and will grant forgiveness. From here on the story is about God's love and mercy and grace, and how few people receive it, and how the world rejects it.

What we have here is essentially the source of human depravity. Human depravity can be defined as a condition of the human soul in which there is nothing truly good, spiritually good, in which there is no genuine obedience to God. It is the condition of the spiritual soul in which there is no fellowship with God. It is the condition of the human soul on which the sentence of death has been passed. It is

the condition of the human soul in which it will not acknowledge the sinfulness of sin and concerns itself only with the consequence of sin, not the sin itself. It is a condition of the human soul in which blame shifting and a constant effort to exonerate oneself and exalt oneself is a daily effort. It is a condition of the human soul which is so profound and so deep that a sinner cannot on his own even honestly repent. And this condition is true of every human born into the world. Paradise was lost not only for Adam and Eve, but everyone else. The loss of blessing defines the world; corruption defines the human race. The whole race, people in the past, the present, and yet to come in the future are born in this condition because of what Adam did.

In the verses that I want to draw to your attention, 14 and 15, we're going to see how God reacts to this. This is divine justice rendering a perfect sentence. Obviously there are natural consequences to sin; they're just built into it. Whatever a man sows, he reaps. If you lie, there are inevitable consequences to your lying. If God didn't do anything, there are built-in consequences to telling lies. If you are drunk, if you are inebriated, if you are an alcoholic, there are built-in consequences. God doesn't have to act; that kind of behavior has its own consequences. If you take drugs, that kind of behavior has its own consequences. If you are characterized by hostility and anger, that kind of behavior has its own consequences. If you engage in homosexuality, sexual sin, if you kill people-- whatever it might be, whatever sin, categories of sins--built-in to those sins is the inevitability of cause and effect results.

But there is a far greater reality than that, and that is the reality of divine judgment on top of natural consequences. There is a natural process, there is a natural built-in sequence we could even call wrath. But what we need to understand is far greater than that, is the sentence that comes down from God on sin. And here God renders a sentence--an appropriate and just sentence, in absolute, divine justice--on the serpent, on the man, and on the woman. The woman's sentence is in verse 16, pain in child bearing. The man's sentence, verse 17, the ground is cursed and he has to draw life from it painfully by the sweat of his brow.

Man's sin does not--listen--does not usurp God's sovereignty. Man's sin does not threaten God's sovereignty. It does not diminish God's sovereignty. It only changes the paradigm in which His sovereignty exists. He is always sovereign. He always rules. And here he demonstrates his sovereignty through these curses. And I want to look at the curses that are related to the serpent and to Satan in verses 14 and 15, because in these curses we find embedded the first presentation of good news. When we talk about gospel, that's just an old English word for good news, good news. It is encouraging to me to know that the good news comes at the time the curse comes, that God can't wait. He doesn't wait days; He doesn't wait weeks; He doesn't wait years. He embeds in the curse itself the good news, because God is by nature a Savior and a Redeemer and gracious and merciful and marked by loving kindness.

So let's look at the curse as it is directed at the tempter, Satan. Because it's in that curse that we're going to see the promise. Verse 14, "The Lord God said to the serpent, 'Because you've done this, cursed are you more than all cattle, more than every beast of the field; on your belly you will go, dust you will eat all the days of your life; I'll put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel.'"

This is such comprehensive, sweeping language. I'm going to give you just a once-over-lightly to a passage that could draw us in for a long time. First of all, there's a curse in verse 14 on the natural serpent, the natural serpent. Verse 14, "The Lord God said to the serpent." Now you remember that when Satan came to tempt Eve, he came in the form of a serpent. Verse 1, "The serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the Lord had made. And he said to the woman...." Now nobody ever has met a talking snake. Snakes don't talk. So what happened is, Satan, who is a spiritual being, embodied himself in a snake and talked through that snake. And so God here curses the snake who is the physical, earthly agent of the satanic temptation.

So the Lord God speaks to the serpent, and this is a curse on the natural animal. "Because you have done this, cursed are you more than all cattle, more than every beast of the field; on your belly you will go, dust you will eat all the days of your life," because you have been the instrument of Satan to bring about temptation and sin.

Now let's just stop there and say, "Look." You say, "Well, what in the world does a snake have to do with it?" Nothing. I mean, it was a snake. There are some who believe that snakes were upright until this point, that whatever a snake is now is not what they were, that somehow there was a change in their physiology. You can't really prove that from Genesis, but you can imply that because He says, from now on, "on your belly you will go, and you will eat dust." Which would indicate that if that's a part of the curse, that wasn't true prior. So I don't know what this was. All I can think about is the gecko in the commercial, some little guy standing on his two hind feet; maybe a winsome little kind of cuddly animal, I don't know. But after the curse, whatever was attractive about the snake was changed. The curse comes on the serpent. And I want you to understand why God is doing this. It's very, very interesting. "Cursed are you more than all cattle, more than every beast of the field." Let me just take "more than" and look at it from the Hebrew.

In the Hebrew it is not a comparative, it's a selective. It's not a comparative, it's a selective of all the cattle and of all the beasts--only you are cursed. Okay? That's what it's saying. Of all the cattle and all the beasts, only you are cursed. Cattle refers to domestic animals. The beasts refer to wild animals. So of all the animals, wild animals and domestic animals, only you are cursed, only you. This is a selective curse. Fallout came on the cattle; they die. Fallout came on the wild animals; they die. But only the snake was selected to be cursed, and only on the snake was the curse pronounced. All animals suffered the effects of the Fall? Of course--all animals: fish, birds, all animals on the ground.

But that's not the point here. He's not saying that only a snake is cursed. He's saying this curse comes on the snake alone. And you ask the question, "Well whatever that animal was, if it was an upright animal, whatever it was; if it was a much more winsome and attractive and cuddly little thing, whatever it might have been, it wasn't responsible for what happened. It's a non-rational creature, doesn't have a soul, doesn't have a will, can't reason. So what is the point of punishing an irrational animal? Why would you curse the serpent? Why would you make the serpent crawl and eat dust? Because the serpent then becomes a permanent symbol and a constant reminder of the degradation of Satan. Every time you see a snake, be reminded of the degradation of Satan. Be reminded that the one who was once the anointed cherub, the one who once was the choir director of heaven, the one who was Lucifer's son of the morning has been so debased and so degraded that he is slithering on the ground and eating dirt, symbolically. The serpent--the snake has become a constant picture of the curse of Satan, of the reproach that Satan carries and will always carry. On your belly shall you go. Literally the Hebrew says, "On your belly you will crawl." Every snake that slithers on the ground is a sign of the humiliation of Satan and the divine judgment on Satan for tempting Adam and Eve.

Leviticus 11:42 says, "Whatever crawls on its belly, you shall not eat for they are detestable." Snakes were an abomination. Snakes were unclean animals. Snakes of all animals are the most reviled, the most hated, the most scorned. And again, in rabbinic teaching, rabbinic history, the rabbis make much of the idea that this animal must have once been upright and perhaps a winsome and beautiful part of God's creation, as was Satan before he was sent to the dirt.

Snakes don't feel the curse. They just illustrate it. They just illustrate it. The fact that this animal still stands under a curse is apparent from the peculiar revulsion that snakes still have among most people. "And dust shall you eat"...not as food, but as a result of slithering in the dirt.

By the way, licking dust in the Old Testament (Psalm 72:9; Isaiah 49:23; Micah 7)--licking dust was an Old Testament expression for total defeat. Snake licks dust because he's a symbol. Every slithering dust-eating snake is a symbol of the crushing curse of God and the judgment that is come on Satan. So snakes symbolize the devil degraded and defeated. They are constant reminders to human society that Satan has been declared a defeated enemy. And this isn't going to change because you will notice at the end of verse 14, it will go on "all the days of your life." This curse will never be removed, never be removed. As long as there are snakes, they will be doomed to be visible symbols of the vanquished king of darkness. They will not sprout legs in an evolutionary process, begin walking, climb trees, go out on the branch, develop feathers, become birds. That's what they teach at USC, but that's not true. As long as there are snakes, they will be doomed to be the visible symbols of the vanquished king of darkness, personal illustrations of the defeat of Satan.

To show you how resolute God is with this illustration, how unwavering He is with this illustration, in the sixty-fifth chapter of Isaiah we have a glimpse of the millennial kingdom. We have a glimpse of a

future time when Christ establishes His kingdom on earth. Isaiah 65 is wonderful in this regard. In verse 25 it says, "The wolf and the lamb will graze together." Natural enemies now grazing together. The lion will eat straw like the ox. Oh, and by the way, dust will still be the serpent's food. They never get out of the dirt, not even in the millennial kingdom. Permanent symbols of the degradation of Satan.

And snakes throughout human history have been associated with Satan, haven't they? In the early days of the Christian church there was a very bizarre sect and they were known as the Ophites (O-p-h-i-t-e-s, the Ophites), not a Christian sect. *Orpheus* is the Greek word for snake. They were snake worshipers, the Ophites. The symbol of their sect was a snake, but the god they worshiped was Satan. They were Satan worshipers who chose the snake and the Greek word for snake to define their worship.

In the Druze Mountains of Syria, there are a people called the Yezidi worshipers. They worship the devil and their symbol is a snake. Snakes are still associated with satanic and occult worship. So the snake is cursed and is a symbolic reminder of the degradation of Satan.

But going from the natural serpent, let's go to the supernatural spirit behind the serpent and the curse of verse 15. This is the important one that I want you to look at. God moves from the animal to the one who came into the animal and spoke through the animal, Satan himself, verse 15. "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel." That has been called literally for centuries the *protoevangelium*. *Proto* meaning the first or the prototype--the first *evangelium*, the first gospel. That's the first gospel. What I just read you is the only gospel that the ancient world had. They didn't have anything else. They didn't have anything but Genesis 3:15. That's it.

Here God speaks to Satan himself, the wretched Satan who behaves like a roaring lion but in reality is a slithering snake. He is brought a curse by God. He is subject to God's judgment. God is still sovereign when He threw Satan out of heaven. He exercised His sovereignty, and with Satan, a third of the angels, who were in His rebellion; and He will judge Satan again.

You know, Satan had to have been thinking, and I don't want to tamper in his corrupt mind, but it seems reasonable to me that when Satan was thrown out of heaven, it escalated his anger toward God. Obviously he was...whatever he was before the Fall, whatever it meant to be good and perfect and righteous was just that. But when he rebelled in his heart and became evil, and was catapulted out of heaven, his evil only increased and intensified. And he may have thought that in his campaign against God, when he won Adam and Eve, when he in his mind triumphed over God, when he won the confidence of Adam and Eve and turned them against God to distrust the word of God, when he triumphed, he may have thought that he had overthrown God, that he had finally achieved what he wanted to achieve, that he had now become the sovereign. He had exercised sovereignty and a third

of the angels had gone with Him. And now there were only two humans in the world, and they had chosen him over the true God. Is this finally the triumph of Satan over God? Has he destroyed God's plan? Has he destroyed God's purpose?

Well the answer is, he has not; God is still sovereign. As I said earlier, the paradigm in which God operates that sovereignty changes, but God is still sovereign and pronounces a curse on Satan. Starting in verse 15, "And I will," "I will"--divine action, divine initiative, divine sovereignty; God is still in charge. And it's an amazing judgment. "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed."

What is He saying to Satan? Satan's thought was this, "I've turned Adam and Eve, the human race, against God." And God says, "I'm going to turn the human race against You." That's what it's saying.

"Enmity" is not a word applicable to animals. Enmity is a word *ebab* It means deep animosity between morally responsible beings. Deep animosity between morally responsible beings. Scripture uses it of persons. And God says to Satan, "If you think you have won the entire human race, you are wrong. There will come enmity from humanity toward you. You do not rule. You will not exercise complete control. You will not have the whole human race." God denies Satan at the very moment when he assumed he had triumphed. God denies him what he thought he had gained. God will enable man in his sinful condition, in his fallen condition, to be so totally transformed that he will hate the serpent and love God. This will be reversed. Adam and Eve chose to love Satan and hate God. Chose to doubt God and believe Satan. But that's not permanent for the whole human race. Again, God will enable humanity to be so transformed as to hate the serpent, hate Satan, and love God.

Well, that's going to take something, that's going to take something. We know that's true because we are among those people, are we not? Do we not love God and hate Satan? Oh, I know the world loves Satan and hates God, they might not say it that way, but that's the truth. But God has redeemed out of the human race, starting from that very incident in the garden through all of human history until the end of the age, a humanity that has been so transformed that that group of human beings, that massive group of redeemed human beings through all of human history, actually hate Satan and love God. That's the enmity that has been placed between you, Satan, and the woman and her seed. For this to happen, there has to be a radical transformation of the human heart. There has to be a deep, deep change in the human heart to turn man back to God. It is so profound that the New Testament speaks of it as the new birth. It is so profound that the prophets, Ezekiel and Jeremiah, speak of it as having a new heart.

To put it another way, the old Adam has to die and a new Adam has to be born. The old Eve has to die and a new Eve has to be born--a new Adam and a new Eve; a new man and a new woman--and new men and new women who hate Satan and love God instead of loving Satan and hating God. And God is saying that change will come.

Here, dear friends, is the first suggestion of regeneration, first suggestion of transformation, first suggestion of salvation, first suggestion of good news. And what is the initial good news? That there will be among men those who love God and hate Satan. God will put enmity between Satan and the seed of the woman. There will be a humanity that will be so totally transformed that they will love God and they will see Satan as the enemy and God as the friend.

So here the gospel, good news, makes its initial entrance into human history, embedded in a curse on Satan. The gospel is first given then not in a promise, but in a curse. Not in an act of kindness, but in an act of judgment. And as I said earlier, for centuries this was the only gospel, this is the only promise. This was the only promise for centuries of Satan's defeat--of sinners being transformed to love God and trust God, and hate Satan and distrust him.

Well there's more than that. This is actually the promise of a Savior, of a Savior. Because this enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed, will come about because the seed of the woman will crush you on the head as you bruise him on the heel. This is an amazing prophecy. Let's just take it apart a little bit.

The enmity will be between you, Satan, and the woman. First of all, the woman is Eve. Eve herself, I think, is promised salvation. Eve will be transformed--Eve will love God, trust God, obey God, and hate Satan and distrust Satan. Eve will no longer see Satan as a friend and God as the enemy of her knowledge, her fulfillment, her pleasure, her delight, her joy as she thought he was. But it will go beyond her. In verse 20, her name is Eve because she was the mother of all the living. So there will be enmity not only between you and the woman, but between your seed and her seed. In other words, out of Eve who is the mother of all living, will come a race of redeemed humanity that will also be at enmity, that will also be at enmity with Satan, that will also believe God, love God, trust God, and hate Satan. Your seed--Satan, unbelievers. Her seed--believers. Your seed--all the depraved, all the unconverted, all the haters of God to one degree or another; her seed--all the transformed who love God, who hate Satan. So, right at the moment where Satan may have been thinking, "I think I've won this deal. I've just captured the whole of the human race. I've got a grip on the mother and the father--the father of all men; and Eve, the mother of all living. They have chosen me to worship, to be their friend, to love and to trust. I've won." And God says, "Not so fast, not so fast. Eve will turn on you; she will hate you; there will be hostility because she will turn to me. Out of her loins will come a redeemed humanity; her seed who will do the very same thing."

But there's something else here because at the end of verse 15 it mentions her seed. And then the pronoun "he," her seed; "he," her seed is a special man ultimately. This refers to an individual, singular pronoun--"he."

The enmity will be Eve's, and she will hate Satan and love God. The enmity will come through the humanity that proceeds from Adam and Eve; there will be a redeemed humanity who will be hostile toward Satan. But there will be one Man, "he"--one Man. And here you have this most interesting identification as her seed being "he." It comes down to "he," much as the seed of Abraham, Paul says in Galatians, is a seed; not seeds, but a seed. And he points directly to Christ.

God is speaking here of the seed of a woman who will be a Man. This is the only place in the Bible where it talks about a seed of a woman. It talks a lot about seed of men, because seed is in the man; it's not in the woman. But there was One born without a human father, and the seed was in the woman. And that is the virgin-born Christ, the Son of God. He is the only human who was not produced by the seed of a man. The only time a woman had the seed of her own. He is virgin-born. Clearly that is the testimony of the gospel of Matthew. Clearly that is the testimony of Galatians 4:4, "born of a woman," "born of a woman." Isaiah 7:14, born of a virgin.

So there will be hostility toward you, Satan, from Eve. There will be hostility toward you from a transformed humanity, and there will be one Man who comes from the seed of a woman who will be your destroyer, who will be your destroyer. This has to point to the Lord Jesus Christ.

I think Satan understood this prophecy. I think Satan has always been able to interpret this prophecy; and that is why Satan has been so fully engaged, as you can read through Old Testament history in trying to destroy the line of the Messiah. Again and again and again and again, if not specifically the line of the Messiah, the Jewish people, if you will. That's why there have been so many efforts at Jewish genocide, and they continue even now. That's why Satan endeavored to kill all the male children at the time of the birth of Christ that were two years and under, in order to slaughter the Messiah. Satan has always done everything he could to prevent the birth of the seed of the woman, and if not prevent the birth of the seed of the woman, snuff the life of that seed out before that One can crush his head.

So it says in verse 15, "He shall crush you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel." He will deal a crushing blow--that's the actual word--literally to crush the head of Satan like you would crush a pumpkin. The heel of the seed of the woman will be bruised, that's an attack from the rear, with less than permanent damage. A bruise on the heel is a minor thing.

Satan was engaged in bruising the Son of God. Isaiah says He was bruised for our iniquities, and if you go to the cross you remember Luke 22:52 and 53 says that Jesus confessed that "this is the hour of the power of darkness," "this is the hour of the power of darkness." Satan bruised Him at the cross, but only minor bruises that would heal. The cross was a blow on His heel--a minor bruise, only a bruise--allowed for the redemption of all these sinners who would love God and hate Satan, all these sinners who would be torn from the grasp of Satan. But the One whose heel was being bruised would, at the same time, crush the head of Satan. That's an attack from the front, dealing a deadly,

crushing blow to the head.

When a man with a great boot heel stomps on the head of a snake to crush its skull, that's a picture of the total defeat of Satan. This is accomplished at the cross. How did Jesus defeat Satan at the cross? By providing the atonement that paid in full for the sins of all the people whom God would regenerate. By satisfying the justice of God, by paying the full debt to God, by conquering death, by opening heaven--all the marvelous cross work of Christ is the crushing blow on the head of Satan.

We aren't very far into the Scripture until we come to the cross, are we? Right here, Genesis 3. Christ has already appeared in chapter 1 in the creation, because according to John 1:1 He is the Creator. But here we see Him already in chapter 3 as the Redeemer. Here we see embedded in the curse on Satan, the promise of the Savior, the seed of a woman. That can't happen unless there's a virgin birth. He will be bruised on the heel, and He was bruised at the cross; but in being bruised, He will crush the head of Satan.

Can you imagine the promise that this was to that early group of people? Listen, the curse on man hasn't even been given. It comes down in verses 17 and 19; the curse on woman hasn't even been given. Before God even lays out the price that men are going to pay and the price that women are going to pay, before God even pronounces judgment on them, hope appears and mercy and grace and salvation, and good news--before God even banishes Adam and Eve from Paradise, before He sends them out of the garden and forbids them to ever come back, before punishment is placed on their backs, hope is placed in their hearts. God is by nature a gracious, merciful, compassionate, forgiving God, and so He plants hope in the midst of the curse. It's like Romans 5:20, "Where sin abounded"...What?...“grace abounds even more.”

What an incredible place to begin to see the glory of Christ in the Old Testament. He is the seed of the woman, the Man who crushed Satan's head. And because of that, the end of the book of Romans, Paul says, "Satan has also been placed under your feet." Because He conquered Him, we in Christ conquer as well.

God delights in mercy. Before He pronounces a curse on man and woman, before He expels them from the garden, He gives them salvation hope, hope of regeneration that they will hate Satan and see him as an enemy, and they will love God (regeneration). That there will come a Savior; there will come One who will conquer Satan and therefore conquer sin. Even though He in the conquering will be bruised, He will crush that deadly enemy. What an amazing promise. What a gracious God. And it is here that the gospel begins.

Next Sunday night we're going to look at verse 20 because we see even more about the gospel in the first act of God to cover sinners, Adam and Eve. But that's for next Sunday night. Let's pray.

We remember, O Lord, the words of Luther's great hymn, "And though this world with devils filled, should threaten to undo us, we will not fear for God has willed His truth to triumph through us. The prince of darkness grim, we tremble not for him. His rage we can endure for lo, his doom is sure. One little world shall fell him." Thank You, O God, that through Christ You have conquered the great enemy, a great Satan. We thank You that You promised from the very beginning a transformation that would turn us into lovers of God and haters of Satan; lovers of truth and righteousness and haters of lies and sin. Thank You for the promise of regeneration and the means by which that promise can come, the bruising of the seed of the woman who in being bruised crushed the enemy's head. Thank You for that promise. Thank You that we not only understand that in its simplicity, but we understand the fullness of the New Testament revelation of all that that means. How rich we are. How grateful to be living at the end of the age when all these things are known to us. How privileged we are to be alive and have in our hands and in our own language the New Testament, which presents the fullness of all that is in Christ. Give us a greater love for Him and a greater joy in serving Him, proclaiming Him. We pray in His name. Amen.

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