

**Pentecost 3 / June 9, 2024**

**Genesis 3:13**

**“I will enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.”**

**He shall bruise his head. He shall bruise His heel**

Genesis chapter three is foundational to the Christian understanding of sin, human alienation from God and the reconciliation between God and humans in Christ Jesus. It begins with humans living with God, each other and creation in peace. It concludes with the humans at odds with each other, cast out of the presence of God and under the condemnation of death. The Serpent, not your garden variety snake, but the devil and Satan, tempts them to eat the fruit of the one tree that God had forbidden to them. The immediate consequence of their action, which was more than simply eating some forbidden fruit, but mistrusting God, was a sense of distance from each other and a terror of God. They hide from God and each other.

The purpose of this chapter is to show the origin of sin and its sad effects in our relationships with each other and God. But more than the origin of sin and its instigator the devil, the great purpose of this chapter is to lead us to Jesus: The promise of His coming, the redemption from the consequences of sin; servitude to the devil, bondage to sin, alienation from God and death. The Lord promised a Redeemer to be born of the woman. There is a Redeemer, Jesus Christ our Saviour. The serpent bruised His heel on the cross. He crushed the serpent's head with the stone of His empty tomb Easter morning.

Genesis 3:13 is referred to as the prototype or first expression of the gospel. In announcing the consequences of sin in human suffering and death, and in condemning the serpent for its action in tempting humans to sin, God gives hope to the man and the woman, promising redemption from sin and the condemnation of death. In speaking judgement to the serpent, the Lord promises that one of woman's offspring will deliver a crushing blow to his head, while himself receiving a wound to his heel. Some people have passed this off as a folktale, expressing the universal fear of snakes, who will bite our heels if we are not watchful for their presence. In terms of the context and seriousness of the narrative this seems a very weak explanation.

The context of this verse is the temptation of humans by the serpent, identified elsewhere in scripture as the devil and Satan. The temptation put before the woman and the man was to do what God had forbidden, eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the midst of the garden. The bait was that by so doing, they would become as gods themselves. How that relates to the fear of snakes is beyond me. The humans took the bait. The tempter triumphed. But instead of becoming gods themselves, they were alienated from God and became the thralls of the devil, captivated by his spell and under his control.

God's judgement on the serpent is significant for two reasons, neither have anything to do with the fear of snakes and the danger of snake bites. First, the Lord puts enmity, hatred and resistance, between the woman's offspring and the serpent. He's not talking about garden variety snakes, but the great serpent, identified elsewhere as the devil and Satan. The devil has great power over the human spirit and more influence over our will than we realize. His power is great, but not absolute. God set a limit on evil, saying that part of the human spirit will resist the will of the devil. Second, and most importantly, the Lord promises that one of the woman's offspring will completely resist the devil, bruise his head and take away his power. Jesus overcame the temptation of the devil in our place, trusting God's word. Jesus offered His perfect obedience for our disobedience. Jesus reconciled us to the Father in forgiveness through the blood of His cross. His heel was bruised, but He crushed the serpent's head.

Genesis is a book of foundations. Foundational to the faith of the Old and New Testaments is the fall into sin, separation from God, alienation among humans, physical and eternal death. Foundational to Genesis and all the Old Testament, is God's promise to send a Redeemer to set His people free from the devil, the effects of sin and the condemnation of death. Eve believed the promise. After the death of her son Abel and the banishment of the brother who murdered him, Eve rejoiced to have another son. She called his name 'Seth', which means 'appointed.' She called him Seth, because she believed the promise and hoped he was the offspring appointed to redeem them from bondage to sin, the power of the serpent and the condemnation of death.

Seth wasn't the appointed One, but the promise remained. In the fullness of time, a son conceived by the Holy Spirit was born to a woman in Bethlehem of Judea. He was given the name Jesus, for He would save His people from their sins. He was tempted by the devil, but unlike his human ancestors, He overcame temptation and passed

the test. His heel was bruised, but He was not destroyed. He suffered grievous injury, experiencing the pains of death and bearing the sin of the world. He was bruised for our sins, but in His suffering, He inflicted a far more deadly bruise to the serpent, taking away his power over humans by taking away the sin of the world. He took away the serpent's power with His death. He crushed his head with the stone of His tomb Easter morning. Jesus is the promised offspring of the woman. In Him we are set free from the tyranny of the serpent, the control of sin and the condemnation of death. In Him we are reconciled to the heavenly Father in peace in time and for eternity.

Genesis is foundational. God builds His church upon its promise; Israel in the Mount Sinai Covenant, the Holy Christian Church in the Covenant made new in the blood of Jesus. Two names, but one church. Israel are the people who live with God through faith in His promises. St. Paul said not all of Israel are Israel. His meaning is that only those who live with God through faith in His promises are truly members of His church. God's first promise in Genesis was an offspring of the woman to undo the effects of their sin, release them from the control of the serpent and set them free from the condemnation of death that they might again live in the glorious freedom of the children of God. Eve believed the promise.

When the Lord spoke, Eve didn't think He was talking about garden snakes or snake bites. She knew the Lord was talking about Satan and giving them a promise for hope. She believed the Lord's promise and, in this hope, she continued to bear children with her husband, awaiting the appointed One. The bible is a book of promise and faith. We see people who believed God's promises despite monumental obstacles to their faith. God wants us to believe Him. God wants us to believe His promises. Israel are the people who believe God's promises. The faithful in Israel looked to the day the Lord would send the woman's offspring to redeem them from sin, save them from death and release them from the control of the serpent. Jesus is the promised offspring.

God continued the promise first made to Eve through Abraham. He promised to make his offspring a nation and through them bring blessing to all nations. Abraham believed God and the Lord counted Him as righteous. On his death bed, Abraham's grandson Jacob spoke God's promise to his sons who became the twelve tribes of Israel. He promised a king, saying to Judah, "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet until tribute comes to him; and to Him shall be the obedience of the peoples." Jacob believed God's promise to send a king through the line of Judah. Jesus is the promised King.

Centuries later, as the nation of Israel wallowed in war, idolatry and unbelief, the Lord reiterated His promise, saying through the prophet Micah, "But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you will come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel whose origin is from of old, from days of eternity... And He shall be their peace." Those who were of Israel, of the household of faith, believed the promise of the redeemer and waited in hope for Him who was begotten from eternity, to born in time; Jesus our God and Saviour. He made peace between God and humans through the blood of His cross.

The promises of Genesis are foundational to our faith. Jesus is the fulness and fulfillment of God's promises. He is our Redeemer from sin, the devil and death. He is our great God and only Saviour, promised to Eve, born of Mary. In Galatians St. Paul wrote of the promise fulfilled in Mary, saying, "When the fulness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons." God's promises are fulfilled in Christ Jesus. All who believe God's promises are fulfilled in Christ Jesus, receive forgiveness of sin, peace with God and the promise of sharing in His resurrection to life everlasting. The Holy Spirit open our ears to hear, our minds to believe and our hearts to receive Jesus our Saviour. In His Name. Amen