

The Serpent's Sentence

by C.H. Spurgeon

Transcript

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"And the Lord God said unto the serpent, Because you have done this, you are cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field. Upon your belly shall you go, and dust shall you eat all the days of your life: and I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; it shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel." Genesis 3:14,15.

SOME master in Israel who wanted to help the memories of his hearers has said that the three things to be preached above everything else are the three R's—Ruin, Redemption and Regeneration. He spoke wisely and well. How will men seek salvation if they do not feel their ruin? Where is there salvation except in the atoning blood? What is salvation but being created anew unto holiness? It is a noteworthy fact that, in Holy Scripture there are three third chapters which deal with these things in the fullest manner. The third of Genesis reveals Ruin. The third of Romans teaches Redemption. The third of John sets forth Regeneration.

Will our young friends be so good as to read those chapters through with care, at home? It is also worthy of mention that not only do each of these chapters teach its own R, but that it also teaches the other two R's. In this third of Genesis we have not only Ruin, but we have the Redeemer in "the Seed of the woman," and we have Regeneration in the expression, "I will put enmity between you and the woman." God's regenerating power creates a hatred of evil in the chosen seed. The same you will find in the other chapters, for the third of Romans contains a fearful description of the sin and ruin of men. And in the third of John, after you have read, "You must be born again," not far from it you find it written, "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him might not perish, but have eternal life." Believe any of these great Truths of God and the rest follow as a necessary consequence.

May we be helped this morning to learn something with regard to Ruin, Redemption and Regeneration from the passage now before us! I pray you, never regard that story of the serpent as a fable. It is said, nowadays, that it is a mere allegory. Yet there is nothing in the Book to mark where history ends and parable begins—it all runs on as actual history and as Bishop Horsley forcibly remarks, "If any part of this narrative is allegorical, no part is naked matter of fact." It seems to me that if there was only an allegorical serpent, there was an allegorical Paradise, with allegorical rivers and allegorical trees. And the men and women were both allegorical and the chapter which speaks of their creation is an allegory. And the only thing that exists is an allegorical Heaven and an allegorical earth. If the Book of Genesis is an allegory, it is

an allegory all through—and you have an allegorical Abraham—with allegorical circumcision.

Then you would have an allegorical Jacob and an allegorical Judah—and it is not unfair to push the theory onward and impute to Judah allegorical descendants called Jews. But if you borrow any money from this race, you will not find them allegorical when you have to pay! It is idle to call the narrative of the Fall a mere allegory—one had better say at once that he does not believe the Bible. There is something sane about that declaration, although it is folly. But to say, "Oh, yes, it is a venerable volume and worthy to be studied, but it is padded out with many an allegory," is to say something which confutes itself if you come to look into it.

The Bible is intended to be real history and it contains some portions which, by the consent of everybody, are real history. But Moses could not be an historian and yet set mere fables before us as a part of his story. To write a jumble of allegory and of fact causes a man to lose the character of a reliable historian and we had better repudiate him at once. There was a real serpent, as there was a real Paradise. There was a real Adam and Eve who stood at the head of our race,

and they really sinned and our race is really fallen. Believe this. When Satan, "that old serpent, the Devil and Satan"—as the Apocalypse calls him—determined to tempt Eve in order that he might destroy the race in which God evidently took much delight, he could not appear to the woman as a spirit.

Spirits are not to be discerned by the eye since a pure spirit is a thing which none of the outward senses of human beings can apprehend. An immaterial spirit must be invisible and therefore he must embody himself in some way or other before he can be seen. That Satan has power to enter into living bodies is clear, for he did so upon a very large scale with regard to men in the days of Christ. He and his legions were even compelled to enter into the bodies of swine rather than be cast into the deep. Being compelled to have an embodiment, the master evil spirit perceived the serpent to be at that time among the most subtle of all creatures—and therefore he entered into the serpent as feeling that he would be most at home in that animal.

Out of the serpent he spoke to Eve as though the serpent itself had spoken. There was an actual and material serpent, but the evil spirit who is known as "the old serpent" was there, possessing the natural serpent with all his masterly cunning. Cruelly determining to lead the human race into sin that he might thus ruin it and triumph over God, the fallen angel did not hesitate to assume a reptile form. Well might Milton make him say—

"O foul descent! that I, who once contended With gods to sit the highest, am now constrained Into a beast; and, mixed with bestial slime, This essence to incarnate, and imbrute, That to the height of deity aspired!" Notice carefully, that when the Lord comes to deal with the serpent, He does not question him as to his guilt and the reason of it. And the reason is, perhaps, that the guilt of the arch-enemy was self-evident or, better still, because the Lord had no design of mercy for him. He meant to make no Covenant of Grace for the devil or his angels. He took not up angels, though he took up the seed of Abraham.

In the infinite Sovereignty of God He passed by the fallen angels, but He chose to raise fallen man. Those who quibble at the Doctrine of Election should answer this question—Why is it that God has left devils without hope and yet has sent His Son to redeem mankind? Is not Divine Sovereignty manifested here? We can give no answer to the question, What is man that God thus visits him with distinguishing Grace, except this—"He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy, and He will have compassion on whom He will have compassion"? Intending, therefore, no forgiveness to this evil spirit, the Lord put no questions to

him.

His interrogation of our first parents was a sign of mercy. When God chides with a man's conscience, it is with the view of blessing him. Do I speak to any man here whose sense of sin is aroused, who is accused by the Word of God, who feels the Spirit of God working within him as a spirit of bondage? You may be hopeful because it is so. If God had meant to destroy you, He would have left you alone, even as He left the serpent without a word of expostulation and He would have passed sentence upon you speedily. The very rebukes of God are tokens of His favor towards men. With the serpent, that is, with the evil spirit, God had no upbraiding, but dealt at once by way of doom. He pronounced a sentence upon the serpent, which, while it was terrible to him, is most encouraging to us. And so far as our first parents understood it, it must have been a sun of light to their dark, depressed souls.

For many a year this was the lone star of believing hearts—this Gospel of the serpent's doom. Satan was their enemy. He had done them wrong. He was also God's enemy and God would fight against him and call them into His battle. He would raise up One who would suffer, but would win the victory—One whom He calls "the Seed of the woman." By Him Satan's head would be bruised and in that very fact the race of man would be unspeakably blest! Last Lords-Day morning [NO. 2163, IMMANUEL—THE LIGHT OF LIFE] I introduced to you Immanuel—God with us, born of a virgin. We are now running on the same lines and again I would speak of our Lord Jesus as the woman's Seed and extol Him as espousing our quarrel and undoing the mischief which the old serpent has worked in us.

First, notice THE INSTRUCTIVE FORM UNDER WHICH SATAN APPEARS. The text begins, "The Lord God said unto the serpent." Under the serpent form he beguiled the woman and under that form he was condemned. He is a serpent, still. He can go about among the weak and defenseless as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour, but he is most at home as the embodiment of a serpent. The serpent was most subtle and so is the Evil One most cunning. You think you understand the ways of Satan but you are mistaken. You have been tempted by him these 30 years and you believe your experience can unravel all his plots.

Ah, my Brothers and Sisters, he has been engaged in the work of tempting men for nearly 6,000 years and he is not only much older, but he is far more acute and more sagacious than you are. His ways are not easily found out and though we are not ignorant of his devices, we know not which device he will next use. If we have successfully escaped his nets for 40 years, the skillful fowler may even yet entangle us. We have need each day to cry, "Lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from the Evil One." John writes of him in the Revelation as "that old serpent, called the Devil and Satan, which deceives the whole world." He is more cunning than the wisest—how soon he entangled Solomon! He is stronger than the strongest—how fatally he overthrew Samson!

Yes, and men after God's own heart, like David, have been led into most grievous sins by his seductions. We do not know where he now lurks, or from what quarter he will next shoot his arrows, but we may rest assured that he is always plotting mischief against the people of God and he is working to effect their pollution. We may wisely enter into Paul's anxiety when he wrote to the Corinthians, "But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." From the evil machinations of the Subtle One, may the Lord deliver us!

A serpent is very insinuating. It can enter where another creature could not. Ever so small an opening makes room for a serpent and it winds itself in without noise. Satan is very insinuating and as he entered

Paradise, so can he penetrate into the most secret and sacred places. He creeps into the Church, watch though we may. He creeps into houses though sanctified by devotion. Have you never found him intruding into your closet during your prayers? There may seem to be no loophole and yet there he is, where he is least expected. Has he not wound himself into your families? Has he not crops in your hearts? How can we keep him out? We watch against his attacks from without but, behold, he has found a lodging place within! Subtle and insinuating is Satan—he is a serpent, indeed!

And how venomous! What poison one fang of the old serpent will throw into our moral system! Look around and see how many have been poisoned with the desire for strong drink, with lust, with avarice, with pride, with anger, with unbelief. Fiery serpents are among us and many die of their venom. If we tolerate the least sin, it is a burning drop in the veins of the soul! One touch of the fangs of this serpent will work immeasurable sorrow, even if the soul is saved from death. It is only the power of God that keeps us from being destroyed by this viper! Had he his will, he is a spirit so malignant that no heir of Heaven would survive! O God, keep Your own! Deliver us from the Evil One!

In all probability the reptile called the serpent was a nobler creature before the Fall than now. The words of our text, so far as they literally concern the serpent, threaten that a change would be worked in him. It has been a sort of speculative opinion that the creature either had wings, or was able to move without creeping upon the earth as it now does. Of that we know nothing. But assuredly the serpent is a hated thing with which manhood is at war—and its form and habit typify all that is mean and cunning. There is nothing noble, nothing brave, nothing true about the idea of a serpent.

Satan was among the first-born of the morning, a swift and shining servant of God, but he transgressed against his Sovereign and fell. And now he is nothing but a serpent—malignant, base, cunning, and a liar. He is fitly figured by "the wily snake." "He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it" (John 8:44). He goes out to deceive the nations (Rev. 20:8). He works signs and lying wonders (2 Thess. 2:9). He lays snares, and takes men captive (2 Tim.

2:26).

Keep before your minds the form of a serpent and remember that after this manner Satan will attack you. Only let me soften your fears with the sight of another serpent—the serpent of brass lifted upon a pole brought life to those whom evil serpents had injured. It seems to me a wonder of condescending Grace that our Lord Jesus could allow Himself to be symbolized by a form which had been assumed by the great enemy of souls! Yes, there was the bronze serpent lifted high

upon a pole and they that looked, though bitten by fiery serpents, lived! Even thus is Jesus on the Cross the sure remedy for sin of every kind. Look out with all your eyes of caution for the old serpent, the devil. But at the same time look up with all your eyes of faith to Him who was made a curse for us that we might live.

II. So much for the first lesson, now for the second. Observe THE MEMORABLE FACT AS TO SATAN'S CONDITION. "The Lord God said unto the serpent, Because you have done this, you are cursed" and that curse was made emphatic and superlative. He with whom we have to contend has the curse of God upon him even now! God has blessed His people, but he has cursed their great enemy! The curse of God blights and blasts, even as in the case of the fruitless fig tree, which, beneath the sentence of the Lord Jesus, withered away.

The curse of God has fallen upon that foul spirit who represents evil—it could not justly be otherwise. This is his shame and your strength. The next time you are fighting with Apollyon, here is a keen shaft to hurl at him. Tell him he is accursed of God and what has he to do with those whom the Lord has blessed? He whom God blesses is blessed, but he whom God curses is cursed, indeed. Upon all the power of sin and error, yes, upon Satan himself, who is the ringleader in evil things, the curse of God abides and this is prophetic of their overthrow. The truth shall conquer, holiness shall overcome. Falsehood and wrong bear the brand of Cain upon their brow and they shall wither from the root.

Satan was cursed with reference to us. Our fall has brought him no gain, but an increase of Divine displeasure, of disappointment and envy. He was under God's wrath before, but now the Lord says concerning him, "You are cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field." Though there comes pain and groaning upon all the lower creation through man's sin, there shall come upon the old serpent a far more exceeding measure of the curse because he has dared to lead into revolt the race of man. Who will willingly be the slave of a tyrant whom the Lord has cursed? Not only Satan, but every form of sin is under the curse. The Tempter would make you think that some shapes of sin are blessed, but this is false.

All sin has a curse attached to it. Keep far from it. Is it false doctrine? It is accursed! Is it living in wantonness and carnal pleasure? It is accursed! Touch it not! You cannot do wrong without defiling yourself with that which God has cursed. You may imagine that you will gain many good things by yielding a little to sin, but this is a lie of the Adversary—evil is loss and ruin. The curse which God pronounced on the serpent is pronounced on the whole of his seed and everything that is impure, untruthful and unholy lies under the ban of God. Brethren, if for Christ's sake we should suffer poverty, or reproach, or slander, or even death, there would be a blessing in it all! But if by means of doing evil we should rise to wealth, honor and ease, we should find in all our gains a burning curse! Who prizes gold with the curse upon it? It is cankered, and will eat into the soul. God knows what is cursed and what is blessed—and we may well believe His declaration that evil is meaner than the brutes and more sensual than the wild beasts of the field.

All this is a call to escape from the ways of sin. Tremble lest you be found under the curse! Hasten to flee to Him who can turn the curse into a blessing, even Jesus, who bore our sins in His own body on the Cross and so bore away the curse from all Believers. The memorable fact that Satan and the power of evil are under the curse should hearten us in our conflict with spiritual wickedness. We can overcome them, for the curse of the Lord has gone forth against them.

III. For a third lesson, note THE REMARKABLE PROSTRATION which fell upon the serpent—"Upon your belly shall you go." So does the serpent move and so does evil labor to make progress. Satan moves always as a fallen one—not with the dignity of holiness, but groveling low. God has put upon his every movement the indication that he is no longer great and wise. The movements of the Prince of Darkness are base and sensual—"Upon your belly shall you go." His seed also take to the same posture in going. I have seen the foes of the Truth of God contending against the faith of God's people and I have marked their policies, their plots and their plans—and I have said to myself, "Verily, it is written, Upon your belly shall you go."

Beings engaged in evil designs have no other way of going but with tricks, devices, concealments and double meanings. When men deny the Scriptures and the Truth of God, they always go to work in an underhand, mean and serpentine style—"Upon your belly shall you go." If guilty man begins to plot for his own advantage, scheme for his own glory and aim at perverting the Truth of God, you will notice that he

never takes a bold, open, manly stand. No, he dodges, he conceals, he twists and shifts—"Upon your belly shall you go." Sin is a mean and despicable thing. The greatest potentate of evil was here doomed to cringe and crawl and his seed have never forgotten their father's posture. All the objects of the powers of evil are groveling.

What do they seek after? When men forsake the way of holiness, they rush after polluted and idle amusements. What is there in the world's pleasure which is ennobling? Carnal mirth is still a groveling thing—"Upon your belly shall you go." A professing man gives up the separated way, enters upon modern society and he no longer walks with God. What is his general course? Within a short time we find him careless of all religion and tolerant of licentiousness. It is ever so—"Upon your belly shall you go." If you give way to evil, you shall go down, down, down till your god is your belly and you glory in your shame! If a man would be great, let him serve God! If a man would rise to the angels, yes, rise to God, let him obey the commands of his Maker. But if he wishes to degrade himself below the adder, which "glides obscure through bush and brake," his easy method is to follow Satan and rebel against the Most High.

IV. Observe, in the fourth place, THE PERPETUAL DEGRADATION put upon the serpent—"And dust shall you

eat all the days of your life." Satan is now to live a defeated life, for such is the force of the expression, "His enemies shall lick the dust." It signifies that they are utterly defeated. So Satan, all his life long, exists as a conquered and chained enemy—his power is broken and he knows it. He is defeated as to the whole of his great scheme and he is to be defeated in the details of it all the days of his life!

When he met our Lord in the wilderness, he crept upon his belly with serpentine temptations. But our Lord, by His holiness, made him eat dust! How often was he, in our Lord's lifetime, made to feel that his conqueror had come! He cringed before Him and implored that he might not be tormented before his time. When he saw the Lord Jesus upon the Cross, having planned, as he thought, to crush Him by death, he began to dread defeat. When he heard Him cry, "It is finished," and felt His iron heel upon his head, he knew, to his eternal horror, that he had only fashioned for Christ an opportunity of redeeming mankind! What a mouthful of dust he had to eat in that day! None more wretched in the universe than Satan, whose works the bleeding Savior had destroyed!

It was a day of bitter defeat for the enemy when our Lord rose from the dead. The old serpent had watched the pale corpse, but when he saw it live and when the angel rolled away the stone and Jesus, the Christ, came forth to die no more, I guarantee you the serpent ate dust that day! And when the Apostles stood forth—men whom Satan despised, humble fishermen—and the Holy Spirit came down upon them, again it was fulfilled, "Dust shall you eat." When the nations were converted, the idols were broken and the Truth of God mightily prevailed, then did Satan remember the words, "Dust shall you eat all the days of your life."

He has more humiliation yet to come. Arise, and preach Christ and win souls and the great enemy of souls shall find his power diminished, his name abhorred and again he shall lick the dust! Forever, dust shall be the serpent's meat, for what he does gain always disappoints him. He thought he had obtained a great advantage when he won the woman to disobedience—but he had made a rod for his own back since her Seed would become his eternal antagonist! The Fall of man led up to the Incarnation and the Atonement—and by these Satan is thrown down. By man has come the Resurrection and so the defeat of Death, who was first-born of Hell. The victory of the devil in Eden is blotted out by the victory of Jesus at

Calvary!

If Satan ever knows pleasure at all, it is of the foulest and most unsatisfactory kind—dust is his meat. There is nothing satisfying in the pleasures of rebellion. He remains a disappointed, restless being. The most cunning error which he invents and sustains by philosophy is no more than dust. His whole cause, for which he has labored these thousands of years with a horrible perseverance—his whole cause, I say—will dissolve into dust and will be blown away as smoke! Still does he feed himself upon dust. Let those who are servants of Satan know assuredly that as they are living in sin, they will have to eat at their father's table and learn the emptiness of all the pleasures of sin—and the worthlessness of all the treasures of evil.

Everything that sin can bring you is just so much dust—foul eating, insufficient, clogging, killing. Though you hoard up wealth, gold is nothing but dust to a dying man. Though you gain all earthly honor, it, too, dissolves in dust. This is the misery of that great spirit who is called the Prince of Darkness, that he must eat dust all his days! But what misery it must be to be only some poor subject in that unhallowed kingdom and still to be doomed to the same loathsome fare! "Dust shall you eat all the days of your life." Note that right well—and may God deliver you from such feeding!

V. Let us, in the next place, think upon THE CEASELESS WAR with which God threatens the serpent—"I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed." Satan reckoned upon an easy conquest and had apparently gained it—but he would find his Victim become his antagonist and at length his conqueror. Satan can

never know peace—he seeks rest and finds none. When he talked to that woman with his guileful words of flattery, he thought he had made a friend of her. The charming creature in whom God had embodied the perfection of beauty—had he not seduced her from obedience to the great King? Had he not used her as the instrument to make her husband a traitor to his God?

They were great friends—those two. She felt, in the moment that she took the fruit, that she owed much to the serpent for giving her the gentle hint whereby she was led to find the opening of her eyes and the uplifting of her nature to be as God. How grievously was she deceived! Nor was the serpent to find himself advantaged. The league was broken and the Deceiver and his victim were at enmity. God declares most solemnly, "I will put enmity between you and the woman." God will see that there is no peace. There is a war to be waged between Satan and the woman's Seed so long as the world stands. Sometimes it looks as if there was going to be peace, for the world flatters the Church and the Church seeks to conform herself to the world.

As before Noah's flood the sons of God and the daughters of men were joined in unhallowed alliance, so again and again there have been attempts at truce. But peace there cannot be! Today Satan tempts the ministers of Christ to soften down the Gospel, adapt it to the age and make it popular. And he also labors to throw down the division between the Church and the world. "Fill up the gulf!" he says. "Cover it over like an old sewer and forget that it ever existed!" Thus he speaks like the sinner in the Proverbs—"Cast in your lot among us, let us all have one purse." But mark this, all you that hear me—though all the pulpits should be captured and though it should seem that the very elect were deceived, yet God will not leave Himself without witnesses but will find, somewhere or other, some chosen ones of the Seed of the woman to carry on the holy war even to the end. Jehovah has laid His hand upon His Throne and He has sworn to have war with evil from generation to generation.

See how it was in Israel when the high priest of God, even Eli, winked at sin when his own sons, as priests, committed iniquity at the tabernacle door and all Israel was thus made to do evil. Would not the lamp of Truth go out? Would not the worship of the Lord be utterly abhorred? Ah, no—a little child was brought by his mother into the tabernacle to be the servant of the Lord and in him the Lord found a champion! In the night did God call Samuel and he answered, "Here am I." This Samuel stood before the Lord and gave forth prophecies which made both the ears of him that heard them to tingle—and the Lord was again great in Israel.

Do not tremble for the ark of the Lord! God will not suffer the old serpent to spread his slime over all things. Satan's throne shall always be opposed. This enmity is to be kept up by God Himself. He said, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed." See here the Church of God announced in this verse! You have not only the Gospel here, but the Church, also! Christ, the Seed of the woman, is the Head—and all who are in Christ are His body—He and they are the one Seed. In these words the Lord set up the Church which continues to this day—a seed which is opposed to Satan and to evil—a seed which will remain, by the power of the Spirit of God, waging constant war with the powers of evil.

Do we belong to that seed? In this seed there is a deep-seated hatred to everything that is false and evil. God will see that this seed shall never yield to the power of evil, for still it shall stand true, "I will put enmity between you and the woman." As long as there is false doctrine, there shall be a protesting reformer. As long as there is any form of wickedness extant, there shall be a witness born from on high to contend with it. This seed is born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, but of the Spirit of God who dwells in the true seed of the woman. And this seed shall be valiant for the Lord of Hosts till the last enemy shall be destroyed.

Which side are you on, my Friend, this morning? I put the question very pointedly to everyone here—Are you born from above? That which is born of the flesh is flesh and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit—and only this last is the true seed of the woman.

VI. Sixthly, observe that we see in the text THE LIMITED ACHIEVEMENT of the old serpent. What will he accomplish by all his schemes? "You shall bruise His heel." That is all. This is after the serpent's manner. Satan is "an adder in the path, that bites the horse heels, so that his rider shall fall backward." If he dares not attack you openly, he will assail you from behind. He is as a snake in the grass, biting at the heel of the traveler. The result of Satan's 6,000 years of cunning and enmity is that he has bruised the heel of his Victim. That bruised heel is painful enough.

Behold our Lord in His human Nature sorely bruised. He was betrayed, bound, accused, buffeted, scourged, spit upon. He was nailed to the Cross. He hung there in thirst and fever and darkness and desertion. They pierced His hands and His feet. And last, they cut his heart open and there flowed from it both blood and water. Satan by death bruised the heel of the woman's Seed. It is a sad business, but when our Lord thought of the Resurrection, the salvation of His chosen and the conquest of the world, it seemed to Him to be a light thing—"He endured the Cross, despising the shame."

Behold the Seed of the woman as further comprehending all the Lord's believing people! Satan has bruised their heel to the utmost of his power. Through the long persecutions he has been assailing the heel of the Church. Many of the saints the devil cast into prison and others he caused to be tortured for Christ's sake. But their souls were not conquered! He could only bruise their heel—their spirit soared out

of his reach. And you, today, when tempted and tried, and cast down, may be comforted because your Head is not hurt, for Jesus reigns in Heaven! The waters are black and they cover the body, but our Head is above the billows and the body is safe.

The serpent's bruises stay in the heel and spread no further. The suffering of the Church, however great, is but a light affliction, not worthy to be compared with the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Thank God the enemy can only bruise your heel! The cause of God and Truth in the world may, by Satan's subtle power, be for a while sadly bruised as to the heel of its progress, but it cannot be wounded in the heart of its Truth. The kingdom advances painfully because of the bruised heel, but it fails not—even when lame it takes the prey. Some doctrine which, possibly, may have been stated in a questionable manner is more fully studied, more carefully made known and so even the heel-bruise works for good. Though the Church of God may be under a cloud for a time, yet she will break out with all the greater splendor before long. "You shall bruise His heel."

Make the best you can of it, Satan, it does not come to much! All that you are at your greatest is but a heel-nibbler and nothing more. You are not allowed to poison the heel, but only to bruise it. Though the man of God walks limpingly a while and suffers where the fangs have been, yet, leaning on his Beloved, he comes up from the wilderness without fail—and forgetting the bruises of his heel—he rejoices in the triumphs of his glorious Head!

VII. Now we come to the seventh lesson. We have marked the limited triumph of Satan and we now observe HIS FINAL DOOM. "I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your seed and her Seed; it shall bruise your head." Here is the end of the great conflict. Satan, who heads the powers of evil in the world, is to fight it out with all his cunning and strength—and he is so far to succeed as to bruise the heel of the champion with whom he fights—but in the end the Seed of the woman is to bruise his head.

This was accomplished when the Lord Jesus died and by dying honored the Law, put away sin, slew death and defeated Hell. When the great Substitute drank the cup of wrath to its utmost dregs for every believing soul. When He unhinged the gate of the sepulcher and carried it away, as Samson carried the gates of Gaza—post, and bar, and all. When He opened the doorways of Heaven and led captivity captive, then indeed, the head of the dragon was broken. What can Satan now do? Is not the accuser of the Brethren cast down? He is still doing his little best in bitterness and malice, but the Christ has crushed him! Yes, the very Christ who "was despised and rejected of men." The Man of the thorn crown and the marred visage. The Man of bleeding shoulders and pierced hands and feet. The Man who was born of a virgin. The Seed of the woman has broken the power of the enemy!

Hallelujah! Hallelujah! He has cast down the Prince of Darkness from his high places! Did He not, Himself, say, "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from Heaven"? He has bruised the serpent's head! This is done in all Believers, also, and shall be done yet more effectually. Brothers and Sisters, in that day when the Holy Spirit led us to trust in the Lord Jesus, we bruised the serpent's head! Satan had been accustomed to command and we to obey—and thus sin had dominion over us. But as soon as ever we believed in Christ, that dominion was ended and Dagon fell before the ark of the Lord! I see the serpent rise above me. This great python, with opened jaws, gapes upon me as though he would swallow me up whole. But I am not afraid! O serpent, I have bruised your head in Christ Jesus my Lord, for I, too, am of the Seed of the woman! The serpent cannot lift himself against the chosen Seed. What can he do with a broken head? He knows that God has decreed that every Believer shall triumph over him. It is written, "God shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly."

Hallelujah!

Once again. This bruise upon the head of the Evil One is a mortal stroke. If he had been bruised upon the tail, or upon the neck he might have survived. But the Lord shall utterly slay the kingdom of evil and crush out its power.

Reigning evil shall cease and Divine Grace shall reign through righteousness unto eternal life. There shall be a new Heaven and a new earth wherein dwells righteousness. Christ Himself, the Seed of the woman, shall come a second time and He shall reign on earth among His ancients gloriously. Then shall He ride forth prosperously, because of truth and righteousness—and His right hand shall exalt His people. His foot shall tread down their enemy. May you and I be among the happy throng that shall salute the Seed of the woman in His Second Advent! May we reign with Him in that day! By the Seed of the woman is Paradise restored to us and all the mischief of the Fall is undone, for He restores that which He took not away.

And now, my Hearer, which side are you on? Do any of you think that you shall not surely die? You talk like your father—and you are his children! Do any of you say God is a hard Governor? Has He said, "You shall not eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden"? You are like your own father in this, also. And do you move in snaky, cunning ways? Are you given to craft and policy? Dare you tell a lie and then forge another to prop up the first? You are of your father the devil, for you do his works! Are you opposed to God and truth and righteousness? And do you cry out for what is called "liberty," that is, licentiousness and permission to indulge your own passions? Then you are on the evil side! Do you aspire to know good and evil? Young man, would you go into evil haunts to see vice and learn its ways? Do you long to see "life," as they call it? Are you familiar with the sensual and the profane? Ah, then you are listening to that old deceiver who allures you into his deadly nets! I pray you, escape from his seductions!

Is it well with you? Do you look to Jesus, the Seed of the woman? Are you trusting in Him to break the power of the enemy? Do you wish the power of sin to be broken in yourself? Do you desire to have the very head of it crushed to powder? Do you pine to be free from sin and holy as God is holy? Are you trusting in Jesus to have this same thing worked in you? Ah, then you are on the conquering side! Victory shall be yours through the blood of the Lamb!

Thus have we found much Gospel in the wonderful sentence pronounced upon that old serpent, the devil. But yet we have only skimmed the surface. To the eternal God be glory, world without end. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON— Genesis 3. HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—917, 470, 477.

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