

Scripture Reading: Genesis 3:11-21

“9 Then Jehovah God called to Adam and said to him, "Where are you?" 10 So he said, "I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself." 11 And He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?" 12 Then the man said, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate." 13 And Jehovah God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate." 14 So Jehovah God said to the serpent: "Because you have done this, You are cursed more than all cattle, And more than every beast of the field; On your belly you shall go, And you shall eat dust All the days of your life. 15 And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel." 16 To the woman He said: "I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; In pain you shall bring forth children; Your desire shall be for your husband, And he shall rule over you." 17 Then to Adam He said, "Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it': "Cursed is the ground for your sake; In toil you shall eat of it All the days of your life. 18 Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, And you shall eat the herb of the field. 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."”

"The Judgment of the Serpent"

Well this has been the week where I began to sense the holiday season coming upon us once again!

We are approaching the Advent season, which is both the end and the beginning of the Church calendar, where we celebrate the coming of Jesus each year... His incarnation where He comes as the Son of Man to be our redeemer, and His second coming where He comes to judge all the world.

Lord willing I will have us out of the Garden of Eden by that time and Mike will be filling the pulpit for the next two Sundays to finish his series on the Book of Philippians. I am sure this year will be like so many others where we look up shortly and wonder again where all the time went! I trust that we have been learning how important the Book of Beginnings is for our understanding the history and meaning of these events that we celebrate in this joyous season!

I want to begin this morning with our application continuing on with the lessons in confession that we learned from King David at the end of my message last week: I know this breaks every homiletical rule for preaching, but I think it is important for us to see a pattern here in the Book of Beginnings that continues down thru history...

- We sin**
- By His grace we cry out to God in repentance and ask for His mercy & forgiveness**
- God fully forgives us by laying the penalty of our sin on Jesus and looking at us only in His righteousness.**
- We then learn to lean on His strength to endure the necessary consequences of our sin.**

King David was chosen to be the King of Israel & God greatly blessed his reign.

In the midst of all these blessings David fell into grievous sin which he confessed after Nathan the Prophet confronted him about his sin.

- After this David knew God's forgiveness & knew he could continue to serve God as we saw last week in Psalm 51.**

However, there were also necessary consequences from David's sin. We are given details of this account in the Second Book of Samuel where the Prophet Nathan brutally confronts King David as 'the man' after he is upset by the story of the poor man's little lamb: II Samuel 12:9 "Why have you despised the commandment of Jehovah, to do evil in His sight? You have killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword; you have taken his wife to be your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the people of Ammon. 10 Now therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised Me, and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.'... 13 So David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against Jehovah."

➤ Again, this is why David is a man after God's own heart... NO excuses just confession!

"And Nathan said to David, "Jehovah also has put away your sin; you shall not die."

We are given here a small picture of the great salvation we have in Jesus, which we will see in the Garden in a moment, but just as there are serious consequences from the fall of man, we see consequences in the life of David: Not only the ongoing struggles that David will have in his family, but David's sin would immediately take the life of the son born to Bathsheba.

14 "However, because by this deed you have given great occasion to the enemies of Jehovah to blaspheme, the child also who is born to you shall surely die." 15 Then Nathan departed to his house. And Jehovah struck the child that Uriah's wife bore to David, and it became ill."

Now we have to step back for a moment and consider how this judgment would impact a parent, even one who had committed great sin...

➤ David has been honest in his confession but now goes before God seeking His mercy.

16 "David therefore pleaded with God for the child, and David fasted and went in and lay all night on the ground. 17 So the elders of his house arose and went to him, to raise him up from the ground. But he would not, nor did he eat food with them."

This goes on with David for several days & those around him see how hard the loss of this child would be on David.

18 "Then on the seventh day it came to pass that the child died. And the servants of David were afraid to tell him that the child was dead. For they said, "Indeed, while the child was alive, we spoke to him, and he would not heed our voice. How can we tell him that the child is dead? He may do some harm!"

We need to remember that the Kings of that day could do pretty much whatever they wanted and even King David had abused his power by ordering the death of Uriah to get what he wanted...

➤ So it was not without great cause that these men feared bringing the bad news to King David.

➤ But David is now a humbled man...

19 "When David saw that his servants were whispering, David perceived that the child was dead. Therefore David said to his servants, "Is the child dead?" And they said, "He is dead." 20 So David arose from the ground, washed and anointed himself, and changed his clothes; and he went into the house of Jehovah and worshiped. Then he went to his own house; and when he requested, they set food before him, and he ate."

➤ All of this is too much for his servants who now come to King David trying to understand how he could react in this way...

21 "Then his servants said to him, "What is this that you have done? You fasted and wept for the child while he was alive, but when the child died, you arose and ate food."

What they have seen simply makes no sense from a human perspective: The child David fasted for is now dead and they were expecting weeping & wailing and perhaps even the King's rage!

➤ But such was not to be the case...

22 “And [King David] said, 'While the child was alive, I fasted and wept; for I said, 'Who can tell whether Jehovah will be gracious to me, that the child may live?' 23 But now he is dead; why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.” 24 Then David comforted Bathsheba his wife, and went in to her and lay with her. So she bore a son, and he called his name Solomon.”

We see here in this account two striking examples of God’s abundant mercy: The first act of mercy is quite obvious and again difficult to understand from a human perspective:

➤ God has taken a child from David & Bathsheba and now He blesses them with another who would be the son that sits upon David’s throne when he is gone!

David had lost a child he greatly loved and David would continue to see the results of his sin in his life as God had promised until the day he died and yet I am sure he was often comforted by the presence of Solomon and God’s assurance that this son would build the temple and sit as King over Israel.

The other blessing is more subtle and yet has provided great comfort to countless thousands of parents who have grieved over the loss of a child:

In verse 23 King David tells his servants, “But now he is dead; why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.”

David’s confidence that he would see his son again in paradise has brought great comfort to all of God’s people who have lost children down through the ages. We saw an example of this in our little denomination this past week where Pastor Toby Sumpter from Idaho & his wife Jenny received the tragic news Tuesday that their little boy had died in his mother womb and asked for prayer as they awaited his delivery. On Friday Toby posted this simple message on Facebook: “Just met my son, Justice Drake Sumpter, 10 fingers, 10 toes & he's already fought the good fight & received his crown. RIP, little brother.” Toby gave more details later talking about his boy’s name like Steve and Sarah have done with Athanasius Peter and it leads us very nicely into our text and the unfolding story here in the Garden:

“A little about his name: Justice means “righteousness.” It’s the promise that we have been given through Jesus that everything has been put right and will be put right. We are more than conquerors through Him who loved us, though we feel pain and shame and disappointment now in this life. Jesus is our Justice, and so we trust in Him. Drake means “dragon”, and through the cross of Jesus, our justice is victorious over that great dragon of old: Satan, sin, and death. As it turns out, one of our ancestors on my dad’s side was Sir Francis Drake, the famous English sea captain and explorer. Our Justice Drake has joined his Captain in the well fought fight and has gone ahead of us in the great adventure of everlasting life. We will catch up with him later, and then there will be some fabulous stories to tell and adventures to share.” Toby concluded by saying, “We don’t sorrow like those without hope. We trust in Jesus who has plundered the grave and risen victorious over it. The leaves may fall, but we know that the Great Spring is coming.”

➤ As we saw last week God does not come to Adam and Eve only as their judge, but also as their redeemer.

God sought their repentance and in our morning text we see the promise of the great salvation that gives the Sumpters and others great hope.

➤ The seed of the woman, Jesus, has crushed the head of the serpent, that great Dragon of old Satan!

We should note again the contrast in how God approaches the serpent...

There is no call for repentance, just judgment, but with a promise of hope for Adam and Eve.

As we have seen, Satan has used the snake as his agent in the deception of Eve so God is speaking both to the reptile and to Satan here and in neither case is repentance possible:

- Satan has fallen in his pride and has no redeemer.
- The snake is not a moral agent or one made in God's image as were Adam & Eve so he is not able to repent.

Some have asked why the snake was cursed when he could not as a mere animal be held responsible for his actions. In the Scriptures we often see judgment falling on related things, just as we will see with the creation for which Adam was responsible next week.

In Leviticus when a man is involved with sexual sin with an animal the animal is destroyed and at Mount Saini the golden calf was ground up as part of God's judgment. When Korah led a rebellion against Moses he and his friends and supporters were swallowed up by the earth but their censers were pounded into a covering that was to be a memorial to remind the people of Israel about the consequences of rebellion.

While we don't know the full extent of the physical changes God wrought on the snake, their breed certainly has served as a memorial of the fall.

In verse fifteen we see God speaking to the snake as Satan's agent, to Satan as the great deceiver of mankind and to Adam & Eve giving them great hope in their time of great need!

Genesis 3:15 "And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel."

God promises enmity or conflict or tension and it comes in three ways: ALL of them pictured in the promise that one would wound the heel and the other would crush the head!

First we see this in the history of man's relationship to snakes:

- They are a feared animal that can bring harm as they strike a person's heel!
- Of course the advantage man has is the ability to simply crush the head of a troubling snake!

More importantly we see God predicting the history of man and Satan where he, as our great accuser, is always striking the heel of men. And again man has the advantage of turning to God as his strength.

We see examples of people crushing the heads of Satanic leaders in the Scriptures and they are often women! Abimelech's head was crushed by the millstone a woman dropped on his head and Jael put a tent peg through Cicero's head and of course David beheaded Israel's great enemy Goliath.

We know that the ultimate battle and fulfillment of this promise comes when Jesus crushes the head of Satan at the cross... But we must never forget that God uses His people to carry out His work as well. This is why the Apostle Paul tells the Saints at Rome in Romans 16:20 "And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly."

We see this three-fold fulfillment in the reference to the seed of the woman as well: Adam will soon name his wife Eve because she is the mother of all living and as such she is the mother of all those who are at enmity with snakes!

Eve is also the mother of all the faithful sheep who will battle the goats who follow Satan down through the ages and there will always be enmity between these two groups:

The City of God versus the City of Man as Augustine explained briefly in his thousand page book The City of God.

And of course Eve is the mother of the Godly line that would one day bring forth Jesus who would be the seed of the woman who crushes Satan's head after he was allowed to bruise His heel.

This is explained in detail by the writer of Hebrews: 2:9 “ But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone. 10 For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. 11 For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren, 12 saying: "I will declare Your name to My brethren; In the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You." 13 And again: "I will put My trust in Him." And again: "Here am I and the children whom God has given Me." 14 Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, 15 and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. 16 For indeed He does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham. 17 Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.”

I will leave Revelation chapter twelve as your homework where we see more details of the great battle between Jesus and Satan.

- **Next week we will consider in more detail the consequences that befall Adam and Eve...**
- **Consequences of their disobedience that are with us to this day!**

But for this morning I want to end again in the first Epistle of John where he explains the importance of being on the right side of the battle that began here in the garden...

Last week we saw the importance of the call to confession and how the Apostle John urged us to be honest about our sin and to confess it!

He returns to that theme in chapter three with even stronger language...

I John 3: “1 Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.”

- **There we see the enmity promised by God in the Garden**

2 “Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. 3 And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.”

- **We have hope in Jesus and thus we can come to Him honestly confessing our sin and knowing not only that we are forgiven but that we now have His righteousness, His purity in the eyes of the Father.**

4 “Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness. 5 And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin. 6 Whoever abides in Him does not sin. Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him. 7 Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous. 8 He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. 9 Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God. 10 In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother. 11 For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another, 12 not as Cain who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brother's righteous.”

The bottom line is that God wants us to choose sides: Are you part of the seed of the serpent or the seed of the woman?

Are you looking to Satan and his ways which will be crushed in the end or are you looking to the righteousness of Jesus that will last for all eternity?

The former might bring you a bit of pleasure for a season, but it will in the end be like the fruit that Eve and Adam partook of in the garden!

The later will give you the peace and comfort that only Jesus can give:

You will be able to honestly confess your sins and have the strength to face whatever trials this life might bring, saying with the Sumpter family in their time of great sorrow:

“Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. We don’t sorrow like those without hope. We trust in Jesus who has plundered the grave and risen victorious over it.”

Communion Meditation: Psalm 85

“Jehovah, 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. Selah 3 You have taken away all Your wrath; You have turned from the fierceness of Your anger. 4 Restore us, O God of our salvation, And cause Your anger toward us to cease. 5 Will You be angry with us forever? Will You prolong Your anger to all generations? 6 Will You not revive us again, That Your people may rejoice in You? 7 Show us Your mercy, Jehovah, And grant us Your salvation. 8 I will hear what God Jehovah will speak, For He will speak peace To His people and to His saints; But let them not turn back to folly. 9 Surely His salvation is near to those who fear Him, That glory may dwell in our land. 10 Mercy and truth have met together; Righteousness and peace have kissed. 11 Truth shall spring out of the earth, And righteousness shall look down from heaven. 12 Yes, Jehovah will give what is good; And our land will yield its increase. 13 Righteousness will go before Him, And shall make His footsteps our pathway.”