

Banished

Genesis 3:20-24

Well, six sermons already on the fall. Six sermons already on Genesis chapter 3. Today is the seventh. There is a reason for such an emphasis. The subject of this chapter is a big deal. Chapter 2 ended with everything all good. The six days of creation were complete, and the creation of man as male and female is described for us.

Gen. 2:21 “And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. 22 Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man. 23 And Adam said: “This is now bone of my bones And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man.”

Everything was good. Very good. Good good, if I can make the point of emphasis in the typical Hebrew fashion, by repeating the word. And it was good because there was no sin, so guilt, no shame. That’s how chapter 2 ended, “they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.”

And then comes the serpent, questioning the very word of God, tempting Eve and Adam with her. So we have read about the act of sin itself, the autonomous rebellion of man against the word of God. Then, of course, the self-justifying excuses, the blame-shifting. And then God’s curse, first pronounced upon the serpent, Satan himself. Then the curse upon the woman, and finally, as a climax, the curse upon the man. It would be the curse of death, pronounced by God with these words,

v.19 “In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread Till you return to the ground, For out of it you were taken; For dust you are, And to dust you shall return.”

That’s final. But there are a few more verses yet in this chapter, good and helpful verses to tie all of this together and set the stage for all that follows in the rest of the Bible. And I begin this morning simply by saying,

I. LIFE GOES ON.

That might seem contradictory, given the threat of that curse, “for in the day that you eat of [the tree of the knowledge of good and evil] you shall surely die.” Or, again, “For dust you are, And to dust you shall return.” Adam and Eve didn’t die, not right on the spot. They didn’t return to dust; rather they continued living. I have noted in previous weeks that the pronouncement of death was enacted immediately, and though Adam and Eve didn’t die on the spot, they were rendered mortal. They lost the enjoyment of a body not subject to sickness and disease, and they immediately began the process that would culminate in their death. We live in the same condition, and while it isn’t the most pleasant way of looking at life, it is true and accurate to say that we are all in the process of dying all of our life. We may grow, mature and develop for a few years of childhood, but our bodies are corruptible, and we are dying. That’s the curse.

Yet, in that context, for us, for Adam and Eve, we can still say that life went on. And so we read,

v.20-21

Adam gave his wife her name, a name, interestingly enough, related to the Hebrew word for life or living. Not only does she continue to live, then, but she will fulfill that most basic, natural and distinctive function for which God made her female. She would have children, and the human race would continue. The ordinary, ongoing experiences of life would continue, despite the curse.

Remember the last two sermons, though, those ordinary ongoing experiences would no longer be pain-free. They would no longer be free of struggle.

v.16 “To the woman He said: “I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; In pain you shall bring forth children.”

But she would bring forth children. She would perform and accomplish the task for which God made her female, even after the fall. And we, of course, live in the same context. Life goes on, but now it goes on under the effects of the curse. So we can expect trouble. We can expect struggle, and sorrows. We will live under the curse with tears, with suffering, with grief. And only in that context can we understand our ongoing responsibilities. It is noted that Eve would have children such that the human race would continue. And Adam would continue to labor and work in order to provide a sustenance for their lives.

v.23 “...therefore the LORD God sent him out of the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken.”

Adam would continue to till the ground. He would continue to labor. Both he and Eve then show us,

A. The ongoing responsibilities of fallen men.

Again, my main point. Life goes on. Ongoing responsibilities continue, and will continue throughout this age, until Jesus returns. In the context of trouble. Thus we read Jesus’ helpful but realistic words to his disciples,

John 16:33 “These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”

Life goes on, ongoing responsibilities continue, but now there will be trouble. Tribulation. That was one of the main messages

that the apostolic writers continually taught the early church, a message that remains so appropriate to this day. Life goes on, but “In the world you will have tribulation.” Peter puts it this way,

1 Peter 4:12 “Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you...”

Don’t think it strange. Don’t be unsettled. Trouble will come, fiery trials, and there is nothing strange about that. Indeed, as Peter continues,

1 Peter 4:13 “...but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ’s sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.”

That’s where we live, with ongoing responsibilities as God has given us as human beings created male and female, in his image. And yet, because of sin, there is always,

B. The inescapable awareness of the guilt of sin.

v.21 “Also for Adam and his wife the LORD God made tunics of skin, and clothed them.”

No longer would they be naked and not ashamed. Now they felt the very painful reality of their own sin. And the awareness of your own sin does one thing above all else, it makes you feel guilt. It creates in your own conscience the pangs of guilt, the shame of guilt. And that’s part of what it means to be created in the image of God, this moral relationship to God is so vital to understanding our humanity. We are held accountable, we are responsible. So when we fail, when we sin, we feel the need to cover up. Hence the symbolic significance of clothes covering our nakedness. Because that is what we are before God—naked. Exposed.

Remember the rebuke given to the lukewarm church of the Laodiceans? They were not sufficiently conscious of their own sinfulness, and the Lord rebuked them rather harshly.

Rev. 3:17 “Because you say, I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked— 18 I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. 19 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. 20 Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.”

Their great fault was that they didn’t recognize the “shame of their nakedness.” God offered them “white garments, that you may be clothed.” And that is what the gospel does, isn’t it? We are given white clothes, which is nothing less than Jesus’ own righteousness. We are clothed with his righteousness, so the shame of our nakedness would be covered.

It is worth noting that the Old Testament concept of atonement, or forgiveness of sins, was the concept of covering. Our sins are covered! You’ve heard that language.

Ps. 32:1 “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, Whose sin is covered.”

Paul quotes that Psalm in Romans 4, so it isn’t just an Old Testament idea! For this is the central promise of the gospel,

Ps. 85:1 “LORD, You have been favorable to Your land; You have brought back the captivity of Jacob. 2 You have forgiven the iniquity of Your people; You have covered all their sin.”

Isaiah 61:10 “I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, My soul shall

be joyful in my God; For He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness, As a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments, And as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.”

So it is that fallen man now needs to be covered, “that the shame of [our] nakedness may not be revealed.” Thus, although life goes on after the fall,

II. COMMUNION WITH GOD IS LOST.

And that is the distinctive emphasis of our text this morning. Man is banished from the garden, banished from the presence of God. With good reason.

A. Fallen man is now evil.

v.22a “Then the LORD God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil.”

Satan’s lie was something of a half-truth, wasn’t it? Maybe a quarter-truth. This was the lie,

v.5 “For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

Satan, of course, meant that as a temptation, making man think of how great it would be to be like God. But the reality was that “knowing evil” for man meant “being evil.” Only God can know evil and be perfectly good; for man there is no distinction between knowing evil and being evil. So Adam and Eve were already good, created good, and they came to know evil! They became evil. That’s the meaning of God’s words in verse 22, “Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil.”

There is a terrible consequence to that personal knowledge of

evil, that personal experience of evil. The consequence was that man's evil became a prohibitive barrier in his relationship with God. Rather than becoming like God by knowing evil, when man became evil he became disqualified from communion and fellowship with God. The prophet Habakkuk understood that well, and it caused him to ask a very penetrating question of God,

Hab. 1:13 "You are of purer eyes than to behold evil, And cannot look on wickedness. Why do You look on those who deal treacherously, And hold Your tongue when the wicked devours A person more righteous than he?"

"You are of purer eyes than to behold evil, And cannot look on wickedness." That is a true and accurate description of God. Which is to say,

B. Evil men are now unable to experience life.

Fallen men, sinful men no longer have the experience of life. They are, as Paul would later put it, by nature children of wrath. They are dead in sin, as the New Testament explains so repeatedly. And since fallen man is now dead, he cannot partake of the tree of life. The symbolism and the reality become one here, because what happens as 'life goes on' is that Adam and Eve are now unable to live and, therefore, unable to partake of the tree of life. So God forbids them to eat of that tree any longer.

v.22 "Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever..."

Thus they are banished. Adam and Eve are banished from the Garden of Eden, from the presence of God. Again, to join together the symbolism and the reality of all that, the point is that,

C. Evil men are now alienated from God.

v.23 "...therefore the LORD God sent him out of the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken."

Banished. Separated from God. Alienated from God. That's the consequence of Adam's sin, alienation from God.

Those aren't hard concepts to understand, but they are crucial to good doctrine. And crucial to for the understanding of salvation. They are crucial for the understanding of the gospel. For the whole gospel can be put in these terms, alienation and its opposition, reconciliation. Since the fall, every man born has been born under this curse of alienation from God. By nature, children of wrath. Separated from God. And the promise and hope of the gospel is then called reconciliation.

Sin causes alienation from God. Sin brings death, which is separation from God. And in Adam, we all sinned. We all died.

Rom. 8:12 "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned..."

There is only one hope. There is only one way to be reconciled to God. By faith in Jesus.

Rom. 5:8 "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. 9 Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. 10 For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. 11 And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation."

The invitation of the gospel is given in these very terms.

2 Cor. 5:18 "Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us

to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, 19 that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. 20 Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. 21 For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

That is the call of evangelism. That is the invitation of the gospel. And that is the message of this sermon on the banishment of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden. That is the message I preach to you this morning. "Be reconciled to God." By faith in Jesus Christ, but trusting in him for your salvation and your life, your relationship with God, broken by sin, can be restored."

1 John 5:11 "And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. 12 He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. 13 These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life."

One more point as we end Genesis 3, which is to again emphasize...

III. THE ABIDING DEMONSTRATION OF GOD'S GRACE.

I've made it clear in each of these sermons on the fall just how much God's grace is made evident, and this morning, it is explicit. It is right here in the text. I don't need to refer to Revelation or some other place in the Bible to show how God removes this curse in the gospel. The promise of that restoration of life is right here. The out-working of God's grace is right here. I've already alluded to it with reference to the ongoing responsibilities of fallen men. Women will have children and men will labor for the

sustenance of life. Both of those things are,

A. The evidence of grace in the life of the man and the women.

Go back to,

v.20 "And Adam called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living."

Childbearing will now include suffering, because of the curse, but there will be children! God doesn't condemn Adam and Eve to an immediate destruction or annihilation. He gives them children, despite their sin. He doesn't end the human race as an act of judgment, but provides for its continuation. That's called grace! Thus the grace of God is evident in the woman's ongoing ability to exercise her natural function as a female.

To emphasize how gracious this is, Paul would even make the astounding and sometimes confusion declaration in,

1 Tim. 2:4 "And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression. 15 Nevertheless she will be saved in childbearing if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with self-control."

Obviously, you can't take that out of context and interpret it in such a way that is contrary to the rest of Scripture, because a woman is actually saved just like a man, by grace alone, through faith alone, in Jesus Christ alone. But the point is that despite the fall into sin, despite the curse of death upon that sin, God still saves! And so a woman will continue to be a woman, and despite the curse of death, she will continue to bear children. And as she lives out that natural function for which God has designed the female half of the human race, she can become the object of God's saving work. So great is his grace,

And so that he isn't further misunderstood, Paul adds obvious fruit of the spirit so that no one will miss the reality of the effect of God's grace in the lives of his people. A woman, and a woman alone, is capable of bearing children. And by God's grace, that work will continue until the end of this age. And Paul praises those women whose faith and godliness is evident, noting the ultimate work of God's grace in their lives in terms of salvation.

Notice the parallel blessing of God's grace in the life of the man.

v.23 "...therefore the LORD God sent him out of the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken."

Don't miss the same principle at work, that man's distinctive work of providing for the sustenance of life will also be preserved, even after the curse. His work will now include much labor and toil, but he will still succeed. He is banished from the garden of Eden, but he will still be able to "till the ground from which he was taken." Despite the curse, and its effects upon the hardship of our labor, that normal, ongoing labor will be productive and successful, by God's grace. Mankind will continue to live, by God's grace, and throughout this age, God's grace will be at work to bring about his great work of salvation.

There is additional evidence of God's grace. Look again at, v.21 "Also for Adam and his wife the LORD God made tunics of skin, and clothed them."

I've already made mention of the covering needed because of our sin. Notice who provides the covering! God provided the covering! "The LORD God made tunics of skin, and clothed them." This clearly demonstrates,

B. God's provision for atonement.

You can't establish everything there is to know about salvation upon that verse, but knowing what the rest of the says about salvation, it's very edifying to emphasize the consistent biblical principle that is set forth. God provides the sacrifice! God provides the covering. God provides! That's the grace of God at work in the gospel.

And then notice, God made tunics of skin. Animal skin. So now, under the curse, the death of animals under the curse is also the means by which the atoning sacrifice for sin is provided. Adam and Eve were covered, the shame of their nakedness was covered, because an animal's life was sacrificed. That principle would become abundantly obvious throughout the Old Testament, the death of a substitute to cover the sins of a guilty man. And that whole theme finds its conclusion and fulfillment when the substitute became God's own son, the Lord Jesus, whose death now perfectly and completely covers our sins. All of that is pictured and prefigured for us way back in Genesis 3, the grace of God at work.

One more comment about the abiding demonstration of God's grace. Go back to,

v.24 "So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life."

What is the purpose of that? What is the significance of those cherubim, those angels whom God set as guards, to keep fallen man out of the garden of Eden? I believe the answer is protection. Actually,

C. Protection from God's condemning wrath.

Do you remember when Moses asked God to show him his glory?

Ex. 33:18 And he said, "Please, show me Your glory." 19 Then He said, "I will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before you. I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." 20 But He said, "You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live." 21 And the LORD said, "Here is a place by Me, and you shall stand on the rock. 22 So it shall be, while My glory passes by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock, and will cover you with My hand while I pass by. 23 Then I will take away My hand, and you shall see My back; but My face shall not be seen."

"No man shall see Me, and live." That's the point. So great is God's glory and so great is our sin, that on our own, by ourselves, none of us can behold God and survive! So the tree of life would become for Adam the curse of death, if he attempted to eat from it. So God is keeping Adam and Eve out of the Garden of Eden not only as a curse, but also as a protection from his own condemnation. They could not partake of the tree of life, which is a symbol of God himself, because if they did, if they attempted to do so, they would die.

God, in his grace, is protecting mankind from the condemning wrath of his own justice.

v.24 "So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life."

Only at the end of the age, when Jesus returns in glory, will the tree of life again be open to those whom God has redeemed.

So the rest of the Bible will teach us about redemption, about how those who faced God's curse as we have studied it here in Genesis 3 might receive the glory of the blessing as we read in

the very last chapter of the Bible,

Rev. 22:1 "And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. 2 In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. 3 And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. 4 They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. 5 There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever."

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, that that hope of life might be yours!

Rom. 6:23 "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."