

A Foretaste of Salvation

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- [0 : 0 0] Bible, let's turn to Genesis chapter 3. Genesis chapter 3, as a lot of high school and college students do, I spent my summers working odd jobs.
- And one summer I worked at a small upholstery company in a man's garage in his backyard, a converted garage. Now don't get excited, I didn't learn anything.
- I learned how to tear up furniture and to stuff pillows. And while there I did learn two pretty amazing truths.
- One of them is that my co-worker, the ex-convict, could shoot his belly with a staple gun and not get hurt. And he wasn't even drunk.
- At the time, it was impressive. I mean, I was like Gomer Powell, Shazam, you know. The other thing I learned was when you reupholster, you almost remake furniture.
- [1 : 0 1] And if you want to get a piece of furniture reupholstered, it better be a good piece of furniture. Because when you rip all those insides out, there's hardly anything left except the frame.
- And if the frame's not built right, it's not going to amount to much. It was not until I got down to the fundamental basics that I really understood how furniture was made.
- Well, Genesis 3 gets us down to the basics about us and about sin. And we'll continue down that to see the slippery slope of sin when we continue in Genesis after Easter.
- But these three truths stand out to me. The first one is this. Sin is a foolish and selfish trap. After being tempted, Adam and Eve tried to pass the blame.
- And they also wanted to be their own God. That's what Genesis 3 verse 5 tells us. Not only that, but understand that sin causes alienation and it causes shame.
- [2 : 1 3] After sinning, they were ashamed and they hid from God. This whole emphasis on having pride in our society and all that goes with it, it's an attempt to avoid the shame of sin, quite honestly.
- And if you're proud of your sin and you're not ashamed of it, then it must not be sin. That's the idea. It's kind of an attempt to rewrite the script, if you will. And the script never changes the reality because sin causes alienation, causes shame.
- The third truth is this. Sin comes with horrible consequences. It lowers us to the lowest level of life, to the dust. It leads us to be a victim of a manipulative devil, striking your heel.
- It brings burdens to blessings, increases pain of birth. It causes strains in relationships, desire but struggle in relationships. It brings toil into the triumphs of life, the thorns and the thistles that's mentioned.
- It brings difficulty and burden to the fruitfulness of life. That's what working the ground is talking about in Genesis chapter 3. And this morning we look at the only hope that a sinful humanity has.
- [3 : 3 4] We actually see a foretaste of a wonderful and real salvation that can only come through Christ. In Genesis chapter 3, beginning in verse 20, and it says this, The man called his wife's name Eve because she was the mother of all living.

And the Lord God made for Adam and his wife garments of skin and clothed them. 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. Therefore the Lord God sent him out of the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken.

He drove out the man and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed a chair upon him and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to this tree of life.

When we look at this passage, we see in reality the love that the Father has for us. Despite the fact that we turned against him, and not only did Adam and Eve do that, but Romans 3.23 tells us that we've all sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

[4 : 51] So we've all turned against him. In his love though, he provides a way. The traits of God that we see here are the same traits that make up our hope. And this passage, I believe, is just a foretaste of our salvation.

Notice first the mercy of God. It's found in Genesis chapter 2 verse 16 and 17 and it says, And the Lord God commanded the man saying, You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat.

For in the day that you eat of it, you shall surely die. God said in the day that they would eat of it, they would die. Did they?

Did they? Yes and no. What is death? Well, biblically, death is separation.

Death comes in a lot of different ways, not just physical death. Death. Relationships die. Dreams die.

[6 : 07] Opportunities die. And in Genesis chapter 3 verse 6, there was a spiritual death. Their relationship with God was divided.

There was, as Jesus refers to at one point, a chasm between them and God. They hid from God. They no longer walked with him in the cool of the day.

They were ashamed of who they were. And now separated. Without some hope of God, we have no hope of renewal. They went from walking with him to hiding from him.

They went from shame to covering themselves. They went from blessing to curse because of their sin. And don't misunderstand. Physical death entered in the world at that time.

Adam and Eve did die one day, but God in his mercy did not eliminate humankind. In Genesis chapter 3 verse 15, in the midst of their curse, God also gave them a promise.

[7 : 10] And it's a promise that's easily missed, and I want you to get it. It says in Genesis 3 verse 15, I will put in between you and the woman and between your offspring and her offspring.

He shall bruise your head and you shall bruise his heel. You know what the promise is? Offspring. This ain't all there is. With Adam and Eve, they messed up.

They died spiritually right there when they bit that fruit. But the reality is, it was there, they were there, and they would have offspring, and that would show that there'd be new life.

Life would not stop. In other words, in his mercy, God allowed the life of humanity to continue on. We see this pattern often in the Old Testament. God will raise up a prophet.

A prophet will send a message of doom upon people. That if they do not repent and turn from their ways, they will die. And through that prophet, that promise will come.

[8 : 12] But with repentance, new opportunities come for them when they repent. Verse 20 tells us that God does not throw up his hands and disgust when we fail.

He does not abandon his crown creation. Instead, he offers newness of life. And in this woman, the lineage began that produced Christ, who is the hope of our salvation.

With our innocence gone, and our rebellious sin obvious, and our death deserved, God preserved us.

It's nothing but the mercy of God. But I also want you to see the forgiveness of God. For verse 21 speaks of the forgiveness of God.

Because when sin entered in, so did shame. And in a hapless, helpless effort, they tried to cover themselves.

[9 : 09] And they're not the only ones. When we are found in sin, we each try to find our way to cover our sin. We try to hide our sin. We somehow try to make it go away.

In Shakespeare's classic, Lady Macbeth tried to wash her hands of the murder, but she couldn't do it. When Pilate was standing before that trial with Christ, he tried to wash his hands of it.

But he couldn't wash his hands of it. He's the one that held the power to make the decision. With our sin comes shame. With our sin comes embarrassment. With our sin comes insecurity.

And we try to cover it up. How? We do it a lot of ways. Sometimes we do it by trying to act like it never happened. Huh? I don't know what you're talking about.

Sometimes we try to cover up our sin by justifying it. Well, if you only knew my circumstances, you'd understand. Sometimes we do it like we saw here. We point fingers at other people.

[10 : 09] Sometimes we try to justify it by trying to pay it back ourselves. And the reality is, folks, all of us have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. And we can't pay it back. We can't pay the price.

Verse 21 teaches us that when physical death is the cost of the sin, God always will provide that pardon. And these animal skins that they put on that God provided for them for clothing, that is a foreshadow of the sacrificial system.

And the sacrificial system of the Old Testament is the foreshadowing of the coming of Christ. While Adam and Eve are knitting their own fig leaves, trying to make an inadequate covering, the reality is they needed God's intervention.

And he provided the sacrifice that would cover their shame. And that is a foreshadowing of the whole sophisticated system of sacrifices that are covered in Leviticus.

And if you're doing the Bible recap, congratulations, you got through Leviticus. The details of all of that are pertinent.

[11 : 17] Because God wanted to show us the weight of our sin. As those fig leaves were knit by men and were inadequate, so are our works.

God provided a sacrificial system as a foreshadowing of the sacrifice of Christ. What Christ did one time covered what priests did every year.

I want you to hear this passage, but I don't really want you to hear it. I hope you get it. It's in Hebrews chapter 10, verse 11, and it says this, And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sin.

But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, waiting for the time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet.

For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified. The point is this, folks. It takes a work of God to cover our sin.

[12 : 32] When the runaway son came home, it was his father who came and covered his tattered clothes with his best robe. In the same way, God has covered the first sinners.

And in the same way, Christ shed his blood to cover our sins. Hebrews 9, verse 22 says, Without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sins.

I'm thankful today for the forgiveness of God. But not only do we see the forgiveness of God here in this passage, but we also see the holiness of God. I want you to see this because God knows us well and he knows exactly what we need.

And God knows the horrible devastation of sin. He knows that when we try to go without him that we're doomed. He never made us to sin.

Your bodies don't hold up to sin. He wanted us to avoid sin because it tears at our bodies. It tears at our world. And when we wanted to become our own God, and that's what happens when we sin against God.

[13 : 40] We choose our way instead of his way. Notice the temptation. Verse 5 says, Satan says, you will be like God.

That's what led her away. But truthfully, every time we sin, we do just that. We're saying that we want to be our own God. We want to do it our way.

And God has made us to have abundant life with his leadership in submission to him. And outside of that, we have no hope, folks. In reality, the knowledge of good and evil really is a curse.

Think about it for a moment. When we sin against God, we find out about stuff we didn't even need to know. When we walk away from him and do our own thing, we learn things that separate us from God.

That strain at our lives. When we take over our own lives, we'll always be led away from him. Therefore, what does God do?

[14 : 58] He puts us in our place. Verse 23 says, he drove them out of the garden and made them toil with the land to get by. Because when we rebel against God, he'll remind us from whence we came.

Why? Because he's a holy God. He does not tolerate sin. Psalm 24, verse 3 through 5 says this. Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? And who shall stand in his holy place?

He who has clean hands and a pure heart. Who does not lift up his soul to what is false. And does not deceive, swear deceitfully. He will receive blessing from the Lord and righteousness for the God of our salvation.

We see here not only his mercy, his forgiveness, we also see his holiness. And lastly and most thankfully, we see our hope in God.

We see our hope in God in verse 24 when it says, 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.

[16 : 09] It says he put a cherubim there. In the Old Testament, we see that the cherubim are angels and they're angelic guardians of the holy places.

In the tabernacle, they were stitched into the curtain that entered into the holy of holies. Not only that, but they sat atop the mercy seat on top of the Ark of the Covenant.

The most holy place. When the temple was built in the inner sanctuary of the temple, there were olive wood statues, two of them, 15 feet high with a wingspan of 15 feet wide.

Cherubim guard, the holy place. And here the cherubim are blocking the center from the paradise of God. And between the cherubim on the mercy seat, God said he would meet us.

All of that means that our only hope is in the Lord. Our only hope is salvation in Christ.

[17 : 18] He is all that we have. And he is all the hope that we need. Outside of his covering, the way to eternal life is guarded by his holiness.

It does not come from our good deeds. It does not come from our church attendance. Although, man, I'm glad you're here. It does not come from our baptism.

Although baptism is a mandatory step for obedience to God when you come to him in Christ. It does not come from our family heritage.

Although, if you've been raised with godly folks, you ought to thank him for it. What a privilege and a treasure it is. It does not come from our knowledge of the word as much as we ought to know the word of God and live the word of God and read and apply the word of God.

Our salvation does not come from that. It only comes through his death. And our response is what matters to us personally.

[18 : 28] Do we give our lives over to Christ? We have to decide that. Do we give him priority of those things that we like to hold on to?

Do we enthrone him as Lord of our lives? Let me be personal this morning. Has there ever been a time in your life when you've asked the Lord Jesus to forgive you of your sins, to come into your life and change you?

Lord, I can't do it myself anymore. I need your help. I need you to guide me. I need you to guide me. And if you have, are you where you need to be this morning?

I'm not talking about our location. I'm talking about with him. Since his death, he has told us to remember him by taking part in the body and the blood of Christ.

We'll close the service today with the Lord's Supper. And that Lord's Supper is a time to commemorate the cross of Christ. It's a time to reflect upon our future hope in him.

[19 : 55] But listen to me. It's also a time to analyze where we are now in our walk with him. It's a special thing.

It's only to be taken by those who've been biblically baptized by immersion and have openly confessed their faith in Christ. It's not a snack. It's not a ritual.

I don't like rituals. It's a reflection and a remembrance. And we need to be right when we take it.

And he tells us to take it regularly because we need to be right. So believer, confess and repent of your sin before doing this.

And if you can't walk away from your sin, walk away from the table. This invitation proceeds always do it before the Lord's Supper so that we can be right for the Lord's Supper.

[21 : 08] So I ask you today, what do you need to do to be obedient to the Lord today? What do you need to do?

If you've never given your heart and life to the Lord Jesus Christ, you need to surrender your life to him. He'll change you forever. The eternal life he gives kicks in immediately. And not only do you live forever, but thank God there's an uptick in your life.

Not only does the quantity of the years of your life change, but the quality of your life changes. He's come to give you life and give it more abundantly. You surrender your life to him, he'll change you.

Maybe you're here and you have done that, but you've never been baptized as a believer. You've never done that. We plan to baptize in coming days. So I encourage you, if you've never been baptized as a believer, to come, make that right.

Without doing that, it's a step of hindrance, I'll tell you. It's a step of disobedience to not do that as a believer. And maybe you are a believer and you've been baptized as a believer, but the reality is there's things not right in your life.

[22 : 19] I encourage you, whether it be at this altar, whether it be in your place, don't just sing through this invitation. Get your heart right. Make it right with the Lord.

If God's drawing you to this church, you feel led to be a part of us, don't let something special this morning take away from what God's leading you to do.

You come. We'll work all that out. I promise. I just want you to obey God today. Let's come before the table in the right way and honor God.

Remember his death until he comes. Let's pray together. Lord Jesus, I love you and I thank you. For the opportunity that you give us this morning to worship you, to give you honor.

And I ask right now, dear God, that you'll work and move in our lives. Help us, Lord, to simply be obedient to do exactly what you would have us do. And it's only in Christ's name that we pray.

[23 : 22] Amen.