

# Dreadful Consequences

Genesis 3:14-24  
SS Lesson for 10/14/2018

**Devotional Scripture:** Rom 2:5-11

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# Introduction

## Overview and Key Verse of the Lesson

The lesson examines the **Dreadful Consequences** of sin which separates us from God. The **study's aim** is to realize that it is by God's mercy that salvation is offered. The **study's application** is to personally trust Jesus as Savior and Lord.

*(Adapted from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary)*

### Key Verse: Gen 3:17

*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.*

### Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary

**3:1-7.** These verses provide both the record of the historical Fall of man and the archetypal temptation. This passage is a perfect case study of temptation, for sin cannot be blamed on environment or heredity. Genesis 1-2 recorded what God said; **now the serpent** (the devil, Rev. 20:2) spoke. The word of the Lord brought life and order; the word of the serpent brought chaos and death. Truth is older than falsehood; God's word came before Satan's lies. Genesis 3:1 is connected with 2:25 by a Hebrew wordplay: Adam and Eve were "naked" (*ārūmm*); and the serpent **was more crafty** (*ārūm*, "shrewd") than all. Their nakedness represented the fact that they were oblivious to evil, not knowing where the traps lay, whereas Satan did and would use his craftiness to take advantage of their integrity. That quality of shrewdness or subtleness is not evil in itself (indeed, one of the purposes of the Bible is to make believers so, according to Prov. 1:4, where *ārmāh* shrewdness, is trans. "prudence"). But it was used here for an evil purpose. The tempter was a serpent (Satan in the form of a snake), thus suggesting that temptation comes in disguise, quite unexpectedly, and that it often comes from a subordinate (someone over whom one should have exercised dominion; cf. Gen. 1:28). Also there may well be a polemical element here, for the serpent was worshiped by pagans. Their symbol of life was in fact the cause of death. Divinity is not achieved (the promise of Satan here; 3:5) by following pagan beliefs and symbols. That is the way of death, not of life. Eve either did not know God's command very well or did not want to remember it. By contrast, Christ gained victory over Satan by His precise knowledge of God's Word (Matt. 4:4, 7, 10). (See the chart "Satan's Temptations of Eve and of Jesus," near Matt. 4:3-11.) Eve disparaged the privileges, added to the prohibition, and weakened the penalty—all seen by contrasting her words (Gen. 3:3) with God's original commands (2:16-17). After Satan heard this, he blatantly negated the penalty of death that God had given (3:4). Satan is a liar from the beginning (John 8:44), and this is his lie: one can sin and get away with it. But death is the penalty for sin (Gen. 2:17). The tempter also cast doubt over God's character, suggesting that **God** was jealous, holding them back from their destiny (3:5). They would become **like God** when they ate—and God knew that, according to Satan. So Satan held out to them the promise of divinity—**knowing good and evil**. With this the work of Satan was finished. The woman was then left to her natural desires and physical appetites. The word for **desirable** (*neḥmād*, v. 6) is related to a word that appears later in the command, "You shall not covet" (*taḥmōd*, Ex. 20:17). Physical practicality (**good for food**), aesthetic beauty (**pleasing to the eye**), and the potential **for gaining wisdom**—to be "in the know"—these draw a person over the brink once the barrier of punishment is supposedly removed. The results, of course, were anticlimactic. The promise of divine enlightenment did not come about. They both ate and saw, but they were spoiled by so doing. They were ill at ease with one another (mistrust and alienation) and they were ill at ease with God (fearful and hiding from Him). Satan's promises never come true. Wisdom is never attained by disobeying God's Word. Instead the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (Prov. 1:7).

**3:8-13.** The remainder of this chapter falls into three sections: (a) the confrontation with **the LORD** in which the two sinners, hearing Him, feared and **hid... among the trees** (vv. 8-13); (b) the oracles of the Lord in which new measures were given to the serpent, the woman, and the man (vv. 14-19); and (c) the clothing by the Lord as a provision for the new order (vv. 20-24). The effects of sin are punishment and provision. Whereas **the man** and the woman had life, they now had death; whereas pleasure, now pain; whereas abundance, now a meager subsistence by toil; whereas perfect fellowship, now alienation and conflict. The motifs in chapter 3—death, toil, sweat, thorns, the tree, the struggle, and the seed—all were

later traced to Christ. He is the other Adam, who became the curse, who sweat great drops of blood in bitter agony, who wore a crown of thorns, who was hanged on a tree until He was dead, and who was placed in the dust of death.

**3:14-19. God spoke to the serpent** (vv. 14-15), to Eve (v. 16), and **to Adam** (vv. 17-19). God's words to the serpent included (a) the announcement that the snake, crawling and eating **dust**, would be a perpetual reminder to mankind of temptation and the Fall, and (b) an oracle about the power behind the snake. God said there would be a perpetual struggle between satanic forces and mankind. It would be **between Satan and the woman**, and their respective **offspring** or "seeds." The "offspring" of the woman was Cain, then all humanity at large, and then Christ and those collectively in Him. The "offspring" of the serpent includes demons and anyone serving his kingdom of darkness, those whose "father" is the devil (John 8:44). Satan would cripple mankind (**you will strike at his heel**), but *the* Seed, Christ, would deliver the fatal blow (**He will crush your head**). Then God told the **woman** that she would have **pain** in bearing **children**, and that she would be mastered by her **husband** whom she desired. Because Eve's **desire** probably refers in this context to her prompting Adam to sin, it is better to translate the verse "Your desire *was* for your husband." Having overstepped her bounds in this, she would now be mastered by him. God then told Adam that he would experience great pain in scratching out a livelihood (3:17-19). (**Painful toil** translates the same word used in v. 16 for the woman's pain. This word occurs only three times in the OT, in vv. 16-17 and 5:29.) Death will be his end—he will **return to the ground** (*'ādāmāh*; a gracious provision in view of the suffering), and he will **return to dust** and become the serpent's prey again (cf. 3:14). So much for ambitions for divinity! Man may attempt to be like God, but he is dust. These punishments represent retaliatory justice. Adam and Eve sinned by eating; they would suffer in order to eat. She manipulated her husband; she would be mastered by her husband. The serpent destroyed the human race; he will be destroyed. God also made gracious provisions. Mankind will die and not live forever in this chaotic state, and children will be born (v. 16) so that the human race will endure and continue. Ultimate victory will come through Christ, the Seed (Gal. 3:16) of the woman (cf. Gal. 4:4, "born of a woman"). No matter how hard people try to do away with male dominion, agonizing labor, painful childbearing, and death, these evils will continue because sin is present. They are fruits of sin.

**3:20-24.** Adam's faith and God's provision are noted in these verses. God would save them and ensure that they would not live forever in this state. Adam's faith is seen in his naming **his wife Eve** (lit., "living"). Thus Adam was looking to the future and not primarily to death. Eve's faith is seen later (4:1) when she named her firstborn Cain because he was from the Lord. All God's dealings with people as sinners can be traced back to this act of disobedience by Adam and Eve. **God** is a saving God, however, and the fact that He **clothed... Adam** and Eve testifies to that. An animal was sacrificed to provide **garments of skin**, and later all Israel's animal sacrifices would be part of God's provision to remedy the curse—a life for a life. The sinner shall die! (Ezek. 18:20; Rom. 6:23) Yet he will live if he places his faith in **the LORD**, who has provided a Substitute. The skin with which God clothed Adam and Eve perpetually reminded them of God's provision. Similarly in the fullness of time God accepted the sacrifice of Christ, and on the basis of that atonement He clothes believers in righteousness (Rom. 3:21-26).

### Commentary from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary

"This will only end in tears." I cannot tell you how many times I have either heard or said this. It usually comes out of my mouth when I or someone I know is about to do something that is not wise. Although we know it is not wise, many times we end up doing it anyway. We end up regretting that decision when we injure ourselves or someone else. Sometimes, thankfully, the results of our choices are only minor. Sadly for Adam and Eve, and for us, the consequences of their decision were not so minor. They made a foolish decision to disobey God's directive. Because of it, they were driven out of paradise. Their beloved home was lost to them. They were forced into an unknown landscape to live out their lives. That was only the start. They would now be forced to provide for themselves. Before this they did not have to strive for things. Now they would have to work, experience pain and suffering, and endure hardship. Ultimately, they would face death. The worst part, though, was knowing how far-reaching the consequences were to be. Imagine knowing that because of you, everyone else after you would be forced into pain and toil. The entire planet would experience this (Rom. 8:20). Adam and Eve had to carry that guilt, knowing that their own children would one day see the results. More important, that special communion they shared with God was broken. Since God cannot tolerate sin in His presence (Ps. 5:5), a rift formed in the intimacy that was once there. It had even created a rift between Adam and Eve themselves. Even their relationship was marred. To them it must have been a nightmare. They were being driven from their home and were at odds

with each other and God. The ease and simplicity of living was gone, never to return. What despair they must have felt! When we look at our world, it is easy to share in that despair. As believers, however, we need not indulge in an attitude of hopelessness. Although our world is deteriorating around us, we have hope for the future. Why? For believers, this world is only a way station, a stopping place. There is a better world waiting for us, one that has been prepared specifically for those who trust Jesus Christ as Savior (John 14:2). Christ told us that He is creating a new world, one that is perfect and suited for us. It is a world without sin. Because of this, we will not be subject to sin's consequences in that world. All of that will be erased, like a vapor. Jesus has saved us from that curse. Someday there will be redemption for this fallen planet. We know that the created order has been waiting for this redemption (Rom. 8:22). Until then, we need to be vigilant working for God's kingdom. How can you take part in God's redemptive work? What is your role? While we cannot turn back the consequences of sin in this world, we know that they do not have to be eternal. That is news that a dying world needs to hear.

## Major Theme Analysis

*(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)*

### ***The Judgment (Gen 3:14-19)***

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."

### **On the serpent - Satan (14-15)**

*The serpent will have dust as its food (Isa 65:25)*

25 The wolf and the lamb will feed together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox, but dust will be the serpent's food. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain," says the Lord.

*The serpent will crawl on the ground (Mic 7:17)*

17 They will lick dust like a snake, like creatures that crawl on the ground. They will come trembling out of their dens; they will turn in fear to the Lord our God and will be afraid of you.

*The serpent will be considered detestable (Lev 11:42)*

42 You are not to eat any creature that moves about on the ground, whether it moves on its belly or walks on all fours or on many feet; it is detestable.

*Satan will be bound by Jesus (Jude 1:5-6)*

5 Though you already know all this, I want to remind you that the Lord delivered his people out of Egypt, but later destroyed those who did not believe. 6 And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their own home — these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day.

*Satan will be hurled out of Heaven (Rev 12:7-9)*

7 And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. 8 But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. 9 The great dragon was hurled down — that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.

*Satan will be thrown into the lake of fire for eternity (Rev 20:1-3, 10)*

1 And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. 2 He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. 3 He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time. 10 And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

*Satan will be crushed under Jesus' feet (Rom 16:20)*

20 The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.

## **On the woman (16)**

*Pain during child birth (Isa 26:17)*

17 As a woman with child and about to give birth writhes and cries out in her pain, so were we in your presence, O Lord.

*Pain during birth that gives over to joy (John 16:21)*

21 A woman giving birth to a child has pain because her time has come; but when her baby is born she forgets the anguish because of her joy that a child is born into the world.

*Man will be head of the woman (1 Cor 11:3)*

3 Now I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.

*Wives should submit to their husbands (Col 3:18)*

18 Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.

## **On the man (17-19)**

*Work hard for food (Ps 127:2)*

2 In vain you rise early and stay up late, toiling for food to eat — for he grants sleep to those he loves.

*Earth is cursed (Rom 8:20-22)*

20 For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. 22 We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.

*Ground will have thorns and weeds (Prov 24:31)*

31 thorns had come up everywhere, the ground was covered with weeds, and the stone wall was in ruins.

*Man will return to dust when he dies (Ps 90:3)*

3 You turn men back to dust, saying, "Return to dust, O sons of men."

*Born naked and will die naked (Eccl 5:15)*

15 Naked a man comes from his mother's womb, and as he comes, so he departs. He takes nothing from his labor that he can carry in his hand.

## **The Results (Gen 3:20-24)**

20 And Adam called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living.

21 Also for Adam and his wife the Lord God made tunics of skin, and clothed them.

22 Then the Lord God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever" —

23 therefore the Lord God sent him out of the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken.

24 So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.

## **Mercy (20-21)**

*Mercy because God loves us (Rom 5:8)*

8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

*Mercy through Jesus bearing all of our transgressions (Isa 53:5-6)*

5 But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. 6 We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

*Mercy because God is faithful and righteous (Rom 3:3-5)*

3 What if some did not have faith? Will their lack of faith nullify God's faithfulness? 4 Not at all! Let God be true, and every man a liar. As it is written: "So that you may be proved right when you speak and prevail when you judge." 5 But if our unrighteousness brings out God's righteousness more clearly, what shall we say? That God is unjust in bringing his wrath on us? (I am using a human argument.)

*Mercy because of grace (Eph 2:8-9)*

8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— 9 not by works, so that no one can boast.

*Mercy prompted God's salvation (Rom 9:16)*

16 It does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy.

*Mercy before the beginning of time (2 Tim 1:9)*

9 who has saved us and called us to a holy life — not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time,

## **Death (22-24)**

*Death as a consequence for sin (Gen 2:17)*

17 but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die."

*The wages of sin is death (Rom 6:23)*

23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

*Death entered man's destiny through sin (Rom 5:12)*

12 Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned—

*The one who sows from the sinful nature reaps death (Gal 6:8)*

8 The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.

*When sin is full grown, death is the punishment (James 1:15)*

15 Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

## Conclusion and Other Thoughts

### ***Concluding Thoughts from Bob Deffinbaugh***

#### **God Seeks, Sifts, and Sentences Man (3:8-21)**

The separation which Adam and Eve brought about is that which God seeks to bridge. God sought out man in the garden. While Satan's question was designed to bring about the fall of man, God's questions seek his reconciliation and restoration.

Notice that no questions are asked of the serpent. There is no intention of restoration for Satan. His doom is sealed. Take note also of the order or sequence here. Man fell in this order: serpent, Eve, Adam. This is the opposite of God's chain of command. While God questioned in the order of authority (Adam, Eve, snake), He sentenced in the order of the fall (snake, Eve, Adam). The fall was, in part, the result of the reversal of God's order.

Adam is first sought by God with the question, "where are you?" (verse 9). Adam reluctantly admitted his shame and fear, probably hoping that God would not press him on this issue. But God probed more deeply, seeking an admission of wrongdoing: "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" (verse 11).

Thrusting at least a part of the responsibility back upon the Creator, Adam blurted out, "The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate" (verse 12).

Both Eve and Adam must share in the responsibility for the fall, Adam implied. His part was mentioned last and with as little detail as possible. And so it will always be with those who are guilty. We always find mitigating circumstances.

All the ways of a man are clean in his own sight, but the Lord weighs the motives (Proverbs 16:2).

Then Eve is questioned, "What is this you have done?" (verse 13).

Her response was little different (in essence) than her husband's: "The serpent deceived me, and I ate" (verse 13).

It was true, of course. The serpent did deceive her (I Timothy 2:14), and she did eat. The guilt of both, while a feeble effort to excuse or at least diminish human responsibility was made, had been clearly established.

Such must always be the case, I believe. Before punishment can be meted out, the wrong-doing must be proven and acknowledged. Otherwise punishment will not have its corrective effect on the guilty. The penalties are now prescribed by God, given in the order of the events of the fall.

#### *The Serpent Sentenced (vs. 14-15)*

The serpent is first addressed and his punishment established. The creature, as the instrument of Satan, is cursed and subject to an existence of humiliation, crawling in the dust (verse 14).

Verse 15 addresses the serpent behind the serpent, Satan, the deadly dragon: "And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; ..." (Rev 12:9).

There is to be, first of all, a personal animosity between Eve and the serpent: "And I will put enmity between you and the woman" (verse 15).

Such enmity is easy to comprehend. But this opposition will broaden: "And between your seed and her seed" (verse 15).

Here, I believe God refers to the battle of the centuries between the people of God and the followers of the devil (cf. John 8:44ff).

Finally, there is the personal confrontation between the seed of Eve, the Messiah, and Satan: "He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel" (verse 15).

In this confrontation Satan will be mortally wounded while the Messiah will receive a painful, but not fatal wound.

How beautifully this prophecy portrays the coming Savior, Who will reverse the events of the fall. This is that of which Paul wrote in retrospect in the fifth chapter of Romans:

Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of Adam's offense, who is a type of Him who was to come. But the free gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many. And the gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned; for on the one hand the judgment arose from one transgression resulting in condemnation, but on the other hand the free gift arose from many transgressions resulting in justification. For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ (Romans 5:14-17).

While the prophecy of verse 15 is somewhat veiled, it becomes more and more evident in the light of subsequent revelation. It comes as little surprise, then, to learn that the Jews, according to the *Targum*, regarded this passage as Messianic.

#### *The Woman's Penalty (vs. 16)*

It is only fitting that since Satan attacked mankind through the woman that God would bring about man's salvation and Satan's destruction through her. This has already been revealed to Satan in verse 15. Every child born to woman must have troubled Satan.

While salvation would come through the birth of a child, it would not be a painless process. Woman's sentence comes at the center of her existence. It deals with the bearing of her children. But in the midst of her labor pains she could know that God's purpose for her was being realized, and that, perhaps, the Messiah would be born through her.

In addition to labor pains, the woman's relationship to her husband was prescribed. Adam should have led and Eve should have followed. But such was not the case in the fall. Therefore, from this time on women were to be ruled by men: "Yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you" (verse 16).

Several things must be said concerning this curse. First of all, it is one which is for all women, not just Eve. Just as all women must share in the pains of childbirth, so they must be subject to the authority of their husbands. This does not in any way imply any inferiority on the part of women. Neither does it justify the restriction of voting rights or withholding equal pay and so on.

For those who refuse to submit to the biblical teaching concerning the role of women in the church—that women must not lead or teach men, and not even speak publicly (I Corinthians 14:33b-36; I Timothy 2:9-15)—let me say this. The role of women in the church and in marriage is not restricted to Paul's teaching, nor is it to be viewed as only related to the immoral context of Corinth. It is a biblical doctrine, which has its origin in the third chapter of Genesis. That is why Paul wrote,

Let the women keep silent in the churches; for they are not permitted to speak, but let them subject themselves, just as the Law also says (I Corinthians 14:34).

To those men and women who wish to disregard God's instruction I must say, that is precisely what Satan desires. Just as he drew Eve's attention to the restriction of the one tree, so he wants women to ponder the restriction placed upon women today. "Throw off your shackles," he urges, "Find self-fulfillment." "God is keeping you from what is best," he whispers. And it is a lie! God's rules have reasons, whether we understand them or not.

For the men, I hasten to add that this verse (and the biblical teaching on the role of women) is no proof text for male superiority or for some kind of dictatorship in marriage. We are to lead by love. Our leadership is to be at our own personal sacrifice, seeking what is best for our wife (Ephesians 5:25ff). Biblical leadership is that patterned after our Lord (cf. Philippians 2:1-8).

#### *The Punishment of Men (vss. 17-20)*

Just as Eve's punishment related to the center of her life, so is the case with Adam. He had been placed in the garden, now he will have to earn a living from the ground "by the sweat of his brow" (verses 17-19).

You will notice that while the serpent is cursed, it is only the ground which is cursed here, and not Adam or Eve. God cursed Satan because He does not intend to rehabilitate or redeem him. But already the purpose of God to save men has been revealed (verse 15).

Not only will Adam have to battle the ground to earn a living, he will eventually return to dust. Spiritual death has already occurred (cf. verses 7-8). Physical death has begun. Apart from the life which God gives, man will simply (though slowly) return to his original state—dust (cf. 2:7).

Adam's response to God's penalties and promise is revealed in verse 20: "Now the man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all the living."

I believe this act evidenced a simple faith on the part of Adam. He accepted his guilt and punishment, but focused upon the promise of God that through the offspring of woman the Savior would come. Eve's salvation (and ours as well!) would come through her submission to her husband and through the bearing of children. Adam's naming the woman, Eve, which means 'living' or 'life' showed that life would come through Eve.

God is not just a God of penalties, but of gracious provision. Thus, He made for Adam and his wife garments from the skins of animals to cover their nakedness. A veiled prophecy of redemption through the shedding of blood is not, in my opinion, an abuse of this verse.

### **A Severe Mercy (3:22-24)**

Satan's promise had, in a backhanded way, come true. Adam and Eve had, in a sense, become like God in the knowing of good and evil (verse 22). But there is a great difference as well as some similarity. Both man and God knew good and evil, but in a vastly different way.

Perhaps the difference can best be illustrated in this way. A doctor can know of cancer by virtue of his education and experience as a doctor. That is, he has read of cancer, heard lectures on cancer, and seen it in his patients. A patient, also, can know of cancer, but as its victim. While both know of cancer, the patient would wish he had never heard of it. Such is the knowledge which Adam and Eve came to possess.

God had promised salvation to come in time through the birth of Messiah, who would destroy Satan. Adam and Eve might be tempted to gain eternal life through the eating of the fruit of the tree of life. They had chosen knowledge over life. Now, as the Israelites too late tried to possess Canaan (Numbers 14:39-45), so fallen man might attempt to gain life through the tree of life in the garden.

It would seem that had Adam and Eve eaten of the tree of life they would have lived forever (verse 22). This is the reason God sent them out of the garden (verse 23). In verse 24 the 'sending out' of the two is more dramatically called 'driving out.' Stationed at the entrance of the garden are the cherubim and the flaming sword.

"How cruel and severe," some would be tempted to protest. In today's legal jargon, it would probably be called 'cruel and unusual punishment.' But think a moment, before you speak rashly. What would have happened had God not driven this couple from the garden and banned their return? I can answer it in one word—hell. Hell is giving men both what they want and what they deserve (cf. Revelation 16:6) forever. Hell is spending eternity in sin, separate from God:

And these will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power (II Thessalonians 1:9).

God was merciful and gracious in putting Adam and Eve out of the garden. He kept them from eternal punishment. Their salvation would not come in a moment, but in time, not easily, but through pain—but it would come. They must trust Him to accomplish it.

*(Adapted from URL:<https://bible.org/seriespage/4-fall-man-genesis-31-24>)*

***Practical Points from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary***

1. When we choose sin, we also choose its consequences (Gen. 3:14-15)
2. Sin destroys our relationship with God and exposes us to pain that God never intended for us (vs. 16)
3. Disobedience allows toil and sorrow to infect relationships, activities, and places that once brought us joy (vss. 17-19)
4. When your life seems to lie in shambles, trust God and look to Him as your hope for restoration (vs. 20).
5. God always cares for His own (vs. 21)
6. God's grace limits the consequences of man's sin (vss. 22-24)