

## Message - Gen. 3:15 – Surprising Grace

Judgment Day arrives. God reviews the billions of people assembled, and says, “Welcome to Heaven. Women, go with Saint Peter. Men, form two lines. One line shall be men who ruled their woman on Earth. The other line shall be men who were ruled by their woman.” After much movement and shuffling, all the women are gone, and there remain two lines of men. The line of men that were ruled by their women is hundreds, perhaps thousands of miles long. The line of men that ruled women has but one man standing. God reviews the two lines, points to the long line, and in a voice that echoes angrily throughout Heaven says, “You men should be ashamed. I created you in MY image, and you all were ruled by your wives. Behold! Only one of my sons stood up and made me proud. You shall learn from him!” God turns to the one man standing, smiles, and says, “Tell them, my son, how did you manage to be the only one in that line?” And the man says, “I don't know, Lord. My wife told me to stand here.”

God probably had in mind Genesis 3:16 where He told Eve “...your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you.” (ESV)

Now, let's look at the verse before that, the surprising grace inserted between the fall and the judgment in paradise.

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.” (ESV)

This is a very important, perhaps, even the most important verse in the whole Bible. Especially, today as we are witnessing the rapid degradation of our society and increasing wickedness in our world. Just read the news and watch the films promoting degenerate lifestyles. This reminds me of the state of the world before God sent the flood. Genesis 6:5 (ESV), “The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”

Sadly, even churches are forsaking biblical values for worldly values.

A recent study from the Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University found that a mere 37 percent of Christian pastors in the United States have a biblical worldview. George Barna did a nationwide study of about 1,000 Christian pastors. Barna found that the majority (over 62 per cent) of the pastors surveyed possess a hybrid worldview known as Syncretism. That's the combining of different beliefs and various schools of thoughts foreign to the Bible.

This part is the most disturbing. What's more, the study found only 13 percent of teaching pastors and 12 percent of children's and youth pastors have a biblical worldview. Again, the study found only 13 percent of teaching pastors and 12 percent of children's and youth pastors have a biblical worldview.

Why is that a big concern? Studies have shown that a person's worldview primarily develops before the age of 13, then goes through a period of refinement during their teens and twenties. That's why I personally believe youth ministry is very important.

According to George Barna, "From a worldview perspective, a church's most important ministers are the children's pastor and the youth pastor," he said. "Discovering that seven out of every eight of those pastors lack a biblical worldview helps to explain why so few people in the nation's youngest generations are developing a heart and mind for biblical principles and ways of life, and why our society seems to have run wild over the last decade, in particular."

But wait, there's hope. In this verse, we have the initial unfolding of the good news, God's plan of redemption and ultimate salvation for fallen man.

Many theologians consider our scripture passage today as the "Protevangelium." That's the theological Latin term meaning "first gospel." It refers to the promise of Genesis 3:15 that the "seed of the woman" would conquer the "seed of the serpent." According to the Lexham Bible Dictionary, "This concept is applied to Jesus as Messiah."

One of those theologians, Charles A. Briggs wrote, "'The protevangelium is a faithful miniature of the entire history of humanity, a struggling seed ever battling for the ultimate victory. Here is the germinal idea which unfolds in the sufferings and sorrows, the hopes and joys of our race until it is realized in the sublime victories of redemption. The protevangelium is the only Messianic prophecy which has been preserved from the revelations made by God to the antediluvian world.'" Antediluvian refers to the time before the flood.

Martin Luther called this the first announcement of God's grace. This is the favor shown by God to sinners. Grace is the unmerited and unconditional gift of God's love that we can never earn or deserve.

Gen. 3:15, introduces us to God's surprising grace. It's completely unpredictable considering the circumstances surrounding this announcement.

What were those circumstances? Genesis 3:1-16, is the account of Adam and Eve's choice to believe the serpent rather than obey God. They chose to be like God, so they ignored God's one and only restriction in the garden – do not eat the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. So, in the middle of the dire consequences of the first sin, we have v. 15 that promises all is not lost. What a surprise! In that dark moment when paradise was lost, God's surprising grace brings hope to a seemingly hopeless situation.

By the way, have you ever wondered why Eve was not surprised or startled by her encounter with the serpent? Think about it, Gen. 3:1 says, "the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made." So, not only was the serpent gifted with speech, but also gifted with reason. He was reasoning and disputing with Eve.

The serpent probably walks erect, too, or else the curse "you will crawl on your belly" will not make sense. (Genesis 3:14)

Anyway, serpents are acknowledged for wisdom (Mt 10:16 ...be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. ESV). But these reptiles were at first, probably, far superior in beauty as well as in shrewdness to what they are in their present state. Why did God make the serpent craftier? The Bible does not tell us, so we really don't know. Some theologians think the purpose was to share wisdom but wisdom can also be used for evil as in this case.

**Surprising grace** - The bible is about the grace of God – His gracious purpose to make right what Satan totally messed up by leading the first human beings to rebel against God.

### **1) Surprise to Satan**

After convincing Adam and Eve to reject God by their disobedience, Satan was expecting total victory. He succeeded in forming an alliance with mankind against God. He knew Adam and Eve were going to multiply. So, by leading them into rebellion, he expected the rest of the human race will now serve him instead of serving God. He assumed, he would be the god of this world forever.

But the expected alliance was short-lived. God will not let this alliance continue, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring."

The word "enmity" refers to hostility, not fear. The curse does not mean that from then on all women will fear snakes—that's not the case even today. Yes, some women may have an aversion towards the slithering creature but not all. Also, the curse is not aimed at the woman, but at the serpent.

Enmity is deep animosity against another person. In this case, it means a continuing war between the serpent's descendants and Eve and her descendants. So God will regenerate Eve and she'll turn around and hate Satan. Then, she will have a number of descendants, God's elect, who will oppose him. If you're a believer today, you are one of those offspring. When God regenerated you, your alliance with Satan ended and you are now at war with him. If you are born again, you are not counted among the devil's offsprings anymore.

### **2) Surprise to Adam and Eve.**

In the darkness that descended over creation after the fall, God promised hope. In the new world's darkest moment, hope was given. This was a surprise to Adam and Eve, as they came out of hiding and trembled in the face of God's judgment. In the midst of their guilt and shame, instead of condemnation, they were given a gracious promise. Remember, it was only the serpent and the earth that got cursed but not Adam and Eve.

The woman's offspring will bruise or overwhelm (shuph) Satan and his minions.

In verse 20, right after receiving the death sentence, Adam named the woman "Eve." That means mother of all living because from her seed will come the One who gives life and the ones who will be given life. Ultimately, from her seed will come the One, Jesus, who will give eternal life.

Grace is about the love of God to the undeserving. What a surprise? Even we were surprised by our second birth, being born again from above. The apostle Paul's conversion was a surprise. Remember Paul's encounter with Christ on the Damascus roadtrip?

I'm sure there are also a lot of conversion surprises here in this room. Remember that time when you were born again and your surprise and excitement in receiving God's amazing grace.

The enmity was not limited between Satan and the woman but will continue until the devil and his offspring are finally defeated. Until then, the war goes on.

Sadly, not all of Eve's first offsprings will have enmity with Satan.

"We should not be like Cain, who was of the evil one," John wrote in his first epistle (1 John 3:12).

Jesus told the religious leaders who opposed and rejected him that they were like their father, the devil.

John 8:44 "You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires."

This conflict between Satan and God is evident throughout history. This enmity rages on today – inside and outside this building. Yes, even within the church there are false prophets and false teachers who claim to speak in the name of God. These wolves in sheep's clothing proclaim a fake gospel that makes people feel good on their way to hell.

Terrorism, abortion, and rabid persecution of Christians continue here and in other countries. Believers have suffered and died for their faith and their Lord from the earliest days right up to the present day. In fact, it might surprise you to learn that the century that has seen the most Christians put to death for their faith was not the first, second, or third century, but started from our own twentieth century!

This brings us to the next surprise.

### **3) Surprising Grace in Affliction**

The third surprise is that the banishment from paradise was actually a gracious act of God. First of all, the presence of fallen or imperfect beings would ruin the perfection of paradise. Like if you find and join a perfect church, your imperfection would ruin that perfect church.

It was also not beneficial to fallen man because living in paradise will not induce repentance and change. "If it's all good, why change." Of course, there was also the matter of eating from the tree of life that would prevent the death sentence from being carried out. (Gen. 3:22, NET)

And the Lord God said, "Now that the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil, he must not be allowed to stretch out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever."

Affliction and distress can be strong motivators for returning back to God.

Psalms 119:67 "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep your word."

[Psalm 107:6](#) “Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress.”

And this verse is repeated in verses 13, 19, and 28 of Psalm 107.

2 Corinthians 12:8-10 “Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. <sup>9</sup> But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. <sup>10</sup> For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”

Affliction, distress, and weakness turn to blessings with the power of Christ in us to give us strength

After about four years of backsliding in the 80s, being afflicted led me back to the Lord... When I was in misery under God’s discipline, watching my world collapsing all around me, my Godly wife reminded me, “don’t you think it’s time to come home?” By God’s grace, I’m home, and still graciously being disciplined.

Yes, Brothers and Sisters, God’s grace can turn afflictions into blessings. That’s surprising grace.

#### **4) The Ultimate Surprising Grace – Jesus Christ**

The special delivery of the One who will fulfill the promise of Gen. 3:15, is the 4<sup>th</sup> and ultimate surprising grace -- Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. He’s the seed whose birth we celebrate on Christmas Day.

“between your offspring (plural) and her offspring (again plural), then the shift – he (singular) shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”

The woman’s seed, not the man’s seed, turned out to be a prophecy of the virgin birth. This was literally fulfilled in two New Testament records: Matthew 1:23 “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son...” and Galatians 4:4 “God sent forth his Son, born of woman..” It’s not stating the obvious but something unique.

Isn’t it ironic? It was a woman who was first tempted and started the fall, yet God chose a woman to produce the One who will bring Satan’s final downfall.

Jesus is our heavenly surprise, our gift of grace deposited in the womb of a woman.

Charles Feinberg wrote, “the great and crowning defeat of man's spiritual adversary was accomplished by Him who was in a special sense the 'seed\*' of the woman, the representative of humanity, who overcame once and for all the power of the Evil One.”

The threat in Gen. 3:15 is both clear and obscure. It had to be expressed in sophisticated and cryptic ways to ensure that the powers of darkness would be misled. And it was. Even the angels didn’t know the plan.

“It was revealed to them (the prophets) that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things.” (1 Pet 1: 12).

It left Satan in the dark about what woman will give birth to the Seed of the Woman. So, he had to think of every woman as possibly becoming the mother of the Seed that will crush his head or bring his complete downfall.

“Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away. <sup>7</sup> But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. <sup>8</sup> None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. (1 Corinthians 2:6-8)

Satan’s defeat was actually the death of Jesus on the cross that gave the complete payment for all the sins from the time of the fall until eternity. Surprise!!!

### **Now What?**

There are only two offsprings – the serpent’s offspring (unbelievers) and the woman’s offspring (Jesus and all believers).

To the Unbelievers –Admit that you’re a hopeless sinner under condemnation and repent. By faith, believe in Jesus as your Lord and your Savior who suffered and died on the cross for the forgiveness of your sins.

To the Believers – continue to oppose Satan’s offspring

Yes, your heel will also be bruised. These heel strikes are evident everywhere. Christians are bombarded with immorality through the internet. Our youth are attacked with sexually explicit songs and vicious video games promoting wicked lifestyles. In schools and colleges, they are ridiculed and called bigots for their biblical values. Pregnancy support centers are firebombed for providing pregnant women alternatives to killing their babies. Even Supreme Court Justices are not safe from the heel strikes for ruling to overturn Roe vs Wade.

Yes, brothers and sisters, the serpent’s heel strikes are all around us, on TV, movies, social media and even in our careless conversations. In churches, the serpent’s bite marks are seen in the splits on political correctness or being woke.

But don’t be discouraged and depend on our Lord’s surprising grace to outlast the serpent. “The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.” (Romans 16:20)

HUMPTY DUMPTY had an unsolvable problem. We have a problem too, but ours has a solution.

Jesus Christ came to our wall,

Jesus Christ died for our fall;  
So that regardless of death and in spite of sin,  
Through grace, He did put us together again.