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The Lord Reveals His Grace

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Genesis 3:14-24

But as I was wincing and clenching my teeth, I heard my mother say, "It's all done!" I opened my eyes in disbelief. I looked at her and said, "That's it?" I hadn't really felt a thing. I actually looked at my arm to see if the needle had left a mark because it was such a tiny poke that I didn't really think it had happened.

When we look at this passage we see that kind of thing happening here. When we finish reading these words—if we are reading them right, we should say, "That's it?"

What did God say would happen if Adam disobeyed? He would DIE. But when we read this passage, especially in light of what we saw last week where Adam was squirming like a little boy at the doctor's office, we think, "That's it?"

God is doing something here that should catch our attention. He is beginning this thing we call the covenant of grace. He is showing that he freely offers unto sinners life and salvation through Christ. And we see stated in at least 4 ways in this passage.

It all begins in verses 14-19 and the curses that are pronounced.

I. His grace is revealed in the curses that are pronounced [14-19]

In verses 14-19 the Lord pronounces his sentences upon the snake, the woman, and the man. Since they have offended God, they have to now meet the consequences of their actions. But as God declares the curses that would befall them, we see—even in these judgments—His immense grace.

A. The snake

Look at how God curses the snake. In verse 14-15 we see that Satan is doomed. God first says that Satan will crawl on his belly and eat the dust of the earth. That's a picture of defeat. It is like one of us saying, "Satan, you are going down!"

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In verse 15 we have what is often called “the proto-evangelium.” That is, the first gospel. God promises that there will be enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of Satan. And Satan will strike his heel, but he will crush Satan’s head. This is the first reference to the coming of the Messiah. It is the first prophetic announcement of Jesus. There would come one who would be born of a woman who would put an end to Satan and the sin and death that he causes.

Already Adam and Eve’s heads would have perked up. “What was that?” Did you say that we were going to have a baby? That’s something they probably were not expecting. God surprises them with a promise of grace and salvation.

B. The woman

The idea is expanded in the next verse. In verse 16 God speaks to the woman and he says that she is going to have pain in child bearing. On top of that her relationship with husband going to have a great deal of discord as she seeks to assert herself over him.

Now, right here I wonder what was going through Eve’s head. God is speaking about the very heart of her life, her children and her husband. Basically these two things encompass the whole of her universe. The home was supposed to be the focal point of her joy and happiness. But God says that this is going to be the epicenter of her sorrow too.

But I can’t help but think of her saying, “That’s wonderful!” she probably turned to Adam and said, “Do you hear that honey! We’re going to be fighting! Isn’t that great! I’m gonna have morning sickness and labor pains, and we are going to have all kinds of trouble raising kids. Woo-hoo!”

I’m betting Eve would have been ecstatic. Because no matter how bad it would be at least she gets to live!

The same can be said for the man. In verses 17-19 we see what was to befall the man.

C. The man

Just like he did with the woman, God zeros in on the main aspect of the man’s life. His work. Life down on the farm isn’t going to be the same. It is going to be filled with toil. That is to say, it is going to involve a great deal more rigor. The ground is going to produce thorns and thistles. That’s a symbol. It means here’s going to be a lot more frustration when it comes to in putting food on the table.

But hey! At least he gets to put food on the table!

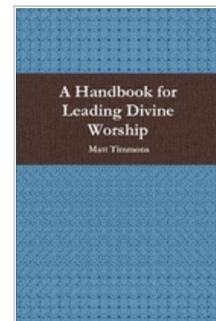
I want you to realize the waves of relieve that would have come over Adam here. God had originally said, “In the DAY you eat of that fruit you will die.” Adam should have dropped dead right on the spot! That fruit should have been the last thing he ate. But God’s saying here that He is going to grant him an extended period of life.

“Did you hear that, honey? Life’s going to be hard!” This would have been music to Adam’s ears. It’s a blessing in the midst of the curse!

The curse carries with it a bright beam of grace. Yes we see God enacting his wrath, but it is greatly restrained. And all that is said here reveals that God has something different in mind. He has chosen to bring glory to himself by establishing a new relationship with men; one based on grace.



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But it is not just seen in the curses that are pronounced; this relationship is also seen in the faith that that is expressed.

II. His grace is revealed in the faith that is exhibited [20]

In verse 20 we see that the first thing Adam does is name his wife Eve. And what I want you to understand is a demonstration of his faith and hope in God. This act shows that Adam understands that God has not going to abandon him.

The word Eve means "life" or "life giver." He's already celebrating the fact that they are going to have children! "You are going to be the mother of all living."

What do you mean? She hasn't had a single baby yet. How does he know that? It is because he has heard the promise that God just made. He understands what God is doing. He sees that God is being gracious to him and offering him life and salvation. He sees is that God is reclaiming him.

Adam has already begun to live by faith. In his naming his wife Eve, we see that Adam trusts the promise and is living his life in light of the promise. And for the rest of their lives Eve is going to be a testament to the fact that God is a gracious God. And every time he wakes up in the morning he is going to see her there and remember that God has not dealt with me according to my sins.

The wonderful thing is that each of us may do the very same thing. The grace of God may be yours. You don't have to live in your sins. You too can have this same grace and salvation. All you have to do is what Adam did. All you have to do is believe that the promise is true.

It is kind of like the story about the soldier who was commended by Napoleon. When Napoleon was told of the noble deed that this soldier had done he said, "Well done, Captian." Immediately the man dropped his musket, removed the other marks of his position from his attire, and ran to the front of the ranks and stood with the head officers of the company. Bewildered that this low ranking soldier's actions they asked him what he was doing. The man responded, "The Emperor called me captain, so I am!"

He heard the word, and so he believed and acted as if it were true.

That is what Adam did. And if you wish to be a part of this covenant of grace, that is all you have to do. Our situation is different than Adam's, but not that much different. The Savior—the one who will crush the serpent's head has already come and taken the penalty that was due to Adam. Jesus Christ died to atone for sin and vanquish death. But he has said he will come again. He said he will vanquish Satan completely will cast Satan into the Lake of Fire. He will put an end to Satan and all that he stands for.

And if you would like to take part in it, if you want to have this salvation, all you have to do is trust his promise.

The grace of God is available to us. It is revealed in the curses that are pronounced and the faith that is exhibited. And in the next verse you see it in the animal that is sacrificed.

III. His grace is revealed in the animal that is sacrificed [21]

In the next verse it says that the Lord made garments of skins for Adam and Eve and clothed them. To understand what is going on here you have to put yourselves in Adam's fig leaf.

First, think about that. There is a reason why people don't usually snort shrubbery. You have

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...they think about that. There is a reason why people don't usually sport an ass. You have to be very careful sewing those leaves together. And such apparel doesn't permit you much mobility. As you can guess, it's going to rip rather easily.

Think about how silly he would have looked standing there before God with these make shift underwear. He tried running from God and hiding, no doubt the things started to tear. He had to look rather bad. The reality of his sin was plainly exposed.

But there was a reason why Adam had chosen to cover himself with a fig leaf. Leaves were not only readily accessible; they would not have harmed the tree from which they were taken. At this point in history, life was considered sacred. We don't think twice about hurting an animal. But it probably would not have occurred to Adam to harm an animal for its hide. For them, death was a punishment. It was a sign of God's anger.

And when they saw this animal's blood being spilt upon the ground that would have sent them a message. It would have told them that their sin could not be taken care of by any easy, cheap process. As they looked at that animal's carcass they could only admit "that should have been me."

What happened here is a foreshadowing of God's ultimate provision for sin. If man was to live, another must die in their place.

God's giving them these new clothes was a picture of what he would one day do in his Son, Jesus Christ.

Friends, the grace of God does not negate God's justice. The penalty for sin still stands. But that is the glory of the gospel. There on the cross our Lord Jesus took the penalty on our behalf. And we can stand before God because he gives us the covering of his perfect blood and righteousness.

This verse is not insignificant. It reminds us that God's dealings with us are gracious indeed. And so does the last paragraph.

We've seen the grace of God revealed in the curses that were pronounced. We've seen it in the faith that was demonstrated. We've seen it in the animal that was sacrificed. But, oddly enough, we also see it in the door that was shut.

IV. His grace is revealed in the door that is shut [22-24]

In verses 22 through 24 the scene comes to a close. It is something of a sad ending. No doubt it is a tragedy. Adam and Eve are forced to leave the garden. But I want you to understand that this is actually a sign of love.

God says, "Adam, you can't live here anymore." Why does he say that? It is because in that garden there is another tree. There was not only the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, but there was also the tree of life. And what if man should eat of it? What would happen? He would have forever sealed his fate. He would be condemned to his lost state for all eternity.

But God removes them from its presence. He drives them out of the garden, closes the door and locks it. He removes them from that danger because he doesn't want anything to get in the way of his plan to bring them back.

If there was some poison in your house, you wouldn't leave it sitting around would you? You wouldn't want to have your child get into it and end up losing them forever, would you? Of course not. So you put it in a safe place and lock it away. And you keep your kids from

coming into contact with it.

That's exactly what the Lord does here. His removing them is sad, but it is actually a sign of his mercy. It is just another confirmation that God doesn't want them to be lost forever.

And it is at this point that we remember that we have the pleasure of knowing the end of the story. As we leave the garden—and as we hear the latch on the door, we remember that one day the door will be thrown open again.

There will come down from heaven a New Heavens and a New Earth. And the dwelling place of God will be with men.

Conclusion:

Some of you may be familiar with the famous painting of this scene. It is a painting of the expulsion of Adam and Eve. The couple is depicted walking out of the garden in absolute despair. They are both attempting to cover the shame of their nakedness. Eve's head is thrown back in anguish, and her mouth is open as if crying out in anguish. Adam's head is thrust forward and is clasped by his hand, emphasizing the extent of his sorrow and shame.

The painting is a classic and a true masterpiece as it communicates the havoc that their sin has wrought for the world. But I believe that the painting is not in the least bit accurate.

Adam and Eve did not walk out of the garden naked. And I do not think that their demeanor would have been that of absolute despair. They would have walked out fully clothed with the graces afforded them by God's good hand. And while there is no doubt there would have been sadness at having to leave the splendor of Paradise, there would not have been complete despair. In the midst of their tears of sorrow, there no doubt would have been tears of joy and hope.

They did not receive what they truly deserved. Not by any means.

And, my friends, all this is a testimony to what is ours in Jesus Christ. God has not left us to perish in our sins. We too have the promise of grace and mercy. Though we must live for a time in the shadows of misery, we may yet still live by faith; knowing that our redemption is at hand.

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