

Genesis 3 – The introduction of Sin and the Life of Self

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Let's get into it, Genesis chapter 3. Have you ever had somebody come up to you and say, "I just really believe that people are inherently good." That's a very popular comment, a very popular statement. I understand it when it's made by people who have never opened a Bible or read the word of God in their lives.

It's a little bit distressing when I hear it cross the lips of a Christian or someone who claims to be a Christian because this chapter and of course, many other passages in the Bible answer that question quite decisively for us. Ever since mankind began to think about why we are the way we are, the world has come up with all kinds of different possible explanations.

And the reason we even ask the question is because we look around or we turn on the news and we hear about what's happening in the world and there is ample evidence to prove that mankind possesses the capability of doing some of the most heinous, evil, and cruel things that you can imagine.

And yet in the face of all that evidence, there are some people that come away saying, "well, I think that's just a cultural thing, or it's a lack of education because I believe that man or mankind is basically good and we learn to be bad through our culture and that sort of thing." What we're going to be looking at here in Genesis chapter 3 is the biblical explanation of the origin of evil and darkness in the human heart.

And the Bible, I believe, gives the best explanation to this ongoing and very challenging question. Where did all this stuff come from? So, let's get into Genesis chapter 3, it begins in verse 1 by saying, "*Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made.*" (ESV)

And I'll stop you right there because in this very first verse we are introduced to this character identified as the serpent, as you'll notice. And there's frankly nothing in this chapter of Genesis to lead us to believe that the serpent or to lead us to understand who the serpent is, there's nothing in this chapter. We have to go elsewhere, frankly, in the word of God. But the word of God helps us in several places.

It wasn't that long ago, we finished the Book of Revelation and twice in the book of Revelation we read about the ancient serpent. Let me put these on the screen for you first from Revelation chapter 12, verse 9, it says,

Revelation 12:9 (ESV)

And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world...

And then later on in the book of Revelation, chapter 20, it goes on to say,

Revelation 20:1-2 (ESV)

Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain. And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years...

Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain. And he seized the dragon, (once again) that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years...

And then in the prophetic revelation that is given to us in the book of Ezekiel concerning Satan, we read this,

Ezekiel 28:13 (ESV)

You were in Eden, the garden of God...

As God is speaking prophetically to the evil one. Now this has obviously brought up a lot of questions. Are we talking about some kind of a story here that has no basis in genuine, literal fact, but is this in fact some kind of a metaphor that God is giving to us. Or is this an actual narrative?

Well, the biblical writers believed that Genesis recorded for us, an actual, literal narrative, and that's the way we're going to look at it. Even so, we've all come up with our own illustrations in our own mind or that we've seen in books, maybe even some from some of our earliest years. We've seen illustrations of what this conversation between the serpent and the woman, which we're going to read about in just a moment, probably looked like.

Let me show you a pic, it wasn't hard. I looked up a picture online and it was simple, there it was, boom.



We've seen pictures like this, but you know, we're not at all sure, that Satan was in the form of a serpent as we know a serpent today. This illustration that is given to us, it shows a serpent or a snake in a way that you and I would recognize in our world today.

But, we really don't know, we really don't have much of an idea as to what exactly Satan looked at. As far as we know, Eve thought that she was having a conversation with just another angel who had taken on some kind of a form or image or whatever the..., but is later. Although she does speak of him as the serpent here later on in this chapter. But, there's so much we don't know about the world before the flood or even the world before sin.

We try to understand these things by what we know, but there's so much we don't know. Damien and Aaron just got back from Kenya here a few weeks ago and Aaron was explaining to us in staff meetings a few times how different things are culturally in Kenya and in some cases, very, very difficult to understand why they do what they do, because he's just not familiar with it.

And if you, and some of you have gone to other cultures, you've lived in other countries, if you were to go to like an Asian country, China or Korea or something, you're going to see things, you're going to hear things that you're not going to be able to explain based on your own experience.

These are things in our own present world. Can you imagine what the world was like before sin and before the flood? And yet we try to come up with pictures in our mind about what these things looked like or how it could have been. The fact of the matter is, we read through this chapter in Genesis and we're frankly left with more questions than we have answers. That's okay.

We don't have to answer every question and what we should not try to do is try to answer those questions based on our own personal experience. So, we don't really know. But what we do know, is in the middle of verse 1 now, it goes on to tell us that, *“He (the serpent) said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden’?”*”

Now you remember, I trust that when we studied last time, we talked about the fact that God had given the man and the woman all of the trees in the garden to eat from. He simply told them that there was one tree in the center of the garden from which they were not prohibited or from which they were prohibited from eating.

But isn't it amazing, how the forming of one question here, just right away suggests an undermining of the integrity and the sincerity of God. Just the way you phrased the question, “did God really say, did He actually say to you guys that you couldn't eat any of the fruit from these trees?”

Well, it wasn't even where anywhere close to what God had said, but just the suggestion. Do you guys understand how subject we are to suggestion? Somebody can suggest something and we run with it. You hear a news story about somebody who's been accused of a crime and we weren't there, we didn't see what happened, but we hear an accusation and we instantly, “oh, that scum, guilty.” And you hear people doing it, you see people doing this.

Social media has brought this to the forefront that there's a news story about somebody who's accused of a crime. There's no evidence yet that's been presented and the people that are commenting, again, they weren't there to see what happened. But what do they do? Oh, they're just vicious in their assumptions and the enemy knows that this is a tendency that is kind of, that is part of us and even more so now that sin has taken hold.

So, this question is formed in such a way as to kind of make God appear miserly and ungenerous. And the woman responds here in verse 2, says to the serpent, no, *“We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, ³ but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’ ⁴ But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die.””*

So, you see now that Satan has engaged the woman and drawn her into conversation, he's now poised to attack with a clear contradiction of what God had said. Because God told them that they would die and yet the serpent comes back immediately and says, “you will not die.”

And by that, he plants a seed of doubt in the mind of the woman. And then he goes on for the final assault in verse 5 saying, *“For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”* This verse is a classic example of what is so difficult and confusing about the deceptions that the enemy brings into our hearts and minds, because when he speaks, there is often a modicum of truth.

There's a modicum, there's a partial truth in there, and there's just enough to snag you and kind of drag you into the conversation. Because you'll notice he said, *“God knows that in the day that you eat of it, your eyes will be opened.”* Well, was that true? Yes, skip down to verse 7. If you skip down to verse 7, it says, *“Then the eyes of both were opened...”* That's after they ate the fruit of the tree.

So, did Satan tell the truth in that particular respect? Yes, he did and so there was that element of truth. But the deception was found in what their eyes would be open to see because Satan of course presents these things always to our benefit. *“If your eyes are open, oh, let me tell you the wonders you're going to see then”* and that's the implication. So yes, he told the truth about the fact that their eyes would be open, but what is exactly that they saw when they had their eyes open?

Verse 6, it goes on now and tells us, *“So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, ...”* By the way, we see all the elements of the temptations of sin right there in that single verse. Notice she says that the woman saw, *“that the tree was good for food,”* that is the lust of the flesh. And she saw *“that it was a delight to the eyes,”* that's the lust of the eyes. And then she saw *“that the tree was to be desired to make one wise,”* that's the pride of life. These things you're spoken of in the New Testament, all of Satan's temptations fall into these 3 categories.

So, he doesn't have a huge plate to work from, but there's plenty of variations to those things. And it says, seeing those things, *“⁶ ... she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.”* And then we come to verse 7, *“Then the eyes of both were opened, (and look at this, and these are important words) and they knew ...”*

Now, what did they know? Well, the first thing we're told is that, *“⁷ ... they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin cloths.”* So, we see here right away, immediately after their eyes are opened, they come to this realization that they are naked and they are moved to cover themselves.

Prior to sin, there was no such compulsion for them to cover themselves, but now their lives are very different because sin has entered into their lives. And that statement, *“they knew that they were naked,”* boy, that carries so much meaning, *“they knew that they were naked.”*

We'll talk about that a little bit more in just a moment, but let's read verses 8 through 10 and we'll talk about this altogether. It says, *“⁸ And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. ⁹ But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?” ¹⁰ And he said, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.””*

And right here in this group of verses, we are introduced to the terrible consequences of Adam and Eve entertaining the promise that their eyes would be opened by disobeying God, all right? The promise of enlightenment didn't come about as they kind of thought it would.

They were enlightened, make no mistake about it, when they ate of the forbidden fruit, they were enlightened. But what they knew left them feeling ashamed in one another's presence and you can see also from these verses that it left them fearful of God. What reason did they have to be afraid of God, but they actually hid from Him.

So, we immediately see these consequences, these reactions. And in verse 11, you'll notice that God's speaking here, and *“He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?”* Notice God poses a question there to Adam, and the question is meant at least partially, to give Adam the opportunity to confess. *“Have you eaten from the tree that I forbade you to eat from?”*

Immediately, Adam was given this opportunity to say, *“yes I did, I confess my sin and I ask you to forgive me,”* but there's none of that going on. He doesn't do any of that. But you know the question that the Lord asks to Adam also serves the purpose of revealing something very important because the answer to the question, *“who told you, you were naked,”* although unspoken in this chapter is that no one told them that they were naked.

The men and the woman knew it for themselves because they became self-aware and with their self-awareness, they became self-conscious. In other words, their conscious focus turned from God to self. Their conscious focus

turned from outward and upward, to inward, and this is where the self-life begins. And believe me, it has tormented human beings ever since.

We are captive to the self-life, it is only through Jesus that we can be set free. We'll talk about that as we get toward the end of the chapter, but the self-life is what dominates our every thought, our every action, our every movement, and it is a tormenting way to live and ultimately it leads to death. Which is precisely why Jesus spoke about the necessity of coming to Him and with Him as a disciple.

Salvation is free, but you want to, if you want to be a disciple of Christ, there's a cost to that. Do you understand the difference? There's not a cost to salvation, but there is a cost to discipleship and Jesus addressed the most important and frankly to us, most costly element of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus.

Let me put this up on the screen, from Matthew chapter 16.

Matthew 16:24-25 (ESV)

Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it."

Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross (and you know what the cross is, it's an instrument of death) and follow me. (and then He gives the reason why) For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it."

Now, this is one of the most powerful verses in all of the Bible because it addresses the very issue that we see beginning here in Genesis chapter 3, which is the self-life.

Immediately, upon disobeying the Lord, the man and the woman are filled with shame toward one another, they are filled with fear toward God, and they are utterly focused on themselves.

And this is the destiny of all who came after them, ourselves included. And yet, we come to Jesus Christ, we are saved by grace through faith, that is free. But then Jesus comes along and He says, "now, to follow me, to be a disciple, there is a very costly element. Because you must begin to do what I did, or will do, in the context of the timing here and that is to be on the cross."

And to be on the cross is to die, but the death is not a physical one for you and me that He bids us to. The death is death to self, the self-life that dominates. And what Jesus is simply saying is, “in order to be a disciple, I must be Lord” and do you understand Christians that in Genesis chapter 3 where the self-life began, man became his own lord, small “I”, but Lord nonetheless.

We took that role, we ousted God from the throne of our hearts and we became our own master. And now that we've come to know Jesus Christ as our Savior, Jesus says, “now, the master of self must be put to death and the true master, the true Lord of your life must be enthroned in your heart and on the throne of your heart, because that's where real discipleship is going to begin to take place. That's where a true following of Me is going to begin to take place.”

Because you see, discipleship means following Jesus. The self-life means following me, my inclination, my wisdom, my feelings, my direction, my agenda, my way. Now the world celebrates that, we sing songs like “I did it My Way” and that's what the world celebrates because that's all the world knows. They have no other Lord but self and we all know what that's like because most of us haven't always walked with the Lord. We've walked very much with self as Lord of our lives, and we know what that lordship feels like. And we also know in Christ what it means to begin to put that lordship to death on the cross that we might follow Jesus.

The final thing that we see the man and the woman doing in this passage is running and hiding from God and boy, I'll tell you, if that isn't a picture of what mankind has been doing ever since, I don't know what is. I mean, we've been running from God ever since. We have been ashamed, we have been afraid of his presence, and we have run from him, as far as we can get.

I remember, I remember before I was walking with the Lord, I remember in my adult years before I was walking with the Lord, and I've told you guys this before, but I'd be watching television, with the remote, like, you do and going through the channels and Sunday morning I'm going through the channel looking for something that I want to watch, and there's inevitably some preacher on tv. I tell you, I could not go past that channel fast enough to get that out of my ear. I don't want to hear it, I don't want to see it, I don't want to be reminded of any of it. My remote could not work fast enough to get me past that channel. I was running from God, staying as far away from anything that God might say to me as I could.

But you know what God has been doing ever since man started running, He's been calling out. “Where are you?” He's been calling us and like I've told you, I

believe that God calls everybody, I don't think everybody responds to that call, but I believe He calls everybody. He's been calling sinful man back. He's been calling us to come to the cross to accept what Jesus did first and foremost to confess our sin, to turn from our sin and to turn to the Lord. He's been calling us ever since.

Now notice in the following verses how the self-life begins to play out in the man and the woman because God had asked, "Adam, did you eat of the tree that I told you not to," and ¹² *The man said, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate."*

Again, I told you that the question God asked was an opportunity for Adam to confess his sin and just say, "yes, that's what I did, I did that" and own up to it. And yet, rather than doing that, he points to the woman as the culprit. Rather than taking the culpability on his own, he points to her, implying in fact that not only is it the fault of the woman, but it is in fact God's fault on some level because he says, "the woman you gave me, if you hadn't given me this woman, this never would've happened."

And so, he's implying that even God was at the root of the problem. You can kind of see what's happening here, again, this is the self-life, you guys. This is what it means to be dominated by self, "I'm going to protect self at all costs, I want self to live, and rather than self being impugned, I'm going to I'll shift that to someone else, gladly, gladly."

You ever gotten in an argument with somebody and you talk to them or accuse them? This happens sometimes with kids and one kid will accuse the other kid of something and they'll say, "oh, yeah, well, what about you?" It the same, it's the same thing, that's exactly what Adam did. So, instead of confronting the man's duplicity, the Lord goes on and in verse 13, He says, *"Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate.""*

Again, she's doing the same thing, she's deflecting the blame, casting it upon the serpent and certainly there is a culpability there that falls to Satan. But you'll notice that neither the man or the woman confessed their own personal culpability in the matter.

And so, as we read on here, in verse 14, and I know you guys know how this goes, but I want you to notice that God asks nothing of Satan. Did you catch? As we go on and read here, He's not going to say to Satan, "what does this you have done?" He asked the man, He asked the woman, He does not ask the

enemy because it's a non-issue. Satan is confirmed as who he is. He doesn't just act evil, he is the evil one. He cannot be other than he is and all that remains for Satan is to pass sentence.

And so, in verse 14, it says, *“The Lord God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life.”* And I will grant you, this curse is challenging for us to understand.

Again, we weren't there, we didn't see the dynamics of all that is taking place here. It appears that the Lord directs this curse upon the animal that somehow Satan had either inhabited or, we don't even know. So, we're trying to understand this outside of the time period. But the reality of the snake slithering on the ground I think is a constant reminder to you and me of the curse that did come to the enemy as a result of sin.

But there's something else that we're told here and that is that God said in verse 15, *“I will put enmity (which is hatred) between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”*

Now, this has a dynamic kind of a meaning here, but it speaks first of all of the perpetual hostility that will exist between the offspring of the woman, which is all mankind, and the offspring of the serpent.

Now, that introduces an interesting thought, doesn't it? Can Satan have offspring? Well, not in the biological sense, but certainly those who reject God and embrace the world; the kingdom of the enemy, are sons of Satan in a very real sense of the word.

We saw this back when we were studying earlier in our study of John on Sunday morning, you remember this? Let me put it on the screen. From John chapter 8, it says, and this is Jesus talking to the religious leaders. He says,

John 8:44 (ESV)

You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because

there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, (okay, and that speaks of how evil Satan is) for he is a liar and the father of lies.

So, when Jesus said to the religious leaders that they had a father who was the devil and you'll remember in the passage they took great offense at that statement, and they came back and they said, "we have no father but God."

To which Jesus said, "if God was your father, you know you would love me because He sent me." But Jesus is making the point that spiritually speaking, these people are offspring of the enemy, spiritually speaking. And so what God says concerning this enmity or hatred between the offspring of the enemy and the offspring of the woman, which again, is all mankind.

It just speaks of the conflict that began so long ago and that continues to this very day which is why the apostle John goes on in his first letter up on the screen to say,

1 John 3:13 (ESV)

Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you.

They hate you because God spoke this curse, this reality into these consequences regarding the offspring of the serpent and the offspring of the woman and He said that there would be hatred. And so, John says, don't be surprised. And yet sometimes we are, we are. Christians will come and say, pastor Paul, "I need you to pray for me, I've just been running into all kinds of opposition from the world, I don't know where this is coming from." Well, let me explain it to you, we'll take you back to Genesis chapter 3 and we'll talk about the origin of that hatred.

And how it was warned, we were warned of it in the New Testament and how it continues to this day. "*Do not be surprised,*" John wrote.

Now the Lord turns to the woman and the ESV you'll notice put some interesting words in this passage. It says, first of all, "¹⁶ *To the woman he said, "I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you."*

There're 2 things that I want to bring out here concerning the curse that is laid upon the woman. And the first is, the Lord says, "*I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing.*" There are a good many Bible teachers and scholars who suggest that God was referring to the painful existence of raising children that in

general and not limited simply to giving birth to children, that may in fact be the case.

But either way, the idea is introduced to us here that you know the pain, that the painful birthing process would be greatly increased for the woman and very likely, the whole process of raising children. But the second thing that the Lord says to the woman is that, He says, “*your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you.*” And that suggests obviously that the woman's desires would clash with her husband's.

And you might be looking at your own marriage and saying, well, that pretty much hits the nail on the head with us; my wife's desire. And I could probably say that, I am desperately in love with my wife, but we have very different, likes, dislikes, desires foods that we like.

It's just it, sometimes it's even kind of funny how different two people can possibly be. But this interpretation or this rendering, I should say, this rendering in the ESV, I have to tell you is somewhat unique as it relates to how this verse is worded. The New American Standard Bible (NASB) renders this as, “*yet your desire shall be for your husband*” which suggests a different idea altogether.

But the second part of the statement says, “*but he shall rule over you.*” And whatever else you may read into those words, it seems pretty clear to indicate that there will be, and this is part of the curse of sin, that there will be an ongoing struggle for leadership within the context of the marriage union of the man and the woman.

And whatever order, whatever peace, whatever unity that God originally designed for a man and a woman to enjoy within the context of marriage, that would be disfigured and distorted now that sin had entered the picture. And so now, He's basically just saying, this union that you've come into, which we talked about at the end of Genesis chapter 2.

The man sees the woman, “he says, this is now bone of my bones, flesh of my flesh, she shall be called woman for, she came out of man.” He goes on to say that they, “the two were naked and they weren't ashamed and for this reason, a man will leave his father and mother and be joined and cleave and united to his wife and the two shall become one flesh.” And that was the intention, that was the intention.

God's intention that there would be unity, peace, and order in the marriage relationship. And what God is saying to the woman now is that those things have now been marred, those things have now been disfigured by sin and this is what sin has done to everything of God's really, most everything to God's original creation.

There was a distortion, a perversion that now entered the picture. What God originally created and called good has now been distorted and perverted. And now it's become dangerous, it can literally become dangerous to us if we don't follow the word of God and we've allowed it to become dangerous.

There are some dangers that are out of our control all together, like weather. I don't believe that God originally created the earth to suffer things like typhoons and tornadoes and earthquakes and floods that take, sweep away life and all the other things that, you know, but we don't have any control over those things.

But I believe that they are a result, a consequence of the fact that the earth has been cursed. We're going to see that in just a moment as God outlines that to the man. The point is, life has been distorted. God didn't intend for people to get sick, He didn't intend for people to get cancer, He'd never intended for people to die.

God did not factor death into the process of his creation, those are distortions and disfigurations of God's original created order. And this is what we see in reality because these things that He says to the woman, "you shall have a desire to lead, but the man will control you." I mean, that's what we've seen, it's not been good, it's been bad.

There's this conflict and many times we see this happening within the home. We see it happening within marriage; women having a desire to lead, and men becoming domineering and controlling and uncaring. And this is a result of the marring of the marriage union through sin. It doesn't mean it's good.

When God pronounces these curses, these aren't good things you guys, these are bad things. These are bad things and only in Christ and through his word, can we begin to recover some of the order that God originally intended in marriage between one man and one woman, because that was God's original design. And that design was that there would be love and respect that would dominate the relationship rather than a desire to control and a desire to dominate.

Now, the Lord turns to Adam and he says to Adam, verse 17, "*And to Adam he said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the*

tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' (look at how He begins) cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. ¹⁹ By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return."

Well, there's actually several things here that deserve our attention, but you'll notice that the first rebuke that Adam receives as a result of his sin and listening to the voice of his wife, is that very thing there: *"Because you listen to the voice of your wife."*

Does that mean that a man should never listen to the voice of his wife? Not at all. The point here is He's saying that, "you listen to your wife in contradiction to what I said" that's the point. I do listen to my wife, I consider her a very valuable counselor in my life, but I do because she gives me godly advice, godly insights.

What Eve did is she contradicted the very clear prohibition that God had given and that is why the first rebuke that comes to Adam is you listen to the voice of your wife rather than deferring to the command of the Lord. He allowed her to sway him over and above the word of God, and that, you know, that should never happen within a marriage. It was never intended to happen within a marriage. But it happens all the time within marriages, particularly where you've got one person in a marriage saved and the other person who is yet unsaved, happens all the time.

And as a result of the first curse, you'll notice that it also centers on the ground, the world that God had given mankind dominion over. Whereas the ground would originally before sin, just produce naturally all this wonderful food to sustain the man and the woman, now it's going to be very different.

He says that, "you are now going to work the ground in pain and through the sweat of your brow, will you eat your bread." And this is such an apt picture of so much of our lives today. What was meant to be easy and natural has now become laborious and a burdensome struggle. Do you ever find that to be the case in life? Things weren't meant to be a laborious struggle, we made them that way through our own sin.

And then the last thing God says to the man, again in verse 19 is that he would *"return to the ground."* And that is, of course, a euphemism for death. *"For out*

of it you were taken (speaking of how the man was created) *for you are dust and to dust you shall return.*” And so, we are introduced to this idea of death.

Now, I say introduced, introduced in the Bible. We didn't need an introduction. We knew death was around anyway, we've dealt with it in our lives many times. Friends, family members, so on and so forth, pets, you name it, things die, but this is death in all of its gruesomeness.

And there's nothing pretty or acceptable about death, there's nothing orderly or good about death, it is an enemy. It is a result of the curse and that's the way we should see it. But lest we be depressed, looking around and seeing the consequences of this curse still ransacking the world in which we live.

There are some wonderful and very encouraging statements in the Bible about what God has done and will do with this curse that continues to torment us. Let me show you these on the screen. First, from Galatians chapter 3, it says,

Galatians 3:13 (ESV)

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—

And that simply means He took our curse, He bore our curse because the curse was on us; the curse of sin and death and He bore it by becoming that curse. And then in 1 Corinthians 15:22, Paul writes,

1 Corinthians 15:22 (ESV)

...as in Adam, all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.

...as in Adam, all die, (and boy we see that all the time) so also in Christ shall all be made alive.

So, we see here some pretty wonderful, hopeful statements given to us in the Bible about God reversing the curse, which of course He did by sending His Son. Now the chapter finishes this way in verse 20 by saying, *“The man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living.”* Kind of interesting that he named her thusly even before she became a mother at all.

“²¹ And the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.” You'll notice that, we were told earlier that the man and the woman made garments for themselves out of fig leaves, which I don't know if you've ever seen a fig leaf, but they're kind of prickly.

A lot of Bible students over the years have seen in this creation of coverings, a picture of 2 religions that exist in the world. People talk about all these world religions. Well, there's really only 2 because there is the religion of works and then there's Christianity, which is the religion of grace and salvation by faith without works. And they all come down to this idea of how we're covered.

And there's a lot of people who see this in these pictures of the man and the woman, first of all, covering themselves in an effort of self, which they believe is a picture of the religion of works that essentially labors, where a person labors in their own strength to cover themselves or to cover their sin.

And then there's this issue of what we see here in verse 21, which is the true message of the Bible where God moves to cover man's sin. And isn't it interesting, it says "He covered them with animal skins." Well, what does that tell you? It tells you that some animals had to die, and so, what we see is we have this picture of the covering of man by God through death.

And don't you know that the word "covering" is essentially the definition of the biblical word atonement, to atone is to cover over. That's why the top of the ark was called the atonement cover and it was a kind of a play on words to refer to the cover of the ark and also what atonement means; to cover.

So, we see these 2 pictures of world religions. You're either trying to save yourself or you're letting God save you and cover you, one or the other, one or the other. So just know this, you can't cover yourself. Our effort to cover our self is like Adam and Eve taking fig leaves and trying to cover themselves, and I'm sure that didn't work at all and, it just, yeah, was a really bad idea.

Verse 22, "Then the Lord God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever—" ²³ therefore the Lord God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. ²⁴ He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim (which are a class of angel, if you will), and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life."

And this is an interesting passage that reminds us that it was necessary that Adam and Eve not be given the opportunity to eat of the tree of life if they were ever to be saved. What God was doing by keeping them from the tree of life was He was protecting them from the terrible fate of living forever as sinners.

And that's what God said, “lest he eat of the tree and live forever.” Live forever as a sinner, what a terrible destiny. But because death, both physical and spiritual is now the destiny of mankind, God was now free to come in the form of man, taking our curse, bearing our sin, and dying our death, our death, so that He might do what no other man could do after paying for that sin, and that is rise in victory.

People can pay for their own sin, but what they can't do is rise in victory. That's what Jesus came to do for us and the reason He was able to rise, the reason He was able to take our sin is because He was fully man. The reason He was able to rise in victory is because He was fully God and death could not hold Him. Let me end with a passage from 1 Corinthians 15, I love this.

1 Corinthians 15:45-49 (ESV)

Thus it is written, “The first man Adam became a living being”; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. But it is not the spiritual that is first but the natural, and then the spiritual. The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. As was the man of dust, so also are those who are of the dust, and as is the man of heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven.

Thus it is written, “The first man Adam became a living being”; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. But it is not the spiritual that is first but the natural, and then the spiritual. The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. As was the man of dust, so also are those who are of the dust, (that’s us) and as is the man of heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. (that’s also us now that we are in Christ) Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven.

And that is the, that's the good news right there, let's pray.

Father, we know and we can see from the Bible that we don't deserve your love for us. We don't deserve forgiveness, we don't deserve atonement, redemption, salvation, and yet ever since the first man sinned, you've been calling out just as we saw you called Adam, “Adam, where are you?” You've been calling us Lord, by name.

And I pray, Lord God, that if there's anyone here or watching online who has not yet responded to that call of the Lord that they would do it right now. Confess their sin and allowed Jesus to pay the penalty of all the sin that they

ever have or will commit. And I thank you Lord for the free gift of salvation through Jesus Christ.

But Lord, now that we're saved, we struggle every day because our flesh still wants to dominate, our flesh still wants to be in control, our flesh still wants to call the shots. But Lord, we have a new master and He lives in us now and we pray every day, Lord God, that we would yield more and more of that control to you, Lord, the rightful King and Lord of our lives.

And give us the strength and the ability to dethrone self every single day, to stop listening to the voice of self and to listen instead to the voice of our Savior who calls to us every day and says, "follow me, take up your cross and follow me." Thank you, Father, for the power and the revelation of the things that we've looked at in the word today.

Your Word truly is powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, and we thank you for it in Jesus' precious name and all God's people said together, amen.

God bless you. Have a good rest of your evening.