

Principle Faith: Genesis Three

Part 9

The audio and print files for this class can be found online at <http://www.etspm.org/audio/principlefaith>

Our Purpose: ... to honor and glorify God through heart, soul, strength and mind ... in a way that demonstrates love for others and self at the same time. ... to focus on ... principles that help us understand the biblical text, our relationship to God and others

Our Goal: To examine at least the first eleven chapters of Genesis during the quarter, looking for, explaining, and applying the principles we find.

What is a principle? - a foundational truth or premise upon which we build beliefs, practices and explanations. ... a study of key ... principles in light of how they generate and strengthen faith, reflect God's nature and glory and build a case for all things spiritual. Biblical principles: reflect the existence/nature of God; indicate God's connection with the overall biblical theme; demonstrate divine providence; illustrate how tightly organized the "scheme" of redemption really is

Genesis In Context: ... how Israel fit into God's divine plan for the redemption of all mankind

3:15ff ... the first gospel

1. The last point of emphasis in lesson 8, "sin can be overcome," bears brief repeating here. Lesson 8 dealt with what probably appeared to be several "negative" principles: the origin of sin (from Satan's perspective), God and Satan (addressing "how" Satan became what he was), the origin of sin (from man's perspective), and the consequences of sin.
2. In spite of the overwhelming negative material presented in the third chapter — after all it's a stretch to think that anything can counter, or balance, any account that chronicles the origin of sin in man — God still revealed something positive in Genesis 3. As noted in our class last week, it is almost impossible, if not impossible, to find a passage that condemns sin and announces the punishment for sin, and then not find a concomitant verse or principle in the context that addresses and promises a solution to/for sin.
3. The "solution" to sin in Genesis 3:15 is the first of untold thousands of verses that offer an answer to the problem of sin. It is good news in that it offers something positive, even though it is far from the fully developed gospel revealed in the new testament, it is still an inkling of what God has in store for humanity.
4. Genesis 3:14-19: 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."
5. The consequences of sin are unalterable — because God hates sin, the sinner must be punished. Though God is merciful (cf. Psalm 103), God's mercy never covers sin without a price. The interconnected salvific concepts of atonement, propitiation, reconciliation, justification, sanctification all come at great cost.
 - a. Satan was cursed (in the guise of the serpent): because he was a liar and a murderer (ch 4) from the beginning; he does not stand for truth, nor is truth in him (Jn 8:44); his pride caused him to fall (1

- Tim 3:6); he is full of deceit, fraud, an enemy of righteousness, and never stops perverting God's word (Acts 13:10);
- b. Eve was cursed: she was formed last, but sinned first, and her/woman's role was forever effected (1 Tim 2:8ff); she would bring forth children in "travail," and would always be subject to her husband (cf. 1 Tim 2; 1 Cor 11; et. al.)
 - c. Adam was cursed: though not deceived, at least not to the extent that Eve was (cf. 1 Tim 2), he still listened to Eve and succumbed to sin; that the text of 1 Timothy says he was not deceived indicates he apparently knew what he was doing; RWP notes that it is "not certain that ex- here means "completely deceived" in contrast to simplex (οὐκ ηπατηθη) used of Adam, though possible."
 - d. the world was cursed: it would bring forth thorns and thistles that man had to overcome to feed himself
 - e. the imagery here, that sin touched everything mentioned in the account of Genesis 3 (man, woman, serpent, the ground), is the first indication of how "invasive" sin is
 - f. under the Mosaic law the ubiquity of sin is presented, in part anyway, through the seemingly picayune level of sacrifices that Israel was instructed to engage in; Leviticus chronicles a sacrificial system that seems to say "sin is everywhere ... everywhere you look, everywhere you walk ... you will encounter it every day in just about everyone you meet, greet, etc. ... in just about every situation of life that you will face," that might appear to be so overwhelming as to suffocate us physically and spiritually, but the Levitical code/practice of sacrifices was designed to show Israel that even in spite of the enormity of sin, man can be accepted by God, we can have a relationship with God (on his terms of course), and God can live in our midst when we love and humbly serve him
 - g. though not to that extent, Genesis 3:15 reflects the same principle in germ (or perhaps we should say "seed" form);
 - h. the "answer" or "solution" to sin is seen in verse 15 concerning the relative victories of the seed of woman and the seed of the serpent; the serpent gained what might be styled a Pyrrhic victory - one where the cost was so high that the "victory" was, or will be, of no ultimate effect; Satan would one day "defeat" the seed of woman through/by means of the crucifixion of Christ, but Christ's resurrection just days later made that "victory" meaningless; Christ's victory "destroy(ed) the works of the devil." (1 Jn 3:10); that's not fully developed here, but the thought originating in the mind of God from eternity starts, at this place, to show up in the revelation; in fact, there exists a very real sense in which the prior material to this point is all just preparatory to this key truth
6. The promise of Genesis 3:15 also shows us just how dependent we are on God, thus showing the greatness of God's grace and mercy and our utter dependence on him for all things, especially spiritual blessings (though surely including physical)
- a. it is not fully addressed in the immediate context, but implicit within this passage is this perpetual principle of salvation: we are saved by grace through faith; that principle is not just a new testament principle, but one found throughout the revelation; it applied during the Mosaic law, it applied during the Patriarchal period, it applied here (cf. Rom 4; Ex 32; Eph 2:8ff); the specific commands vary from age to age, but the principle/s always remain
 - b. God, in effect, through the Genesis account thus far, is prepping (all) future generations of humanity so that they can understand who God is, what God is like and what he expects of us to be pleasing in his sight
 - c. Genesis 3:15 says very little about the specifics of God's redemptive plan - it is not inherently revealing about the virgin birth, the complete identity of the Messiah and many other details; it says nothing about the sacrificial system under the law, the sacrifice of the Christ under the new covenant ... it says nothing about the significance of the skins that God clothed Eve and Adam with nor the purpose and/or the meaning of the implicit death of the animals from which the skins came;
 - d. yet, in spite of its brevity, the greater context reveals a series of related principles concerning our relationship with God:
 - (1) God expects us to listen to and know his will

- (2) God expects us to follow his will
 - (3) there are divine purposes in doing so
 - (4) there are consequences in not doing so
 - (5) the benefits of obedience always outweigh the curses of disobedience
 - (6) the principle of salvation, remaining in God's good favor, always involves his grace and our faith
7. The promise of God to bless Adam and Eve in this context, though initially oblique and distant from complete fulfillment, is/will be just as sure as God's promise to punish them in Genesis 2:17; the concept of "promise" might be foreign to mankind at this point, but it will be very suggestive and full of great meaning to Israel - God's promise to save Israel directly connects with God's promise in Gen 3:15, both of which directly connect with every other seed and salvation promised throughout scripture
8. The very nature of "seed" in the first gospel demands numerous additional premises:
- a. it demands a continued adversarial role for Satan
 - b. it demands a continued role for man in "fighting" against Satan
 - c. it anticipates further, more expansive "seed" promises (Abraham, David, Christ)
 - d. it anticipates further revelatory guidelines - only history/information that applies to the seed promise will be presented in the inspired literature; God's story is specifically selective to carry out what is here in incipient form - the fulfillment of the singular seed that is the Christ (cf. Gal 3)
 - e. it foreshadows all of human history from God's perspective and God, through many prophets and penmen, will continually return to the promises and covenants that are intrinsically connected to it
 - f. it informs us of God's continual willingness to give signs, hints, clues, etc. so that we might find him and serve him
 - g. God's promise in this "first gospel" is directly related to what he envisioned for Adam and Eve in the garden at first - far distant from this we will see that the close of the revelation and the close of the book by that name will witness the return of what is taken away in this context (paradise lost/regained).
 - h. God's promise/s in the "first gospel" have eternal consequences connected to his eternal plan
 - i. God's timing of the revelation of the gospel will occur incrementally and be fully completed only when the "time is right" (cf. Gal 4; Eph 1)
 - j. the first gospel anticipates not only God's ultimate vanquishing of Satan through Christ, but the means by which we, too, will conquer Satan (Rom 16:20; Eph 6:10ff); it also anticipates that vanquishing is done, not just to "justify" God and Christ, but also to justify us, to prepare us, etc. to do the same (cf. Eph 4:8; Col 2:15; Heb 2:14; 1 Jn 5:5; Rev 20:1ff)
 - k. the centrality of this "seed" promise, so early in the history of man and man's redemption, points to the centrality of Christ's role from eternity and the epoch significance of his incarnation (cf. Jn 1:1; Col 1; Heb 1, et. al. ... all demonstrate the role of Christ the creator in salvation history)
 - l. the implicit animal sacrifices expands to envelope not all of the patriarchal sacrificial system, the entirety of the system under Moses, but also the role of the most unique of all sacrifices, that of Jesus the Christ
9. The closing verses of Genesis 3 show, as does 3:15, the enormity of sin in God's eyes as well as God hope for something even better:
- a. man was separated from God because of sin
 - b. God would provide a way of reconciliation, but God did not want man to live forever in a world now cursed by sin

Up and Coming Principles: chapter four - children are from God; principles of proper worship; the "second" sin; God's mercy continues; brother's keeper; one wife, not two (God's subtle revelation); chapter five - God's selective history/the role of genealogies

Assignment: Read through and continue to study Genesis 4-5 for additional principles.