

# Genesis 3:14–24

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[ 0 : 00 ] Again, that's Genesis chapter 3, verses 14 through 24. Please stand for the reading of God's word. The Lord God said to the serpent, Because you have done this, curse are you above all livestock, and above all beasts of the field.

On your belly you shall go, and thus you shall eat all the days of your life. I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring. He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.

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.

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. Curse 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. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground.

[ 1 : 11 ] Out of it you were taken. For you are dust, and to dust you shall return. The man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living.

And the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them. 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 the tree of life, and eat, and live forever.

Therefore the Lord God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed a cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.

This is the word of God. Thanks be to God. I'll pray to you. You'd think after being in ministry for 35 years, you'd know when it was your turn to turn your own mic on, but I'm usually so mentally engaged with what is to come, I forget the most elementary of things.

It's good to see you this morning, and a special welcome to those of you who are watching us via our Zoom link today. It's great to have the loft filled with living, breathing men, women, and children, and to approximate some gathering that our church looks forward to seeing.

[ 3 : 02 ] Perhaps you've heard of the novel series that flies under the banner, Lemony Snicket's A Series of Unfortunate Circumstances.

Thirteen books, from what I am told, in all. Critically acclaimed for showing that things can actually go from bad to worse. I raised that at the outset because I'm sure that's the way many of us today feel.

Things can go from bad to worse. There's a hopeless inversion on our desired expectations for life. You live long enough when you realize that there's actually at times an escalation of unfortunate things. Given where we are in our series in the book of Genesis, the title for the second book in that series I find rather ironic.

It's called The Reptile Room. And the Bible presents us in Genesis chapter 3 with an escalation of unfortunate circumstances that are due to our first parents' original sin.

[ 4 : 17 ] A sin that they committed against God. A sin that, because we are their children, we're caught up in in all of the attending problems. For three weeks now, this being the third, we're in this chapter that's dominated by a reptile.

Not a kind one, but a crafty one. And it's a book that has left us undone before God. You ever feel that way? Undone?

Almost in every respect. Think about where we were two weeks ago. Chapter 3, verses 1 through 7. We realize that we are a compromised creature.

You and me. We all have an experiential knowledge of evil because we've all participated in a treasonous act of rebellion. And if that weren't bad enough, last week Bondan led us through something more than an experiential knowledge and awareness of evil, but that we are a combative creature by nature.

You and me. That there's an existential sense of shame. That we exact out upon others, even loved ones, through this game of blame.

[ 5 : 29 ] And so the unfortunate reality that I am a compromised individual is escalated with the unfortunate circumstance that there is hostility amongst us, which then today, with the reading of verses 14 to 24, we realize that we are, as the collective body, going from bad to worse.

We are learning in this text that not only are we against God, not only am I generally and naturally inclined to be against you and you against me, but that God is against us.

That is the most dire of all circumstances. God is against us. Think of it. The idea of going from bad to worse in this chapter is put on a cosmic scale.

The Bible claims that as you and I can at times go through life raising our fists towards the heaven and cursing God, that actually God is quite willing and perfectly able to curse us right back.

Righteously obligated, in one sense, to give us over to the things that are due. We were the first to counter his all goodness in an act of treasonous independence meant to usurp his godness.

[ 6 : 51 ] And God looks at us and shakes his fist and curses back. Perhaps you've thought, I've always felt like that. God is against me. I never knew the Bible was willing to admit that.

But it is true. Look at verse 14. We find God cursing a creature of his own making.

Look at verse 17. We find God cursing his own created order out of which all things living were to come. Unless you think that's bad and it can't get worse, if you peek your glance over to chapter 4, verse 11, you'll actually find God cursing a member of humanity, the pinnacle of his own creation.

And so, by way of introduction, we arrive at the seriousness of this text. You and I have a problem. We know we have a problem, but the problem is greater than the one we thought we had before we heard the text read today.

It's a problem that just getting a self-awareness is not going to solve for you. It's a problem that self-help isn't able to relieve for you.

[ 8 : 11 ] It's a problem that demands more than looking within and cultivating the better angels that are within you. It's a problem that learning how to self-actualize your own improvement won't be capable of assuaging.

We have a bigger problem than acquiring the life skills that will overcome our own shame. We actually have a bigger problem than learning how to act in ways where we don't play the game of blame.

We actually have a divine adversary. The eternal one is rightly and actively engaged against us because in him he is all goodness, and in us we are out for our glory.

Let me put it to you as cleanly as I can. Divine displeasure is the price we pay for the pleasure of play-acting as though we were divine.

Let me give it to you an analogy. You're going to pay the toll of divine displeasure to travel the road of self-independence. That's the problem in our text.

[ 9 : 16 ] If God is against us, who will be for us? It's a question that I think this sermon has to answer if there's going to be any hope for us.

And I hope to answer that question, God against us, with three words that might be uttered by you at the close of the sermon. The three words of the argument simply, God help us.

Your life, my life, can begin anew and afresh if we understand how God against us becomes God help us. Let's look at God against us.

Our text, and I hope you have a full Bible. I know some of you have phones and there's no way around it this morning or in this day and age, but I encourage you if you're at home to just go over and grab a Bible off the shelf because it's kind of nice to see this whole passage in one thing rather than trying to scroll it down and put the bits and pieces together.

And the reason I say that is the passage comes to you in the literary form of a complete sermon. It's like looking at a sermon outline. And interestingly, it's a sermon that's preached by God.

[ 10 : 27 ] That's an irony. It reveals to us what God does in the world when he doesn't have a preacher. You'll remember a few weeks ago that Adam failed to stand and speak.

He abdicated on judging the serpent who was trying to bring rebellion into the world. He was dismissively silent in correcting Eve lest religion be loosed upon the world and man-made rules begin to animate our relationship with God.

And so while Adam's voice, in a sense, earlier fell silent as his mouth sucked upon the forbidden fruit, here God's voice is heard. His own word goes forth.

That's what God does. When he doesn't have a preacher in the word who will hold the line on what he wants from the order, he preaches himself. You can see the outline.

Verse 14, Then the Lord God said. And you'll see how his sermon moves to his second point, verse 16. To the woman he said.

[ 11 : 26 ] And then verse 17. And to Adam he said. And then finally, the Lord God pairing both ends, not only in verse 14, but in verse 22.

Then the Lord God said. And so as Andrea read the text to us today as a continually flowing movement, you and I look at it as the sermon notes of God with four simple points to his message, all related to what he said.

The first three are going to emphasize the fact that God is against us. It's the fourth one that I'm going to want you to really puzzle through with me.

Because it leads us to this same God being the one who will help us. In other words, God's graces fortunately attend God's curses.

So what does he say to the serpent? I'm not going to lay it all out in full, these first three because I want him to mood with a sense of rapidity. Almost as though we were reading it.

[ 12 : 40 ] He puts a curse upon the serpent. And he instills deep-seated hostility between it and the woman.

That's a point I'll return to later. But that's what God says. A curse upon the serpent and deep-seated hostility between the created order and the woman in some way that has spiritual significance.

Notice what he says to the woman. Verse 16. He's going to, in a sense, Eve's defiance against God exacts a heavy price.

And here's the price as we learn what it is. There's greater discomfort in bringing children into the world and there are contrary desires with the man with whom she is supposed to walk through the world.

There's pain in childbirth. But it's made actually even worse by this disastrous way that men will act toward women in a fallen world. I mean, we might not like the Bible's teachings at all points, but there are times where the Bible clearly gives us a picture of the world as you and I know it.

[ 13 : 53 ] Look at that little phrase there. Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you. A rather enigmatic phrase that is puzzling to interpret.

Let me see if I can give it just the shortest of words. There's one other time in the very next chapter where these words are used in that close proximity to one another.

The word desire and the word rule. That might help us understand what's meant here. In chapter 4, verse 7, you'll see those words appearing in close correspondence to one another.

God's word decaying. If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not well, sin is crouching at the door. Here it is. Its desire is contrary to you, but you must rule over it.

Same two words used in proximity that we have in our text. And the second use of it might actually help us understand what's meant by the first use of it. The word desire in the second one is connected to something sinful.

[ 14 : 51 ] Sin was desiring him. Something meant to conquer Cain. Something meant to gain a hold over him. But that Cain was supposed to rule it.

That is, he must subject it to himself. Now, if that's what's happening in chapter 4, perhaps in parallel then, what we're learning about the exacting price against the woman is that there is now, as a result of this mutually held sin, man and woman, women will have a sinful desire to conquer and gain hold over a man, and the sinful man will meet that desire with an equally ungodly force of his own.

He will exert himself in ways that dominate and rule over her. And so that compatibility that existed between the two at creation is now contorted into this struggle for servility or self-gratification.

There's dissonance among the sexes. There's pain in the midst of family and childbearing. And while we might not like all of that, it certainly is the price we have paid for going our own way.

So he said something to the serpent, he said something to the woman, and then he says something to the man. Difficulty in your work and death.

[16:11] I mean, I'm just summarizing those few verses there, those poetic verses, which talk about the catastrophe of sin. Woman is evidently not alone in her pain, or not the only one paying a toll to walk the road or drive the highway of our independence.

Man will live in the midst of great difficulty. Simone Bale said, he exhausts himself in order that he may eat, and he eats in order that he may have strength to work. And after a year of toil, everything is as it was when he began.

And death, the one who came forth from the ground will now return to the ground. For dust you were taken, to dust you will return. That's the fast movement of God against us.

The serpent is cursed, the woman will struggle, the man will surely die. I mean, the only limited solace from that moment in the text on God being against us is that word from Adam there in verse 20.

He calls his wife's name Eve because she was mother of all the living. It's almost in the midst of the sermon that God was preaching. He leans over and looks at his wife, and he says, well, so far in the sermon, three points have been made, and there's only one thing I'm holding on to.

[17:33] You're going to be the one who brings living, still moving motion into the world. Almost muttering under his breath, even before God gets his conclusive word out in his message.

Which really then brings us to the back end of the text, the point where I really wanted to have you puzzle with me.

Verses 21 and following. I hope your eyes are just looking at it. You know that first sermon outline point is there. Then the Lord God said.

I mean, this is certainly the literary, structural movement of the text. Then the Lord God said. He's on to his fourth point.

And really, we see that things are only going from bad to worse. In this point, what happens when the Lord God says something there in verse 22?

[18:36] Well, what happens is Adam and Eve are made to depart. They're actually forced out of the very presence of God. You know, the word in the Greek that's translated here, Garden of Eden, twice there if you look at it, verses 23 and 24.

The garden is actually the word that you and I would get, the word paradise. That seems to be the most unfortunate of all circumstances, where you and I wake up in the morning and we come to a recognition where we're able to say, yes, I think I have, I know, I actually offend my creator in particular ways and go my own way.

Yes, I'm aware that I'm midst, I live in the midst of enmity between others. Yes, I know that there is pain and struggle in the world in which I have, that my work is unsatisfying and I know that death is ultimately my end.

But think of it, think of the escalating unfortunate circumstance where God now forces them. It isn't just that they leave, they are forced out of the garden, away from the presence of God.

Could anything be worse than this? I don't think so. Paradise lost. Milton picked up on that word there and in his incredible work has the angel here who's holding the sword, the cherubim, saying to Adam, longer in this paradise to dwell permits not to remove thee, I am come.

[20:18] That's the picture the Bible presents concerning the consequences of our sin. that's the fullness of God against us.

That his very presence is withheld from us. So where do we, where do we get God help us? Are you ready for that?

How do we get to God help us? Interestingly, in these most unfortunate of circumstances for our sin, we have the most unusual thing happening in the text.

The voice of God, verse 22, is given to us in an incomplete sentence. That's the first thing I want you to see. So imagine you're hearing him preaching.

He's behind the pulpit. Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now lest he reach out his hand and take also the tree of life and eat and live forever.

[21:21] And the editors have to put a big line in as though the mic went dead, the soundboard didn't work, the words of God weren't in transmission. You're given an incomplete sentence.

Secondly, notice that on either side of God's incomplete sentence, you do hear the narrator's voice.

Interestingly inserted for the first time with such clarity. So as God falls silent in the middle, verse 22, the narrator is bringing interpretive things to light in verses 21 on the front side and 23 and 4 on the back side.

It is as though the incompleteness of what God was saying draws us to hear from the narrator about what God was doing.

That's about the way I've been able to work it out in my own mind this week. We know what God says, but the narrator wants to focus your attention on the entire chapter to what God did.

[ 22 : 31 ] It's a subtle way of shifting our attention away from God against us to God help us. This is what God did. Take a look. Verse 20 and 21, He made garments to protect them.

The Lord God made for Adam and Eve and his wife garments of skin and clothed them. I don't want to make more of this than it is. I don't want to indicate that some animal was slain and blood was shed and the garments provide covering as the way the blood of Christ provides cover.

Those are big, big, big steps. It might just be best to say that he gave them an external covering that would give them some protection given the thorns of life into which they were now living.

But not only does he give this garments to protect them, notice verse 23, he places cherubim to prevent them. Therefore the Lord God sent him out of the Garden of Eden to work the garden from which he was taken.

He drove him out east of the Garden of Eden. He placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the tree of life. That's what's on either side of the incomplete sentence of God.

[ 23 : 44 ] Garments to protect them, cherubim to prevent them. An external covering, a territorial curtain.

Do you see that's what's going on? One is, I'll give you a little something in the thorns of life, but second is, I will bar your entrance to the tree of life. Now let me move from that immediate step from God to how the Bible unfolds a plan to help.

After this, God creates a temporary solution to our problem. Not a complete solution, a temporary solution. You got a problem, I got a problem, I got a problem with God, I got a problem with you, and God's got a problem with me.

And we all can say that. But what he does is he doesn't solve for it immediately. It's kind of like a long math problem. He takes a long time to solve this. In fact, the whole Old Testament is God really working out the problem.

And so what does he do? He creates a temporary solution after making this immediate step. The immediate step, I send you out, but I've secured temporal provision.

[ 25 : 01 ] The temporary step is what the Bible calls a sacrificial system. Now there's something wonderful for you to see here in how this last act of God gets played out in the Bible.

By the time you get to Exodus 26, 31, he is now giving instructions for something called a tabernacle, a way where God could be present with us in the midst of our nightmarish own life. Because he still wants to be with you. And he still wants to be in the middle of Christ's church. But he couldn't be because we wanted to be him.

But there's a temporary solution in that there's this tabernacle created even with an outer curtain. One word in the Hebrew text translated in the Septuagint. But then another one, another word about the curtain that actually becomes a veil in Exodus 26 that separates the holy place from the most holy place.

And guess what? God had artists in the community of faith, seamstresses even. And guess what they sewed into the veil? Guess what God said? This is what I want you to sew into the curtain that is barring your entrance.

[ 26 : 11 ] From the most holy of places where my presence is. They sew in cherubim. The very emblem that we see here in the garden.

And then what happens in the Bible is extraordinary. God moves on from the sacrificial system to securing an ultimate solution to his problem and ours. God moves on and it's his offspring or his seed.

It's the sending of his own son. Stay with me on this. I'm coming back now to that little thing in verse 15 about enmity between the woman offspring and her offspring.

The word there is seed. And it's actually singular, not plural. That God is going to bruise the, crush the head of the serpent through the particular seed that would come forth from the woman.

And the book of Galatians indicates that that seed is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ who was born under the law. That the temporary solution of the sacrificial system in which there was a territorial curtain signified by cherubim that kept you and me away from God and yet able to relate to God is now in his own son in the flesh here.

[ 27 : 30 ] Are you ready for this? I really hope you are. Turn to Luke chapter 23 because you'll see that when Jesus was crucified on the cross, verse 45, the curtain in the temple was torn in two.

Now it doesn't indicate exactly which curtain was torn in two. We know the very word though that's used here in the Greek Old Testament is the same word Luke and Mark and Matthew will use in his work.

And we also know that that word is used 31 times out of the 35 times for this very curtain. And we also know that the three times that word appears in the book of Hebrews, he's indicating that Christ goes in and actually takes out the curtain that's separating you and me and God.

So what I can say to you is simply this, that signifying Jesus' death on the cross and the tearing of the curtain could and should be read to indicate something about what he has done for you and me. That there is now an entrance where there was once no access, where there was no admittance, you are now coming into. Let me see if you can picture it.

[ 28 : 49 ] I mean, you've got to picture the whole Bible now. In essence, the story of the Bible is that while the sword of the cherubim in Genesis 3, keep us out of paradise, God's son on the cross becomes your entrance into paradise.

That's the Bible in one visual shift. Sword and cherubim, no entrance to God given who you are. Jesus on the cross, entrance because of who I am. God's divine justice is meted out on him that God's eternal mercy might be given to you.

In other words, the Christian message is simply that God's mercy trumps God's justice in ways that get both you and God off the hook for who he really is.

your salvation and mine. I want you to take a look at one other thing though in Luke 23. When I saw it this week, I was just thrilled.

[ 30 : 01 ] In Luke 23, right before Jesus is on the cross and that curtain is torn, did you see the narrative that is taking place? Verse 39, one of the criminals who were hanged railed at a memory was crucified next to two criminals.

Two people who knew they were guilty like you and me. And look what one of them says. They railed at him. Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us. Like, get us out of here.

But the other rebuked him saying, do you not fear God since you are under the same sentence of condemnation and we justly? For we are receiving the due reward of our deeds, but this man's done nothing wrong.

And he said, Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom. And he said to him, truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise.

Same word of Genesis 3. Paradise lost. Paradise restored. Not through your own effort or mine.

[ 31 : 05 ] Not through trying to get it together once again. Not through self-awareness. Not through self-help. Not through self-actualization. Not through self-effort.

All through the sacrifice of his son. If you're not a Christian, then today's your day.

Your life, a series of the most unfortunate circumstances, in which you know that you have been against God and you're now reading a Bible that clarifies for you what you always thought God is against you, is the same Bible that God comes and helps you, that God's curses are triumphed over by God's graces.

Yes. Yes. Yes. God's curses God's curses God's curses gosh, do I hope people that are listening to me will put their eyeballs and let them burn into Luke 23 and verse 42 and he said, Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.

that's all you've got to do, that's all you've got to say. That guy was dying on a cross which is why Jesus said, today you will be with me in paradise.

[ 32 : 43 ] In all likelihood you're not going to die today. In all likelihood. Your circumstances won't have gone from that bad to that worse. In all likelihood today. That day will probably be reserved for you and for me.

But you can nevertheless know that your paradise which is in the future has been secured for you today. Amen. He's still going to give you protective covering enough to get through the thorns of life because they're not going to let up.

but he's still going to walk with you. He's going to give his spirit back to you for the wall of hostility has been broken down between him and you through his son.

Let me put it to those of you who feel like well I already am a Christian. Yeah but do you love him?

That's the way Revelation 2 the church of Ephesus that's the way Revelation 2 uses my text.

It's like you know I'm so glad that you have true teaching great doctrine that you walk out but you lost your first love but I'll tell you this whoever overcomes whoever conquers to them I will give the right to eat from the tree of life.

[ 34 : 11 ] So that's the question for any of us who actually already claim to have grabbed hold of this wondrous truth that God helped us in his son.

Yeah but do we love him? Do we love him? Oh don't lose your first love.

That's one way to put the sermon and the other way to put the sermon is oh may this may this be the day you grab hold of your love at first.

And may all non-Christians and Christians then join together at the foot of the cross this morning in love to God. If that's the case then the future is bright even though our present life will be a very mixed bag.

and Revelation 22 says that there's a final thing in his plan.

[ 35 : 17 ] Not only the immediate step of some temporal provision but separation not only some temporary substitutional sacrificial plan not only the securing of it in Christ's plan not only the response and faith and love for you and me plan but then the final plan there's going to be a consummation day not where we go back to the garden where we could mess it up all over again but we go into an eternal paradise where no evil will be emerging from our minds again.

Well a series of unfortunate circumstances a salvation that is beyond our wildest dreams.

Our heavenly father we confess that we go our own way we've done our own thing and the wake that we've created well we're drowning in it and while at first it's almost too much to bear to think that yes and you're willing to put a hose in our mouth we're grateful to know the full story of the Bible that you are our lifeboat you are our support that your son is our sacrifice help us to live in love to him then and walk with us until we see you face to face amen