



## God's Response to Disobedience

Genesis 3:14-24

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*\*\* This original sermon was not written by A.I.*

We are continuing in our Genesis 1-4 series, The Beginning. These early chapters in Genesis are foundational to our faith. They set us off on the right path to obtaining a biblical worldview, a godly perspective on life.

Last week we looked at the immediate effects of Adam and Eve's disobedience. Their disobedience brought shame in their nakedness because they had lost the Lord's covering that they enjoyed before sin. We saw how they sewed together fig leaves as an attempt to cover their own sin, and they hid from God in the process. When confronted by God, Adam pointed the finger at Eve, Eve pointed the finger at the serpent, the serpent didn't have a finger to point.

Now, we've come to God's response to their disobedience, which includes a response to the serpent. Now, remember, the serpent in the garden has been identified by the New Testament as the devil in disguise. A few sermons ago, I described the devil as originally one of God's beautiful angels who rebelled because he wanted to be God— Rev. 12:4 tells us about the devil's rebellion. He took a third of the angels with him to war against God and his angels.

In the Bible, we find four judgements spoken by God against the devil. Our passage this morning is the first judgment, the other three judgments are all found in the book of Revelation. The second judgment is Satan and his demons being banished from access to heaven, which came at the resurrection of Christ. The third judgment, which may coincide with the second, is the devil being bound up in chains for a thousand years. The fourth and final judgment comes after he is released back into the world only to be finally defeated and thrown into the lake of fire for eternity.

Let's get to the scripture for this morning. I invite you to open to Genesis 3:14-24 (NIV).

Gen. 3:14-24

14 So the LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this,

"Cursed are you above all livestock  
and all 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 make your pains in childbearing very severe;  
with painful labor 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 fruit from the tree about which I commanded you, ‘You must not eat from it,’

“Cursed is the ground because of you;  
through painful toil you will eat food from 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.

This is the Word of God for the people of God.

Let’s pray.

So, God begins his response to disobedience with the serpent. He said, “because you have done this— [because you deceived Eve]— cursed are you above all livestock and all wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life.”

There are some who take this quite literally, saying that the snake before the fall had more of an upright posture or possibly even legs. I don’t think that is the way to interpret this. The serpent wasn’t a special breed of talking snake, it was the devil in disguise. This is known as an anthropomorphism; it is the characteristics of the snake being used to characterize the devil.

Anthropomorphisms happen in the Bible all the time. The characteristics of animals are often used to describe God. In Matthew, the Holy Spirit is characterized as a dove descending upon Jesus. In several scriptures, God is characterized as a mother hen, under whose wings we can find refuge. The devil is also described as a great dragon, and an angel of light. Anthropomorphism is a literary device the Bible uses to help us better understand spiritual realities. The serpent is an anthropomorphism of the devil.

God cursed the devil to a life of slithering on the ground and eating dust. Slithering snakes typify the vile nature of evil. Crawling on the belly and licking dust is a posture of absolute defeat. That is the meaning of this first part of God's judgment. The devil's curse— what God consigned him to— is a slithering life of vile evil resulting in crushing defeat after crushing defeat. What this tells us, my friends, is that evil cannot win. Evil is forever cursed with defeat.

God cursed the serpent above all livestock and all wild animals. This indicates that the curse of the fall came to all of creation. Rom. 8:22 says, “the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth...” meaning, all creation suffers as a result of the fall. The fall brought the curse of death, so death came to all, including animals. However, the curse that God placed on the serpent is more than the curse of death on the animals. That curse is the eternal damnation that awaits the devil in the end.

So, this initial judgment from God on the serpent is all about his defeat and ultimate demise. The devil was once a beautiful angel with a divine purpose in heaven. Ps. 8:5 says that God made man a little lower than the angels. The devil, as an angel, was a rung up from humans in heavenly status. In the fall, he became a vile, slithering snake, so to speak, stuck in perpetual defeat, lower than all the animals of the earth, and cursed with a sentence of eternal damnation. The effects of his fall was far worse for him than for humans or animals.

Vs. 15 contains the second part of God's judgment on the devil. “I will put enmity (another word for hostility) between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head and you will strike his heel.” This passage is a prophecy of Jesus Christ. The woman referenced is understood to be the virgin Mary. Her offspring is Jesus Christ. “He will crush your head and you will strike his heel.” This refers to the crucifixion of Jesus, which was a strike to the heel of Jesus but a crushing blow to the head of Satan. It also means that the devil will be at war with all of God's people until his final days.

As such, the devil's crushing defeat continues on through the church. Romans 16:20 says, “the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.” We, as the offspring of Christ, are brought into the victory over the devil. Through Christ's work within us, the Lord crushes the head of Satan under our feet! Amen!

In verse 16, God responds to the woman, “your childbearing and birth-giving will be severe and painful, and you will desire your husband and he will rule over you.” With the fall came death's grip on the human body. Adam and Eve did not die immediately, but the touch of death came upon them immediately. The immediate consequence of the fall was a profound weakening of the human body, accompanied by the onset of pain and trauma, and susceptibility to disease. As Adam and Eve's body clock began to tick towards death, they lost their original ability to withstand great trauma without damage or pain. The woman's severe pain in childbearing and birth would become one of the clearest consequences of the fall.

I remember vividly when Yam had each of our three children. John, our second child was born one day after our first son, Sam's birthday. So, Yam was pregnant with John and having contractions on Sam's birthday— her stomach was out to here. When Yam was making the cake and getting things ready for the birthday party, her contractions started to intensify. About every 30 minutes or so, she would suddenly stop, put her hand on the wall, and moan for a bit, then go back to cake making. In Sam's birthday party, she was celebrating with joy one moment and moaning with pain the next.

Later in the night, we went to the hospital and John came out the next day. Yam went through a lot to deliver him. Watching her go through that was excruciating for me—traumatizing really! After Emily, which was another hard delivery, I couldn't take her pain anymore, so I told her, "I'm done and I'll take care of it so you don't have to, I'm making the appointment now!"

In addition to severe pain in trauma, the woman's desire will be for her husband. Under the context, this means that she will be pulled into reliance on her husband for her life, perhaps for her emotional security, or her sexual well-being, even her physical safety in childbearing. In however that manifests, the fall created the likelihood of an unhealthy and at times very necessary dependance of the woman on the man. Before the fall, Adam and Eve were together dependent upon God.

Another result is the loss of complementary status to one of subordination. God's original design in the garden was for both the man and the woman to partner together, complement each other, to work as equals to and with each other. In the fall we see the birth of male dominance that has plagued the world since then. Male dominance is a direct result of sin; it is not in the original design of God.

Thank God, through Jesus, God has brought men and women closer to his original design. Jesus showed extraordinary honor, value, dignity, and respect toward women in the Gospels, especially for the culture of the time. Ephesians 5 instructs husbands and wives to be submitted to one another in a loving sacrificial relationship, and for both to submit to Christ, who is the head. In effect, both are to depend upon the Lord together. Finally, in Gal. 3:26-28, Paul says, "In Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith... there is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." These are revolutionary passages for the male dominant world of the first century and for most of world history! And they indicate that Christ has brought us a little bit closer to Eden.

In verse 17, God turned to Adam and said, "cursed is the ground, through painful toil you will eat from it all your days. It will produce thorns and thistles. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground; for dust you are and to dust you will return." The fall brought a curse to the ground on account of Adam, and it introduces the curse of death upon humans.

Now, we need to understand that God did not curse humans directly. Adam and Eve, and all subsequent humans are not cursed, but we all live under the curse of death. All humans will die due to sin, but Christ has redeemed us from the curse by becoming a curse for us on the cross (Gal. 3:13). Our body will still die, but our spirit will live, and we will be resurrected into new eternal bodies in the new heaven and new earth. Amen!

God cursed the ground for Adam's sake, but the curse on the ground was lifted after the flood. Genesis 8:21, Noah built an altar and worshiped the Lord. And the Lord said, "never again will I curse the ground because of humans, even though every inclination of the human heart is evil from childhood. And never again will I destroy all living creatures, as I have done, for as long as the earth endures." So, the ground is no longer cursed since the flood, and God has promised to never destroy all life on earth again, meaning, God will preserve his creation even into the new heaven and new earth. Amen!

So, up to now, we have seen God's response to the disobedience of the serpent, the woman, and Adam. He pronounced an everlasting curse on the devil and put him on a slow, defeating crawl to his eternal damnation. The woman was stripped of her strength in childbearing and trauma, resulting in severe pain and a dependent reliance on her husband. The man experienced a temporary curse of the ground and a permanent loss of strength in work. Work would now become painful and laborious for all his days. And the final curse pronounced was the curse of death coming to all humans and living creatures.

God had two more responses to Adam and Eve's disobedience that were incredible acts of mercy. Verse 21 says, "the Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them." This would have been the first shedding of blood that Adam and Eve saw. It was the first time that they saw death with their own eyes, and this was probably a very traumatic experience for them. The first time I was introduced to death was when our dog died when I was little. I remember bawling my eyes out in my mother's arms. Adam and Eve certainly would have had a profound sorrow for the death of this animal on behalf of their disobedience.

God used the shedding of an animal's blood to initially cover Adam and Eve's sin. This act was the root of the temple sacrifices in Jewish law, and it was a prophetic foreshadow of the way that God would forgive sins. Heb. 9:22 says that without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness. Why? Well, the Bible says that the blood is the life of the animal.

It is hard for us to understand this in modern times because we don't live in a sacrificial system anymore. In the ancient times, most if not all cultures of the world sacrificed to gods—the idea of atonement through bloodshed is crystal clear in many of the world's ancient pagan contexts. When blood is shed in an animal sacrifice on behalf of a person's sins, the person and the whole sacrificing community is faced with the consequences of sin—that consequence is death, just as God said it would be.

The Jewish law held that the cleansing of sin could only come through the sacrificial shedding of an animal's blood, but an animal's life was never enough to erase sin. The death of animal cannot take the place of a human's death; it can only become a temporary cleansing of the conscience—a temporary sense of sorrow for an animal's death and perhaps a stronger sense of guilt!

So, the Jews were required to make animal sacrifices over and over again, as if the sacrifice was only a temporary fix, and that is exactly what it was. This skin that God covered Adam and Eve with was only a temporary fix until a more perfect and appropriate sacrifice would be made by the very Son of God, Jesus. His sacrifice and his blood would be worthy enough to cleanse humanity's sin and erase the curse of death.

Heb. 9:11 says, "when Christ came... he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with human hands, not a part of this creation..." in other words, Christ's sacrifice was not like an animal sacrifice in a temple on earth, it was perfect in God's sight and eternally authorized by heaven. Verse 12 says, "He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption." Thank God, Jesus' sacrifice put an eternal end to temple sacrifices, and we have been redeemed by his pure blood and set free from the curse of death! Amen!

The final response was God driving Adam and Eve out of paradise. Now, the reason God banished Adam and Eve from the garden was not to drive them out of his presence. Certainly, sin carries the consequence of broken relationship with God. That was not the reason God barred them from Eden. We'll see in the next chapter that God's intimate presence still remained with subsequent generations. God sent them out of the garden to keep them away from the tree of life. This is a tremendous act of mercy in that the Lord would not consign us to our sinful, rebellious selves for eternity. Instead, he would provide a way to eternal life through the personal sacrifice of his very own Son.

Now, God has sent his Son, Jesus, as the tree of life for us. Through Christ, we can live forever, but only by placing our trust in God. So, in effect, God drove Adam and Eve out of the garden to bring them back to the kind of relationship they should have had with him from the beginning. A relationship of trust and faith. Amen.

Here are three application points from this sermon:

**1. Evil Is Ultimately Defeated — Trust in Christ's victory and don't fear the attacks of the devil.**

**2. Sin Destroys Relationships — Trust Christ to bring restoration, let his example of love and grace guide you in your relationships.**

**3. God's Mercy Covers Our Sin — Put your trust and faith in Christ and rest in Him!**

Let's pray.

**Observation**

1. What specific judgments did God pronounce on the serpent, the woman, and the man in Genesis 3:14-19?
2. According to the passage, what did God do for Adam and Eve after pronouncing judgment (see verse 21)?
3. What reason does God give for banishing Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden (verses 22-24)?

**Interpretation**

1. The curse on the serpent is described as more than just a punishment for a snake. What deeper meaning does the sermon suggest this curse has for understanding evil and the devil?
2. How does the pain and struggle introduced to Adam and Eve's lives reflect the broader impact of sin on all of creation and human relationships?
3. The sermon points out that God's act of clothing Adam and Eve was both judgment and mercy. What does this reveal about God's character and his approach to dealing with sin?
4. Why does the sermon say that being banished from Eden was actually a merciful act by God, rather than just a punishment?

**Application**

1. The sermon says that evil's defeat is certain, even when it seems strong. Are there areas in your life where evil or darkness feels overwhelming? How can you remind yourself of Christ's victory in those moments?
2. Sin's ripple effects are described as deep and far-reaching, affecting relationships, work, and even creation. Can you think of a specific relationship or area of your life where you see the effects of brokenness? How might recognizing this help you respond with more humility or compassion?
3. The garments of skin point to a greater sacrifice—Jesus' death for our sins. How does knowing the cost of your forgiveness affect the way you approach God in prayer or worship?
4. The sermon mentions that restoration begins with trust, not self-reliance. Is there a specific area where you need to stop trying to fix things on your own and instead trust God's promise and provision? What step could you take to do that?
5. The story ends with God making a way for Adam and Eve to return to relationship with him. How does this encourage you about your own failures or times you feel far from God? What practical step can you take to move toward God's restoration today?