

The first promise

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[0 : 00] Let us turn now to the chapter we read, the book of Genesis, chapter 3.

And we will read from verse 14. And the Lord God said unto the serpent, Because there was done this, there were cursed above all cattle, and above every piece of the field upon thy belly shalt thou go, and thus shalt thou eat all the days of thy life.

And especially the words in verse 15, And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed, it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

And so on to the end of the chapter, but with particular reference to that 15th verse. Now, a few weeks ago we looked at the fall of man, as it is brought before us in this chapter, and the consequences of that fall.

By the fall of man, of course, we mean the sin that man committed in the Garden of Eden, and the awful consequences that he brought upon himself by his sin.

[1 : 30] We saw there that Adam had become a rebel, and a fugitive, that he was ruined, and with his sin and by his sin brought ruin upon the human race.

And when God drew near to him in the Garden of Eden that day, his ruined condition was clearly brought to light when he tried to hide himself in his fear from God.

And this is the way sin works in the life. It seeks always to hide the truth, afraid that the truth might see the light of day, and afraid of coming, particularly afraid of God.

Adam just couldn't face God after he had sinned against him. And again, that's the way sin works. People just cannot face God.

And the questions that God directed to Adam in the Garden of Eden were meant to bring before him the reality, the truth of his condition, now as he stood before God.

[3 : 10] And even as the questions are directed to him, and as the questions are meant to bring before him the realization of his condition, you notice how evasive he is.

How he refuses to face up to his own responsibility. How he tries to fend off his own accountability to God.

He blames his wife, and she blames the serpent. It is always a case of passing the responsibility on, passing the buck, as long as it doesn't rise to the individual himself.

He will be prepared to bring others under the condemnation, as long as he escapes the condemnation himself. And that again is the way in which sin works in the life.

He is almost insolent to God. It's the woman that you gave me who is responsible for this condition that I find myself in. So the questions are framed in such a way that this man can see what he has brought upon himself, the ruin that he has brought into his own life.

[4 : 27] And then the chapter tells us how this sin, before we home in on verse 15 particularly, tells us how the sin that man committed that day, the act of disobedience of which he was guilty, how by that act he brought ruin, not only upon himself, but upon mankind, and indeed upon the world in which God had placed him.

It is simply, for example, to notice in verse 14 how God announces the curse upon the serpent.

The Lord God said unto the serpent, because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every piece of the field, upon thy belly shalt thou go, and thus shalt thou eat all the days of thy life.

Now there are one or two things that are of great interest to us. There are some things in it, of course, that we cannot understand, and certainly it's one or two things upon which we cannot be dogmatic.

But you notice in verse 14 that because of sin, the curse had come upon all created beings. But the serpent was cursed above them all.

[5 : 55] There was something in the curse that sin brought and that God pronounced upon the creation as a result of sin. There was something in that curse with reference to the serpent that set the serpent apart from all other creatures.

Now the great question, of course, is this. Does this mean that from that day the serpent crawls as we know and as we see from, for example, from television programs, the way in which it does crawl?

Is this the result of sin? Did the serpent before Adam sinned and before the curse was pronounced, did the serpent move in another way, in a way other to that in which it moves today?

Well, I think that we're warranted to believe that it did. How it moved, we are not told. But I think that part of the curse that was pronounced upon the serpent is that it now moves, propels itself, in a way different to that in which God created it at the outset.

And perhaps the way in which it feeds itself is different to the way in which it fed itself in the creation. Perhaps the reference here is to this, that whenever it feeds, that it, of necessity, brings dust into its own mouth.

[7 : 35] Dusty upon thy belly shalt thou go on, dust shalt thou eat. We know that the serpent doesn't feed on dust, but when it does feed itself, it brings dust into its own mouth.

Now, I think that we are warranted to believe that from the way in which verse 14 puts it. But you see, when the verse speaks of the enmity, when it goes on to speak upon the enmity that exists between the serpent and the human race, we are surely led to believe and to understand that there is more here than the actual enmity, the natural enmity that does exist between human beings and the serpent and the snake.

There is a natural revulsion in the human heart against the serpent. This is true of human anger. This is the way it reacts to the serpent. But there is something far deeper than this involved surely in these verses.

Because God is speaking not just to the serpent, but he is speaking to the one who used the serpent. He is speaking to the devil.

[9 : 05] He is speaking here to Satan as well. And he is speaking, therefore, not just of the natural revulsion that is in the human heart against the serpent, but he is speaking about something far more and something far more fundamental and far more important.

He is speaking about the enmity that he, that is God, is going to put into the human heart against what was represented in the serpent and by the serpent, namely, evil.

There is here something far more, far deeper, far more fundamental, something far more important than the natural revulsion of the human heart to the serpent.

There is here wondrously what God is going to work in the human heart against evil.

I will put enmity between thee and the woman and between thy seed and her seed.

[10 : 19] It shall bruise thy head and thou shall bruise his heel. God is speaking there, surely, particularly, to the devil who used the serpent and in the eyes of most commentators, here we have the first announcement of the grace of God in the Bible.

the first announcement of the coming of one the seed, one seed, one man who is going to come through the woman, one is going to come who will bruise thy head and thou shall bruise his heel.

And this is what many of the ableist commentators believe and accept as being the first announcement of the coming of the Messiah in the Bible.

The first reference to the gospel of the love and the grace of God in the Old Testament. We will come back to that in a minute. But here we are speaking about what sin, what man by his sin brought into the world.

He brought disorder into the creation that God had made. And the serpent, as we indicated, himself, the serpent itself, he felt this curse more than anybody else.

[11 : 58] His natural order was overturned. The way in which he was created, the way in which he lived was changed.

It was true also of man himself, in his relation to the one whom God gave him to lamb, his wife. Sin brought a change into that relationship as well.

At the beginning, everything as we saw a few weeks ago was perfect, everything was good, everything was glorious and wonderfully, wonderfully peaceful in the creation of God, in the Garden of Eden, and in the marriage bond that God had formed between man and wife.

There was nothing but harmony and blessedness and peace and contentment because they were both holy and righteous and good and true.

But then sin came in. And because sin came in, it touched and marred the best of relationships.

[13:05] The relationship between husband and wife, the relationship between man and the creation into which God had pressed him, the relationship between man and the beasts amongst which he lived.

All that was changed. The way in which the woman, and this is what is indicated there in verse 16, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception and sorrow.

thou shall bring forth children and the sire shall be to thy husband and he shall rule over thee. Here is a change as well. The way in which she was to give birth to a child was a way that was accompanied with pain.

I think we are led to believe that before sin came into the world, man would have been ignorant of pain, of suffering, of sorrow, of death.

But when sin came in, the whole order was turned upside down. And these things are in the world now because of sin. Because of sin.

[14:29] And it is highlighted even in this, in that childbearing is accompanied with pain and anguish as a result of sin.

That is what God says here in verse 16. And then the creation itself, the world in which the man lived, the ground that he walked on, the ground that he was to cultivate.

All that was changed now. The very ground itself began to bring forth thorns and thistles. Again, as a result of sin. This is the effect, the fruit of the curse.

That man now has to work. No matter the best cultivated ground, the best garden that you see, it's the best because it has to be worked at.

Constantly worked at. It cannot be done without toil and without sweat and without fatigue and without tiredness.

[15:40] It isn't that the work ethic didn't come in as a result of sin. Man wasn't told to work because of sin. Man was told to work before he had ever sinned.

He was placed in the garden. He was told to work in the garden. That was in the part of the creation ordinance. But the fatigue and the tiredness and the frustration and the sweat came in as a result of sin.

work didn't come in because of sin. But what was the way in which what he had to go through as a result of this work came in because of sin.

That was changed. And then of course he had brought death into his own existence. He had brought death into it.

The day thou shalt eat of it thou shalt surely die. Some people say but Adam didn't die that day in the garden of Eden. Well as I tried to point out looking at the sayings on the cross on Sunday evenings.

[16:52] Adam surely died the day he did sin without a shadow of a doubt. He lost his spiritual life. He became spiritually dead.

He died that day in his relation to God. The life and the favour and the fellowship of God was cut off from his soul, from his consciousness.

He became spiritually dead and he became an heir of eternal death. Heading towards that place where he would be forever cut off from the life and the fellowship and the favour of God.

And that's the death that Jesus died on the cross when he cried, that he died on the cross when he cried, why hast thou forsaken me?

He entered into our death. He went into the far off land. And remember he died that death before he died death physically on the cross.

[17:50] So did Adam in the garden of Eden. He died spiritually when he sinned. And he became an heir of eternal death. And he began to die physically.

And the day would come when death, physical death, would overcome him. And God confirms that in verse 19. Dust, in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread till thou return unto the ground.

For out of it wast thou taken. And for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.

Death is the fruit of sin. in the life of every single individual. All have sinned and therefore all die.

And there is no escape, no way out.

Everyone will die for the simple reason Adam brought that curse into the life of man because of his sin.

[18 : 52] And one other thing. The Lord God said, behold, the man has become as one of us to know good and evil. It may interest you, by the way, as you look at verse 21, we may pause here.

Verse 21, unto Adam also, and to his wife, to the Lord God make coats of skins and clothed. Now, there is no doubt whatsoever that in some way or other, there was no death before sin, remember? No death before sin. There was no death, there would have been no death amongst the human race, there was no death amongst the animals. before sin came into the world.

Now, the moment sin came, it brought death into the whole of the creation, or into the whole of creation. How these animals were slain, we don't know.

Whether they died, some, what, who knows? Who knows how the whole area there, because of sin, may have been turned just upside down.

[20 : 04] Who knows? What may have happened? Who knows but in the moment that man sinned, that because of the curse that he brought upon sin, upon creation, who knows?

But that the animal world may have turned one species upon the other. Who knows? We're not told. All what we are told is that God provided skins from the animals to cover man and woman in their nakedness and in their shame.

I often wonder how the animal rights campaigners would view verse 21 of Genesis chapter 3. However, we pass on. Towards the end of this chapter we have these references.

We have this account. The Lord God said, Behold, the man has become as one of us to know good and evil. And now, lest he put forth his son and take also the tree of life and eat and live forever. The sentence is broken off. Therefore, the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden until the ground from whence he was taken. And he drove out the man and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword which turned every way to keep the way of the tree of life.

[21 : 21] Now, here's an interesting passage with great spiritual significance and some wonderful teaching that we have right throughout the Bible. You see, Genesis 3 tells us that neither the tree of life nor the tree of the knowledge of good and evil have had magical properties.

It was nothing that was in these trees of themselves that altered the course of nature or that would have altered the course of nature. These trees were put there so that man would look at them and remember that these were the tests of his obedience.

God said, I am not to eat of the fruit of that tree. What kind of tree it was were not told. What the fruit was were not told. Of course, it has come down through it was an apple tree.

Were not told. It was just a tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And as Adam stood in the garden of Eden and he considered that tree, all he had to remember was this, God told me not to eat of it.

That is the test of my obedience. I will not eat. It's as simple as that. It was nothing that was in the tree of itself.

[22 : 45] The attention of Genesis 3 is focused directly upon man. In his innocence, in his holiness, told to obey God. And at the root of man's problem today is his disobedience to the law of God.

To the mind of God, to the will of God. And it is rooted in the history of Adam. It is rooted in the act of Adam. And people will turn around to you today and say, if you, for example, tried to bring before them any particular aspect of the law of God and say, ah, yes, but you're not going to push the free church's thinking down my throat, dare you?

You see, when it doesn't suit themselves, it's the free church thinking. Or the Christian thinking. Or some blinkered believers thinking.

They never think of it in terms of God's law. And of their act as being an act of disobedience. Not to what I say, but to what God said.

So you see, Adam was placed there, he was told, obey. And this is the test of your obedience. Don't touch that tree.

[24 : 05] As simple as that. The tragedy is that Adam failed the test. And he took of the fruit of that tree. and by his disobedience he brought sin and death, guilt and uncleanness into the world.

And God looks at man in his guilt, looks at man in his sin, and he says of him, that man has no right to the tree of life.

No right to the tree of life. as he is in and of himself, lost in his sin, disobedient to my will and to my command.

What right has he to the tree of life? He hath none. Therefore, in case, in his unfitness and without any title to it, he stretches forth his hand to take the tree of life, he will be driven out, and I will see that he will not have access to the tree of life.

And so he pressed in the garden of Eden, cherubim, with a flaming sword, which turned every way to keep the way of the tree of life.

[25 : 27] And what is God saying to us here? He's saying this, what the Bible tells us so clearly, that no sinner in his sin and his lostness, and his guilt, and his pollution, and his godliness, and his godlessness, and his disobedience, and under the wrath and the curse of God, no man, woman, or child has a right to the life and to the favour of God.

And as a matter of fact, there stands between them and the favour and the life of God, this flaming sword of God's justice, and God's faithfulness, and God's holiness, the way is barred to man in his lostness, in his guilt, and his pollution, in his disobedience, the way is barred to the life and to the favour of God.

And that's why now we turn back to verse 15. I will put enmity between thee and the woman, between thy seed and her seed, it shall bruise thy head and thou shall bruise his heel.

Sin came into the world by man's disobedience. And here God now is taking the initiative immediately on behalf of man.

I will send someone, I will put enmity between thee and the seed of the woman and there shall come one from the woman who will bruise thy head.

[27 : 13] Thou shall bruise his heel. And we know that this was fulfilled in the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the only way in which we have access to the life and to the favour of God.

In our lostness, in our undoneness, in our guilt and our pollution, we have no right, no title, no claim upon the life of God.

But one came the way for us to the life of God and to the favour of God. And in doing it, the sword that stood between us and that life was plunged into him.

Awake, O sword against my shepherd. He took the sword of God's wrath and justice and holiness and faithfulness to himself and he took the sword out of the way and he has opened a new and living way for us unto and into the life of God.

And I think that's the way in which verse 15 is to be understood in its context here and in its application to all the teaching that we have here.

[28 : 32] Because at the heart of this verse is this, first of all, and this is right through the Bible, God takes the initiative on behalf of man.

God takes the initiative. And as I said, this is what the Bible is all about. God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself.

God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son. It all originated with God. God didn't say, well, the man has the potential to save himself.

God knew that he didn't have the potential to save himself. None of us can save ourselves. And this is the glory of the gospel of the grace of Christ, that God took the initiative.

God did it all. It all began with him. And began when he announced this gospel message, this gospel proclamation in the Garden of Eden.

[29 : 39] And you know this is what happened. When Jesus did come, he came, as Galatians tells us, made under the law, made of a woman. He was the seed of the woman.

And you know that Adam, in a wonderful way, there are some people who believe that Adam and Eve were saved by the grace of God. And I think we have wanted to believe that they were.

Because when God made this promise to Adam, I will send the seed of the woman, one will come from the woman. That is when Adam called his wife Eve, the mother of all living.

And interestingly enough, when Eve gave birth to her first child Cain, to her first child Cain, we read here in chapter 4, when she conceived and gave birth to Cain, she said, I have gotten the man from the Lord.

She actually thought that Cain was the seed that God was referring to. Of course, Cain turned out to be a murderer. It was to be very many hundreds and hundreds of years after this that the one was born to the world from a woman.

[31 : 00] Christ, the Son of God born in Bethlehem. And what happened was this. In his life, in his sufferings unto death, he bruised the serpent's head.

That is, he destroyed Satan's power and Satan's kingdom. In the conflict that was waged between the devil and the Son of God, the devil bruised his heel.

That is, there was during his life on earth, our Lord Jesus Christ, as it were, was placed by God into the hands of the devil.

And he was in the devil's hand. Make no mistake about it. The devil assaulted Christ. The devil tried to destroy Christ.

He tried to discredit Christ. He tried to get rid of Christ. And his trump card was that he would destroy him through death. And what the devil didn't realize is this.

[32 : 07] Was this, as the New Testament tells us, that the very instrument that he took to destroy Jesus' death, that was the very instrument, the very means that Jesus used to destroy his power.

Jesus, we are told, the Epistle of the Colossians, made a show of him, triumphing over him, in and through the cross.

and that was him destroying by his death, the power of Satan. But Satan bruising his heel, in that, he was able to enter into conflict with Christ.

And in that conflict, Christ was scarred. But it was so nice there were the bruising of the heel. in that Satan was able to assault him in his human nature.

But in his death, he destroyed him with the power of death. That is, the devil. But there's something else here. The enmity just, isn't just an enmity between Christ and Satan.

[33 : 30] Here is something wonderful. that God actually can put and does put enmity into the human heart against sin and against evil.

This is a blessing and a privilege that Christ has purchased for us by his death. You see, we are all by nature sinners.

we are all by nature rebels against God and against his authority and against his power. But what happens when a sinner is saved by the grace of God?

What happens when a person's life is reformed, transformed, regenerated? When a person becomes a believer, a Christian, what happens? Well, what happens is this.

That person begins to hate what he once loved. He becomes an enemy of what once was his friend. What did he once love?

[34 : 36] What was once his friend? Sin, evil, darkness, the element which Satan lives and Satan reigns.

evil. The sinner loves darkness rather than light because his deeds are evil. But then you see God comes into his life and God takes the initiative and he says, I will put enmity in your heart against evil.

And it may not be a bad sign today in your life that you do have grace if this is the way you react to sin and to evil, to unrighteousness, to darkness, to unholy, holiness, that God has worked in your heart enmity against it.

Well, has he? That is God taking the initiative in your life. Just as he took the initiative in the history of the world by sending his son into the world to destroy him who the power of death, that is Satan. So God takes the initiative in an individual's life when he sends his grace, his spirit, into the heart and works in that heart a hatred to sin.

[36 : 04] Opposition to sin and enmity to all that is associated with sin. That is grace.

And that is always the way it works. Always. It doesn't enable a person who is in sin to love sin more.

It does the exact opposite. it works to transform him and to turn him against sin. He hates it. And he wants rid of it.

And if you are a Christian today, there is nothing that pains you more than the sin that is in you.

The sin that is working against all that God is. That is what pains you. And that is what grieves you.

[37 : 05] And if that is the case with you today, you owe all that to God. It is God who has taken the initiative in your life.

Let us pray. Our Lord, we would ask thee for thy blessing, for thy peace, for thy power.

We would ask thee to help us to love thee, help us to hate wickedness and unrighteousness and to turn to thyself with a love for all that is right, to love what is pure and what is true, to love thyself thou who art our God and our Father.

We thank thee that thou art the God of all grace, the God who has taken on our behalf the initiative in sending thy son into the world to redeem the world and that we through him might live. we bless that he took our cash upon himself when he took our sins upon himself and that he has taken sin out of the way.

[38 : 31] Oh, to thou lead us in the way that is right by thy grace and to take for us this day, prepare us for our evening worship and forgive our sins for Jesus sake.

Amen.