Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The First Sacrifice
Scripture: Genesis 3:20-24
Code: 80-397

For tonight and in the future, we're going to continue to look at finding Christ in the Old Testament. Now we have established this series long ago--many, many months ago. We talked about the importance of this. We have looked at the greatest of all Old Testament passages on Christ, the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah. We find ourselves now beginning kind of a chronological tour through the Old Testament to find Christ wherever He appears, and I want you to turn to the third chapter of Genesis, Genesis chapter 3.

Obviously in chapter 1 and 2 you have the creation. And as you learned from last Sunday night in Genesis 3, you have the Fall of man, the Fall of the world, if you will; sin enters the world and infects everything in the creation.

In the response that God gives to the Fall, we find curses that are delineated in Genesis 3:14. And I want to read those and then I want to take us in to the final section in this chapter which is going to be our focus. But let's pick up the reading so that we have a good setting for our message in Genesis 3:14.

"The Lord God said to the serpent, 'Because you have done this, cursed are you more than all cattle, and 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 [or hostility] 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.'

"Then to Adam He said, 'Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, "You shall not eat from it";

"'cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; and you will eat the plants of the field; by the sweat of your face you will eat bread, till you return to the ground, because from it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.'

"Now the man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all the living. The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them. Then the Lord God said, 'Behold,

the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever'--therefore the Lord God sent him out of the garden of Eden, to cultivate the ground from which he was taken. So He drove the man out; and at the east of the garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim and the flaming sword which turned every direction to guard the way to the tree of life."

I want us to focus on verses 20 to 24 because this is an amazing little section of Scripture. It is literally pregnant with rich, rich meaning. In the verses that we read, at the end of that text, verses 20 to 24, we essentially have the elements of salvation--the elements of redemption--so that as soon as man falls, God sets in motion the means to redeem him. He falls at the beginning of chapter 3. He's cursed in the middle of chapter 3, and the plan for redeeming him unfolds at the end of chapter 3 in immediate sequence. And again, I can't resist saying, the astonishing, astonishing way which the Spirit of God, with very few words, can give us a revelation of the gospel in these very brief verses. In fact, in verses 20 to 24 you have the necessary components of salvation. That's right, in verses 20 to 24 you have the necessary components of salvation. And, of course, they point to Christ.

Now I want to talk about four of the necessary components, or four elements of salvation: faith from man's side and hope, and from God's side, atonement and security. If you take faith and atonement and security and hope, you have essentially the components, the sum of the elements, of salvation with nothing left out. And we're going to find all four of those elements in verses 20 to 24. The salvation of sinners, their deliverance, their rescue from sin and death, and judgment has always been by faith. It has always included hope. And it has always been through atonement and security. God's work is to provide atonement and security. Our response is faith and hope.

Now obviously these aspects and what we know about them is far beyond the basics that are revealed here. We, we have a full understanding of saving faith, of saving hope. We have a full understanding of the atoning work of Christ, and we have a full understanding of the security of the believer in God's purpose and power, because we have so complete a revelation as the New Testament.

So I need to say that obviously all the aspects of these four realities are not fully revealed here. But I want to give you a little thing to think about, and you can kind of follow this as you study the Scripture, when you go from Genesis on through. The Bible does not go from error to truth. But it does go from incompleteness to completeness. There is no error advocated in the Bible, there is only truth. But it is not at the beginning the complete story. So we say the Bible does not go from error to truth. It does not go from law to grace because there will always be the law of God, and there has always been the grace of God. But it goes from incompleteness to completeness so that the complete understanding of things that are initiated even back in the book of Genesis requires the fullness of Scripture, all the way through to the end of the New Testament.

But as we look at these verses, let me just have you focus on the four words that I gave you, the four elements of redemption that unfold in this passage. And they do so not by implication, but they do explicitly.

The first one I want to talk about is faith, faith. We all know that salvation is by grace through faith. We are not saved by works; we are saved by faith. We all understand that. Now if I were to define faith for you in a saving sense, in a biblical sense, I would say that faith is believing the Word of God, right? It is believing the Word of God.

Now listen, at any point in biblical history, at any point in the history of redemption, believing the Word of God meant believing everything God had said up to that time. We believe the whole of Scripture because we live when the whole of Scripture has been completed. But people who lived in the time of Genesis couldn't believe things that hadn't been written, and hadn't been revealed, but faith was believing whatever it was that God had said. Whatever the body of divine revelation was, faith was accepting and believing that, having trust in the Word of God, having trust in the promise of God that whatever God says is true. And we see that kind of faith right away in verse 20.

Now let me back up a little bit from that. When Adam and Eve were first created and placed in the garden, they believed God. They walked and talked with God in the cool of the day; they trusted God. They communed with God. They believed what God said was so. And they responded.

Then along came the serpent and the serpent told them lies about God--that God was flawed, that God was defective, that God was jealous, and God didn't want them to know good and evil because they would then be equal to God, and He didn't want the competition. Satan also said that God lied when He said, "If you eat of the certain fruit, you will die." Satan says you won't die. So Satan comes along and tells Eve, first of all--and Adam bought into it--that God is a liar, that God is dishonest, that God is defective. Satan convinced them God can't be trusted. He's withholding something good from you. He's really not on your side. He's, He's restricting your joy. And not only that, He's got this defect--He doesn't want you to be equal with Him. And furthermore, He doesn't tell the truth, because you're not going to die.

So there they are, sitting in the created paradise of Eden, in the middle of every good thing that God had made and provided for them, in the paradise of perfection, and they begin to believe Satan and not believe God. In fact, that's exactly what they did. They have experienced God's perfection. They have experienced God's fellowship. And now they don't trust Him. And they're right there in His presence.

At that moment, when they stopped believing what God had said and started believing what Satan said, they were catapulted into depravity; they were catapulted into sin and sorrow and death. Why?

Because they stopped believing God and they started believing Satan. They found themselves consequently, as I just read, starting in verse 14, cursed by God, cursed by God. The woman is cursed through the pain of childbearing and conflict in the marriage, as she tries to usurp power in the marriage, and the husband tries to overrule her. He entered into conflict and the curse in having to work by the sweat of his brow to get food and eke out a living from toxic soil and plants that in a very real sense were fighting against him. All of this happened because they didn't believe God.

But something happens in verse 20 that changes our understanding of Adam and Eve. "Now the man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all the living." The name Eve means life. It means life. This is a clear contrast, by the way, with the sentence of death just imposed by God. God told them when you eat of that fruit you're going to die. And the death principle went into activity immediately upon their sin. And now Adam calls the name of his wife Eve, "because she was the mother of all the living."

First of all, let me say, that the creation promise, Genesis 1:28, to have children, to fill the earth with children, was not abolished by the Fall. Adam knew life would come from the womb of his wife. Adam knew that. How did he know that? Back to verse 15, "I will put enmity," God says to Eve...to Satan rather, "between you and the woman [Eve], and between your seed and her seed." Based on that promise, Adam knew that there would be a seed of his wife. That would be the beginning point of the fulfillment of that prophecy, which would stretch all the way to the coming of the Messiah, the true seed of the woman. He also knew that the seed that would come out of the woman would crush the head of Satan, crush the head of Satan. Satan was the one who had destroyed paradise. So Adam names his wife "Life," and this is Adam's response to God's sentence of punishment. He trusts in the promise of God to bring through his wife a seed who would crush the serpent's head, rescuing humanity from the tyranny of the devil.

The woman will produce life. In fact, she will be the mother of all living and therefore out of her will come whoever the One is to triumph over Satan and restore paradise and bring back the glory lost in the Fall. The very fact that Adam names his wife "Life," is an affirmation that he believes the promise of verse 15. He believes that there will be a seed from the woman who will crush the head of the serpent. He believes it. And the evidence that he believes it is the name he gives to his wife, "Life." The victory over Satan, the victory over sin, the victory over death will come through the seed of the woman, because she was the mother of all the living. That's a...that's a faith statement.

At the time that he said that, he called his wife's name Eve because she was the mother of all the living. She was the mother of nobody, and neither was anybody else. There was just two of them. But God said from her would come a seed who would crush the serpent's head. When Adam names her "Life," he affirms the promise of God to be true and declares that he wills that the Satan who led them into the sin have his head crushed. What has happened here then is Adam has moved back to God's side. Adam believes God now. This is purely an act of faith because no one had ever been born.

Adam had been created and Eve had been created out of his side. No one had ever been born. But Adam believes God that out of Eve will come all life, and among those will be the One who crushes the serpent's head. So naming his wife "Life" was an expression of his faith in the word of the Creator.

To say it another way, Adam believed the salvation God had promised and this was...listen...as far as it was possible at that time--an act of faith in the word of God. He was saying, "I believe You; I believe Your promise; I believe the seed will come; and I believe the seed will crush the serpent." Why did he believe that? Because he has now come to believe God and not Satan.

He has, in a sense, faith in the unseen Christ, faith in the Christ long in the distance, not with New Testament clarity, not even with the clarity provided later in the Old Testament as prophecies concerning Christ become more explicit. But the essence of faith is simply believing everything God has revealed. And that's all he had. And this is as far as his faith can go, to believe that God is true, God speaks truly, God will bring a life to crush the enemy. And he believes it, he believes it.

Hebrews talks about this in chapter 11. "By this kind of faith," which Hebrews says is "the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen"; Hebrews says, "By this the men of old gained approval [from God]." God approved of those who trusted in Him. And by the way, Adam was the first one. Here is the first illustration of a man coming to God by faith, believing everything God has said. There is sin in the world; that's what Adam believed. He knew it well; he had been there when it came. But there is hope; there is coming One who will destroy Satan--God will bring a life to triumph over evil. That's all he had; that's all God had revealed. There was nothing more and Adam believed that, and it was accounted to him for righteousness, like in Genesis 15 when it says, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness." Abraham believed what God promised. Abraham believed what God said, and that's what God has always required. For us, it is to believe the gospel because that is the full revelation of God.

So the original command to be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth--still in place. One of those that will be born out of Eve's loins will bring deliverance, salvation, redemption, and crush the head of the enemy, Satan. I think at this point in the life of Adam and Eve, they hate Satan. They're experiencing paradise lost. They are cursed. They are feeling the effects of the curse already, and they now move to the side of God and abandon their trust in Satan and put their faith in God.

Let me say at this point, such an act would encompass repentance; such an act would encompass repentance because they have to turn from believing Satan to believe God. They have to reject what Satan says about God and come to the truth of God, which He Himself declares.

So what I see here is penitent faith. There's a sadness, a brokenness, a despair--guilt, fear in the hearts of Adam and Eve and they turn from their believing Satan and choosing sin to believe in God and desiring to follow Him and follow His word.

So we could put it this way: the attitude of Adam was dramatically changed toward God and toward Satan. No longer would he believe the liar, who brought this evil upon him; he would believe God. Once a believer only in God, he had defected to become a believer in the serpent, a follower of God's enemy--the lying devil--but in the very words of naming Eve, Adam demonstrates that he believes God's word and is anticipating its fulfillment, including the destruction of Satan, his former master.

So here you see in kind of a basic sense, a seminal sense, repentance and faith. And doubtless, Eve had the same conviction that Satan was the liar, in fact, and God was the truth-teller, because she accepted her name. And with the acceptance of her name, she also embraced the hope of redemption and the destruction of the one who had brought this calamity on her and on her husband and on the world. And, by the way, since she is the mother of all the living, it eliminates the idea that there were any other humans anywhere. She's the mother of all the living. It eliminates the idea that there were any other humans anywhere. She's the mother of all the living.

So the gospel of salvation was given in chapter 3, verse 15, and we looked at that last Sunday, didn't we? The gospel was given there. In verse 20, listen, the gospel is received. Put your trust in God; He is trustworthy. Repent of your sin and alliance with Satan and embrace the promise of God that He will send a Redeemer who will deliver you from sin and crush the head of your enemy.

Habakkuk 2:4, another Old Testament text says, "The just shall live by his"...What?..."his faith." "The just shall live by his faith." So we see here salvation in its first component, which is penitent faith. That's the human side of it, obviously activated by God.

Let's take a second point. Salvation also requires atonement. Salvation also requires atonement. We move from man's response to God's provision, verse 21, "The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them." Here we see the sovereign act of God; God acts in grace toward these two sinners, toward these two fallen beings. Here is God's grace expressed in a symbolic way toward the unworthy couple who deserve death, because God said, "In the day you eat, you"...What?..."you die." But immediately God is gracious, and the Lord God, instead of killing them, covered them.

By the way, from the eighth verse on, Moses has chosen to use "Lord God," a name identifying not only God as Creator and eternal One, but as Lord of grace. Moses here is presenting God as the One who is gracious and merciful, so Yahweh is added to Elohim. So here God acts in grace and mercy and compassion for the sinful and shameful couple. He made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them. This is new. Chapter 2, verse 25, "The man and his wife were naked and not ashamed." Chapter 3, verse 7, when they sinned, "the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked." They had no shame. They had no such thing as an evil thought, no such thing as a...as an aberrant sexual thought until they sinned, and then they realized that nakedness

incited those kinds of thoughts. They knew it themselves, and they sewed fig leaves together, made themselves loin coverings ’cause they were having impulses that they had never had. Because of lust and because of sin, people need to be clothed; they need to be covered. Nakedness is not acceptable to God, but nakedness is not acceptable to man, ’cause he understands that it can solicit shameful things. They felt shame for the first time. And here God reinforces that, verse 21, by making permanent garments out of hide, animal hide, and clothed them.

This is the main point that I want you to see. God provides for man’s physical clothing Himself. God also covers them spiritually in this symbolic gesture. The entire work of salvation is prefigured here. It doesn’t say that God found a sheep, sheered the sheep, wove some garments and covered them. No, He covered them not with the wool taken from an animal, but with the skin of the animal, which means the animal had to...What?...had to die. God clothes the naked sinner, covering the sinner by the sacrifice of an innocent victim, providing atonement, satisfaction to His own required justice with a substitute.

This introduces for the first time in Scripture the matter of atonement or covering of the sinner through the death of an innocent substitute. This is the sovereign work of God. God chose the animal. God killed the animal. God took the skin of the animal and covered the sinners. This is the first death in the world--never been death before this. The first death is the death of an animal killed by God to cover sinners. My, what a beautiful picture of the Lord Jesus, who is the Lamb slain by God from before the foundation of the world, the Lamb slain by God from before the foundation of the world.

This became the standard kind of offering that God required in chapter 4. You remember Cain and Abel came to give offerings to God. Abel, verse 2, was a keeper of flocks; Cain, a tiller of the ground. Cain brought an offering to the Lord of the fruit of the ground; Abel brought of the firstlings of his flock, animal sacrifice and their fat portions. “The Lord had regard for Abel and for his offering; and for Cain and his offering He had no regard.” And that point God institutes the idea of an animal sacrifice as a picture of the fact that an innocent life has to be given to cover sinners. And, of course, that goes on through the whole of the Old Testament. In Genesis chapter 8, you have Noah making a sacrifice like that, an animal sacrifice. In Exodus, chapter 20 and 22 and on through the book of Exodus, you have Moses making sacrifices. If you want to stay back in the patriarchal period, Job chapter 1, verse 5; Job offered animal sacrifices. Throughout the Pentateuch--Numbers, Leviticus, Deuteronomy--there are many, many prescriptions about the necessity of offering sacrifices, dead animals offered to God as a picture of the necessary death of an innocent substitute in the place of the guilty sinner. Repeatedly throughout Israel’s history, God condemned the Jews when they were unfaithful to do this, when they were unfaithful to do this. Particularly Isaiah and Ezekiel addressed the people of Israel as being unfaithful to offer sacrifices to Him. God also upbraided His people when they offered sacrifices that were heartless and without repentance, when it was meaningless, such as Isaiah chapter 1, and even in the book of Habakkuk, Malachi.

Sacrifices don't mean anything. Amos even talks about that if the heart isn't in them. But the sacrificial system was to picture the necessity of a substitute to take the place of sinners, to be killed and to bear the wrath of God. And, of course, none of the sacrifices ever given in the past could do that; they just pictured the One that was to come, who was Christ.

So here for the first time in verse 21, we have a picture of the substitutionary atonement of Christ to come in the future, by which sinner's shame and guilt will be covered, will be covered. The gospel is there embedded in that very statement that God will, listen to this, provide the sacrifice. You remember with Isaac in Genesis 22, God provides the sacrifice to take Isaac's place. Jesus is God's Lamb. God provides the sacrifice.

So the good news immediately after the Fall, immediately after the curse is the promise in verse 15, the promise of one who will come, who will crush the enemy and triumph over evil. And the response of Adam and Eve is faith. And the provision of God is atonement so that the sinner is covered and his shame is hidden.

Now in the next verse there is a third element to salvation, and this is an equally critical element to salvation. And it's really remarkable how it's laid out. Salvation requires faith on the part of the man or the woman; salvation requires atonement on the part of God; and thirdly, salvation requires security on the part of God, security on the part of God. Obviously this whole thing is a grace operation. God made the promise; nobody forced Him to make it. God made the promise of the seed of the woman crushing the serpent's head, and in that is salvation. That's the protoevangelium, the first gospel. God then makes the atonement, the model of atonement, an innocent death for the sake of covering sinners. This is the work of God.

But there's more. There's more. And this is so very, very important. Verse 22, "Then the Lord God said," and again he uses Yahweh Elohim, "Then the Lord God said, 'Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever." Now we'll stop right there.

The Lord God in a divine initiative acted graciously to cover Adam and Eve. And now he acts equally graciously to protect Adam and Eve from a devastating possibility: "Behold, the man has become like one of Us"--only in the sense of knowing good and evil. But not in the sense that God knows good and evil, because God is good and there is no evil in Him. Man is evil predominantly, and only by the grace of God is there any good in him. But the simple truth is man now knows what's good and what's evil. That is true. They know it from the inside. God knows it from the outside. God knows it because He knows everything. But God doesn't experience it. Adam and Eve along with us know it from the inside because we experience it. So in that sense, "man has become like one of us"; only for him this is a debilitating, overwhelming, overpowering personal experience of evil in his own heart. They know

evil because it's in them. They know evil because it drives them. They know evil because it's in their nature. They know evil because it is their constant experience.

What's God going to do about it? Well, I want you to notice this. We've got a problem because now man might stretch out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat and live forever. Would that be bad? Absolutely. Why would it be bad? Because he'd be eternally...What?...evil...be eternally evil. And he might stretch out his hand and take the tree of life and be evil forever. Why would he be prone to do that? Because he for the first time now understands what death means, because God has just killed an animal. There's a carcass there; he has seen that dead form; he knows the reality of death, the finality of death, the horror of death; and he's going to be tempted to avoid death and to stretch out his hand and take the tree of life. And if they eat, they will live forever. That is not in the botany of the tree. But that is what God decreed. And then what you've got is hell forever. What is hell forever? It is the eternal life of a sinner, eternal sin. No hope for deliverance, no hope; and it would be no decay, no disease, no diminishing of human powers, just endless evil, endless evil. A horrible existence, that's what hell is. It causes weeping, wailing, gnashing of teeth. Fire is never quenched; worm never dies.

So if man and woman, Adam and Eve, remain in the garden, the temptation to overpower death by eating will be overwhelming because they don't want to die. They've seen death; they've seen the grousy, gruesome, bloody killing of an animal; they're going to be tempted to eat. And they will live forever evil.

So, verse 23, "Therefore the Lord God sent him out from the garden of Eden." I don't think they would have left voluntarily; it's still the garden of Eden. It's still the garden of Eden. And though the curse has come, the curse works much more slowly then. As you know, Adam lived to be over 900 years old, over 900 years, which meant that though there was decay, the decay was very slow. Which also means that Eden was still Eden, and it was still paradise. But to leave them in Eden, to leave them in that paradise where there was that tree of the fruit of life was to put them in a place where they could be tempted to something that would do them eternal harm. And so this is the second aspect of salvation that I want you to see, and this is God's part. God not only provides atonement, but He secures His people from ever falling. He secures them from ever falling.

Do we believe in the security of the believer? Here it is illustrated. Psalm 97:10 says, "He preserves the soul of His saints." Psalm 89, "My lovingkindness I will not take from him; I will not allow My faithfulness to fail." "My mercies are going to be new every morning, great is Thy faithfulness," Lamentations 3. So here is God driving him out of the garden of Eden, driving him out so that he will not end up eternally evil. God had a far better plan for sinful Adam and Eve.

So what are the elements of salvation that we see here? Faith, on the part of Adam and Eve, who took the word "Eve" as the name because she was going to be the fulfillment of the promise of God.

They believed God. We see the element of atonement, and we see the element of security. God provides the sacrifice that covers sinners, and God secures sinners. All of this points to Christ. Christ is that sacrifice, and Christ is the one who keeps and holds His own.

And then there's a final element of the gospel that appears here in the end of it, in the middle of verse 23 then through verse 24. Salvation requires hope, salvation requires hope. It requires faith, it requires from God atonement and security, but it also...it also requires hope. God not only sent Adam and Eve out to protect them, but He sent them out to expose them. He sent them out to expose them. He sent them out to cultivate the ground from which he had been taken. He drove the man out at the east of the garden of Eden; He stationed the cherubim and the flaming sword which turned every direction to guard the way to the tree of life. So you see the implication there, to make sure they never got back to the tree of life, that's part of the securing aspect.

But first of all, in verse 23, He sent them out to cultivate the ground. Man was to live--Adam for over 900 years. In sorrow, sickness, suffering, temptation, living under the curse, he was to live his whole life feeling the burden of sin, feeling the weight of the Fall, feeling the curse. As I said, 930 years, he was to live that whole time, almost a millennium, working by the sweat of his brow. Eve was to live that whole time being the mother of all living, bearing children painfully. There was conflict in the marriage as she was fighting against the authority of her husband, and he was trying to subdue her. That's what is being stated in verse 16. The sinner then is left to suffer in hope, to suffer in hope.

When it says He drove the man out in verse 24, it means He expelled; it's a very strong Hebrew word--booted him out at the east of the garden of Eden, He stationed the cherubim and a flaming sword to make sure they never could come back in. They were outside the garden of beauty and delights, the paradise. They were put out at the east of the garden, on the east side. Paradise was to the west. Not where the sun rose, but where the sun set. Every day for the rest of Adam's life of 900-plus years, and he watched the sun go down; it was a reminder that he was not allowed back into the paradise of God. Every sunset of every day would remind them of what they had lost and could never regain in this life--constant reminder, constant reminder, constant reminder. And the suffering of their lives expanded and expanded. Their pain, their son killed his brother. Their grandchildren, disastrous. Their offspring would become so bad, so horrible that by Genesis 6 God would drown the entire world with the exception of eight people. And every sunset they would think about the paradise they had lost and they would live in hope, and they would live in hope. He stationed the cherubim there. That's a class of holy angels described in Ezekiel 1, beings of astonishing light, brilliance, glory, surrounding the throne of God. Second Samuel says that the Lord dwells in the midst of the cherubim. Second Kings 19, He literally places His throne between the cherubim.

What is that? That's an earthly replica of heaven. The cherubim, guardians of the holiness of God, guardians of the throne of God, are stationed at the front of paradise. These angels were the guards of the presence of God, and every time the sinners, Adam and Eve, looked and saw the cherubim

and the flaming sword as the sun went down in the evening, they realized they were outside paradise. But they lived in hope; they lived in hope that one day they would enter the true paradise of God. And I think that hope burned bright in their heart. Why would God make them live that way for a long time? Why? Because hope is a purifying reality. First John 3:3, “Everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.” Hope sanctifies, hope sanctifies.

Why would God want man, whom He loves and forgives, to live in hope? Because hope is the perfecting ground, and if you wonder how that works, just know this, that the greatest glories of heaven are reserved for the people who suffer most here. When James and John came with their mother to say to Jesus, “Can we sit on the right and the left hand?” Jesus said, “It’s not for you; it’s for My Father to determine that, and it’s going to go to those who suffered the most.”

Adam and Eve couldn’t enter paradise. But they were living in hope that one day they would. Romans 4 talks about the hope of Abraham. The Scripture talks a lot about the hope of all of us, all of us believers. Psalm 146:5 says, “Happy is he who has the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God.” We live in hope. Romans 8 talks about that. We live in hope. We too are outside the paradise of God, but some day we will enter.

So the third chapter of Genesis then ends with those elements of salvation: faith and atonement and security and hope. And there we see right on the heels of the Fall the components that make up the familiar realities of salvation. We have come into salvation by faith, because there has been an atonement provided for us. We are secure in Christ. And we live in hope, so that the chapter that starts with the greatest tragedy in the history of the world ends with the greatest promise. And if you ever questioned the grace of God, then you would have to go back and look at this again and ask yourself, “Is not God gracious, who runs to provide grace immediately on the heels of the Fall and the curse?” Because God loves, that’s His nature, and He loves to save.

Father, we thank You again for giving us just a brief glimpse into this critical chapter which shows us Your heart for Your saving work. Thank You for showing us Christ, even here in Genesis chapter 3; for He is the One who gave His life that we might have our guilt and our shame covered. He is the one who provided a fitting atonement so that we might be secured forever from hell and live in the hope of the heavenly paradise. Thank You for this glimpse and for Your Word, as always, Amen.

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