



What if evil happened in this world, and everyone just thought, “Whatever. No big deal. Let’s just ‘forgive’”? I don’t think the majority of this world would think that way with regards to Hitler. What he did was not no big deal. Or, if you know anything about Rasputin, you can hear the wickedness from his own writing. What about murderers and abusers? Do we want those individuals to simply get off the hook and do whatever they feel makes them happy? I hope not!

The reality is that humans have an innate sense of the need for justice. Even in Revelation 6, we read of Christians who were killed for their faith, and we’re told that they pray to the Lord asking how long until their blood is avenged (Rev. 6:10). Whether you’re a young child and you get angry for someone hurting you or you’re an adult who is struggling with hurts that people have brought into your life, you know what it feels like for justice to win. We know that justice matters in affirming the truth – and if you’ve been a victim, justice brings stability to you because you know that evil doesn’t win.

But there’s tension we may feel with this. We say we want justice, but what about forgiveness? We all know that we are sinners, too, and that poses a problem for us. We admit what the psalmist wrote in Psalm 130:3, “³ If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?”¹ Certainly, there are sins that incur stricter judgment than others, but every sin is an act of rebellion against God, and if God is just, then he must judge every sin.

What do we do with this tension? Many people try to answer this tension in their own ways. Some say we can harbor bitterness towards some people or we can simply write some off. Others say that essentially everyone will be forgiven in the end – and then justice is drained completely. But none of these are the answer. We know that both justice and forgiveness are essential. And, the Bible reveals to us that both can be exercises – but only God can do this. Justice and mercy can come together. And this is what we see clearly in the text we’re looking at today. In these three verses we see **God’s glory is revealed through promising mercy through his declaration of judgment.**

Adam and Eve’s mission was to image forth God’s glory together. According to Hosea, this was the covenant God made with Adam (Hos. 6:7), and they were to extend the expression of God’s glory out of Eden to extend over the whole world. But they failed. At this moment, God had every right to take Adam and Eve’s lives. He could have destroyed the entire creation. Justice could have been done in doing so. But God doesn’t do this. Instead, he comes to the garden in order to fulfill the mission given to Adam and Eve. God doesn’t destroy. He comes to reveal his glory – which is what all creation (and Adam and Eve) needs.

In arriving in resplendent glory, hope has arrived. It may not have felt like hope had arrived. Adam and Eve are being judged by God. But God’s glory is on full display when he reveals his mercy through

¹ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ps 130:3.

judgment. Many of you remember last year when we went through a series on this theme. You might recall Exodus 34, where God is speaking to Moses. Notice how the scene is described to us: ⁵**The Lord descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord.** ⁶**The Lord passed before him and proclaimed, “The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, ⁷keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children’s children, to the third and the fourth generation.”**² The Lord descends in a cloud and reveals his glory. What is his glory? Mercy through judgment. Justice and Forgiveness come together.

This is what we will see here in Eden in God’s punishment. Today, we’re only focusing on the serpent and Eve. And in these three verses come some of the most prophetic, profound, powerful, pleasing verses in all of Scripture. Behold the glory of God – the glory of God to judge and bring order from chaos. What justice! What mercy! **God’s glory is revealed through promising mercy through his declaration of judgment.** We see this in how he communicates judgment to the serpent and to the woman.

1. God’s glory is revealed through his declaration of judgment to the serpent.

After Eve confesses her sin, and admits that she was deceived by the serpent; God immediately turns his words towards the serpent: 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.”³

With both the serpent and the woman, we see that God’s judgment involves a functional and relational punishment. First, let’s talk about the **functional** reality (mobility and food). The serpent will travel on his belly and will eat from the dust all the days of its life. This is intriguing, isn’t it? According to tradition and Scriptures, the serpent was a tool of Satan, and forever, the punishment on serpents should be a reminder to us of Satan’s demise. Satan used the serpent to communicate with Adam and Eve. We were told earlier in the narrative that the serpent was the most craft and subtle of all creatures in the garden. And now, the crafty serpent is the cursed serpent.

But who cares if it just has to move on its belly and eat from the dust. What does that mean or signify? Think of Psalm 72:9, which says, “**May desert tribes bow down before [God], and his enemies lick the dust!**”⁴ Or recall Isaiah 49:23: **Kings shall be your foster fathers, and their queens your nursing mothers. With their faces to the ground they shall bow down to you, and lick the dust of your feet. Then you will know that I am the Lord; those who wait for me shall not be put to shame.**⁵

Being bent to the dust and eating from the dust is a symbol of ultimate humility and subjugation. Dust, the place of lifelessness that must have God’s breath breathed into it or else it remains death. This movement in the dust is a place symbolizing being cursed. So, what seems to have been the case is that before this curse, serpents had legs and they ate better. Now, it’s different. So, whenever we see serpents moving on their bellies, we ought to recall the subjugation of Satan. Do you believe this? I think many times we can live in fear of Satan’s “power,” but all the way in Genesis 3, we’re told that Satan is a

² [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ex 34:5–7.

³ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ge 3:14.

⁴ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ps 72:9.

⁵ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Is 49:23.

defeated enemy. Do you believe that, Christian? While it might seem like Satan might be getting an upper hand over God, that is never the case! He is cursed!

God will not allow Satan to win. And this moves us to the second part of the curse, the **relational** part in verse 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.**⁶ There will be constant conflict between the serpent's offspring and the woman's offspring. This verse actually can sound kind of confusing. Are we talking about literal serpents here or the one behind this serpent, meaning Satan? It becomes clear that God is talking to Satan. But how do we know this? And if that's the case, is Satan's offspring demons? What does all of this mean?

I'm glad you asked. First, the Hebrew word for "seed" can be used in the singular or the plural. For example, we're told that Cain is the offspring of Eve. Solomon is referred to as the offspring of David. But this word for seed can be plural, talking about generations. So, the word is used to talk about Noah's offspring. In Genesis 9:9, God makes a covenant with Noah and his offspring after him. That refers to *everyone* who comes after Noah, including us today. So, which is it? Is the offspring *one* person or is the offspring many people?

I think the answer is *both*. As we move through Genesis and into the rest of Scriptures, we see this idea. In the genealogies, Moses writes to communicate that the genealogies separate between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman. For example, we have a Lamech who is abusive to people and his own wives, in contrast to the lineage of Seth that leads to Noah. This doesn't mean that every person in those lineages were either good or bad. But Moses writes to show that there's a line leading to the *one* seed that's going to crush the serpent. I love how a man named Victor Hamilton writes about this: **Would this individual, or these individuals, be among the kings of Israel and Judah who are the 'offspring' of their father (2 Sam. 7:12; Ps. 89:5. . .), who 'crush' their enemies (Ps. 89:24. . .) "under their feet" (2 Sam. 22:39), so that these enemies 'lick the dust' (Ps. 72:9)? Later revelations will state that it is Jesus who reigns until he puts all his enemies under his feet (1 Cor. 15:25; as quot. in Hamilton, p. 200).**

When we get to "he will bruise your head," that's in the singular form. There's *one* to come who is going to bruise the head. So, history moves on and then we get to God's people in Egypt. The pharaoh decorates himself with a serpent on his head. Does that seem ironic? I think it ought to be because God administers judgment to Egypt through Israel, and God brings Egypt down to the dust. God leads Israel to the promised land. And eventually back in the land, God gives them a similar commission as to Adam and Eve in the garden. Remove the idolatry. In essence, don't allow snakes to slither in the land. Together, as a people, are to spread God's glory. And then we get to King David, as an example of a greater serpent-crusher. When he fights against Goliath, what does he do when Goliath has fallen to the ground? He cuts his head off. There are so many other circumstances in the Old Testament that are symbols of the seed of the woman warring against the seed of the serpent. But all of these examples move us towards *one* seed of the woman.

This is exactly what Genesis 3:15 is talking about! But many people seemed to get very messed up in their thinking of who the seed of the serpent is. Some thought it referred to being a biological Jew. But that's not right. When Jesus comes to this earth, he says to the religious people, **"⁴⁴You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires."⁷** This was extremely angering to the

⁶ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ge 3:15.

⁷ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Jn 8:44.

people. They're Jews! Aren't they God's special people? From a biological perspective, they were, but what we discover from Jesus, and the Old and New Testament, is that anyone who is faithless is the seed of the serpent. If you do not turn from yourself as central and turn to the Lord Jesus as your salvation and hope, then you are the seed of the serpent. Why do I say this? Because Jesus is the seed of the woman. I love how one commentator wrote about this, saying, "

So, getting back to this text, there's a question for you, "**Are you part of the seed of the woman or part of the seed of the serpent?**" Do you trust in Jesus or do you follow the serpent's ways – living for your own self and your own way of doing things? Why not trust Jesus? His life, death, resurrection, ascension, and current reign crush the serpent's head! In Hebrews 2:14, we read, "**14 Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil. . .**"⁸

Jesus' victory came at great cost to himself. The serpent crush's the seed of the woman's heel. There is pain. There is fighting. But the response of the seed of the woman is to crush the serpent's head – it's a death blow. So, we see with Jesus. Read what the prophet Isaiah prophesies about the serpent-crusher, seed of the woman: **He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.**⁹

This was written a thousand years before Jesus, and so perfectly describes Jesus' sacrifice in his life and death on the cross. But we're told that he was crushed and pierced for our sins. He took the sins on himself. Where Adam failed, Israel failed; Jesus was victorious. He perfectly displayed God's glory and then took the punishment we deserved so that justice would be satisfied. And in justice being satisfied, we could receive peace and forgiveness! Do you see this? Jesus crushed the serpent on the cross! Justice and mercy come together! And so, we're told in Romans 3 that Jesus took our sins on himself ". . . **to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.**"¹⁰

In God stating a curse to the serpent, he's promising hope for humanity! Do you see his mercy through this judgment? Eternal mercy through God's justice being put on display. Behold the glory of God in the garden! And this glory is going to extend to the whole world. I'd love to end the sermon here, but we must move to the judgment of Eve. And, like the serpent, we see functional and relational punishment:

2. **God's glory is revealed through his declaration of judgment to the woman.**

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 contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you."¹¹

The seed of the woman will bring victory over the serpent, but it's not going to be easy. The **functional** aspect of the punishment comes to the woman's childbearing. The word for "childbearing" in the Hebrew isn't simply talking about labor and delivery. The literal translation is "conception." The idea

⁸ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Heb 2:14.

⁹ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Is 53:3–5.

¹⁰ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ro 3:25–26.

¹¹ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ge 3:16.

includes everything from trying to conceive to the emotional, physical, mental pains and difficulties faced as a result of pregnancy.

I know that men sometimes have joked that if men were to get pregnant, the human race would have been snuffed out, but I tend to think that's true. Almost nothing about pregnancy appeals to men. Sometimes when I talk to women about the struggles and pains they experienced, I then wonder why they want another. But, even as I joke about this, there is an immense seriousness in this, too. So many women have died trying to give birth. Many children, including one of my own, have died in the womb. And so many women long to be mothers and they cannot get pregnant.

As I say this, I want to ensure that you know that this punishment is not something that God says he wants to be the case. The enemy is Satan, sin and death. And Jesus came to remove the curse – and it will be removed completely someday. But the reality is that because sin entered the world, brokenness to the very core of human existence has come about, and this is traumatic and lamentable. Yet, we must not lose hope in the serpent-crusher. While this pain might seem unbearable, the serpent-crusher will come.

But then we have the **relational** punishment between husband and wife: your desire shall be contrary to your husband, and he shall rule over you. There are actually many ways to interpret this verse, and I'm not going to get into all the options. Instead, I'm simply going to state what I think. This phrase shows up when God confronts Cain on his sinfulness, and God says that sin's desire is for Cain, and Cain must rule over it. The idea is that sin wants to take control of Cain, and Cain needs to master the sin so that sin doesn't. Given the close proximity of this phrase, I think this is the same idea here in Genesis. As a result of the Fall, the sweetest of relationships – the relationship where the couple was to be naked and unashamed – is now a relationship that is affected by shame. The woman will try to control, and the man will try to dominate. This is not how it ought to be. We were created to, together, rule under God's rule – not controlling or dominating each other. We see this in our world, too, don't we?

I still remember a movie many years ago, where a young girl was wanting to go to college, but she knew her dad wouldn't have any of it. The mom said she'd talk to the dad, and he'd listen. The girl was doubtful because dad was the head. But the mom said something like, "The dad is the head, but I'm the neck, and I can move it any direction I want." Might have been a funny line in a movie, but that's not godly marriage. That's manipulation. That's not relationship. On the flipside, how many men think that leadership is simply being able to dominate and ensure everyone does what he says. That's domineering, and it's nowhere near the meekness of Jesus Christ. There's so much brokenness in marriages, and the serpent loves this.

But before you start feeling hopeless in hearing the punishments to woman, remember the seed of the woman. The serpent wants to destroy lives. He doesn't want to see humans on this earth – get rid of them in any way. He also wants to destroy marriages. But the seed of the woman comes to destroy the destroyer. And so, we even see in Ephesians 5 that marriage itself can be restored through Jesus. In this famous passage on marriage, Paul says that marriage is intended to picture Christ and the church's love for one another. The man is to picture Christ. The woman is to picture the church's love for Jesus. Paul then quotes from Genesis about marriage, and then he moves on to a conclusion and says, "**However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.**"¹² Why does he say this? Because the curse is that the husband doesn't love his wife and the wife doesn't

¹² [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Eph 5:33.

respect. But if you've turned to Jesus for forgiveness and cleansing, your marriage can be restored to meaning and hope. Do you follow the seed of the serpent or the seed of the woman?

Now, this doesn't mean that if you trust Jesus, there will be no more struggles. We still battle against sin and death, but we are told that those who trust Jesus progressively grow in godliness. Instead of suppressing women, Paul says to his friend, Timothy, that we in the church are to treat each other with love like brothers and sisters. To the church in Corinth that was only thinking about power struggles, calls them to recall the love they have in Jesus so that they can now love each other and not seek to control one another. Then in Romans 16:20, we read of God's promise to us as Christians that ²⁰**The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.**¹³ Because we are united with Jesus, the serpent-crusher, the serpent is also crushed under us! Then we read in one of the final chapters of the Bible: ¹⁰**and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.** ¹⁴

The serpent will be crushed, and finally death, sin, sorrow, sadness will be done away. Our sorrows will be gone. Oh, **ponder the beauty and comfort of God's glory coming down to the garden to communicate mercy through these judgments. Where Adam and Eve failed, God declares that he will succeed. And through Jesus, he has and will! Praise God the serpent will be crushed.**

¹³ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ro 16:20.

¹⁴ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Re 20:10.