***The Long Wait for a Son***

**Advent 2022, Genesis 3:15, 12:1-9 November 27, 2022**

***And I will put enmity between you and the woman,  
between her offspring and hers;  
he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.*Genesis 3:15**

**When you’re waiting for an Advent miracle**

So how come history,  
Takes such a long, long time?  
When you're waiting for a, When you're waiting for a,  
When you're waiting for a miracle

Bruce Cockburn, 1986

*16 Bind up the testimony and seal up the law among my disciples.*

*17 I will wait for the Lord, who is hiding his face from the house of Jacob.*

*I will put my trust in him.*

Isaiah 8

*Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for those who were in distress. In the past he humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the future he will honor Galilee of the Gentiles, by the way of the sea, along the Jordan—*

*2 The people walking in darkness*

*have seen a great light;*

*on those living in the land of the shadow of death*

*a light has dawned.*

Isaiah 9

1. Advent matters because waiting is hard work

2. Advent matters because God’s people to often identify with darkness

3. Advent matters because the light comes from the outside

4. Advent matters because God’s providence is mysterious

**Questions sonship answers**

*15 And I will put enmity between you and the woman,*

*and between your offspring and hers;*

*he will crush your head,*

*and you will strike his heel.”*

Genesis 3

*The Lord had said to Abram, “Leave your country, your people and your father’s household and go to the land I will show you.*

*2 “I will make you into a great nation*

*and I will bless you;*

*I will make your name great,*

*and you will be a blessing.*

*3 I will bless those who bless you,*

*and whoever curses you I will curse;*

*and all peoples on earth*

*will be blessed through you.”*

*4 So Abram left, as the Lord had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Haran. 5 He took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated and the people they had acquired in Haran, and they set out for the land of Canaan, and they arrived there.*

*6 Abram traveled through the land as far as the site of the great tree of Moreh at Shechem. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. 7 The Lord appeared to Abram and said, “To your offspring I will give this land.” So he built an altar there to the Lord, who had appeared to him.*

Genesis 12

*“ ‘The Lord declares to you that the Lord himself will establish a house for you: 12 When your days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom. 13 He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. 14 I will be his father, and he will be my son. When he does wrong, I will punish him with the rod of men, with floggings inflicted by men. 15 But my love will never be taken away from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. 16 Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever.’ ”*

*17 Nathan reported to David all the words of this entire revelation.*

2 Samuel 7

1. The story of sonship explains our need for a Savior

2. The story of sonship uncovers God’s promise of a Savior

3. The story of sonship begins to reveal the character of the Savior

**Living this side of Christ’s Sonship**

1. Sonship

*4 But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, 5 to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. 6 Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “Abba, Father.” 7 So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir.*

Galatians 4. See also John 3:16!

2. The story of Sonship can help us with a realistic perspective on sin, evil, and great hope in our   
 battle with Satan. Note: This is one of the themes of the Spurgeon and Keller sermons.

Now, beloved, let us take out of the promise that is given us concerning our Lord’s conquest over the

devil this one item and rejoice in it, for Christ has delivered us from the power of the serpent who opened our eyes and told us we were naked, by covering us from head to foot with a righteousness which adorns and protects us, so that we are comfortable in heart, beautiful in the sight of God, and are no more ashamed.

Charles Spurgeon, “Christ the Conqueror of Satan”. See Keller’s “unsentimental Christmas” article.

3. The confessions of the church most often discuss the person of Christ in terms of his hypostatic   
 union, his offices of prophet, priest and king, and his indwelling by the Spirit. But Article 20   
 introduces Christ as the Son, through whom God’s love and justice are revealed. Why does   
 de Bres use this sonship picture to illustrate the Father heart of God? Hint: Count the number of   
 times “His” is used in this article.

### Belgic Confession, Article 20: The Justice and Mercy of God in Christ

We believe that God—who is perfectly merciful and also very just — sent the Son to assume the nature in which the disobedience had been committed, in order to bear in it the punishment of sin by his most bitter passion and death.

So God made known his justice toward his Son, who was charged with our sin, and he poured out his goodness and mercy on us, who are guilty and worthy of damnation, giving to us his Son to die, by a most perfect love, and raising him to life for our justification, in order that by him we might have immortality and eternal life.

4. Jesus’ sonship is our model of obedience

*Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God— 2 the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures 3 regarding his Son, who as to his human nature was a descendant of David, 4 and who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord.  
 5 Through him and for his name’s sake, we received grace and apostleship to call people from among all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith. 6 And you also are among those who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.*

Romans 1. See also the other sonship passages, especially Romans 8:29-32,   
and the “obedience” passages like Hebrews 5:8

**Resources for further studies in faith practices**

I appreciated Tim Challies’ visual Christmas study at [*https://www.challies.com/visual-theology/a-visual-theology-advent-reading-calendar-for-your-family/*](https://www.challies.com/visual-theology/a-visual-theology-advent-reading-calendar-for-your-family/)

Tim Keller has a wonderful “big picture” series on Genesis which is available at [*https://www.monergism.com/topics/sermon-manuscripts-mp3s-scripture/genesis/chapter-genesis/chapters-03-05-fall*](https://www.monergism.com/topics/sermon-manuscripts-mp3s-scripture/genesis/chapter-genesis/chapters-03-05-fall). I’ve included his sermon on Genesis 3 is at [*https://www.monergism.com/paradise-crisis-%E2%80%93-genesis-31-9*](https://www.monergism.com/paradise-crisis-%E2%80%93-genesis-31-9)

Attached is Spurgeon’s sermon on Genesis 3:15 at [*http://www.spurgeongems.org/vols22-24/chs1326.pdf*](http://www.spurgeongems.org/vols22-24/chs1326.pdf) . Spurgeon also has a “God’s First Words to the First Sinner” sermon at [*http://www.spurgeongems.org/vols7-9/chs412.pdf*](http://www.spurgeongems.org/vols7-9/chs412.pdf)

Derek Thomas has a short article on the importance of Genesis 3:15 at [*https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/significance-genesis-315*](https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/significance-genesis-315)

David Linden has a sermon on the “long story of Jesus” in Isaiah at [*https://davidhlinden.com/article/birth-of-jesus-christ*](https://davidhlinden.com/article/birth-of-jesus-christ)

R. C. Sproul has a wonderful summary of the incarnation at [*https://www.ligonier.org/posts/incarnation-what-we-celebrate-christmas*](https://www.ligonier.org/posts/incarnation-what-we-celebrate-christmas)

Tim Keller wrote a Christmas Eve editorial in the NY Post at [*https://nypost.com/2016/12/24/christmas-is-the-most-unsentimental-way-of-looking-at-life/*](https://nypost.com/2016/12/24/christmas-is-the-most-unsentimental-way-of-looking-at-life/%20)

John Walton has a good analysis of names in Isaiah 7:14 at [*http://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/30/30-3/30-3-pp289-306\_JETS.pdf*](http://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/30/30-3/30-3-pp289-306_JETS.pdf)

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# Christmas is the most unsentimental way of looking at life

By [Timothy Keller](https://nypost.com/2016/12/24/christmas-is-the-most-unsentimental-way-of-looking-at-life/)

December 24, 2016  
at [*https://nypost.com/2016/12/24/christmas-is-the-most-unsentimental-way-of-looking-at-life/*](https://nypost.com/2016/12/24/christmas-is-the-most-unsentimental-way-of-looking-at-life/)

Christmas is the only Christian holy day that is also a major secular holiday. This brings some discomfort on both sides. Many Christians can’t help but notice that more and more of the public festivities surrounding Christmas studiously avoid any references to its Christian origins. The background music in stores is moving from “Joy to the World” to “Have a Holly, Jolly Christmas.”

On the other hand, nonreligious people can’t help but find that the older meaning of Christmas keeps intruding uninvited, for instance, through the music of traditional Christmas carols. It can be irritating to have to answer their child’s question, “What does that music mean —‘born to give them second birth’?”

Christmas does not say, ‘Cheer up! If we all pull together we can make the world a better place.’

As a Christian believer, I am glad to share the virtues of that day with the entirety of society. My fear is, however, that its true roots will become more and more hidden to most of the population.

The secular Christmas is a festival of lights, a time for family gatherings, and a season to generously give to those closest to us and to those in greatest need. These practices are genuinely congruent with the Christian origins of the celebration. The emphasis on light in darkness comes from the Christian belief that the world’s hope comes from outside of it. The giving of gifts is a natural response to Jesus’ act of self-­giving, when he laid aside his glory and was born into the human race. The concern for the needy recalls that the Son of God was born not into an aristocratic family but into a poor one. The Lord of the universe identified with the least and the most excluded of the human race.

But the truth is that Christmas, like God himself, is both more wondrous and more threatening than most understand.

Christmas is about receiving presents, but consider how challenging it is to receive certain kinds of gifts. Some gifts by their very nature make you swallow your pride. Imagine opening a present on Christmas morning from a friend — and it’s a dieting book. Then you take off another ribbon and wrapper and you find it is another book from another friend, “Overcoming Selfishness.” If you say to them, “Thank you so much,” you are in a sense admitting, “For indeed, I am fat and obnoxious.”

In other words, some gifts are hard to receive, because to do so is to admit you have flaws and weaknesses and you need help. Perhaps on some occasion you had a friend who figured out you were in financial trouble and came to you and offered a large sum of money to get you out of your predicament. If that has ever happened to you, you probably found that to receive the gift meant swallowing your pride.

There has never been a gift offered that makes you swallow your pride to the depths that the gift of Jesus Christ requires us to do. Christmas means that we are so lost, so unable to save ourselves, that nothing less than the death of the Son of God himself could save us. That means you are not somebody who can pull yourself together and live a moral and good life.

Christmas, therefore, is the most unsentimental, realistic way of looking at life. It does not say, “Cheer up! If we all pull together we can make the world a better place.” The Bible never counsels indifference to the forces of darkness, only resistance, but it supports no illusions that we can defeat them ourselves. Christianity does not agree with the optimistic thinkers who say, “We can fix things if we try hard enough.” Nor does it agree with the pessimists who see only a dystopian future.

The message of Christianity is, instead, “Things really are this bad, and we can’t heal or save ourselves. Things really are this dark — nevertheless, there is hope.” The Christmas message is that “on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned.”

Notice that it doesn’t say from the world a light has sprung, but upon the world a light has dawned. It has come from outside. There is light outside of this world, and Jesus has brought that light to save us; indeed, he is the Light.

Adapted from the book [*“Hidden Christmas: The Surprising Truth Behind the Birth of Christ”*](https://www.amazon.com/Hidden-Christmas-Surprising-Behind-Christ/dp/0735221650?tag=nypost-20&asc_refurl=https://nypost.com/2016/12/24/christmas-is-the-most-unsentimental-way-of-looking-at-life/&asc_source=web) by Timothy Keller (Viking). Keller is the founding pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in Manhattan.

# The Significance of Genesis 3:15

[Derek Thomas](https://www.ligonier.org/learn/teachers/derek-thomas) at [*https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/significance-genesis-315*](https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/significance-genesis-315)

With the possible exception of [John 3:16](https://www.esv.org/verses/John%203%3A16/), no verse in the Bible is more crucial and definitive than [Genesis 3:15](https://www.esv.org/verses/Genesis%203%3A15/): "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heal." As Alec Motyer writes, "The whole of Scripture is not packed into every scripture, but we may allowably expect every scripture to prepare and make room for the whole. This is what happens in [Genesis 3:15](https://www.esv.org/verses/Genesis%203%3A15/)" (Look to the Rock, IVP, p. 34). Several important issues emerge all at once:

First, it establishes a principle that runs throughout the Old Testament, creating an expectation of a Redeemer who would be a descendent (a "seed") of Adam and Eve. Prematurely and horribly wrong, Eve thus thought her firstborn son, Cain, was its fulfillment ([Gen. 4:1](https://www.esv.org/verses/Gen.%204%3A1/)). Equally, in a deliberate echo of this line of thought God’s covenant with the patriarch Abraham sounds the note of a "seed" that rings like a tolling church bell ([Gen. 12:7; 13:15–16; 15:3, 13, 18; 17:7–10, 12, 19; 21:12; 22:17–18](https://www.esv.org/verses/Gen.%2012%3A7%3B%2013%3A15%E2%80%9316%3B%2015%3A3%2C%2013%2C%2018%3B%2017%3A7%E2%80%9310%2C%2012%2C%2019%3B%2021%3A12%3B%2022%3A17%E2%80%9318/); and so on). No one reading the Bible can miss the connecting threads: God is doing something in the history of Israel that has its genesis in a promise given in Eden. When Mary discovers that she is expecting a baby, Gabriel announces to her concerning her future son: "He will be great" ([Luke 1:32](https://www.esv.org/verses/Luke%201%3A32/)), clearly picking up a phrase already made to both Abraham and David ([Gen. 12:2](https://www.esv.org/verses/Gen.%2012%3A2/); [2 Sam. 7:9](https://www.esv.org/verses/2%20Sam.%207%3A9/)). The "He" is Jesus, of course. The Latin Vulgate rendered it "she" implying that it was Mary, but this was exegesis in the interests of dogma. It is not the woman who conquers but her seed.

Second, it establishes the parameters by which God will redeem His people from their sin. From the earliest times, [Genesis 3:15](https://www.esv.org/verses/Genesis%203%3A15/) has been called the proto-evangelium because it is the first note of God's redemptive intention following the fall in the garden of Eden. When Adam and Eve failed to obey the terms of the covenant of works ([Gen. 3:6](https://www.esv.org/verses/Gen.%203%3A6/)), God did not destroy them (which would have served justice), but instead revealed His covenant of grace to them by promising a Savior ([Gen. 3:15](https://www.esv.org/verses/Gen.%203%3A15/)), one who would restore the kingdom that had latterly been destroyed. God's method of grace is costly: the heel of the Savior will be bruised. Clearly, this is a metaphor that in the context is to be contrasted with the blow the serpent receives (the crushing of his head), but it is immediately apparent what this involves—the shedding of substitutionary blood. That seems to be what lies behind the provision of animal skins as a covering for Adam and Eve in [Genesis 3:21](https://www.esv.org/verses/Genesis%203%3A21/). Blood needs to be shed for sin to be forgiven, something that accounts for why it is that Abel's offering (the firstborn of his flock) is accepted but Cain's (the fruits of the soil) is not ([Gen. 4:3–5](https://www.esv.org/verses/Gen.%204%3A3%E2%80%935/)). The way is now clear: "without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins" ([Heb. 9:22](https://www.esv.org/verses/Heb.%209%3A22/)).

Third, this verse establishes a cosmic explanation for the disorder of the world: Satan is at work. True, there is no mention of Satan here, only a serpent. Adam and Eve are responsible for their actions and are punished accordingly, but their actions are inextricably entwined with the serpent's malevolence. There is more by way of explanation for sin than "free will." The serpent is a part of that which "the Lord God had made" ([Gen. 3:1](https://www.esv.org/verses/Gen.%203%3A1/)), but he is no longer in the condition the Lord had made. Genesis draws a veil over the origins and nature of this rebellion (sin existed before the fall in Eden), and is only partially unveiled elsewhere ([1 Chron. 21:1](https://www.esv.org/verses/1%20Chron.%2021%3A1/); [Job 1–2](https://www.esv.org/verses/Job%201%E2%80%932/); [Zech. 3:1–2](https://www.esv.org/verses/Zech.%203%3A1%E2%80%932/); and especially [2 Peter 2:4](https://www.esv.org/verses/2%20Peter%202%3A4/); [Jude 6](https://www.esv.org/verses/Jude%206/)). Eve's sin was more than something internal; it came from outside, [Genesis 3:1](https://www.esv.org/verses/Genesis%203%3A1/) seems to say. Did the serpent actually speak? Why not? But look at how he grows in the Bible to be the great red dragon of [Revelation 12](https://www.esv.org/verses/Revelation%2012/)! The serpent is a murderer and a liar ([John 8:44](https://www.esv.org/verses/John%208%3A44/)), as well as a deceiver ([2 Cor. 11:14](https://www.esv.org/verses/2%20Cor.%2011%3A14/); [Eph. 6:11](https://www.esv.org/verses/Eph.%206%3A11/)).

Fourth, the principle of the victory of the kingdom of God over the kingdom of darkness is established from the beginning. It is echoed by Jesus at Caesarea Philippi: the "gates of hell" are resolutely set against the church of Jesus Christ, but Jesus assures His disciples that the church will be victorious ([Matt. 16:18](https://www.esv.org/verses/Matt.%2016%3A18/)). The work of redemption unfolds in enemy occupied territory of deadly and tireless opposition by Satan and his minions. The enmity is one of unimaginable meanness and cruelty, which we ignore at our peril. The story of redemption is not in one sense a cliff-hanger to the very end, a tale the outcome of which is uncertain until the last page is turned. The precise nature of the serpent's destiny as the lake of fire is not disclosed until the end ([Rev. 20:10](https://www.esv.org/verses/Rev.%2020%3A10/)), but from the outset his doom is sealed. Christian discipleship is to be worked out within the context of the assurance of victory rather than the prospect of defeat. We are to be equipped and ready for battle, but with the certainty that the decisive battle with the enemy has already taken place and has been won!

**CHRIST THE CONQUEROR OF SATAN**

**NO. 1326**

**A SERMON**

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 26, 1876,**

***BY C. H. SPURGEON,***

**AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed;***

***it shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”***

***Genesis 3:15.***

THIS is the first Gospel sermon that was ever delivered upon the surface of this earth. It was a

memorable discourse indeed, with JEHOVAH Himself for the preacher, and the whole human race and

the prince of darkness for the audience. It must be worthy of our heartiest attention.

Is it not remarkable that this great Gospel promise should have been delivered so soon after the

transgression? As yet no sentence had been pronounced upon either of the two human offenders, but the

promise was given under the form of a sentence pronounced upon the serpent. Not yet had the woman

been condemned to painful travail, or the man to exhausting labor, or even the soil to the curse of thorn

and thistle. Truly “mercy rejoices against judgment.” Before the Lord had said, “Dust you are and unto

dust you shall return,” He was pleased to say that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent’s

head. Let us rejoice, then, in the swift mercy of God, which in the early watches of the night of sin came

with comfortable words unto us.

These words were not directly spoken to Adam and Eve, but they were directed distinctly to the

serpent himself, and that by way of punishment to him for what he had done. It was a day of cruel

triumph to him, such joy as his dark mind is capable of had filled him, for he had indulged his malice,

and gratified his spite. He had in the worst sense destroyed a part of God’s works. He had introduced sin

into the new world, he had stamped the human race with his own image, and gained new forces to

promote rebellion and to multiply transgression, and therefore he felt that sort of gladness which a fiend

can know who bears a hell within himself.

But now God comes in, takes up the quarrel personally, and causes him to be disgraced on the very

battlefield upon which he had gained a temporary success. He tells the dragon that He will undertake to

deal with him, this quarrel shall not be between the serpent and man, but between God and the serpent.

God says, in solemn words, “I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your seed and her

seed,” and He promises that there shall rise in fullness of time a champion, who, though He suffers, shall

smite in a vital part the power of evil, and bruise the serpent’s head.

This was the more, it seems to me, a comfortable message of mercy to Adam and Eve, because they

would feel sure that the tempter would be punished, and as that punishment would involve blessing for

them, the vengeance due to the serpent would be the guarantee of mercy to themselves. Perhaps,

however, by thus obliquely giving the promise, the Lord meant to say, “Not for your sakes do I do this,

O fallen man and woman, nor for the sake of your descendants, but for My own name and honor’s sake,

that it be not profaned and blasphemed among the fallen spirits. I undertake to repair the mischief which

has been caused by the tempter, that My name and My glory may not be diminished among the immortal

spirits who look down upon the scene.”

All this would be very humbling but yet consolatory to our parents if they thought of it, seeing that

mercy given for God’s sake is always to our troubled apprehension more sure than any favor which

could be promised to us for our own sake. The divine sovereignty and glory afford us a stronger

foundation of hope than merit, even if merit can be supposed to exist.

Now we must note concerning this first Gospel sermon that on it the earliest believers stayed

themselves. This was all that Adam had by way of revelation, and all that Abel had received. This one

lone star shone in Abel’s sky, he looked up to it and he believed. By its light he spelt out “sacrifice,” and

therefore he brought of the firstlings of his flock and laid them upon the altar, and proved in his own

person how the seed of the serpent hated the seed of the woman, for his brother slew him for his

testimony.

Although Enoch the seventh from Adam prophesied concerning the second advent, yet he does not

appear to have uttered anything new concerning the first coming, so that still this one promise remained

as man’s sole word of hope. The torch which flamed within the gates of Eden just before man was

driven forth lit up the world to all believers until the Lord was pleased to give more light, and to renew

and enlarge the revelation of His covenant, when He spoke to His servant Noah. Those hoary fathers

who lived before the flood rejoiced in the mysterious language of our text, and resting on it, they died in

faith.

Nor, brethren, must you think it a slender revelation, for, if you attentively consider, it is

wonderfully full of meaning. If it had been on my heart to handle it doctrinally this morning, I think I

could have shown you that it contains all the Gospel. There lie within it, as an oak lies within an acorn,

all the great truths which make up the Gospel of Christ. Observe that here is the grand mystery of the

incarnation. Christ is that seed of the woman who is here spoken of, and there is a hint not darkly given

as to how that incarnation would be effected.

Jesus was not born after the ordinary manner of the sons of men. Mary was overshadowed of the

Holy Ghost, and “the holy thing” which was born of her was as to His humanity the seed of the woman

only, as it is written, “Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call His name

Immanuel.” The promise plainly teaches that the deliverer would be born of a woman, and carefully

viewed, it also foreshadows the divine method of the Redeemer’s conception and birth. So also is the

doctrine of the two seeds plainly taught here—“I will put enmity between you and the woman, between

your seed and her seed.”

There was evidently to be in the world a seed of the woman on God’s side against the serpent, and a

seed of the serpent that should always be upon the evil side even as it is to this day. The church of God

and the synagogue of Satan both exist. We see an Abel and a Cain, an Isaac and an Ishmael, a Jacob and

an Esau, those that are born after the flesh, being the children of their father the devil, for his works they

do, but those that are born again—being born after the Spirit, after the power of the life of Christ, are

thus in Christ Jesus the seed of the woman, and contend earnestly against the dragon and his seed.

Here, too, the great fact of the sufferings of Christ is clearly foretold—“You shall bruise his heel.”

Within the compass of those words we find the whole story of our Lord’s sorrows from Bethlehem to

Calvary. “It shall bruise your head,” there is the breaking of Satan’s regal power, there is the clearing

away of sin, there is the destruction of death by resurrection, there is the leading of captivity captive in

the ascension, there is the victory of truth in the world through the descent of the Spirit, and there is the

latter-day glory in which Satan shall be bound, and there is, lastly, the casting of the evil one and all his

followers into the lake of fire.

The conflict and the conquest are both in the compass of these few fruitful words. They may not

have been fully understood by those who first heard them, but to us they are now full of light. The text at

first looks like a flint, hard and cold, but sparks fly from it plentifully, for hidden fires of infinite love

and grace lie concealed within. Over this promise of a gracious God we ought to exceedingly rejoice.

We do not know what our first parents understood by it, but we may be certain that they gathered a

great amount of comfort from it. They must have understood that they were not then and there to be

destroyed, because the Lord had spoken of a “seed.” They would argue that it must be needful that Eve

should live if there should be a seed from her. They understood, too, that if that seed was to overcome

the serpent and bruise his head, it must augur good to themselves, they could not fail to see that there

was some great, some mysterious benefit to be conferred upon them by the victory which their seed

would achieve over the instigator of their ruin. They went on in faith upon this, and were comforted in

travail and in toil, and I doubt not both Adam and his wife in the faith thereof entered into everlasting

rest.

This morning I intend to handle this text in three ways. First, we shall notice *its facts,* secondly, we

shall consider *the experience within the heart of each believer which tallies to those facts,* and then,

thirdly, *the encouragement* which the text and its connection as a whole afford to us.

**I.** THE FACTS.

The facts are four, and I call your earnest attention to them. The first is *enmity was excited*. The text

begins, “I will put enmity between you and the woman.” They had been very friendly, the woman and

the serpent had conversed together. She thought at the time that the serpent was her friend, and she was

so much his friend that she took his advice in the teeth of God’s precept, and was willing to believe bad

things of the great Creator because this wicked, crafty serpent insinuated the same.

Now, at the moment when God spoke, that friendship between the woman and the serpent had

already in a measure come to an end, for she had accused the serpent to God, and said, “The serpent

beguiled me, and I did eat.” So far, so good. The friendship of sinners does not last long, they have

already begun to quarrel, and now the Lord comes in and graciously takes advantage of the quarrel

which had commenced, and says, “I will carry this disagreement a great deal further, I will put enmity

between you and the woman.” Satan counted on man’s descendants being his confederates, but God

would break up this covenant with hell, and raise up a seed which should war against the Satanic power.

Thus we have here God’s first declaration that He will set up a rival kingdom to oppose the tyranny

of sin and Satan, that He will create in the hearts of a chosen seed an enmity against evil, so that they

shall fight against it, and with many a struggle and pain shall overcome the prince of darkness. The

divine Spirit has abundantly achieved this plan and purpose of the Lord, combating the fallen angel by a

glorious man, making man to be Satan’s foe and conqueror. Henceforth the woman was to hate the evil

one, and I do not doubt but what she did so. She had abundant cause for so doing, and as often as she

thought of him it would be with infinite regret that she could have listened to his malicious and deceitful

talk.

The woman’s seed has also evermore had enmity against the evil one. I mean not the carnal seed, for

Paul tells us, “They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the

children of the promise are counted for the seed.” The carnal seed of the man and the woman are not

meant, but the spiritual seed, even Christ Jesus and those who are in Him. Wherever you meet these,

they hate the serpent with a perfect hatred. We would if we could destroy from our souls every work of

Satan, and out of this poor afflicted world of ours we would root up every evil which he has planted.

That seed of the woman, that glorious *One*—for He speaks not of seeds as of many but of seed that is

one—you know how He abhorred the devil and all his devices.

There was enmity between Christ and Satan, for He came to destroy the works of the devil and to

deliver those who are under bondage to him. For that purpose was He born, for that purpose did He live,

for that purpose did He die, for that purpose He has gone into the glory, and for that purpose He will

come again, that everywhere He may find out His adversary and utterly destroy him and his works from

amongst the sons of men. This putting of the enmity between the two seeds was the commencement of

the plan of mercy, the first act in the program of grace. Of the woman’s seed it was henceforth said,

“You love righteousness, and hate wickedness: therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil

of gladness above your fellows.”

Then comes the second prophecy, which has also turned into a fact, namely *the coming of the*

*champion*. The seed of the woman by promise is to champion the cause, and oppose the dragon. That

seed is the Lord Jesus Christ. The prophet Micah said, “But you, Bethlehem Ephratah; though you be

little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall He come forth unto me that is to be ruler in

Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting. Therefore will He give them up,

until the time that she which travails has brought forth.”

To none other than the babe which was born in Bethlehem of the blessed Virgin can the words of

prophecy refer. She it was who did conceive and bear a son, and it is concerning her son that we sing,

“Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given . . . and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor,

The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.”

On the memorable night at Bethlehem, when angels sang in heaven, the seed of the woman

appeared, and as soon as ever He saw the light the old serpent, the devil, entered into the heart of Herod

if possible to slay Him, but the Father preserved Him, and suffered none to lay hands on Him. As soon

as He publicly came forward upon the stage of action, thirty years after, Satan met Him foot to foot. You

know the story of the temptation in the wilderness, and how there the woman’s seed fought with him

who was a liar from the beginning. The devil assailed Him thrice with all the artillery of flattery, malice,

craft and falsehood, but the peerless champion stood unwounded, and chased His foe from the field.

Then our Lord set up His kingdom, and called one and another unto Him, and carried the war into

the enemy’s country. In many places He cast out devils. He spoke to the wicked and unclean spirit and

said, “I charge you come out of him,” and the demon was expelled. Legions of devils flew before Him,

they sought to hide themselves in swine to escape from the terror of His presence. “Are you come to

torment us before our time?” was their cry when the wonder-working Christ dislodged them from the

bodies which they tormented. Yea, and He made His own disciples mighty against the evil one, for in

His name they cast out devils, till Jesus said, “I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.”

Then there came a second personal conflict, for I take it that Gethsemane’s sorrows were to a great

degree caused by a personal assault of Satan, for our Master said, “This is your hour, and the power of

darkness.” He said also, “The Prince of this world comes.” What a struggle it was. Though Satan had

nothing in Christ, yet did he seek if possible to lead Him away from completing His great sacrifice, and

there did our Master sweat as it were great drops of blood, falling to the ground, in the agony which it

cost Him to contend with the fiend. Then it was that our Champion began the last fight of all and won it

to the bruising of the serpent’s head. Nor did He end till He had spoiled principalities and powers and

made a show of them openly—

***“Now is the hour of darkness past,***

***Christ has assumed His reigning power;***

***Behold the great accuser cast***

***Down from his seat to reign no more.”***

The conflict our glorious Lord continues in His seed. We preach Christ crucified, and every sermon

shakes the gates of hell. We bring sinners to Jesus by the Spirit’s power, and every convert is a stone

torn down from the wall of Satan’s mighty castle. Yea, and the day shall come when everywhere the evil

one shall be overcome, and the words of John in Revelation shall be fulfilled. “And the great dragon was

cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceives the whole world: he was cast out

into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is

come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser

of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.”

Thus did the Lord God in the words of our text promise a champion who should be the seed of the

woman, between whom and Satan there should be war forever and ever, that champion has come, the

man-child has been born, and though the dragon is wroth with the woman, and makes war with the

remnant of her seed which keep the testimony of Jesus Christ, yet the battle is the Lord’s, and the

victory falls unto Him whose name is Faithful and True, who in righteousness does judge and make war.

The third fact which comes out in the text, though not quite in that order, is that *our Champion’s*

*heel should be bruised*. Do you need that I explain this? You know how all His life long His heel, that is,

His lower part, His human nature, was perpetually being made to suffer. He carried our sicknesses and

sorrows. But the bruising came mainly when both in body and in mind His whole human nature was

made to agonize, when His soul was exceeding sorrowful even unto death, and His enemies pierced His

hands and His feet, and He endured the shame and pain of death by crucifixion.

Look at your Master and your King upon the cross, all distained with blood and dust! There was His

heel most cruelly bruised. When they take down that precious body and wrap it in fair white linen and in

spices, and lay it in Joseph’s tomb, they weep as they handle that casket in which the Deity had dwelt,

for there again Satan had bruised His heel. It was not merely that God had bruised Him, “though it

pleased the Father to bruise Him,” but the devil had let loose Herod, and Pilate, and Caiaphas, and the

Jews, and the Romans, all of them his tools, upon Him whom he knew to be the Christ, so that He was

bruised of the old serpent. That is all, however! It is only His heel, not His head which is bruised!

For lo, the Champion rises again, the bruise was not mortal nor continual. Though He dies, yet so

brief is the interval in which He slumbers in the tomb that His holy body has not see corruption, and He

comes forth perfect and lovely in His manhood, rising from His grave as from a refreshing sleep after so

long a day of unresting toil! Oh the triumph of that hour! As Jacob only halted on his thigh when he

overcame the angel, so did Jesus only retain a scar on His heel, and that He bears to the skies as His

glory and beauty. Before the throne He looks like a lamb that has been slain, but in the power of an

endless life He lives unto God.

Then comes the fourth fact, namely, that while His heel was being bruised, *He was to bruise the*

*serpent’s head*. The figure represents the dragon as inflicting an injury upon the champion’s heel, but at

the same moment the Champion Himself with that heel crushes in the head of the serpent with fatal

effect. By His sufferings Christ has overthrown Satan, by the heel that was bruised He has trodden upon

the head which devised the bruising—

***“Lo, by the sons of hell He dies;***

***But as He hangs ’twixt earth and skies,***

***He gives their prince a fatal blow,***

***And triumphs o’er the powers below.”***

Though Satan is not dead, my brethren, I was about to say, would God he were, and though he is not

converted, and never will be, nor will the malice of his heart ever be driven from him, yet Christ has so

far broken his head that he has missed his mark altogether. He intended to make the human race the

captives of his power, but they are redeemed from his iron yoke. God has delivered many of them, and

the day shall come when He will cleanse the whole earth from the serpent’s slimy trail, so that the entire

world shall be full of the praises of God. He thought that this world would be the arena of his victory

over God and good, instead of which it is already the grandest theater of divine wisdom, love, grace, and

power. Even heaven itself is not so resplendent with mercy as the earth is, for here it is the Savior

poured out His blood, which cannot be said even of the courts of Paradise above.

Moreover he thought, no doubt, that when he had led our race astray and brought death upon them,

he had effectually marred the Lord’s work. He rejoiced that they would all pass under the cold seal of

death, and that their bodies would rot in the sepulcher. Had he not spoiled the handiwork of his great

Lord? God may make man as a curious creature with intertwisted veins and blood nerves, sinews and

muscles, and He may put into his nostrils the breath of life, but “Ah,” says Satan, “I have infused a

poison into him which will make him return to the dust from which he was taken.”

But now, behold, our Champion, whose heel was bruised has risen from the dead, and given us a

pledge that all His followers shall rise from the dead also. Thus is Satan foiled, for death shall not retain

a bone, nor a piece of a bone, of one of those who belonged to the woman’s seed. At the trump of the

archangel from the earth and from the sea they shall arise, and this shall be their shout, “O death, where

is your sting? O grave, where is your victory?” Satan, knowing this, feels already that by the

resurrection, his head is broken. Glory be to the Christ of God for this!

In multitudes of other ways the devil has been vanquished by our Lord Jesus, and so shall he ever be

till he shall be cast into the lake of fire.

**II.** Let us now view OUR EXPERIENCE AS IT TALLIES WITH THESE FACTS.

Now, brothers and sisters, we were by nature, as many of us as have been saved, the heirs of wrath

even as others. It does not matter how godly our parents were, the first birth brought us no spiritual life,

for the promise is not to them which are born of blood, or of the will of the flesh, or of the will of man,

but only to those who are born of God. “That which is born of the flesh is flesh,” you cannot make it

anything else and there it abides, and the flesh, or carnal mind, abides in death, “it is not reconciled to

God, neither indeed can be.” He who is born into this world but once, and knows nothing of the new

birth, must place himself among the seed of the serpent, for only by regeneration can we know ourselves

to be the true seed. How does God deal with us who are His called and chosen ones? He means to save

us, and how does He work to that end?

The first thing He does is, He comes to us in mercy, and *puts enmity between us and the serpent*.

That is the very first work of grace. There was peace between us and Satan once, when he tempted, we

yielded, whatever he taught us we believed, we were his willing slaves. But perhaps you, my brethren,

can recollect when first of all you begin to feel uneasy and dissatisfied, the world’s pleasures no longer

pleased you, all the juice seemed to have been taken out of the apple, and you had nothing left but the

hard core, which you could not feed upon at all.

Then you suddenly perceived that you were living in sin, and you were miserable about it, and

though you could not get rid of sin yet you hated it, and sighed over it, and cried and groaned. In your

heart of hearts you remained no longer on the side of evil, for you began to cry, “O wretched man that I

am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” You were already from of old in the covenant of

grace ordained to be the woman’s seed, and now the decree began to manifest itself in life bestowed

upon you and working in you.

The Lord in infinite mercy dropped the divine life into your soul. You did not know it, but there it

was, a spark of the celestial fire, the living and incorruptible seed which abides forever. You began to

hate sin, and you groaned under it as under a galling yoke, more and more it burdened you, you could

not bear it, you hated the very thought of it. So it was with you, is it so now? Is there still enmity

between you and the serpent? Indeed, you are more and more the sworn enemies of evil and you

willingly acknowledge it.

*Then came the champion,* that is to say, “Christ was formed in you the hope of glory.” You heard of

Him and you understood the truth about Him, and it seemed a wonderful thing that He should be your

substitute and stand in your room and place and stead, bear your sin and all its curse and punishment,

and that He should give His righteousness, yea, and His very self, to you that you might be saved. Ah,

then you saw how sin could be overthrown, did you not? As soon as your heart understood Christ then

you saw that what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, Christ was able to

accomplish, and that the power of sin and Satan under which you had been in bondage, and which you

now loathed, could and would be broken and destroyed because Christ had come into the world to

overcome it.

Next, do you recollect how you were led to see *the bruising of Christ’s heel* and to stand in wonder

and observe what the enmity of the serpent had wrought in Him? Did you not begin to feel the bruised

heel yourself? Did not sin torment you? Did not the very thought of it vex you? Did not your own heart

become a plague to you? Did not Satan begin to tempt you? Did he not inject blasphemous thoughts, and

urge you on to desperate measures, did he not teach you to doubt the existence of God, and the mercy of

God, and the possibility of your salvation, and so on?

This was his nibbling at your heel. He is still at his old tricks. He worries whom he can’t devour with

a malicious joy. Did not your worldly friends begin to annoy you? Did they not give you the cold

shoulder because they saw something about you so strange and foreign to their tastes? Did they not

impute your conduct to fanaticism, pride, obstinacy, bigotry, and the like?

Ah, this persecution is the serpent’s seed beginning to discover the woman’s seed, and to carry on

the old war. What does Paul say? “But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted Him that was

born after the Spirit, even so it is now.” True godliness is an unnatural and strange thing to them, and

they cannot stand it. Though there are no stakes in Smithfield, nor racks in the Tower, yet the enmity of

the human heart towards Christ and His seed is just the same, and very often shows itself in “trials of

cruel mockings” which to tender hearts are very hard to bear. Well, this is your heel being bruised in

sympathy with the bruising of the heel of the glorious seed of the woman.

But, brethren, do you know something of the other fact, namely, that *we conquer, for the serpent’s*

*head is broken in us?* How say you? Is not the power and dominion of sin broken in you? Do you not

feel that you cannot sin because you are born of God? Some sins which were masters of you once, do

not trouble you now. I have known a man guilty of profane swearing, and from the moment of his

conversion he has never had any difficulty in the matter. We have known a man snatched from

drunkenness, and the cure by divine grace has been very wonderful and complete.

We have known persons delivered from unclean living, and they have at once become chaste and

pure because Christ has smitten the old dragon such blows that he could not have power over them in

that respect. The chosen seed will sin and mourn it, but they are not slaves to sin, their heart goes not

after it, they have to say sometimes “the thing I would not that I do,” but they are wretched when it is so.

They consent with their heart to the law of God that it is good, and they sigh and cry that they may be

helped to obey it, for they are no longer under the slavery of sin, the serpent’s reigning power and

dominion is broken in them.

It is broken next in this way, that the guilt of sin is gone. The great power of the serpent lies in

unpardoned sin. He cries, “I have made you guilty, I brought you under the curse.” “No,” say we, “we

are delivered from the curse and are now blessed, for it is written, ‘Blessed is the man whose

transgression is forgiven, and whose sin is covered.’ We are no longer guilty, for who shall lay anything

to the charge of God’s elect? Since Christ has justified, who is he that condemns?” Here is a swinging

blow for the old dragon’s head, such as he never will recover.

Oftentimes the Lord also grants us to know what it is to overcome temptation, and so to break the

head of the fiend. Satan allures us with many baits, he has studied our points well, he knows the

weakness of the flesh, but many and many a time, blessed be God, we have foiled him completely to his

eternal shame! The devil must have felt himself small that day when he tried to overthrow Job, dragged

him down to a dunghill, robbed him of everything, covered him with sores, and yet could not make him

yield.

Job conquered when he cried, “Though he slay me yet will I trust in him.” A feeble man had

vanquished a devil who could raise the wind and blow down a house, and destroy the family who were

feasting in it. Devil as he is, and crowned prince of the power of the air, yet the poor bereaved patriarch

sitting on the dunghill and covered with sores, being one of the woman’s seed, through the strength of

the inner life won the victory over him—

***“Ye sons of God oppose his rage,***

***Resist, and he’ll be gone:***

***Thus did our dearest Lord engage***

***And vanquish him alone.”***

Moreover, dear brethren, we have this hope that the very being of sin in us will be destroyed. The

day will come when we shall be without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, and we shall stand before the

throne of God, having suffered no injury whatever from the fall and from all the machinations of Satan,

for “they are without fault before the throne of God.” What triumph that will be! “The Lord will tread

Satan under your feet shortly.” When He has made you perfect and free from all sin, as He will do, you

will have bruised the serpent’s head indeed.

And your resurrection, too, when Satan shall see you come up from the grave like one that has been

perfumed in a bath of spices, when he shall see you arise in the image of Christ, with the same body

which was sown in corruption and weakness raised in incorruption and power, then will he feel an

infinite chagrin, and know that his head is bruised by the woman’s seed.

I ought to add that every time any one of us is made useful in saving souls we do as it were repeat

the bruising of the serpent’s head. When you go, dear sister, among those poor children, and pick them

up from the gutters, where they are Satan’s prey, where he finds the raw material for thieves and

criminals, and when through your means, by the grace of God, the little wanderers become children of

the living God, then you in your measure bruise the old serpent’s head. I pray you do not spare him.

When we by preaching the Gospel turn sinners from the error of their ways, so that they escape from

the power of darkness, again we bruise the serpent’s head. Whenever in any shape or way you are

blessed to the aiding of the cause of truth and righteousness in the world, you, too, who were once

beneath his power, and even now have sometimes to suffer from his nibbling at your heel, you tread

upon his head. In all deliverances and victories you overcome, and prove the promise true—“You shall

tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shall you trample under feet. Because he

has set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he has known my

name.”

**III.** Let us speak awhile upon THE ENCOURAGEMENT which our text and the context yields to us, for

it seems to me, to abound.

I want you, brethren, to exercise faith in the promise and be comforted. The text evidently encouraged

Adam very much. I do not think we have attached enough importance to the conduct of Adam after the Lord had spoken to him. Notice the simple but conclusive proof which he gave of his faith. Sometimes an action may be very small and unimportant, and yet, as a straw shows which way the wind blows, it may display at once, if it is thought over, the whole state of the man’s mind.

Adam acted in faith upon what God said, for we read, “And Adam called his wife’s name Eve (or Life)

because she was the mother of all living” (Gen 3:20). She was not a mother at all, but as the life was to come through her by virtue of the promised seed, Adam marks his full conviction of the truth of the promise though at the time, the woman had borne no children. There stood Adam, fresh from the awful presence of God, what more could He say? He might have said with the prophet, “My flesh trembles for the fear of you,” but even then he turns round to his fellow culprit as she stands there trembling too, and he calls her Eve, mother of the life that is yet to be.

It was grandly spoken by father Adam, it makes him rise in our esteem. Had he been left to himself he

would have murmured or at least despaired, but no, his faith in the new promise gave him hope. He uttered no word of repining against the condemnation to till with toil the unthankful ground, nor on Eve’s part was there a word of repining over the appointed sorrows of motherhood, they each accepted the well-deserved sentence with the silence which denotes the perfection of their resignation, their only word is full of simple faith. There was no child on whom to set their hopes, nor would the true seed be born for many an age, still Eve is to be the mother of all living, and he calls her so. Exercise like faith, my brother, on the far wider revelation which God has given to you, and always extract the utmost comfort from it. Make a point, whenever you receive a promise from God, to get all you can out of it, if you carry out that rule, it is wonderful what comfort you will gain. Some go on the principle of getting as little as possible out of God’s Word. I believe that such a plan is the proper way with a man’s word, always understand it at the minimum, because that is what he means, but God’s Word is to be understood at the maximum, for He will do exceeding abundantly above what you ask or even think.

Notice by way of further encouragement that we may regard our reception of Christ’s righteousness as an

installment of the final overthrow of the devil. The twenty-first verse says, “Unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them.” A very condescending, thoughtful, and instructive deed of divine love! God heard what Adam said to his wife, and saw that he was a believer, and so He comes and gives Him the type of the perfect righteousness, which is the believer’s portion—He covered him with lasting raiment. No more fig leaves, which were a mere mockery, but a close fitting garment which had been procured through the death of a victim, the Lord brings that and puts it on him, and Adam could no more say, “I am naked.” How could he, for God had clothed him.

Now, beloved, let us take out of the promise that is given us concerning our Lord’s conquest over the

devil this one item and rejoice in it, for Christ has delivered us from the power of the serpent who opened our eyes and told us we were naked, by covering us from head to foot with a righteousness which adorns and protects us, so that we are comfortable in heart, beautiful in the sight of God, and are no more ashamed.

Next, by way of encouragement in pursuing the Christian life, I would say to young people, expect to be

assailed. If you have fallen into trouble through being a Christian, be encouraged by it, do not at all regret or fear it, but rejoice you in that day, and leap for joy, for this is the constant token of the covenant. There is enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent still, and if you did not experience any of it you might begin to fear that you were on the wrong side. Now that you smart under the sneer of sarcasm and oppression, rejoice and triumph, for now are you partakers with the glorious seed of the woman in the bruising of His heel.

Still further encouragement comes from this. Your suffering as a Christian is not brought upon you for

your own sake, you are partners with the great seed of the woman, you are confederates with Christ. You

must not think the devil cares much about you, the battle is against Christ in you. Why, if you were not in

Christ, the devil would never trouble you. When you were without Christ in the world you might have sinned as you like, your relatives and work-mates would not have been at all grieved with you, they would rather have joined you in it, but now the serpent’s seed hates Christ in you. This exalts the sufferings of persecution to a position far above all common afflictions.

I have heard of a woman who was condemned to death in the Marian days, and before her time came to

be burned a child was born to her, and she cried out in her sorrow. A wicked adversary, who stood by said, “How will you bear to die for your religion if you make such ado?” “Ah,” she said, “Now I suffer in my own person as a woman, but then *I* shall not suffer, but Christ in me.” Nor were these idle words, for she bore her martyrdom with exemplary patience, and rose in her chariot of fire in holy triumph to heaven. If Christ be in you, nothing will dismay you, but you will overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil by faith.

Last of all, let us resist the devil always with this belief, that he has received a broken head. I am inclined

to think that Luther’s way of laughing at the devil was a very good one, for he is worthy of shame and

everlasting contempt. Luther once threw an inkstand at his head when he was tempting him very sorely, and though the act itself appears absurd enough, yet it was a true type of what that great Reformer was all his life long, for the books he wrote were truly a flinging of the inkstand at the head of the fiend.

That is what we have to do, we are to resist him by all means. Let us do this bravely, and tell him to his

teeth that we are not afraid of him. Tell him to recollect his bruised head, which he tries to cover with a

crown of pride, or with a popish cowl, or with an infidel doctor’s hood. We know him, and see the deadly

wound he bears. His power is gone, he is fighting a lost battle, he is contending against omnipotence. He has set himself against the oath of the Father, against the blood of the incarnate Son, against the eternal power and Godhead of the blessed Spirit, all of which are engaged in the defense of the seed of the woman in the day of battle. Therefore, brethren, be steadfast in resisting the evil one, being strong in faith, giving glory to God—

***“’Tis by Thy blood, immortal Lamb,***

***Thine armies tread the tempter down;***

***’Tis by Thy word and powerful name***

***They gain the battle and renown.***

***Rejoice ye heavens; let every star***

***Shine with new glories round the sky:***

***Saints, while ye sing the heavenly war,***

***Raise your Deliverer’s name on high.”***

**Paradise in Crisis – Genesis 3:1-9**

Dr. Timothy Keller

Series The Bible: The Whole Story Part 2 – Creation and Fall  
at [*https://www.monergism.com/paradise-crisis-%E2%80%93-genesis-31-9*](https://www.monergism.com/paradise-crisis-%E2%80%93-genesis-31-9)

Preached in Manahattan, New York, January 11, 2009

*1Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden’?” 2The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, 3but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’ ”*

*4“You will not surely die,” the serpent said to the woman. 5“For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” 6When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.*

*7Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. 8Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. 9But the Lord God called to the man, “Where are you?”* - Genesis 3:1-9

In this series of sermons we’re trying to get across that the Bible is not a series of disconnected stories, each one with a little moral for how to live, but it’s actually primarily a single story about what went wrong with the human race and what will put it right. Figuring out what went wrong with the human race is actually really important.

Beatrice Webb, who was one of the architects of the modern British welfare system … She and her husband and some others founded the London School of Economics. She was a socialist, an activist, a British leader. She kept a diary, and in 1925 she went back and looked at her older diary, and she wrote, “In my diary, 1890, I wrote, ‘I have staked everything on the essential goodness of human nature.’

Now, 35 years later, I realize how permanent are the evil impulses and instincts in us and how little they seem to change, like greed for wealth and power, and how mere social machinery will never change that. We must ask better things from human nature, but will we get a response? No amount of science or knowledge has been of any avail, and unless we curb the bad impulse, how will we get better social institutions?”

That’s a remarkable statement from somebody who ought to know. She is saying there is something so wrong with us that leads to selfishness and violence, that leads to corruption in business and corruption in government, that leads to war and atrocities, and that’s consistent across history.

She says science hasn’t dealt with it. Education hasn’t dealt with it. Social machinery hasn’t dealt with it. Who will explain it? Chapter 3 and chapter 4 of Genesis do, and we’re looking at them for four weeks. Let’s start with this very famous text, and let’s learn what we can by noticing four features of the narrative: *the sneer, the lie, the tree,* and *the call.*

The story starts with a sneer. It says, *“Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, ‘Did God really say, “You must not eat from any tree in the garden”?*’ ” Satan is speaking through the serpent. Right away readers say, “Who is Satan, and where did he come from, and what’s wrong with him, and how did he get that way?” but this text is about us. It doesn’t tell us anything about that. It’s here to explain how *we* got to be the way we are, and how we are now.

If we read it that way, it’s incredibly instructive, but if we ask, “Where did he come from, and what’s all this?” it doesn’t. It’s all right. That’s not what we need to know right now. It’s not the most important thing we *ever* need to know. What we see is the fall of the human race starts not with an action, but with an attitude, not with an act, but with a sneer. This word translated *really*, which could also be translated *indeed* … “Indeed, did he really say …?” It shows the sense of this is not that the Serpent is *denying* what God said; he’s *mocking* what God said.

He’s not saying God didn’t say it; he’s saying it’s ridiculous. It’s laughable. The sense of it is if you ever hear somebody say something like this: “Did he really say *that*?” That doesn’t mean he’s asking, “Did it really happen?” No, he’s saying, “Was he such an idiot, such a jerk, to say that? Did he really say that?” He is not denying God said it; he’s mocking it. He’s trying to get Adam and Eve to laugh at it. He’s trying to change their attitudes toward it. Therefore, the fall of the human race starts not with an action, or even with a thought, but with an attitude of heart.

We’re going to learn two things from this. The first thing (though this doesn’t always happen, I think this happens a lot) is, more often than not, we lose God not through argument, but through atmosphere. For example, here’s a little speech in a novel. It’s about two people who went to college and lost their Christian faith, and then one person gets it back later.

The person speaking got the faith back and is talking to the other person about how they “lost” their faith in college. He says, “Let’s be frank. We found ourselves in contact with a certain current of ideas and plunged into it because it seemed modern and successful. At college we started automatically writing the kinds of essays that got good marks and saying the kinds of things that won applause.

We were afraid of the label ‘fundamentalism,’ afraid of a breach with the spirit of the age, afraid of ridicule. Having allowed ourselves to drift, accepting every half-conscious solicitation from our desires, we reached a point where we no longer believed the faith, in the same way a drunken man reaches a point in which he believes another glass will do him no harm.”

I don’t want anybody to think I’m saying that’s how people lose the faith in college. Very often people lose their faith through argument, but not usually. They usually lose it through sneers. Everybody is sneering. Everybody is snarky. Everybody is saying, “You really believe that?” or “He really believes *that*?” “Does she *really* believe that?” You just want to go into your shell. You want to go along. You very often lose God not through argument, but through atmosphere.

Over the years, I have to say, for every one argument I’ve gotten against Christian belief I get 99 sneers. When somebody says, “Do you really believe that?” a proper measured response would be, “Well, that’s an assertion trying to create an atmosphere; it’s not really an argument. So could you please tell me why you think what I believe is untenable?” Just file that. So first of all, I think we learn here we tend to lose God as much, if not more, from atmosphere than argument.

Secondly, humor. The fall of the human race happened through an attitude of the heart that was expressed through a particular kind of humor. Here’s what I’d like us to think about, at least briefly. There’s a kind of humor that is actually an expression of humility. It persuades, it’s humble, and it says we’re all alike. And there’s a kind of humor that is an exercise of the will for power. It’s serpentine. It’s a way of putting somebody else down so it puts you up.

There’s a kind of humor that brings us all down and deflates and gets us to talk, and there’s a kind of humor that puts one group or one person up and smashes everybody to the ground. It’s serpentine. Do you know the difference? One brought about the fall of the human race and will bring about *your* fall, and one actually can be healing.

W.H. Auden wrote some wonderful essays and did some wonderful lectures on Shakespeare, doing literary criticism of Shakespeare. In a couple of his essays, he says he believed Shakespeare, whether he was personally a Christian or not, had a Christian view of human nature and the world, and therefore, Shakespearean comedy was different than Greek classical comedy.

Auden says in Greek classical comedy, the comedy ends with the audience laughing and the characters on stage in tears, but in Shakespeare comedies, like *Much Ado About Nothing*, it always ends with everybody laughing. The people out there are laughing *and* the people up here are laughing. Why? He says the Greek classical idea was what is funny is “Look at those fools up there. They’re not sophisticated like us.” Therefore, the audience is led by the comedy to laugh *at* the people up there because they lack the sophistication of the audience.

But, he says in one of his essays, there’s a different kind of humor Shakespeare had. He says comedies like *Much Ado About Nothing* are based on the belief that all men are sinners, and therefore, no one, whatever his rank or talents, should claim immunity from the comic exposure. Then Auden goes on and talks about the fact the Christian gospel turns the Greek idea of excellence and sophistication on its head.

In Christianity the ultimate excellence is to know you need the comic exposure to see your own pretensions and pride exposed and to seek forgiveness. He says, “Therefore, in Shakespeare the characters are exposed and forgiven, and when the curtain falls, the audience and the characters are all laughing together.”

David Denby, a movie critic for the *New Yorker*, wrote a book that’s coming out this week called *Snark.* In it he’s talking about how there’s a kind of humor that puts everybody down and says everybody is full of it and everybody is out for themselves. *New York* magazine this week wrote a snarky review of the book. It says, “When you have a society filled with BS, you just have to get up and say it’s filled with BS, and I’m *going to* get up and say it’s filled with BS.”

Auden would say that’s classical. That’s Greek comedy. What you’re really saying is, “Everybody but *me* is filled with BS. Everybody but *me* is out for themselves.” There is a kind of humility that says we human beings need to be laughed at. Look at our pretensions. And there is a kind of cynicism that is corrosive, that laughs at any truth claims, any claims that this is right and this is wrong, and is, therefore, basically serpentine, putting yourself in the judgment seat.

What will happen is that kind of cynical, corrosive, serpentine humor that says “Everybody is filled with BS but me, everybody is on the take, everybody is out for themselves but me,” leaves you in the end with no meaning in life. That can’t give you meaning in life. It leaves you in the end without friends. It’s serpentine. The Serpent laughs at you. If you laugh like the Serpent, the Serpent in the end will laugh like you.

Secondly, the fall of the human race proceeds with a lie. The next thing you see is after the attitude of the heart comes a lie for the mind. We see it here in verse 4. God has said, “Don’t eat of this tree,” and the Serpent comes back in verse 4 and says, “You will not surely die, for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened.”

Here’s what he’s saying. “God, if you obey him, will keep you down. God knows if you do this and this you’ll broaden your horizons, but he doesn’t want you to.” What Satan is trying to get into the heart of the human race is “If you obey God, you’ll miss out. If you obey God, you won’t be happy. If you obey the will of God, it’ll cut you off from other options. It will keep you from being all you want to be. You will not thrive and flourish.”

What’s so extremely interesting to see here is that Satan knows what is really crucial to destroy. Notice Satan does not go after the existence of God. He doesn’t say, “The only way I’m going to destroy the human race is to get everybody to disbelieve in God.” Heck no. He knows the whole human race can believe in God. Practically the whole human race *does* believe in God, and it’s a mess. That’s not the issue.

He also doesn’t actually go after the law or the will or the holiness of God. He doesn’t say, “Oh, God doesn’t care what you do.” He doesn’t say, “God doesn’t say you can’t eat of that tree.” He doesn’t deny the existence of God. He doesn’t deny the law of God, the will of God, the holiness of God. He denies the goodness of God. He denies the goodness and the love and the grace and the good will of God *behind* all of those decrees.

He says, “If you obey God, you can’t trust his good will. You can’t trust him. You’re going to have to take your life into your own hands.” That lie went in, and that lie is in my heart and that lie is in your heart. Do you know what it’s doing? It’s doing a lot. Why is it we say, “I know the Bible says I shouldn’t sleep with this person I’m not married to, but it would be great”? “I know the Bible says I shouldn’t spend all this money on myself; I should give it away, but it would be great to spend it all on myself.” “I know I’m not supposed to hold a grudge against this person and try to seek revenge, but boy, it feels good to seek revenge.” You’re tempted.

Do you know why you’re tempted? There would be no temptation unless, underneath, you already believed you can’t trust God. Your heart is saying, “If you obey, you won’t be happy.” The fact that Satan has destroyed our trust in the love of God is beneath everything else. Remember, in the fall we did our series on the Prodigal Son in Luke 15.

There were two different guys, weren’t there? There was the elder brother. He was very religious. He was very moral. He lived a very good life. He followed all of the rules. Why? So that forced God and everybody else to respect and reward him. Then there was the younger brother. He went off, and he had sex with prostitutes, and he lived it up with all of his material possessions. They look very, very different, but look at the bottom of each one.

Why is the moralist, the moralist? Why does he say, “I’m going to earn my salvation”? Because he doesn’t trust in the grace of God. Why does the younger brother go off and say, “I’m going to live any way I want; I’m going to do what I want to do”? Because he doesn’t trust the grace of God. He doesn’t believe if he obeys God he’ll be happy. They don’t believe in the love of God. They don’t believe in the good will of God. It’s at the root of everything. We’ll talk about this more next week.

Philip Roth has a novel called *The Human Stain.* It’s a metaphor for evil. At one point, one of the characters in the book talks about it. The human stain is the evil of the heart that makes everybody want to put everyone else down. It’s there before. It’s underneath all our wrongdoing. “I want to put other people down, and I have to prove myself.” Do you know where that comes from?

Erick Erickson in his book *Childhood and Society* says if a child, in the very earliest years, learns not to trust the dominant personality of the parents because they’ve been abused or because they’ve been neglected or abandoned … If a child in the very beginning of their life cannot trust the dominant personality in their life, then they have a fundamental inability to attach or trust ever again, and it’s a taproot for all other kinds of pathologies.

Now listen. I’m not a psychologist. I have no idea whether Erick Erickson is right about childhood pathologies or not. I do know it’s really weird that Genesis says that is exactly what happened in the beginning of the human race. When we were in our infancy, we believed the Serpent that we can’t trust God, that we can’t trust his love.

There are people right now working themselves to death in their jobs because they’re trying to prove to themselves and everybody else that they’re valuable because they don’t trust the love of God, and there are people putting everybody else down and exploiting and lying to everyone. The human stain. Why? They don’t trust God. If you don’t trust God, you don’t trust anybody. We’ve been ruined by the lie.

So first there was a sneer for the heart. Then secondly there was a lie for the mind. Finally, that leads to an act of the will. But it’s a tree sin. Take a look down here at verse 6: *“When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.”*

What was the great sin? What was this great horrible action? What is it that ruined the human race? They ate of the tree. What is this thing? What was wrong with that? What in the world could be wrong with a tree? By the way, a lot of people say, “I don’t get it. We have Ten Commandments. Sometimes to not kill somebody is actually rather hard to obey. Sometimes not to steal is hard to obey. But not to eat of a tree?

You can see why stealing could be bad, and you can see why killing can be bad, you can see why adultery can be bad, but not eating from a tree. What was the big deal about the tree? What was so bad about that? What was the logic behind the prohibition? God says, ‘You can do anything. It’s paradise. But you can’t eat from that tree.’ What was so bad about that?” Here’s what’s so bad about that.

What if God had actually given Adam and Eve an explanation? You can see Adam and Eve walking up to the tree and saying, “What’s so bad about eating from this tree?” and God saying, “Well, if you eat from the tree, there will be infinite suffering and misery and death for the rest of human history.” They would have gone, “Never mind. There’s a whole other … I mean, the rest of the world. There are all of these other trees.”

You know what? The reason God didn’t give them the explanation is crucial to why the decree was so important and what it was all about. If he had given them the explanation and they had said, “Oh, I’m not going to eat from the tree …” Why? Because cost-benefit analysis. “It’s not worth it.” That’s not really obedience, is it? That’s cost-benefit analysis. That’s self-interest. You’re still in the driver’s seat.

No, no. Here’s what’s going on. God was saying to Adam and Eve, “My children, I am God, and your life is a gift to you, and this world is a gift to you. I want you to live as if I’m God and you are living by my power. I want you to live as if this world is a gift and, therefore, not your possession to do with any way you want. I want you to see your lives are a gift from me and, therefore, not yours and something you can do with any way you want.

Therefore, don’t eat from that tree. This is your chance. You can either choose to treat me as God and to treat your life and the world as if it belongs to me and, therefore, you have to use it as I direct, or you can put yourself in the place of God. You can act as if your life is yours and that you generated it. You can act as if this entire world is yours and you can use it any way you want. You can treat me as God, or you can put yourself in the place of God.”

The Serpent knows that, because the Serpent says, “Take of the tree, and you will be like God.” That’s what Adam and Eve do. What’s so important for us to see is you need to look beyond all of the rules. You have to look through the rules. “Don’t lie. Don’t cheat. Don’t commit adultery. Don’t do fornication. Don’t spend all your money on yourself. Don’t be selfish.” All of the things the Bible says. There are the rules.

Behind the rules is, “Don’t put yourself in the place of God. Obey the rules because you’re not God.” God says, “Obey my rules not because of cost-benefit analysis, not because you see why, but because I’m God.” Do you realize that virtually everything that’s wrong with us in this world is you and I putting ourselves in the place of God? This is the problem.

On the one end, it’s not that hard to see that killing, murder, that kind of thing (which is awful, of course, and happens all the time all over the place in the world every day), is certainly putting yourself in the place of God, but have you ever thought about your anxiety? Some of us are eaten up with anxiety. Some of us are going to the doctor because of the way in which it’s corroding our bodies. We’re so anxious. Why? I’ll speak for myself. You’ve heard me say this before.

I get anxious because I have an idea of how my life has to go, how the church has to go, how things have to go in history, and I’m afraid God, who’s in charge of history, isn’t going to get it right. He’s not going to do it the way it needs to be. I know better. What am I doing? Why am I eaten up with anxiety? I’m in the place of God. See this is the sin behind these other sins. This is the thing that’s staining us.

Because of the mistrust, we put ourselves in the place of God. “I can’t trust God, so I have to do it myself.” How do I deal with worry? I deal with worry by saying, “I don’t know; God knows.” I pull myself a little bit out of the place of God, and I start to feel better, and by tomorrow I’ll be back. See, from anxiety on the one hand to murder on the other hand to grudges …

If you won’t forgive somebody, it’s because you’re putting yourself in the place of God. You think you know what they deserve. How do you know? You think you have the right to see them until they get what they deserve. You don’t have the right. You’re putting yourself in the place of God. All of our problems are coming because we’ve done what the Serpent asked us to do.

Do you know what this means? Let’s get down to nitty-gritty. One thing New Yorkers hate doing … They don’t mind obeying the will of God. They see what the Bible says. They don’t mind obeying the will of God as long as it makes sense to them, but if they feel like, “This is not very progressive,” or “This doesn’t meet my needs …” Do you know who William Borden is? You probably don’t.

William Borden grew up in Chicago in the late nineteenth century and went off to Yale in the 1890s, I believe. Yes, he was one of *those* Bordens. He was extremely wealthy. The Borden’s dairy. He was part of that family, and he was the heir of a great wealth. When he was at Yale, he sensed God’s call to the mission field, and he decided he was going to go to North China and work amongst Mongols and Chinese people.

It was very, very dangerous at the time, and when he announced to his family he was going to go into missionary work, this was appalling to everybody. A man of his stature, of his wealth, of his station in society didn’t do that. He got opposition from his family. He got opposition from his class of people. But he was absolutely resolute. When he graduated from Yale, he gave his entire inheritance (which at that time was $1 million, which was a heck of a lot of money) to mission agencies. He gave it away.

Now in relative poverty, he moved to Cairo to learn Arabic. Just out of college, with his whole life ahead of him, bright … Within a few weeks he had contracted spinal meningitis, and within a few weeks after that he was dead. Scratched on an ordinary piece of paper, which he wrote in his diary as he lay dying, found in his bedroom after he died, were these three phrases: “No reserve, no retreat, no regrets.”

Why wouldn’t he have written in his diary, “God, what are you doing? All my obedience, all my commitment, all my promise, all of my money, all of this preparation. Why would I die now? What possible good …? What are you doing?” Oh no. “No reserve, no retreat, no regrets.” Why? Because he didn’t obey the will of God for reputation. He didn’t obey the will of God for results. He didn’t obey the will of God for impact. He obeyed the will of God just for God’s sake. Not because it made sense, not because he understood it, just because it was God, because God is God and he wasn’t.

Don’t you see that is the ultimate deconstruction of the human will to power that’s ruining the world? If you say, “I’m going to be religious,” or “I’m going to believe in God and I’m going to obey,” but it’s calculated, it’s part of a career move, it’s part of a way of helping you get the inner strength so you can get out and do all of the things … There has to be at some point, “I’m doing this because God says so, because he’s God and I’m not. Period.”

That’s the ultimate deconstruction of the human will for power, which the Serpent got into our systems and poisoned us with. Even though I’m not saying William Borden overcame sin in his human nature, in that one act, where he was faithful to the end, he completely overturned the will of the Serpent. He disbelieved the lie that you can’t trust God. He refused the action of putting himself in the place of God.

By the way, we happen to know he ended up inspiring thousands and thousands of other missionaries over the next generation to go into missions. But he didn’t know that, and you don’t *have* to know that. See this is the stain. This is the thing that has come into our lives. In the next couple of weeks we’re going to see how this plays out, but we want to end with this. What does God do? Here’s the end.

At the very end, in verses 8–9, you see the rest of the history of the human race in a nutshell. Do you know that? The rest of the entire history of the world in a nutshell. *“Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man, ‘Where are you?’ ”*

Please notice two things. The first thing is we are now hiders. If you take that idea and go back over your entire life and think about it, if you rethink your life in terms of that, you’ll see a lot. It’ll be an illuminating exercise. Because we don’t trust God, we now hide from ourselves. We cannot bear to know who we really are. We can’t have a realistic honest appraisal of ourselves. That’s what therapy is all about. If it wasn’t for verse 8, you wouldn’t have a job, therapists.

We hide from ourselves, we hide from each other (spin, dishonesty), but most of all, we hide from God, because in the presence of God we see what we don’t want. We’re hiding. We’re running from the truth, from God, from each other, from our very selves. We’ll look at more of that in the next couple of weeks.

The other thing that is so remarkable is that while we hide, according to these texts, God seeks. It’s our nature to hide; it’s God’s nature to seek. God comes back saying, “Where are you?” Now does he really need information? Does he really not know what happened? Of course not. If he knows what happened, what is he doing?

He’s engaging. In love he’s coming after them. In love he’s counseling them. He’s trying to get them to answer. We learn two things. The first thing we learn is we hide; God seeks. If we ever find God it’s because God found us. There’s that little hymn that goes like this:

‘Tis not that I did choose thee,

For Lord, that could not be;

This heart would still refuse thee,

Hadst thou not chosen me.

My heart owns none before thee,

For thy rich grace I thirst;

This knowing, if I love thee,

Thou must have loved me first.

Anybody who ever finds faith with God feels like that. “You must have come after me; I never would have come after you.” That’s just a fact. The Bible from the very beginning to the end teaches that. More importantly, God going out in love finds its ultimate expression in Jesus Christ. It’s in Jesus Christ all of the things the Serpent gave us are dealt with. Jesus comes back and smashes the Serpent’s head, because he deals with the tree, he deals with the lie, and he even deals with the joke.

First of all, how does Jesus Christ deal with the tree? In the garden of Gethsemane, he’s struggling. There’s a garden. See centuries after Adam and Eve are struggling in the garden over a command about a tree, Jesus is in a garden, and *he’s* struggling over a command about a tree. It’s called the cross. He knows he has to go to the cross and die for our sins and pay the penalty we owe, and he’s struggling.

Think about this. Adam and Eve were in a bright sunny garden, and God said, “Obey me about the tree, and you will live,” and they didn’t. Jesus Christ was in a dark garden, and God said, “Obey me about the tree, and you’ll be crushed,” and he did, for us. Here’s what he did. He climbed the tree of death and turned that tree of death, the cross, into a tree of life for you and me. There’s the reversal of the tree sin.

What’s the tree sin? Us putting ourselves where only God deserves to be, putting ourselves in the place of God. The tree salvation is God putting himself where *we* deserve to be, on the cross. See the original tree sin was us putting ourselves where only God deserved to be, taking prerogatives only God deserves to have, putting ourselves in the place of God, but the tree salvation, which is a salvation of Jesus Christ, his death on the cross, is God coming down and putting himself where *we* deserve to be and taking it for us.

That not only deals with the tree, but that deals with the lie. The lie is, “You can’t trust God,” and all the poison in your life is because you don’t believe God loves you. You don’t believe in the grace of God. What’s going to overcome that? “Well I just believe in a god of love.” That will never overcome it. That’s too weak. It’s weak tea. It won’t work. This is the only thing that will overcome it.

You have to see Jesus Christ climbing a tree of death and turning that tree of death for him into a tree of life for you and me. That will finally begin to take the toxins out of your soul, and you’ll finally start to actually believe God loves you. This is the only thing that will take that out. It’s the only crowbar strong enough to wedge out of your heart the belief that “Basically I’m on my own.”

Lastly, Jesus even deals with the joke. He turns the sneer into something else. Dr. David Martyn Lloyd-Jones used to say the way in which he could tell the difference between a person who was a Pharisee, who believed they were saved by their good works, because they lived a good life, and a Christian who understood the gospel of grace, was to ask them, “Are you a Christian?”

If you ask a pharisaical, moralistic person, “Are you a Christian?” the person gets very … “What do you mean? Of course. Why would you even ask? How dare you ask?” But if you ask anybody who understands the gospel of grace, “Are you a Christian?” they laugh. They say, “Yes, what a joke. Me, a Christian. But it’s true.”

If you’re not a joke to yourself that you’re a Christian, that God is in the middle of your life, that God is using you … If that doesn’t make you laugh, you don’t understand the gospel. It’s a whole different kind of laughter than the laughter of the Serpent. Jesus Christ has dealt with the tree, he has dealt with the lie, and he has even dealt with the sneer and turned it to laughter. Let’s pray.

*Our Father, we have a lot to plow through this next month as we try to understand how we got to be the way we are and as we begin to try to understand the various aspects of that and to know how to try to overcome it using the grace and the gospel of Jesus Christ. So we pray you’d be with us, and we pray you will remind us of what a great joke it is that we belong to you because of your grace. Help us to smile. Help us to laugh at that. Help us to rejoice for the rest of our lives that your Son did what he did. We pray this in Jesus’ name, amen.*

**Paradise Lost – Genesis 3:8-24**

Dr. Timothy Keller at [*https://www.monergism.com/paradise-lost-%E2%80%93-genesis-38-24*](https://www.monergism.com/paradise-lost-%E2%80%93-genesis-38-24)

SERIES: Bible: The Whole Story—Creation and Fall – PART 3

Preached in Manhattan, New York on January 18, 2009

*Genesis 3:8–24*

*8 Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. 9 But the Lord God called to the man, “Where are you?” 10 He answered, “I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.”*

*11 And he said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?” 12 The man said, “The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.” 13 Then the Lord God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”*

*14 So the Lord God said to the serpent,  
“Because you have done this,*  
*Cursed are you above all the livestock*  
*and all the wild animals!*  
*You will crawl on your belly*  
*and you will eat dust*  
*all the days of your life.*  
  
*15 And I will put enmity*  
*between you and the woman,*  
*and between your offspring and hers;*  
*he will crush your head,*  
*and you will strike his heel.”*

*16 To the woman he said,*  
*“I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing;*  
*with pain you will give birth to children.*  
*Your desire will be for your husband,*  
*and he will rule over you.”*

*17 To Adam he said, “Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, ‘  
You must not eat of it,’*  
*Cursed is the ground because of you;*  
*through painful toil you will eat of it*  
*all the days of your life.*

*18 It will produce thorns and thistles for you,*  
*and you will eat the plants of the field.*  
  
*19 By the sweat of your brow*  
*you will eat your food*  
*until you return to the ground,*  
*since from it you were taken;*  
*for dust you are*  
*and to dust you will return.”*

*20 Adam named his wife Eve, because she would become the mother of all the living. 21 The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them. 22 And the Lord God said, “The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever.”*

*23 So the Lord God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. 24 After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.*

We’re looking at what the Bible says about sin. The Bible is not a disconnected set of stories, each of which has a little moral about how to live life. Primarily, the Bible is a single story telling us what is wrong with the human race, what God is going to do about it, and how history is going to end, how it’s all going to turn out. It’s a single story. We’re looking at Genesis 3–4 to give us answers to what’s wrong with the human race, why the human race is so prone to selfishness, violence, wars, atrocity, and corruption all the time.

C.E.M. Joad was a British philosopher. He was an atheist. He was a member of *The Brains Trust.* He lived in the early twentieth century. He *was* an atheist but came back to faith later in life and, at the very end of life, wrote a book called *The Recovery of Belief*. In it he said this very fascinating thing: “It is because we rejected the doctrine of original sin that we on the left were always being disillusioned by the behavior of both the people and the nations and politicians, and by the recurrent fact of war.”

Did you hear that? He says he thought most of the problems were the capitalists, not the common people, because he had rejected the doctrine of original sin. He bought into what Rousseau said, what Samuel Taylor Coleridge said, what almost all of the European intellectuals in the nineteenth century said. That is, that though human beings have their problems, the problems are not hardwired into us. They are lack of education. We can make the changes.

He realized near the end of his life that because he didn’t believe in the doctrine of original sin, he didn’t believe what the Bible said about the universality and the depth of sin in every human heart, he had basically based his whole life on a different view of human nature. He set in motion social policies that didn’t work. Basically, because he didn’t have the Bible’s understanding of human nature, he wasn’t able to navigate life as it was. Isn’t that something?

So let’s see what the Bible has to say about sin (last week, this week, and the next couple of weeks) as we look at Genesis 3–4. We learn four things here: *the heart of sin, the breadth of sin, the depth of sin,* and *the end of sin.*

**1. The heart of sin**

What is sin again? What is the definition of sin? The reason you may find out every week I give you a different definition is that, like the concept of God, the concept of sin is so profound you can’t stick it into one single nutshell definition. Last week we said, in terms of a vertical perspective, sin is putting yourself in the place of God. It’s taking upon yourself prerogatives and rights only God has. We talked about that last week.

Today I’d like to give you a more horizontal perspective. You see it right away. As soon as Adam and Eve have eaten the fruit and now sin has come into their lives and we’re seeing the results of this, immediately we see what I’d like to show you here. When God says here in verse 11, “Did you eat of the tree I commanded you not to eat from?” the man says, “The woman did it.”

Just to show you, by the way, the man is not more sinful than the woman, when God turns to the woman and says, “What do *you* have to say for yourself?” she says, “The Serpent did it.” We’ll get back to that, the equality here. Here’s the point. When Adam says, “She made me do it; send *her* to hell; give me another wife,” basically … “You’re talking to the holy God of the universe. What do you have to say for yourself?” “Take her.”

Here we see the essence of sin in a horizontal perspective. Sin is a willingness to throw anybody else under the bus to justify yourself. Sin is justifying yourself at the expense of other people, to feel superior to other people. In order to have a self-image, I have to feel superior to other people. I have to expose other people. I have to exploit other people. Sin is saying, “Your life to enhance mine,” not “My life to enhance yours.” See that’s servanthood.

“Your life to enhance mine. I will suck you dry. I will drain you dry. I will disadvantage you so I can feel good about myself, so I can justify myself, so I can have the significance and security I want.” Philip Roth wrote a novel called *The Human Stain.* That’s his metaphor for evil. The novel is actually about a man who starts to do very well in life, and everybody feels they have to bring him down. They have to find something wrong with him. They have to ruin his career.

Philip Roth has one of his characters talk about what he calls “the human stain,” which is this proneness to evil in the heart, which is, in a sense, deeper than behavioral actions. It’s this need to pull people down, this need to justify yourself at the expense of other people, to feel better than other people. “I’m good because you’re bad. I’m competent because you’re incompetent.”

At one point one of his characters … She calls this the human stain in the heart, and she says something like, “It’s in everyone, indwelling, inherent, defining. The stain that precedes your acts of disobedience, that encompasses disobedience and perplexes all explanation and understanding. It’s why all talk of cleansing your heart is a joke. The fantasy of purity is appalling, for what is the quest to purify but more impurity? The stain is inescapable.”

What does she mean by that? She says, “If you actually try to purify yourself, that just brings more impurity.” Here’s why. The stain is self-righteousness. The stain is, “I justify myself by pulling you down, by making myself feel superior to you, better than you.” If that’s the case, then to try to purify yourself from the stain only makes you more stained, because you say, “Look, I’m pure,” and you’re not.

C.S. Lewis wrote a little satirical piece called “Screwtape Proposes a Toast.” Screwtape is a senior devil (this is a satirical, fictional piece, by the way) who basically is at a dinner for a college of junior devils who are getting ready to go out there and tempt the human race and make life horrible. So Screwtape suggests a particular method for making people’s lives miserable and making the world a horrible place.

What he suggests is there’s a particular feeling human beings have, and what you want to do is turn the gas up on that feeling. Whatever else you do, make sure you enhance this feeling, because this is the feeling that will really ruin their lives. Then Screwtape says, “The feeling I am talking about is that which prompts a person to say, ‘I’m as good as you.’ ” That’s the essence of sin. That’s the essence of how hell operates. That’s what made the Devil, the Devil. “I’m as good as you.” When Satan started saying that about God, it was all downhill for the universe.

He says, “Anyone who says, ‘I’m as good as you,’ does not believe it. No one says, ‘I’m as good as you,’ if you believe it. You wouldn’t say it if you did. The St. Bernard never says to the toy dog, ‘I’m as good as you.’ ‘I’m as good as you’ is a useful means for the destruction of whole societies, but it has a far deeper value as a state of mind, which necessarily, excluding humility, charity, contentment, and all of the pleasures of gratitude or admiration, turns a human being away from every road which might finally lead him to heaven.”

The impulse that makes you say, “I’m as good as you. I don’t like you getting ahead of me …” The impulse that says, “I’m better than you; that’s how I know I’m okay” is sin, and it’s really at the root of everything from murder to racism to all of our conflicts. This is another view into the heart of sin.

**2. The breadth of sin**

This is really important. I’ve already alluded to it. What the man does, so does the woman. The man and the woman are both equally ashamed, both equally filled with blame shifting and doing the same behavior, both equally banished. There’s no difference. One is not more sinful than the other. This is crucial.

The Christian doctrine of original sin is that we are hardwired for selfishness and cruelty. It’s not just a problem of we have bad examples or bad environments. We’re hardwired for it. Secondly, the Christian doctrine of original sin is that we’re *all* hardwired for it, *all* of us, across the cultures, across the races, across the classes, across the genders. *Everybody*. Let me show you how important that is.

Remember what Joad said? He said we were on the left, because we denied the doctrine of original sin, thought what’s really wrong with the world was located in the capitalists, in the elites, not in the common people. But life showed him that, no, sin is everywhere. He realized the mistake he made as a member of the left was, because he didn’t believe in the doctrine of original sin, he demonized a certain group of people, he demonized a certain set of folks, and saw *that* is where the problem is, but the doctrine of original sin is it’s in all of us equally.

On the other hand … I don’t want you to think I’m picking on people from the left. People from the left would say, “Oh, it’s the elites; it’s not the common people.” There are other ways to look at it. What about conservative people, or what about people who just simply are traditional and feel like what’s really wrong with the people is the hoi polloi, the unwashed masses, the common people?

There’s a very famous letter that has come down to us from the Duchess of Buckingham. The Countess of Huntingdon, who had become converted to evangelical religion under the preaching of George Whitefield in the eighteenth century in Britain, tried to evangelize her aristocratic colleagues. She would send sermons by George Whitefield to her friends. She would invite them to come to hear him preach. One of her aristocratic peers, the Duchess of Buckingham, after having been invited by the countess to come and hear George Whitefield, sent her an icy note declining. This is what she said:

“I thank Your Ladyship, but the doctrines are most repulsive and strongly tinctured with impertinence and disrespect toward their superiors in perpetually endeavoring to level all ranks and do away with all distinctions. It is monstrous to be told you have a heart as sinful as the common wretches that crawl upon the earth. It is highly offensive and insulting, so I cannot but wonder that your ladyship should relish any sentiments so much at variance with high rank and good breeding.”

She’s right. The doctrine of original sin levels people. The doctrine of original sin makes it impossible for people from the left to say, “It’s those elites up there, not us common people,” and it makes it impossible for the people from the right to say, “It’s you unwashed masses,” or “It’s you criminal element,” or something like that, “not us virtuous people who have good breeding.” She was right. Do you know why? The doctrine of original sin creates a radical democracy of sinners.

If you believe in original sin, nobody is better than anybody else. You cannot look down your nose at a criminal or a drug dealer and say, “There’s a sinner; not me,” because the doctrine of original sin says the same seeds of that kind of behavior are in your heart. Maybe it didn’t sprout because you weren’t in the very same environment as that person out there, but the fact of the matter is you’re no better. We’re all sinners. We all need grace.

The Duchess of Buckingham was right. She says, “This levels everybody, to say that I have a heart as sinful as the common wretches that crawl the earth.” That’s what the Bible teaches. It destroys self-righteousness. That’s the reason G.K. Chesterton says, “Christianity preaches an obviously unattractive idea, such as original sin; but when we wait for its results, they are pathos and brotherhood, and a thunder of laughter and pity; for only with original sin we can at once pity the beggar and distrust the king.”

What does he mean by “brotherhood”? What it means is it’s possible for a society that claims to be Christian to be racist, but if it is, it’s racist in spite of the doctrine of original sin, not because of it. It’s not grasping what the doctrine says. What the doctrine says is it’s a radical democracy. We’re all brothers and sisters in sin. We’re all under judgment. We all have no hope except for the grace of God.

That’s the reason why if you really grasp the doctrine of original sin, it creates a solidarity between you and every single person, even the most wretched people you see on the streets of New York City. When that comes into your heart, no longer do you say, “Oh, who are these people?” *You* are these people. I read about a discussion that happened here in New York City recently about the Bernie Madoff Ponzi scheme, which still beggars the imagination. How could it have happened?

They were getting together and they were talking. “Well what does this mean?” One person had the audacity to say, “Look, let’s not call this sin. Let’s not say there was anything wrong. This is the way people are. People are going to do this. People are going to cheat; they’re going to lie. They’re going to do this. This is why we need government regulation. The only hope is government regulation.”

But government is people. *Soylent Green* is people, but government is people. Oh, that’s terrible. You guys don’t know what *Soylent Green* is? Unless you’re a real movie geek, you need to go and Google “Soylent Green,” and then you’ll know. It has nothing to do with the sermon at all, so just please don’t even think about it for the rest of the sermon, or you’re going to hurt yourself. Government is people. We are all the same. That is the breadth of sin.

**3. The depth of sin**

Here’s what we mean. Human beings are radically relational. That’s what we’re made for. Remember, we’ve seen this as we’ve gone through Genesis 1–2. We’re in the image of God. That means we’re built to reflect or to relate to God. We saw we are built to be lonely without other human beings. We’re relational beings. We live for relationships.

What we see in these verses right here is every single relationship being destroyed by sin. Another way to put it is sin is a malignant tumor eating away at our very ability to conduct any relationship. Sin destroys our relationship with God, our relationship with ourselves, our relationship with others, and even our relationship with nature and the world around us. Look carefully quickly.

First of all, we see in these verses it destroys our relationship with God. In verse 8 we’re told God comes walking into the garden in the cool of the day. When the Bible says David walked with Jonathan, or Abraham walked with Lot, or something like that, of course it means they literally walked, but it means more than that. The word *walking* in Hebrew was an idiom that meant friendship, relationship.

The fact that God walked with Adam and Eve in the cool of the day meant he was coming in wanting friendship, seeking relationship, and we hid. Sin is running from God who wants a relationship with us. Why don’t we want a relationship with him? The answer is (we said already) sin now means our lives are about power, about getting power over other people, about saying, “I’ll have a relationship with you as long as it doesn’t get in the way of my needs, as long as it doesn’t get in the way of my happiness and my fulfillment.”

It’s always, “Your life to enhance me.” You’re happy to have relationships as long as they enhance you, as long as they build you up, as long as they make you feel good. What we don’t like is servanthood. We like consumer relationships. “As long as the cost-benefit analysis is working well and I’m getting as much or more out of you as you’re getting out of me, fine.”

We don’t like covenant, where you are committed to someone to serve somebody whether or not you’re getting anything out of it or not. We hate that. Covenant goes against the grain of the heart, because sin is now all about keeping control and having power. There’s no way for a finite being to walk with an infinite being without losing control, so we won’t have it.

Yes, it’s true most people in the world say they believe in God and they pray, but most people in the world do not actually have in their minds the real God, because most people have a god they can pray to when they want to and doesn’t really demand loss of control of your life, doesn’t really demand that you change your life. Haven’t you seen that? Isn’t that true of a lot of us? In which case, we’re actually running from God and hiding from ourselves the fact we’re running from God by essentially believing in a god who isn’t holy, isn’t infinite, isn’t sovereign.

So first, our relationship with God has been destroyed. As a result, our relationship with ourselves is destroyed. How do we see that? When Adam says, “The reason I hid from you is I was ashamed because I was naked.” In the Bible, just like *walking* is an idiom for something bigger than just walking, so *nakedness* is an idiom for something bigger than just being ashamed of being naked.

*Nakedness* is a sense of guilt, that there’s something wrong with me, a sense of shame, that I need to prove myself, I need to cover, I need to keep people from seeing who I am because they’ll reject me. *Nakedness* is a psychological dislocation, a lack of ease with who you are. When our relationship with God is severed, our relationship with ourselves is severed. That is to say, we really don’t want to admit what’s wrong with us. We really don’t want to admit the worst about ourselves.

See the one thing we don’t want to believe is that we’re utterly dependent on God. We want to think we need God occasionally or maybe not at all, but in our heart of hearts we know we’re utterly dependent on God, and therefore, we are in denial about who we really are. That’s where the shame comes from, and that’s where the guilt comes from, and that’s where this lack of ease with being able to admit who we are comes from.

Thirdly, our relationship with each other is destroyed. We already saw some of that when the man starts to throw the wife under the bus just to save his neck. Even the making of fig leaves in verse 7 … As soon as sin came into their hearts, they covered up from each other. They sewed fig leaves to cover up their nakedness, but they were covering up their nakedness from whom at that point? God wasn’t even around. From each other.

We cannot bear to have other people really know who we are. We have to control what other people see about us, because we have to maintain power and control. Because our relationships are now power relationships, not love and service relationships, our relationships with each other are messed up. Individually we have superficial relationships, exploitative relationships, but corporately, races don’t get along with each other, the genders don’t get along with each other. Because our relationships with God are messed up and our relationships with ourselves are messed up, so our relationships in the world are messed up.

Lastly, the fourth thing that’s destroyed here is even our relationship with nature, the physical environment. Verse 17 says instead of just going out there and tilling the ground and up comes nothing but, I guess, flowers and food, now thorns and thistles will come up. The dust is no longer your friend. There is a lack of mesh with the physical environment. There is a clash with the physical environment. It’s no longer our friend. Now we age, now we get sick, now there are natural disasters, and now we die. We came from dust, but what’s going to happen at the end?

Erma Bombeck, who used to write humor columns many years ago, generally for women, in newspapers, at one point said something like, “You know, my life is dominated by dirt. At this end of the house there’s dirt. There’s dirt in the bathroom, dirt on the plates in the kitchen, dirt in the rug. So I work to get rid of the dirt, and by the time I get to the other end of the house, the first end of the house is dirty again. It never ends. And in the end, after all of these years of struggling against dirt, struggling against dirt, what do I get? Six feet of dirt.”

That’s almost exactly what God says in Genesis 3:17–20. In the end the dust wins. Every one of our relationships has been decimated by sin.

**4. The end of sin**

Now, what’s God going to do about it? You know, even though the Bible has all kinds of authors … Every one of the books has a different author, yet the Holy Spirit is the Author behind the author, and therefore the Bible is, in a sense, a single book with a single author, and he, the Holy Spirit, is an incredibly good storyteller. What we have here in the midst of this incredible disaster is the most enigmatic, intriguing foreshadowing. What is the foreshadowing of what God is going to do about it in the future? What are we going to see?

First, look at the mercy of God’s heart. He comes in, and he doesn’t smite them. He says, “Where are you? What have you done? Have you done what I asked you not to do?” What does God want with those questions? God could not be seeking truth and illumination for himself. He knows the answer. The only reason God would be asking questions is if he’s trying to give truth and illumination to *them*.

He’s treating them as adults. He’s not treating them as objects. He’s not treating them as animals, or even as children. He’s doing what people in AA call an intervention. He is trying to get them to tell him what they should know. “Admit what you’ve done. Say who you are. Own it. Take responsibility.” It’s fascinating. He’s counseling them. He’s seeking them in love, asking the questions instead of just telling them what they’ve done wrong. Isn’t that something?

Notice really carefully, by the way, whereas he asks questions to Adam and Eve, he doesn’t ask any questions to Satan. Do you know what that means? God loves the sinner but hates the sin. God holds out hope for evildoers, but he will not compromise with evil. It’s very interesting. So first of all, we see God makes a distinction between the evildoers and evil, and he seeks in love to change people’s hearts.

Secondly, we see the mercy of his hand. The second thing he does is he makes garments for them. Isn’t that something? See they had sewed fig leaves all over themselves. When God makes garments for them, they need garments psychologically for privacy, now physically they need garments because we have a hostile environment and they need better things than fig leaves, and he makes garments out of animal skins.

Many people over the years have noticed this seems to be God’s hint, a pointer toward the sacrificial system, toward the atoning sacrifices of the temple and tabernacle, and eventually, the atoning sacrifice of Jesus himself. Therefore, when God clothes Adam and Eve, do you know what he’s saying? He says, “Someday I’m going to have to give salvation, but my salvation is holistic. You need forgiveness. You also need shelter from the stormy blast.”

Therefore, human beings who seek to spread God’s salvation out in the world have to deal with all of the results of sin: physical, spiritual, psychological, and social. That’s the reason we don’t just go out into the world to help people get their sins forgiven and connect to God, but we also feed and clothe. Derek Kidner in his commentary on Genesis on this passage says, “The coats of skins are forerunners of the welfare, both spiritual and physical, which man’s sin makes necessary. Therefore, social action could not have had an earlier or more exalted inauguration.” Interesting.

So we see the holistic nature of God’s hand, and we see the mercy of God’s heart, but what is he going to do? He says in verse 15. This is the enigmatic foreshadowing. He looks at the Serpent and he says, “Because you have done this, I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers. He will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.” There’s a lot to be said here, but here’s what we have to see.

Do you know what the picture is? Imagine a group of people, a family, and into the midst of them comes slithering as fast as it can (and you know how fast they can come) a snake, a venomous snake, a poisonous snake, coming right at them. One man goes after the snake, and he begins to stomp on it. Finally he crushes the head and saves the family, but only after, in the process, the snake bites him, the poison goes into him, and he dies. That’s the picture.

What God is saying is … This is amazing if you realize this snake is not just a snake but is Satan. It represents evil. God is saying one of the descendants of Adam and Eve, the seed of the woman, a human being, is going to destroy sin and death itself but get a fatal wound in the process. A human being is going to come, and he’s going to destroy sin and death, and in the process lose his life. I wonder who that could be.

You see, the first Adam should have done something like that, not just stood there and let the Serpent destroy his family. The first Adam should have jumped on the snake or stomped on the snake or whatever. But the second Adam will. It’s Jesus Christ. Keep this in mind. In Romans 4 Paul says, “In Christ your sins are covered.” In Romans 4 Paul says, “Blessed is the one whose sin is covered. Blessed is the one to whom God does not impute sin.”

Now we don’t like cover-up, do we? Cover-up, Watergate … that’s not good. No, cover-up when you’re just sweeping things under the rug is not good, but that’s not what’s happening here. What we’re being told is that Jesus Christ is going to deal with your sin. When he goes to the cross he’s going to deal with your sin so your sins can be covered, pardoned, forgiven. How? Look at the last verse.

When God sends Adam and Eve out of the garden, there’s a sword there, and nobody can get back into the presence of God. Nobody can get back into the garden. Nobody can get back into paradise. Nobody can get to heaven unless you go under the sword. What does the sword represent? The wages of sin, the justice of God. The wages of sin is death. Nobody can get back into paradise unless they go under the sword.

The Bible says in Isaiah that when the Messiah comes, the suffering servant, he will be cut off from the land of the living. Jesus Christ went under the sword. He opened a new and living way back into the presence of God. He went first, and the sword slew him. He has covered our sins. Here’s what it means to be a Christian. It’s not to say, “I’m going to try real hard to live a good life.”

To be a Christian means to say, “Father, cover my sin because of what Jesus Christ has done. Objectively cover it by pardoning my sin, but subjectively deal with the sin in my heart. I don’t feel loved. I don’t live loved. I’m trying to prove myself. I’m trying to get control. Let the love of what Jesus Christ did for me so flood my heart by the Holy Spirit I can start to serve people.”

You know what? A lot of people in New York … If there’s one thing I’ve seen over the years, it’s how hard everybody is working. Everybody is working so hard to achieve, and a lot of people are really upset. “I didn’t get into that graduate school. It’s not the top tier. I’m not there. I didn’t make that much money. I didn’t achieve. I’m gaining weight. Nobody wants to go out with me.” You’re really upset because you’re looking for beauty, and you’re looking to achievement, and you’re looking to accreditation and credentials.

Do you know what these things are? They’re fig leaves. They’re ways you’re trying to deal with the nakedness. You’re trying to deal with the sense that, “There’s something wrong with me, and I don’t quite know what it is.” Let Jesus Christ clothe you with his love. Accept what he has done. Ask God to receive you because of what Jesus Christ has done, and ask the Holy Spirit to make real to your heart what he has done for you.

That will begin not only to cover your sin objectively so God accepts you and you can go to heaven because of what Jesus has done, but subjectively it’ll start to heal your heart of sin, the canker, the cancer, the thing that’s destroying all of your relationships because you’re so nervous and so ashamed and you’re trying to prove yourself and you’re so needy. When the love of God comes in there, it changes everything. Ask God to cover you with the righteousness of Christ now so that someday you can be utterly covered with the very glory of God. Let’s pray.

*Our Father, we’re so grateful it’s possible for us to know this horrible spiritual cancer, sin, has already, actually, been dealt with and is eventually going to be dealt with completely and is going to be over. Until then, we ask that you would help us to receive your salvation, your grace, into our lives in such a way that we can begin to more and more die unto sin and live more and more unto righteousness and be conformed to the image of your Son, in whose name we pray, amen.*