Congregation of the Lord Jesus Christ,

One of the deadliest diseases in human history was **smallpox**. If you caught smallpox, in just a few days your whole body was covered in awful fluid-filled blisters. And three out of every ten persons who caught the disease would die. There is evidence of smallpox all the way back to 1500BC in Egypt. So, a great many people died of smallpox over the centuries. But in 1796, a doctor named Edward Jenner observed that a group of women who milked cows and caught a lesser form of the disease called cowpox did not get smallpox. And so, he began injecting people with cowpox. And in 1900, a more refined vaccine, rather than straight out cowpox, began to be administered all round the world. And the disease was eventually declared dead in 1980. And I expect that most or all of us did not know that we have Edward Jenner to thank for discovering a cure for smallpox. But we owe him our thanks for making it possible for us to not catch that disease.

Well, the cure for smallpox was discovered because Jenner and others finally got a full understanding of *what this disease was* and what *caused* it. And we noted last time that physical disease is not our only problem. In fact, the biggest problem we face as human beings is a spiritual one – the Bible calls it sin. And the ‘cure’ for sin is salvation. And Genesis 3 is a study of sin and salvation. It explains how sin entered creation, how serious sin is, and how sin is ‘cured.’ And in so doing, it lays the foundation for all that will unfold in the rest of the Bible, and especially for why Jesus had to come and die on the cross. Therefore, we do well to carefully explore this chapter.

* And we began to do this with the temptation of the serpent in verses 1-7. And our chief concern there was: Why does evil exist?
* But our study of sin and salvation proper began last time as we focused on sin and the **guilty activity** of Adam and his wife in verses 8-12. And we saw that, like them, we have a sinful nature, to which are added the sins that we personally commit. And so, like them, we deserve death and eternal condemnation.
* Well, the ‘cure’ for sin is called salvation. And we are introduced to it also here in the Garden of Eden. And it will be our focus today as we consider the **gracious activity** of God.

And congregation, if we owe Edward Jenner our thanks for curing one physical disease, then we owe God a lot more for delivering us from what our sin deserves! And we will see all this as we consider the four parts of this passage – the **gracious approach** of God, the **gentle call** of God, the **guilty curse** put on the serpent, and the **gospel promise** given by God. And my hope and prayer is that by the end of this sermon, nothing will be more amazing to you than the grace of God in Jesus Christ!

1. So, we begin with vv8-9 and the **Gracious Approach**.
   1. **Have you ever wondered what a world without sin would look like**? Our bodies, the sky, flowers – what would they look like and how would they function without sin? Well, because we are so immersed in sin, this is near on impossible to imagine. But we can safely assume that having eaten the forbidden fruit, Adam and his wife instantly saw and felt that everything had changed, for the worse. And God had also warned Adam that he would surely die on the day that he ate the forbidden fruit. So, now what? Well, I mentioned this in the last sermon, but in Leviticus 10 we read about the time that two priests were struck dead on the spot for not keeping a commandment of God. And in **Numbers 25**, because the men of Israel “*began to whore with the daughters of Moab*,” the Lord sent a plague among them and *24000* people died! So, we know that the Lord takes sin very seriously. And do you remember how the Lord appeared to the people when He gave them the law from Mt Sinai? It was a terrifying scene of smoke and fire and earthquake and trumpet sound. And so, it would have come as no surprise *if* we read in verse 8 that Adam and his wife were struck dead on the spot, or that the the glory of God descended into the garden, and His voice thundered forth, saying, “Come here, you wicked rebels!” That would have been no less than they deserved.
   2. But what we read instead is entirely unexpected; there is no fire or thunder or instant death. Instead, Adam and his wife “*heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the Garden in the cool of the day.*” And this really is an unexpectedly gentle scene, given what Adam and his wife had just done and were now doing!
   3. But of course, there is a word beginning with ‘g’ that is more fitting than ‘gentle’ and that word is ‘**gracious**.’ Can anyone tell us what grace means? Undeserved favour. And that is what is on display here – God’s undeserved favour toward Adam and his wife. For although they deserved death and condemnation, and did not deserve to be in the presence of God, He *comes* to them; He *seeks* them out; He *pursues* them, and He does it *so* gently!
      1. I think if you asked people to point to a passage in the Bible that reveals God’s amazing grace, most would instinctively turn to the New Testament. But the God of the New Testament is the God of the Old Testament. And the amazing grace of God is found right here at the dawn of history, as God seeks sinners!
   4. And in terms of what this teaches us about salvation, this is a preview of how the salvation of all believers will be accomplished. For Jesus Christ is God who came down to earth. And in **Luke 19:10**, Jesus said of Himself, “*For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost*.” And this scene also teaches us that it is possible for God to not treat us as our sins deserve. **Romans 6:23** says that “*the wages of sin is (what?) death*.” Sinners deserve to die. When we read in the Bible about the fire and judgment of God, that is not God losing the plot and going Over-The-Top, that is God dealing with sin *as sin deserves to be dealt with*. Again, if Adam and his wife had been struck dead on the spot, it would have been exactly what they deserved. But God graciously came to seek sinful and guilty Adam and his wife.
      1. Now, make no mistake, God *cannot* overlook their or our sin; it must be paid for. And we will see how Jesus Christ came to pay the sin price later in the passage. And there will still be consequences for their sin, which Adam and his wife will learn about also, and which we will consider next time. But they will learn this *after* God reveals His grace and forgiveness in the gospel promise that we will look at soon.
      2. But what you and I need to know, as guilty sinners, is that the God of the Bible is gracious, patient, kind, loving, gentle, and merciful!

1. And we see more of this in the next scene, which is God’s **Gentle call** of Adam and his wife, who were foolishly trying to hide from God.
   1. If you are a fan of detective shows like I am, you will know that when a lawyer wants someone to appear in court who does not want to appear in court, they will serve the person with a **summons**. And a summons is a legal document stating that the person must appear before the Judge on so and so date. Well, God could have summoned Adam to appear before Him. He would have been entirely within His rights, as his Creator, to demand that Adam crawl out from his ridiculous hiding spot and get over here, right now! But instead, “*God called to the man and said to him, ‘Where are you?’*” And it appears that these words were spoken in a gentle tone of inquiry, much as we might call out to someone if we have arrived at their house, and the door is open, but we cannot see them. But this is not to suggest that God did not know where Adam was. **Job 28:24** says, *“[God] … sees everything under the heavens*.” And in **Jeremiah 23:24**, we read, “*Can a man hide himself in secret places so that I cannot see him? declares the LORD*.” So, God knew *exactly* where Adam was. And God also knew *exactly* what Adam had done. In **Psalm 139:2-4,** the Psalmist says of God, “*You discern my thoughts from afar. You … are acquainted with all my ways. Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O LORD, you know it altogether*.” So, this calling out to Adam created the opportunity for Adam to experience God’s amazing grace.
   2. And notice what happened next. What we **do not read** is that Adam ignored God and chose to remain hidden. Instead, it is quite clear that Adam went to the Lord, immediately. And although his initial response was his most miserable and pathetic attempt to explain and shift the blame for what he had done, we will see, later, that he responded with faith.
   3. And there are more wonderful lessons about God’s amazing grace in all this.
      1. First, a vital part of salvation is **the call of God**. It is *pictured* here in God calling out to Adam, “*Where are you?*” But this is expressed in plain language in **Romans 8:29-30**. This is the passage known as the golden chain of salvation. We read: “*For those whom [God] foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son …* (Foreknowledge/Pre-destination = election) *And those whom He predestined He also called, and those whom He called He also justified, and those whom He justified He also glorified*.” So, a part of how God works salvation in those whom He has chosen is that He calls them.
         1. And the amazing grace part of the call is that it is **not deserved**.
            1. With Adam and his wife, God did not call them because they were eagerly searching for Him, desirous of confessing their sins. No, as we saw last time, they were hostile enemies of God who were not seeking Him at all.
            2. And this is the spiritual condition of everyone when God savingly calls them – hostile enemies of God. We see this in **Romans 5:8-10**: “*God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us* … *While we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son*.”
            3. So, the call of God is not something that any sinner deserves.
      2. And the second thing to note is that **God’s call** **is always effective**.
         1. It was so with Adam and his wife. For them, it was the voice of God that called them directly. And they came to Him, physically, but also spiritually, as we shall see later.
         2. But for His elect ones, today, God’s call comes through the reading and preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ. And God attaches His Holy Spirit to the words, and they travel through the air, and go in through the ears all the way into the heart/soul/mind. And the response is *always* repentance and faith.
         3. It is the I of the salvation acronym TULIP. Can anyone tell us what the I stands for? **Irresistible grace**. All those whom God has chosen to salvation will respond to the call of the gospel in repentance and faith.
   4. And **if you are a believer**, what this means is that you are so not because of a decision you made, but because God chose you before the foundation of the world and called you by His word and Spirit. And that is wonderful news because any decision of yours is like the hillsides out at Muriwai that can disappear in a moment. But the sovereign choice and call of God is like solid, immovable rock. It is why Paul ends Romans 8 with these glorious words: “*For I am sure that [nothing] will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord*.” God’s electing purposes cannot fail!
   5. And so, if you are not yet a believer, please respond to the gentle call of Jesus today. In **Matthew 11:28-30**, He said, “*Come to me, all who [carry a burden of sin and guilt], and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls*.” You can give your burden of sin and guilt to Jesus today. He will take it from your shoulders because He paid the price for it on the cross. All you must do is repent and believe.
      1. And I urge you to do so today because the gentle call of Jesus has an **expiry date**. It is the day that you die or when Jesus returns. And that could be later today. And if you have not responded to His gentle call before then, you will receive a summons to appear before Him on Judgment Day. **Romans 14:10** says, “*We**will all stand before the judgment seat of God.”* And if you did not repent and believe in this life, you will be sentenced to an eternity in hell on that day.
2. But I want us to see more of God’s amazing grace as we turn our attention thirdly to verse 14, which is where we see the **Guilty curse** that God placed on the serpent.
   1. I wonder if you noticed that while God *called* Adam and *asked* him what he had done and then *asked* the woman what she had done, He did not *call* the serpent or *ask* it for an explanation. He just immediately pronounced judgement and passed sentence. And the reason for this is that behind the activity of the serpent is the demonic influence of the devil. And because of his earlier rebellion in heaven, the devil was already under the sentence of condemnation. So, there was no need for God to examine the serpent/devil and there was no possibility of repentance for the serpent/devil. And we will learn more about the devil’s influence in this world, shortly, in the curse that the devil receives. But for its role in the Fall, the serpent is cursed. We read: “*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.*”
      1. And we can infer from this curse that prior to this moment, the serpent had been some sort of magnificent creature that walked upright, but now it was a defeated and slimy creature that would crawl on the ground.
      2. And snakes do, literally, eat the dust, which their forked tongues touch. But you will know also that whenever we talk about an athlete who unexpectedly loses a game or a politician who is fired for lying or cheating, the expression we use is that they ‘**bit the dust**,” right? And what we mean is that they have fallen down, low; they are defeated. So literally *and* figuratively, the serpent ‘bit the dust’ and would now eat the dust forever. From this day forward the snake would be a symbol of deceit and defeat.
   2. And think about Adam and his wife, here, as they heard this curse pronounced and saw this once beautiful creature become a hissing, slithering, disgusting snake. You can imagine the cold shiver that went down their spines as they realized that God had every right to pronounce a much worse curse on them! And that is surely what they expected God to do now do to them. And this should also hit us hard too. Your sin and my sin is utterly offensive to God. And we deserve His curse.
3. And that is why we must press on and end with the **Gospel Promise** in this passage, our fourth and final point. And we see this in the curse that is addressed to the devil in verse 15, where God said, “*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*.”
   1. Boys and girls, **enmity** means hostility, bad feelings, ill-will, hatred. When you and one of your siblings or schoolmates have had a squabble, and you sit on one side of the room with a scowl on your face and they sit on the other side with a scowl on their face, that’s enmity. There is no love or warmth or kindness. You just want to hurt them. And with this curse, God announced that there would be enmity between the devil and the woman, and between the seed or children of the devil and the seed or children of the woman. And congregation, this part of the curse is extremely important. Let me explain why:
      1. First off, it is extremely important because **it helps us understand our world**.
         1. As we have noted in earlier sermons, sometime before the Fall, Satan had rebelled against God in heaven. He wanted to take God’s place. He wanted to *receive* worship himself rather than offer it to God. But he failed in this rebellion. And the result was that he and the angels that had joined him were cast out of heaven.
         2. So, Satan now **turned his attention to humans on earth**. Maybe he could lure them away from the worship of God to the worship of himself. And he had been successful with Adam and his wife. They were, at this moment, worshippers of the devil. And that is because you are either one or the other. You are either a worshipper of God or a worshipper of the devil. Another way to put it is that before the Fall Adam and his wife were children of God, now they were children of the devil. And the Bible uses those terms.
         3. And we have spoken about this in an earlier sermon, but these words are about what we call the **antithesis** – the enmity between the children of God and the children of the devil that began this day and has continued throughout human history and will continue until Christ returns.
            1. It is why in the very next chapter Cain, a child of the devil, will kill Abel, a child of God.
            2. And it will be a controlling theme on every page of the Bible thereafter and come to a climax at the cross of Calvary.
            3. And it is why there is so much opposition to Christ and His Word and His people in society today. And it is why you will face persecution. It is because God has decreed an enmity between His children and the children of the devil.
      2. But secondly, this part of the curse is extremely important also because it is part of the gospel!
         1. At the end of verse 15, God will promise that one child of the woman will crush the head of the devil. And that is a promise about Jesus, as we shall see in a moment. But even before Adam and his wife have heard that promise and believed it, God **graciously declares** that Adam and his wife are not permanently stuck in the position of being worshippers of or children of the devil. Because they are among the elect of God, there will be enmity between them and the devil. Satan has not succeeded in capturing all humanity for his family. Some of humanity will be his. But Adam and his wife and all the elect of God that come from them will be worshippers of God, children of God. And again, it is all by grace. It is not deserved. It has its origins in God’s decree to set His saving love upon some of fallen humanity.
         2. So, these words reveal that it is possible for sinners to be saved by grace; to be “*delivered from the domain of darkness*,” which is where Adam and his wife were at that moment, “*and transferred into the kingdom of His beloved Son*,” as **Colossians 1:13** puts it. And this salvation is received by faith. And we will see Adam and his wife respond in faith next time. But it is when we believe in Jesus Christ that we are “*delivered from the domain of darkness and transferred into the kingdom of His beloved Son*.”
         3. But the key point is that when God spoke these words, Adam and his wife had not yet believed; they were still worshippers or children of the devil. They were still hostile enemies of God. So again, salvation is by grace alone.
   2. And this sets the scene for the last part of verse 15, where we read, “*He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heal*.” So, from among all the offspring of the woman, all the children of God, there will be one male child (He) who will bruise or crush the head of the devil. Yes, the devil and his offspring will bruise the heel of the woman’s offspring, including that one male child, but He will bruise or crush the head of the devil. And congregation, this promise is called the **protoevangelium** – the first gospel promise. We will have to continue in the Bible to learn that this promise is about Jesus, the Son of God, being born of a woman, and living a perfect life and then dying on the cross and rising again. But this is the first time in the Bible that God promises to send a Saviour. And again, Adam and his wife did not deserve it; they were not asking for it; they were still hostile enemies of God when He gave them this promise.
      1. But as we said about the antithesis a moment ago, we have the story of the Bible, right here. Every attempt to kill the line of Messiah Jesus is the seed of the devil bruising the heel of the seed of the woman. But the final battle will be won by Jesus, on the cross, when He cries out, “*It is finished*!” indicating, as the hymn-writer put it, that “the strife was o’er, the battle done, the victory of life is won, the song of triumph has begun!” The head of the devil was *crushed*!

And it is that victory of Jesus that makes salvation all about grace. He deserved it; He earned it; He secured it. Not you! Well, our passage began with Adam and his wife hiding from God. But we have seen the amazing grace of God that has its fulfilment in Jesus Christ who came to seek and to save the lost. So, if you want to hide, let it be in Christ. And what I mean by that is what another hymn-writer wrote: *Rock of Ages, cleft for me, Let me hide myself in Thee; Let the water and the blood, From Thy wounded side which flowed, Be of sin the double cure, Save from guilt and make me pure*. Praise God for His amazing grace. Amen? Amen.