

A Curse Laced with Marvellous Mercy

Genesis 3:14-19

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Introduction:

Today in our sermon series in Genesis, we continue to make our way through chapter 3.

- This is a dark chapter in many ways because it shows how the whole human race fell from their original state of happiness, uprightness, and communion with God.
 - When we came from the hand of our Creator, we were richly blessed with all of these, but when we rebelled, we lost these blessings.
 - People are often puzzled about why there is so much death and suffering and wickedness in the world if indeed God is a good God.
 - They are puzzled because they do not accept the explanation that is given here in Genesis 3—
 - that it is because our father Adam sinned and so fell under the curse of God.
- Last week we saw how Adam and Eve knew that they had done a very wicked and sinful thing...
 - And how knowing this, they tried desperately to hide from God...
 - And even when the Lord God came and drew them out of their hiding places, even then they resorted to evasion and excuses instead of frankly admitting their sin.
 - Yet, even in these dark events, there was the very fact that the Lord came seeking them out and drawing forth a confession from them...
 - This is an act of great mercy—
 - We should be thankful when He exposes our sin—it is because He aims to show mercy to us.
 - This showed that He still had plans for them.
 - This is an absolutely marvellous thing, and we need to be thankful and not resist Him when He points out our sins to us.
 - It is an act of mercy to make us face them so that we will turn to His wonderful provision of forgiveness and deliverance in Jesus Christ!
- And now, in our passage this week (verses 14-19), we come to more darkness as we see the change in the condition of Adam and Eve on account of the fall...
 - We saw that when God created them, He put them in paradise—there was no sin, no sorrow, and they were provided with all sorts of wonderful things.
 - In this section, God pronounces upon them the pain and sorrow that they must now endure because of their sin...
 - And this is pain and sorrow that we must also endure as their posterity who share in this sin.

- It results finally in death—in returning to the dust from which we were made.
- But in looking at these dark verses, I am going to show you that they are, in fact, laced with marvellous mercy—
 - there is all kinds of mercy all through them!
 - This mercy is especially evident when we know the rest of the story—what God has in store for His people who are reconciled in Christ.
 - We are going to take full advantage of our vantage point in looking at this passage with the shadowy promises as those who know how the promises here were unfolded in subsequent ages!
 - Adam and Eve ought to have had a great deal of encouragement in the hope that is revealed...
 - But when we look at how God actually went about to fulfill these promises so fully and so wonderfully,
 - we have all the more reason to be encouraged!
- But let me tell you—apart from Christ—this is all very dark and dismal.
 - If you are here today without Christ, you will find it very difficult to accept what is written here.
 - It is too much for you to accept.
 - Outside of Christ, it is a curse without hope...
 - But in Christ, even the dreadful pronouncements of curses and suffering actually become sources of hope and promises of blessing!
 - To put this another way, the *reality* of this fallen world is intolerable for those who are outside Christ,
 - but in Christ it is full of redemptive hope.

So let's take a look at these curses that are laced with mercy in Christ.

- I will read from the beginning of chapter 3 to give you the context, but our focus will be on verses 14-19.
- Here is the Word of God:

Genesis 3:1-19: Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, “Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?’”² And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden;³ but of the fruit of the tree which *is* in the midst of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.’”⁴ Then the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die.⁵ For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes

will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”⁶ So when the woman saw that the tree *was* good for food, that it *was* pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make *one* wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.⁷ Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they *were* naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.⁸ And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from

the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. ⁹ Then the LORD God called to Adam and said to him, “Where *are* you?” ¹⁰ So he said, “I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself.” ¹¹ And He said, “Who told you that you *were* naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?” ¹² Then the man said, “The woman whom You gave *to be* with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate.” ¹³ And the LORD God said to the woman, “What *is* this you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.” ¹⁴ So the LORD God said to the serpent: “Because you have done this, you *are* cursed more than all cattle, and more than every beast of the field; on your belly you shall go, and you shall eat dust all the days of your life. ¹⁵ And I will

put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.” ¹⁶ To the woman He said: “I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; in pain you shall bring forth children; your desire *shall be* for your husband, and he shall rule over you.” ¹⁷ Then to Adam He said, “Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, ‘You shall not eat of it’: Cursed *is* the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat *of* it all the days of your life. ¹⁸ both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field. ¹⁹ In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you *are*, and to dust you shall return.”

May the LORD bless the reading of His holy Word.

Now we saw last week in verses 7-13 how the LORD drew out at least a bare admission from both Adam and Eve that they had eaten the forbidden fruit...

- I say a bare admission because each sought to blame others—Adam blamed Eve and Eve blamed the serpent...
- But rather than debate with them to bring them to a fuller confession,
 - the LORD simply proceeds to pronounce His sentence—first upon the Serpent, then upon Eve, and then upon Adam.
 - I will follow this order today—
 - that is, we will look first at the sentence upon the serpent, then at the sentence upon Eve, and then at the sentence upon Adam...
 - And we will see what each of these sentences entails, but also look at how each is laced with mercy for the church (here called the seed of the woman).

I. So first, the curse upon the serpent.

A. For the serpent, it is only a curse.

1. You will notice in the first place that the LORD does not even attempt to draw out a confession from him as He had done with Adam and Eve.
 - He had come to Adam and asked him directly if he had eaten...
 - And then when Adam said that the woman had given the fruit to him, He turned to the woman and said “What is this that you have done?”
 - But when the woman says that the serpent deceived her, the LORD does not turn to the serpent to say “What have you done?”

- He turns to him only to curse him.
 - I remind you again that you should be very thankful whenever the Lord exposes your sin instead of just cursing you...
 - He does it that you might have a chance to repent.
 - But there is no need for Him to approach the serpent because the serpent is already beyond repentance.
2. You will notice further that it is only a curse for the serpent—there is nothing for him in the way of mercy.
- a. The creature itself—the snake—is cursed above all other creatures...
- 1) First, it is said that it must crawl on its belly—
 - Whether the anatomy of the serpent was changed, or whether God simply associated the anatomy it already had with the curse,
 - it is from henceforth to be seen as a slithering lowly creature—cursed more than the other creatures who also bore pain from the fall.
 - The snake is brought from its exalted position as more clever than the other creatures to this lowly slithering place that it now occupies.
 - 2) The enmity that is mentioned between the serpent and the woman’s seed also applies—
 - Serpents kill more people with their attacks than any other creature...
 - Mosquitoes kill more people by transmitting diseases like malaria and yellow fever,
 - But from its own resources, snakes kill about 50,000 people per year compared to crocodiles which kill 1000, lions and elephants each kill 100, and wolves and sharks each kill about 10.
 - Even if you include tapeworms and roundworms, they kill less than 5000 a year between them.
 - 3) But we saw before that the serpent was simply the creature that was used by Satan as his instrument...
 - The serpent itself does not even talk—except by the agency of some intelligent being like Satan...
 - So does God curse the snake?
 - It is because these wretched creatures were the instrument that Satan used to bring about the demise of mankind...
 - Just as a father might break the sword that killed his son—not because the sword itself is evil, but because the father loves his son, and it was the instrument of his son’s death.
 - In His vengeance against the serpent, we see our heavenly Father’s love for mankind and for His own honour that makes Him zealous for man who bears His image.
- But this curse obviously extends to more than mere snakes.

- b. In cursing the serpent, the LORD is in fact pronouncing His curse upon Satan who employed the serpent as his image.
 - What is powerfully presented here is that Satan, who sought to destroy man, will himself be destroyed by man!
 - This is a direct attack on his pride.
 - Being a superior being, Satan thought it easy to get at God by attacking man who bears His image,
 - and I suppose it was easy enough...man proved an easy target.
 - But to Satan's great chagrin, God will raise up the seed of the woman to conquer him!
 - What a terrible sting this is to his pride!
 - He would rather have anyone besides the son of man do him in.
 - Take a look at v. 15 and you can see that this is what God is going to do:
 - **Gen 3:15: And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.**
 - You see that though the serpent is said to bruise, or batter the heel of the woman's seed—her offspring...
 - That her seed will bruise or batter his head...
 - A crushed heel is destructive to be sure, but a crushed head is fatal...
 - And that is the point...
 - Satan himself as well as his seed will be completely conquered so as to rise no more.
 - Now of course from this shadowy prophecy, it is not yet clear that the seed of the woman is the Son of God incarnate,
 - but what is clear is that the woman will bring forth a son who will destroy the Devil.
 - It should be understood that the seed referred to here is, both for the woman and for the serpent,
 - both collective and individual.
 - There is conflict that goes on between the serpent and his offspring and the woman and her offspring,
 - but it culminates in a final battle between this male seed of the woman who arises to crush the head of Satan himself.
 - Satan is chagrined to learn that he will be brought down—of all things—by the seed of the woman!
 - This, of course, is all worked out by the Son of God being born of Mary, and coming forth to fulfill all righteousness for all of His seed (the church),

- and so being given authority to judge Satan and his seed (all those who belong to him) and to cast them into the Lake of Fire by which they are completely conquered.
- What a dreadful end for the proud serpent!

B. But consider what a great blessing this is for the seed of the woman!

1. I mentioned before that this seed of the woman is the church—

- Perhaps I need to explain this...
- a. By “church” I mean what Jesus calls:
 - His people, whom He comes to save from their sin—He was to be named Jesus because “He will save His people from their sins.”
 - The great assembly to whom He declares His victory,
 - His sheep, who hear His voice and come to Him,
 - His seed, whom He “sees” when He dies on the cross,
 - Those that the Father had given Him, to whom He gives eternal life, and who are drawn by the Father,
 - Those whose names are written in the book of life,
 - Those who have part in the first resurrection and so have new life in Christ as new creations in Him,
 - Those who are called, chosen and justified through faith in Him,
 - His brethren whom He is not ashamed to call His brethren because He has made them perfect through His sufferings,
 - The true circumcision and the Israel of God who keep God’s commandments because they are circumcised in heart,
 - All those who are born from above by the Holy Spirit whom Jesus gives to them...
 - The sons of Abraham who delight to see His day.
- b. The seed of the serpent, on the other hand, are those who, though technically the offspring of the woman,
 - are fallen with all of the rest of her physical offspring and brought under the dominion of Satan and are never delivered—never saved from their sins, never redeemed—
 - who die in their sins, as enemies of God, without reconciliation, without faith in Jesus, without ever being born again and without ever being adopted into the family of God.
 - They are without hope because they are without Christ.
 - They are Satan’s seed because they remain in league with Satan and are not what is referred to in Genesis 3:15 as “the woman’s seed” who arise in their head Jesus to overcome Satan and to destroy him.

2. Consider the blessing that is given to the seed of the woman—the whole church in this curse upon the serpent!

- a. First, in that God Himself puts enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent.
 - This is one of the ways we know how to distinguish what is meant by the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent.
 - God divides them—He puts enmity between them—He makes them enemies!
 - This is wonderful enmity—given the circumstances!
 - If God did not do this, we would have gone on being friends with Satan forever!
 - We would have gone on in his rebellion, warring against God, in bondage to Satan and to sin with no hope of deliverance.
 - That is the condition that Adam and Eve and all their offspring were in because of the fall...
 - But God turns those called the seed of the woman against Satan and against all who remain in league with him!
 - How does God do this? How does He turn us and put the enmity there?
 - Well, He comes to us by His powerful Holy Spirit and by His Word and He shows how wrong we are to be in sin and against God...
 - He shows us how wrong Satan is and how wrong it is join him in his rebellion...
 - He convinces us of how wrong it is.
 - And then He shows us how Jesus Christ has come to suffer the penalty of our sin so that we can be forgiven...
 - He makes us want to come and be forgiven and restored...
 - And praise be to His name—He turns us so that we do actually come to Jesus for pardon and for new life and then,
 - when we come, He gives us new life and He justifies us and He adopts us into His family and He enables us to become more and more like Jesus and He gives us eternal life in Jesus.
 - One way to say this is that He turns us against Satan with whom we were all aligned by the fall.
 - He delivers us from his dominion and brings us into the kingdom of Jesus Christ, the righteous one,
 - who brings us to eternal glory to live with Him forever.
 - He releases us from Satan's iron grip.
 - This enmity, which to the serpent is dreadful curse,
 - is to the seed of the woman the root of all blessings!
 - Now let me ask you—do you have this enmity against the serpent that has caused you to own up to your sin so that you have come to Jesus and have been delivered?

- If not, then you are still with the Devil and there is no hope for you until you repent and trust in Jesus who alone destroys the Devil and his workmanship (whose workmanship you are until you repent).
- Do not think that you have to be a Devil worshipper to be in league with Satan...
 - Oh no—he has servants who take pride in their morality and in their civility and goodness... as well as those who sacrifice cats and try to cast spells on people.
 - You are Satan’s seed until you come to Jesus Christ because you remain in the rebellion that Adam and Eve initiated in the garden from themselves and their offspring.
 - Jesus is the only one who can deliver you.
- And I tell you, if you have come to Jesus, then you know what it is to wage war against Satan; even against your own flesh—
 - the remaining corruption that is in you—you have to fight daily against your sin—you have to deny yourself...
 - And you know that to do this successfully, you must call upon Jesus to give you both the wisdom and the power you need...
 - The wisdom to know what to do,
 - And the power to be enabled to do it!
- So you can see how this enmity is for us a great blessing.
 - How dreadful it would have been for us to be left with Satan.
- b. The second blessing for us from the serpent’s curse is the promise here that he will be conquered...
 - We have already seen this—his head will be crushed or battered.
 - We can be sure of this even as he crushes our heel—
 - As he pounded upon Jesus when He was on the cross, but only with the result that Jesus arose from the dead with healing in His wings...
 - And Satan still pounds the heel of the church—bringing all kinds of trouble and destruction,
 - He brings division between brothers...
 - He brings tares into the church who do great harm to us...
 - He sends persecutors to try to wipe us out...
 - And even as he tempts us as individuals and sometimes succeeds in bringing us into sin against our God... even into very grievous sins so that we feel helpless...
 - But we can know in all of this that we are more than conquerors because God has promised right here in Genesis 3 that he will only crush our heel and that we will crush his head!
 - This gives us the hope of eternal life!

- Jesus tells us in all of our tribulation when we are weary under Satan's blows to be of good cheer, because He has overcome the world!
- If you are in Jesus, you are more than conquerors through Him who loved you and gave Himself for you!
- Nothing will be able to separate you from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

TRANS> What blessings there are for us in the curse pronounced against Satan!

- And now, with this blessing in mind to cheer us,
 - Let me show you the blessing laced curse that is pronounced against the woman and then against the man...

II. The curse against the woman that is laced with blessing

A. She is struck right at the heart of her role or calling as a woman.

1. First, she is struck in her role as mother.

- You can see this in the first part of verse 16:
 - **Gen 3:16: To the woman He said: "I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; in pain you shall bring forth children..."**

a. Adam and Eve both were given the amazing blessing and calling to be fruitful and multiply...

- In other words, to bring forth children like themselves—children that were bone of their bone and flesh of their flesh!
 - As those made in God's image, they were able to bring forth children of beauty, truth, and goodness—
 - Children that would be a beautiful and true reflection of their Creator...
 - And it was Eve in particular who was endowed with the ability to bear these children and to nurture them.
 - What joy she would have in these children!
 - Eve was indeed to be the mother of all living!
 - What a delight they would be—with all of their diverse personalities, yet all living together in perfect unity and love.

b. But now Adam and Eve, being fallen into sin, can only bring forth sinful children.

- Children that are naturally in league with Satan unless Christ delivers them, and children who quarrel with each other and dishonour their parents.
 - What sorrows there are now!—what heartache!
 - Eve will have to watch her son Cain murder her son Abel...
 - And besides this sorrow and pain, there is also the physical suffering that goes along with childbirth...
 - Many women have died on the birth stool.

- And there are the cramps and the pains associated with the woman's cycle—
 - all to remind her that she was the one who allowed the serpent to deceive her.
 - Childbearing, her glorious privilege, will now be a thing with many sorrows and hardships associated with it.
2. And look as well—she is struck in her role as Adam's wife...
- a. She was formed by the Lord, as we saw in chapter 2, to be Adam's wife—
 - She was made of his substance that she might be a suitable companion to him who was like him (bone of his bones and flesh of his flesh).
 - It was her delight to serve him and to please him and to delight him—her joy was in her relationship with him.
 - b. But look at how this closest of all relationships is cursed—according to the second part of verse 16 where the LORD says:
 - **Gen 3:16: Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.**
 - The point here is that she will have relational problems with this one that she was given to have an intimate relationship with...
 - Her desire will be for him—the word desire is very general—but the point is that she will yearn for him to be what he is not...
 - She will be dissatisfied with him and trying to change him—
 - She will want to control him.
 - And yet, all the while, he will rule over her—
 - No longer will he exercise loving authority that is for her sake—in which he gives of himself for her sake,
 - but now he will dominate and oppress her.
 - His authority will be exercised in a selfish way,
 - either as one who puts everything off on her...
 - or as one who makes unreasonable and selfish demands.
 - Instead of labouring to bless her, he will labour to control her and exploit her.
 - How many women's greatest sorrows are found in their relationship with their husbands—or with men!
- B. But I want you to see that there is still a blessing in this curse!
1. First of all, in that even though she has sorrow and pain and struggle in her role, she is still able to...
 - bring forth children and to live with a husband.
 - When Adam and Eve fell, God might have entirely terminated their ability to be fruitful and multiply...
 - Why should God wish to see children of corruption that would distort His image by their sin and corruption?

- Why should He allow marriage to go on when it would not be a picture of the relationship He has in His headship over the Son?
- But this curse shows that still she will marry and that still she will bring forth children...
 - Sorrow will be added, but these things will still be done!
 - And in many cases, women are still able to find a great deal of joy in their relationship to their husbands and in bearing children.
 - And even if they do not marry or bear no children, they are able to enjoy their role as a nurturer of the society at large...
- 2. And even more—when we join this blessing of childbearing with the promise of enmity against Satan, it truly does become a blessing!
 - Those who come to Christ are able to have a part in filling the earth with a godly seed—in Christ!
 - God calls the children of believers, in particular, “My children” and declares that they are “holy” rather than unclean.
 - In Malachi He rebukes His people for divorce because, He says He seeks a godly offspring.
 - And so you see that in Christ, the blessing of bringing forth children is restored—because now we can once again fill the earth with a godly seed!
 - That is what God’s original intention was!
 - These are children who, in this fallen world, come forth with enmity against Satan and who speak for truth, humility and righteousness... confounding their enemies in the gate.
 - We are able to bring forth warriors for Jesus Christ who help us fight against Satan and his seed to establish Christ’s righteous kingdom.
 - Yes, the curse is certainly felt and there remains corruption even in the godliest households,
 - but through the power of the resurrected Christ, we can look for marriages and children that bring glory to God.
 - Is this not the primary reason that God left us with this ability to bring forth children...
 - Because He knew that He would turn His elect against Satan and that they would come forth in Christ as a kingdom of righteousness?
 - Yes indeed!
 - We can still fill the earth with a godly seed in Jesus Christ...
 - Through Him, what was cursed becomes a blessing again!

III. Now let us consider the curse that was put upon the man...

- A. First of all, I want you to see the reason that God gives for the curse upon the man because it is very instructive to us...
1. Of course it was for eating the forbidden fruit that he was cursed...

- We have seen that this was a test of the man's loyalty by which he could have shown his love and fidelity to God...
 - but in eating, he declared his independence and rebellion as one who wanted to put himself in the place that belongs to God only.
 - He wanted to decide for himself what is good and what is evil instead of leaving that for God to decide.
- Of course Adam is cursed for eating the fruit, but there is another reason that is given as well—something we don't want to miss...
- 2. You will remember how Adam blamed (as he said), **the woman that You gave me**.
 - Well look at how God turns this back on him and says, verse 17:
 - **Gen 3:17: "Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it': "Cursed is the ground for your sake;"** and so on...
 - Isn't that great?
 - God puts the man with his excuses in their place as if to say:
 - You told me that you ate from the tree from which I told you not to eat because your wife gave it to you...well then—I am cursing you not only for eating but also for listening to your wife when she told you to do what I had forbidden...
 - Now you have two sins instead of just one...
 - I gave her to you to be a helper to you in serving Me, and now you have gone and listened to her when she told to you to do what I had forbidden...
 - You are cursed because you listened to her!
- 3. This is so helpful for us to think about.
 - a. Whenever you make excuses, you just add to your guilt!
 - When a child fails to do what he is asked and he says, "I forgot," he should get twice as much punishment...
 - Not only did he disobey what you asked him to do, but he also was so indifferent about it that he put it out of his mind!
 - b. You can do this with every illegitimate excuse...
 - Understand of course that some excuses are legitimate...
 - But when they are not—the excuse only makes what you did or did not do even worse.
 - The child who says, "I did not take out the garbage because I was tired" needs to be told, "you mean you let tiredness get in the way of obeying me?"
 - Jesus deals with the lazy servant this way who said he did not serve because of afraid of his austere master...
 - The master replies to the servant: "if you thought me to be austere then all the more you should have invested my money..."

- Let us learn from this not to make excuses before God.

TRANS> Now having seen the reason for the curse on the man, let us look at the curse itself.

B. As with the woman, the man is stuck right at the heart of his role or calling as a man.

1. Already, he has been informed in the woman's curse that he will be an oppressor...with problems in his marriage and problems with his children.

- This is a dreadful thing to be told—you who were made in My image will be a selfish abuser,
 - even toward the one you ought to protect and cherish most of all...
 - You will be impatient toward her and you will hurt her and you will even tyrannize her!
 - You will be lazy and not provide for her as you should and you will rather indulge yourself in your own selfish desires...breaking up the relationship that I gave you with your wife that would have been so beautiful.
- Men think they are breaking free of God when they follow their lusts,
 - but in fact they are being turned over to God's curse and to bondage—
 - They are actually destroying their ability to enjoy pleasures by their wrongful pursuit of pleasure.
 - It's true! The more you lust, the more you go for porn, the more you destroy your ability to enjoy sex.
 - So also, the wrongful pursuit of food and drink brings you into bondage to food and drink.
- And of course at the same time, the man will have to bear with the woman who desires him in her selfish sinful way—
 - in the sense of wanting him to be what he is not—
 - in desiring to control him and to have him be this way or that way, even if he is doing what he ought.
 - The curse pronounced upon her certainly pertains to him...

2. But the man is also cursed as to his own particular calling...

a. You will recall that when God created him, the LORD told him that he was to subdue the earth...

- This involved taking the earth's resources and bringing them into service for the blessing of himself and his neighbour to the glory of God.
 - We saw that man was given work to do as a blessing.
 - As an image bearer of God, he was able to serve others and to bless them by labour.
- One of the principle things he was given to do was to tend the garden and to till the earth that it might bring forth food for him and his family.
 - But his work would include everything from building houses to painting pictures, from training animals to studying about the planets, from chemistry to poetry, from organising nations to cooking meals...

- b. But you can see that the very ground is cursed because of Adam's sin.
- Look at verse 17-19...
 - **Gen 3:17-19: Cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. ¹⁸ Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field. ¹⁹ In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return.**
 - 1) You can see here that the earth will no longer produce so willingly for him as it did before the fall.
 - And why should it?
 - Why should it nourish the one who is in rebellion against God?
 - That would be like a nation providing food and equipment for a foreign army who has come to their border to invade them.
 - 2) The same language is used as with the woman—in toil she brings forth children—in toil Adam eats of the ground...
 - There are things in nature that will hurt him and interfere with his productivity—there are storms and (as we saw in verse 15) snakes.
 - Work was a God-given blessing just as bearing children was a God-given blessing, but now it will be full of difficulty and sorrow.
 - 3) And the most devastating thing of all is the end result...
 - The man will toil until he returns to the ground!
 - He was made from the earth to rule over it and to subdue it, but it will end up subduing him.
 - The ultimate humiliation is to be returned to dust and ashes.
 - This is what sin has done to the one who was made in God's image!
 - As a perverted image, he is no longer fit to be sustained by the earth, and the earth will eventually swallow him up.

C. But I want you to see again that there is a blessing in this curse also!

1. First, a blessing is seen in that the earth will still produce for him at all!
 - The blessing is found in the words, "you shall eat bread."
 - Three times he is told that he will still eat...
 - Yes, his productivity will be hindered and he will be faced with droughts and pestilence and weeds and thorns at every turn...
 - But he will still be able to eat his daily bread and to provide for his family...sometimes he will even be able to provide well!
2. And as we saw with the woman in Christ, just as she and her husband can bring forth children for the glory of God,
 - so the man can bring forth from the earth for the glory of God.

- And in Christ, the family that he sustains through his toilsome labour will be a family that brings glory to God!
 - It will be a family that is nourished to war against Satan and to build the kingdom of Christ by grace...
 - His sons will speak with their enemies in the gate!
3. But what about death... is that not the ultimate triumph of the earth over the man?
- a. In a way yes, but in Christ no!
- Remember what we saw in verse 15?
 - Satan and his seed do not have the final word!
 - All Satan can do to the seed of the woman is bruise his heel!
 - Death may seem like more than this.
 - It seemed like more than this when Christ died...
 - But you know what happened!
 - The ground could not keep its prey!
 - Jesus Christ arose—He broke the power of death because He broke the power of the curse—
 - not only as an individual person, but as the head of the church so that all who are in Him are assured of victory over death!
 - 1 Cor 15:54-57 sums this up beautifully, talking about our present bodies as “this corruptible...” it says:
 - **1 Cor 15:54-57: So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory.”⁵⁵ “O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?”⁵⁶ The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law.⁵⁷ But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.**
- b. Now look at Genesis 3:19...
- It says that Adam will bring forth food with toil and sweat *until* he returns to the ground from which he was taken!
 - Death, for the seed of the woman (those in Christ) signals the end of their toils!
 - In Christ, death is the bruising of our heel, but then we are raised up in victory to bear the curse no more!
 - For the wicked who remain joined in friendship with Satan,
 - Death will also result in a resurrection, but a resurrection to damnation where men and women will experience the full power of the curse that only Christ can break.
 - According to Christ, they will be gathered to Him for judgement and then cast into outer darkness which He describes as being cast:
 - **Mark 9:43-44: into the fire that shall never be quenched—⁴⁴ where ‘their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.’**

Conclusion:

So the question for each of you is this

- Right now, as you sit there before the Lord, are you the seed of Christ or the seed of Satan?
- There is no other category.
 - The earth has obviously been cursed because of man's wickedness—the curse can be seen and felt all around us...
- But if you are in Christ, the curse pronounced here in Genesis 3 is laced with blessings...
 - In Christ, there is the promise of broken allegiance with Satan—He brings us out from his dominion and frees us to serve God.
 - Have you been so freed? If so, give thanks, if not, then come to Jesus!
 - In Christ, there is the promise of fruitfulness in our calling—both the calling to fill the earth and the calling to subdue it—we will bring forth godly seed by His grace and sustain them even in this fallen world.
 - Are you serving Christ in His kingdom today? If you are, give thanks, if you are not, then repent and come to Him.
 - In Christ, there is the promise of ultimate victory over Satan in Christ—He bruises our heel, but we shall be raised to reign and he shall be conquered.
 - So what is your destiny?
 - Are you in Christ, the hope of glory, or are you still with Satan and headed for destruction and misery?