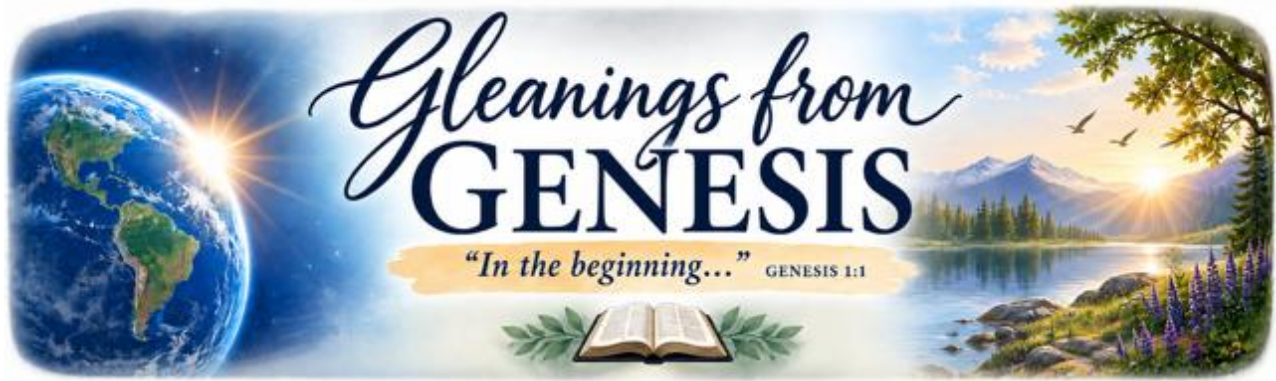




Genesis 3 – The Curse

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Introduction

We have seen what happened to Adam and Eve as soon as they sinned. They experienced what God said they would—they knew experientially the difference between good and evil, and because they committed evil through disobedience, they immediately were overcome with shame, guilt and fear.

Once they both say the words they had to say: “. . . and I ate. . .,” then God’s judgment is executed as he curses the serpent, and the man and the woman. Sin can never be covered up, whitewashed, or excused. It must be paid for.



Have you ever wondered what that serpent must have looked like before the curse? The Bible says he was a “beast of the field.” Evidently it wasn’t crawling, and it wasn’t scary. None of the animals were scary before the curse.

This is what ChatGPT gave as a possibility of what it might have looked like. Looks more like a dragon. The truth is that we just don’t know. But it must have had some appeal for Eve. Remember, Satan is really good at lying and deceiving, and before he was cursed to crawl on his belly, he was already controlled by Satan and he was already a good liar.

Why did God curse the serpent?

God had a purpose for cursing the animal—the serpent. Cursing the serpent turned it into a symbol; a constant reminder of the degradation of Satan. Since then, Satan has become synonymous with the serpent:

Revelation 12:9 (ESV): *And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.*

Revelation 20:2: *And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years.*

"God curses the animal itself, the snake, so that it becomes a constant picture of the devastation and the reproach that Satan bears. The snakes of the world are symbols of the divine judgment on Satan.

"Every time you see a snake slithering and crawling around, it is a sign of the humiliation of Satan. It is a reminder of the divine judgment on him for tempting Adam and Eve into sin."

(From a sermon by John MacArthur preached in 2000, titled "The Curse on the Serpent")

What was the curse on the Serpent?

Genesis 3:14 – 15

The LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. ¹⁵ 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."

Jesus said this to the Scribes and Pharisees about the devil:

John 8:44: *"You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him."*

What does it mean that God will put enmity between the serpent (Satan) and the woman, and between the serpent's offspring and her offspring? Who is the seed of the woman? Paul explains:

Galatians 3:16: *Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, "And to offsprings," referring to many, but referring to one, "And to your offspring," who is Christ.*

The serpent's offspring is Satan and the woman's offspring is Jesus, the ultimate seed of the woman who will mortally crush the serpent. Genesis 3:15 is known as the *protoevangelium* or "first gospel." It is the Bible's earliest prophecy of a Savior, symbolizing the ultimate victory of Jesus Christ over Satan.

Many centuries would have to pass before that promised Seed would be born as a baby in Bethlehem.

"By going to the cross, Jesus will ultimately destroy this serpent, this devil, who holds people captive under sin, shame, and guilt. He will crush the serpent's head by taking their guilt and shame on himself." (D.A. Carson)

The Curse on the Woman

Genesis 3:16

To the woman he said, "I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you."

(Can also be translated against your husband or contrary to your husband.)

There are several interpretations of part B of this curse: *"Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you."* I will interpret it by what is called the complementarian view, which I believe is more closely founded on exactly what the Bible says.

Complementarians believe that male headship and female partnership were established before the fall during creation: Adam was created first and given primary responsibility. Eve was made as a helper corresponding to him, in harmony and without oppression. Headship is viewed as a loving, servant-hearted responsibility for the man, not a harsh domination.

- The wife's "desire": Rather than a healthy submission, sin introduces a competitive or manipulative impulse in the woman to usurp or control her husband's leadership.
- The husband's "rule": Rather than loving and gentle leadership, the man responds with harsh, domineering, or passive-aggressive control over his wife.
- The distortion: The curse did not invent male headship; it corrupted it. Sin turns mutual harmony into a power struggle characterized by domination and resistance.

The Curse on Adam

Genesis 3:17 – 19

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,' cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; ¹⁸ thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. ¹⁹ By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return."

Notice the order of God's interrogation when he comes into the Garden after the Fall.

1. He addresses Adam first in verses 9 – 11: *But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?" ¹⁰ And he said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself." ¹¹ He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?"*
2. He addresses Eve second in verse 13: *Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."*

The Effect of the Fall on Relationships

First, the relationship to God is changed.

God continues his relationship with mankind after the Fall, but it is riddled with man's sinfulness and disobedience, which interferes with the relationship and causes all kinds of consequences.

We still can see God's creation today as one of order and love, lavish and beautiful. But because of the Fall, we also see elements of disorder, evil, ugliness and folly.

Second, the relationship to evil is changed.

Before the Fall mankind did not know the effect of evil, though evil was present.

The theme of the Old Testament – the "rule" in the Garden of Eden – was to know and live by God's created order. It is referred to as "the fear of the Lord" in Proverbs. The fear of the Lord brings blessing and order and peace. It is when we fall for Satan's lies that we experience cursing and chaos and shame.

Proverbs:

9:10: The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight.

10:27: The fear of the LORD prolongs life, but the years of the wicked will be short.

19:23: The fear of the LORD leads to life, and whoever has it rests satisfied; he will not be visited by harm.

Third, the relationship in marriage is changed.

In the Garden before the Fall there was no relationship problem between man and woman. Afterwards there is competition and lack of harmony.

Fourth, the relationship to vocation/work is changed.

Adam and Eve worked before the Fall. Work was good; it was enjoyable. It produced good things. Work became a burden only after the Fall.

- What is your experience with relationships—marriage or otherwise? How often are you having to deal with broken relationships of one kind or another?
- What is your experience with work or careers? Has it been mostly satisfying or has it seemed more like an unfortunate necessity rather than a fulfillment of God's order?

The Curse Reverser

If you have been born into God's family through faith in Jesus Christ, you have the curse reverser: Jesus Christ! Jesus reverses all these curses!

Galatians 3:13: *Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree"*

Because of Jesus and his redemptive work, we can be free from the curses, even as we live in a sin-cursed world.

- **We can have a personal relationship with God through Jesus.**

John 17:8: *"For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me."*

John 14:6: *Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."*

- **We can have victory over sin through Jesus.**

1 Corinthians 10:13: *No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.*

- **We can have peaceful, joyful relationships with each other through Jesus.**

John 13:34-35: *"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."*

1 John 4:7: *Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.*

- **We can have a positive relationship with work because we can do all work to glorify Jesus.**

1 Corinthians 10:31: *So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.*

Ecclesiastes 9:10a: *Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might.*

The Effects of the Curses:

On the Serpent: Satan continues to do all he can to "bite our heels" and affect our lives in harmful ways. But the good news is that the seed of the woman, Jesus Christ, will bruise his head. It is Jesus Messiah who will defeat Satan and he has defeated him through the Cross.

Romans 16:20: *The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.*

On the Woman: Childbearing became painful. As with all human functions, the Fall has made the task of giving birth more difficult. And bearing children will bring other pains.

On Marriage: The relationship between men and women still bears the curse of the Fall. The woman will desire to rule over man, and instead man will rule over her. The history of man's leadership is also the tragedy of the Fall.

On Work: The joy of creative lordship over the earth was reduced by the Fall. Work did not begin at the Fall, but it was corrupted at the Fall.

We all live in this third chapter of Genesis—living with the effects of the curses. This universal experience is proof of the biblical claim that we are all children of Adam, descendants of the pair who opened the story of humanity in the Garden of Eden.

Genesis 3: 20 – 24:

The man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living. ²¹ And the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them. ²² 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 of the tree of life and eat, and live forever—" ²³ therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. ²⁴ He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.

Repentance consists of two things. First, the awareness of the course of temptation. Second, the pair acknowledge the fact of their disobedience. They both come to the place where they say, "Yes, we ate."

Adam names Eve

He first called her "Out of Man," (Genesis 2:23) but now because of God's promise, he calls her "Life," which is the meaning of the word *Eve*. Adam changes the name of his wife because Eve has heard God's promise and believed it.

God makes clothes for Adam and Eve

This was a sign of God's redemptive activity. With the sacrifice of another's life, he clothed Adam and Eve. He killed the animals, he made the skins, and he clothed them. They did not clothe themselves, but God dressed them.

It is a strong indication of God's provision for the sins of the world. You and I need clothing to make us acceptable to God—to cover our shame. And again, God provides the clothes for us through the sacrifice of his Son, Jesus Christ.

Isaiah 61:10: *I delight greatly in the Lord; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of his righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.*

Galatians 3:27: *For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.*

Sent Out of the Garden

Once Adam and Eve confess to God and he stores them and clothes them, it is a public mark of acceptance by God. Adam and Eve are now received of God and owned again by him.

Then God seems to have drastically changed his attitude, as he drives Adam and Eve out of Eden, slams and locks the door behind them, and sets a guard in the path to keep them from coming back in.

God says, "What if man, doomed now to guilt, shame, limitation and loss, should now take and eat of the tree of life, and live forever" (Genesis 3:22). It would mean that man would never physically die but would go on in his evil condition forever.

So, sending them from the Garden and the tree of life was God's loving solution.

There was a way in, but it is no longer a physical way. It is Jesus. Man must be kept from trying to come through some physical way but must be forced to find the right way back. That is what the cherubim and the flaming sword are for. They absolutely cut off any other way to God than the right way. There is no other way, only one.