

97-11-09a

As we anticipate our Scripture reading this morning, to give us a chance to reflect on the application and the relationship between our Scripture reading and the passage that we are studying, I'd like to begin by reading the passage that will be under our gaze this morning, and then we'll go over and read Psalm 37. But I'd like us to have our main passage firmly in mind as we read Psalm 37, so turn with me at first to Genesis chapter 3. We have read the account, we have studied the account, of the fall in the first seven verses of Genesis chapter 3, and we know that as a result of the conversation that Eve has with the serpent, she saw that the tree was good for food, in verse 6, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise. She took of its fruit and ate.

She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked, and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings. And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord among the trees of the garden.

Then the Lord God called to Adam and said to him, Where are you? So he said, I heard your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked, and I hid myself. And he said, Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat? Then the man said, The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate. And the Lord God said to the woman, What is this you have done? The woman said, The serpent deceived me, and I ate.

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. 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. 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. 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.

Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you. If you shall eat the herb of the field, 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.

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

Adam and his wife the Lord God made tunics of skin and clothed them. Then the Lord God said, Behold, the man has become like one of us, to no good and evil.

And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat and live forever. Therefore the Lord God sent him out of the garden of Eden, to till the ground from which he was taken. 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.

Turn with me to Psalm 37, which deals similarly with man's sin, with the choice that is open to each of us in life, to God's response to those who choose Him, God's response to those who reject Him. Psalm 37 is the Psalm of David. Do not fret because of evil doers, nor be envious of the workers of iniquity, for they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb.

Trust in the Lord, and do good. Dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness. Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart.

Commit your way to the Lord. Trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass. He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your justice as the noonday.

Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him. Do not fret because of Him who prospers in His way, because of the man who brings wicked schemes to pass. Cease from anger, and forsake wrath.

Do not fret, it only causes harm. For evil doers shall be cut off, but those who wait on the Lord, they shall inherit the earth. For yet a little while, and the wicked shall be no more.

Indeed, you will look carefully for his place, but it shall be no more. But the meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace. The wicked plots against the just, and gnashes at him with his teeth.

The Lord laughs at him, for He sees that His day is coming. The wicked have drawn the sword, and have bent their bow to cast down the poor and needy, to slay those who are of upright conduct. Their sword shall enter their own heart, and their bows shall be broken.

A little that a righteous man has is better than the riches of many wicked. For the arms of the wicked shall be broken, but the Lord upholds the righteous. The Lord knows the days of the upright, and their inheritance shall be forever.

They shall not be ashamed in the evil time, and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied. But the wicked shall perish, and the enemies of the Lord, like the splendor of the meadows, shall vanish. Into smoke they shall vanish away.

The wicked borrows and does not repay, but the righteous shows mercy and gives. For those blessed by Him shall inherit the earth, but those cursed by Him shall be cut off. The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and He delights in His way.

Though He fall, He shall not be utterly cast down, for the Lord upholds Him with His hand. I have been young, and now am old, yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor His descendants begging bread. He is ever merciful and lends, and His descendants are blessed.

Depart from evil and do good, and dwell forevermore. For the Lord loves justice, and does not forsake His saints. They are preserved forever.

But the descendants of the wicked shall be cut off. The righteous shall inherit the land and dwell in it forever. The mouth of the righteous speaks wisdom, and His tongue talks of justice.

The law of His God is in His heart. None of His steps shall slide. The wicked watches the righteous and seeks to slay Him.

The Lord will not leave him in His hand, nor condemn him when he is judged. Wait on the Lord and keep His way, and He shall exalt you to inherit the land. When the wicked are cut off, you shall see it.

I have seen the wicked in great power and spreading Himself like a native green tree. Yet He passed away, and behold, He was no more. Indeed, I sought Him, but He could not be found.

Mark the blameless man and observe the upright, for the future of that man is peace. But the transgressors shall be destroyed together. The future of the wicked shall be cut off.

But the salvation of the righteous is from the Lord. He is their strength in the time of trouble. And the Lord shall help them and deliver them.

He shall deliver them from the wicked and save them because they trust in Him. You see several themes running through Psalm 37. You see a pattern of interweaving time and again of the faithful, those who claim the cleansing forgiveness of God, who on the basis of that cleansing and that forgiveness are called upright and called righteous.

They dwell in peace. Whatever their circumstances may be, they dwell in peace. The idea of patience in view of the seeming prosperity of the wicked, claiming the promise of God that justice is coming, the day of reckoning will right whatever temporary injustice we seem to observe.

The righteous, the upright, the meek, those who trust in God, who yield their attention to

His person and His plan will inherit. Several times in this Psalm the promise of inheritance is emphasized and is repeated. What is the future of those who disregard God, those who choose their own way? Several times it says they are cut off.

It's easy to be impressed with the seeming prosperity and the seeming success and seeming happiness and enjoyment of life that people who disregard God may appear to enjoy. This is the reality that it is temporary and they are enjoying the pleasures of sin for a season. But as the Bible says and as several good old gospel songs say, you're going to reap just what you sow.

And that disregard of God will result in God's disregard. And God's disregard is a terrible and painful judgment. On the other hand, and this is the link to our passage in Genesis 3, you will notice that those who turn to God, who claim His deliverance, are blessed.

They are given the gift of peace. They are given strength in the time of trouble. They are given deliverance from their enemies.

They are justified. They are vindicated. They have a bright future.

And they have peace and prosperity of soul even in the present. And we know that none of us qualify for this by nature. None of us are just sort of inherently good.

And then God looks down and says, you know, I really like old so-and-so. They're just such a sweet-natured good person. They don't really sin much.

I think I'm going to do some special things for them. All of us are unworthy of the grace of God when we start out. It is the decision we make to claim God's grace and to claim His forgiveness and His cleansing that distinguishes between those who are upright and those who are wicked, those who inherit and those who are cut off.

It is not a matter of how good we are intrinsically. It's a matter of how much of God's goodness we claim by faith. And it is the decision we make, the priorities we set, that determines that difference.

And you see that God is full of mercy. God is full of compassion. God rewards.

God blesses. God protects and preserves. God vindicates.

God justifies in this psalm and, of course, in many of the other psalms. You have those themes reiterated and emphasized. And that is really the message of Genesis 3. And it's kind of surprising if you turn back now to Genesis 3. When we think of this episode, what do we think of? Adam and Eve are in the garden.

All is bliss. All is wonderful. Eating of the fruit.

Naked and unashamed. It's a wonderful, idyllic, perfectly good environment. And at the

point that they reject the command of God, at the point that they disobey and partake of the fruit, you have the judgment of God.

God judges. God curses. God drives them out of the garden.

God forbids their re-entrance into the garden. He stations the whirling sword and the cherubim. Cuts off access to the tree of life.

Our impression when we just think of this, without necessarily looking closely at the passages, we messed up in the garden and the heavy boot of God's judgment descends and kicks man out of the garden, forbids his re-entrance. And our impression is judgment, separation, loss. The furrowed brow of God in disapproval and in displeasure with man.

Isn't that what we tend to think of? We goofed up and, boy, the justice of God comes in and cursing follows. Well, let's take another look and see if that is the intent of the passage. In Genesis chapter 3, when God comes to the garden following the episode that we studied last week, the deception by the serpent, the partaking of the fruit by Eve and later by Adam, the eyes of them both are open.

They know that they are naked. And what do they do? They sow fig leaves together and make themselves coverings. We're going to come back to that in a moment.

But then, and again, I think I mentioned this before, but if I were a director in Hollywood and I were going to make a movie of this, and I think they may actually have done this, I saw a movie a long, long, long time ago called The Bible. It came out in the late 60s or early 70s. It was one of the first movies I ever saw in a theater.

And I thought, well, they've got a lot of ground to cover if they're calling this The Bible. But it actually only went through the first, I think only up to, I don't even think they got to Israel leaving Egypt. It was mainly just the first part of Genesis that they covered.

But they had man and woman in the garden and so forth in the fall. And generally you would expect that at the point that man disobeys, he knows he's naked and he covers up with fig leaves and hides in the garden, that this would be the point artistically where a cloud would pass in front of the sun. It would be dark and the dark black clouds and the lightning would strike and there would be the thunderous displeasure and anger of God like Mount Sinai coming down and making everyone fearful and cower and so forth.

But after this great sin, which God is fully aware of, and God knows that Adam and Eve have sinned, what does He do? He takes His customary stroll in the garden. He doesn't generate a big black cloud. He doesn't start striking the ground with lightning and making Adam and Eve run about hither and thither in terror.

He takes His usual stroll and walks in the garden in the breeze of the day, the cool of the

day. And He acts initially as though nothing is wrong. Right away this is contrary to expectation.

And especially perhaps in Israel, people who understood the holiness of God and the way it was preserved in the ritual worship, you couldn't approach if you were not ritually pure. You couldn't come in to the place of worship because of the holiness of God. They know the stories of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram and the others who transgressed God and the earth opened and swallowed them up and so forth.

And what a great place to emphasize God's righteousness and justice in this story. And if human hands had written this, if a human mind had concocted this story, this is what would happen. You would have the terrible God of fury and righteous indignation coming in.

And instead, He initially acts as though nothing is wrong and takes His customary stroll. And why is that? What is the point of that contrast, this contrary to expectation action of God? Well, it is designed to make a point. God is making the point that He is not, first and foremost, a vindictive God.

He is not the God that is known primarily by His justice. That as soon as an infraction takes place, stand by. Bad things are going to happen.

God is going to not react in anger and in fury. God is using this occasion to teach, to manifest something about His character. And what is His character? It's grace.

It's compassion. God doesn't come down in thunder and cause Adam and Eve to grovel on the ground in abject humiliation. He takes His usual walk.

And in a way, it's much greater, because as we have discussed even in recent lessons about the interaction between parents and children, if your children disobey, do you want them to focus on their disobedience, their lack of attention to what they are supposed to do? Or do you want them to have as the uppermost issue in their mind, oh boy, my dad is really mad now. My mom is really angry now. We want them to learn to consider their choices and to choose the right.

When they disobey and we discipline them, we hope that that is the point that is reinforced. You make choices and you are accountable for those choices. You are responsible, young lady or young man, for your choice.

And because you have disobeyed, you have brought something on your own head. And we hope that this will digest, that this will be absorbed and will give them a new way of thinking and a new set of priorities in the future so that they can be self-determining, self-sustaining, that they will have their own moral compass, their own ethical standards and their personal realization that they have to choose. And whatever they choose, it's on their own head.

They can't blame the environment. They can't blame someone else. They can't blame the phase of the moon or the astrological configuration at the time.

It is personal responsibility and personal accountability that is at stake. And we distract children from that knowledge when we either fail to discipline them properly or if we, as we discipline them, make an issue out of the wrong thing. It is an exceedingly great mistake to discipline in anger and to give children the impression that the big problem now is that dad is angry or mom is angry.

It is much better to rein ourselves in and be sure that they understand why they're in trouble and why they are now going to suffer a consequence. It is because of their knowledge of the standard and their choice to not meet that standard. This is what God does.

And why is that? Why do we do this with our children? Because we're just looking for an opportunity to exercise authority? We do that because we love them and we want the best for them. We know that we're not always going to be there and that they need to learn something that will sustain them and make them independent and functional as responsible American citizens. The same thing is at work here.

It is a manifestation of the love of God that He doesn't make an issue here out of personal affront. How could you have done this to me? Look at everything I've done for you. What's the thanks I get? Look at the work I put into the garden.

Look at the care. Look at how I planted this. Did I ever do anything to deserve this kind of thing? God doesn't really even make an issue out of Himself directly here, does He? God makes an issue out of what the man has done, what the woman has done in the light of the serpent's conversation and forces him to think about his choices.

And why is that? Because just like any good parent, God loves His children. God loves His people. And God is thinking about their future.

They are going to have a future. Why would God bother if He was just going to say, in the day that you eat thereof you will surely die. A big lightning bolt comes and where Adam and Eve used to be there is just a wisp of smoke.

The very fact that God goes through this exercise in confession and accountability and consequence implies that there is a future and that these are going to be lessons that the man and the woman are going to learn and apply in the future. So right away, if you think about this, there is hope. God does not come down heavy-handed and simply curse and drive and terrorize.

He is a loving Father. This is perhaps the gentlest of all possible ways for this situation to be handled. You can't really think of a way that God could have been more gentle without compromising His character.

So God comes and God calls to Adam and says, Where are you? God doesn't say, Where are you, you filthy sinner, you disobedient rascal. He says, Where are you? He doesn't manifest any wrath, any anger. He doesn't refuse to come into the garden and leave Adam scratching his head.

I wonder if God is ever going to come back. God comes to him, even in his disobedient and fallen state. Adam replies, I heard your voice in the garden and I was afraid.

This idea of God walking in the garden, by the way, is important. They heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day. Walk, to walk in Hebrew is the verb halak.

In English it would be transliterated H-A-L-A-K. And it is the standard word that means to move yourself about by putting one foot in front of the other. But as with the similar verb in Greek, peripateo, it also has a greater level of meaning.

In Greek peripateo means to walk around. But it also is a synonym for lifestyle and for the way you live your life, your presence on the earth. And halak, when used of God, also is a reference to his presence.

And you see this, for example, in Leviticus chapter 26, in the law of Moses, when it talks about the presence of God in Israel. Leviticus chapter 26, verse 12. God is making promises here and giving the conditions of blessing.

This begins all the way back in Leviticus 26, verse 3. If you walk in my statutes and keep my commandments and perform them, then I will. And he gives the list of blessings that will follow those who walk in God's statutes and keep his commandments to perform them. And in verse 9, I will look on you favorably and make you fruitful and multiply you and confirm my covenant with you.

You shall eat the old harvest and clear out the old because of the new. I will set my tabernacle among you, in verse 11. And my soul shall not abhor you.

I will walk among you and be your God, and you shall be my people. I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, that you should not be their slaves. I have broken the bands of your yoke and made you walk upright.

This is a synonym for fellowship, for communion, for God's presence in the beneficial sense. And this is what God is doing after Adam and Eve have sinned. God is still, at this point, walking among them.

You find another reference to this in Deuteronomy chapter 23. Deuteronomy 23, verse 15. I'm sorry.

Let me see what Deuteronomy 23, verse 15 says. Maybe Leviticus 23, verse 15. I can't

read my own writing.

Because that's talking about slaves. I don't really see God walking about there. I'm not sure what I wrote down there on that.

I'll have to go back to that. Turn to 2 Samuel chapter 7. 2 Samuel chapter 7, verses 6 and 7. This, again, is God speaking through Nathan the prophet to David. This is what has been called the Davidic covenant.

He says when David expresses the desire to build a tabernacle for God. He says in 2 Samuel 7 verse 5. So, it's a synonym for God's presence, for communion and fellowship with God. And that, of course, is something that Adam and Eve are going to lose as a result of their expulsion from the garden.

But it doesn't come immediately. And it's an expression of God's long-suffering and God's mercy and His compassion and His continuing love for them, even in their state of disobedience, that He comes to them in their fallen state and walks in the garden as is His custom. And I would like to point out something else here in Genesis chapter 3, verse 10.

When Adam responds to God, what does he do? Now, he, of course, initially mentions that it's the woman that got him into all of this. But what's the last thing that Adam says here in verse 10 and, again, in verse 12? He says in verse 10, I was afraid because I was naked and I hid myself. He acknowledges fear, he acknowledges shame, and he acknowledges deception.

What does it mean to hide yourself? You're trying to deceive. You're trying to keep someone from knowing the truth, which is the definition of deception. And Adam basically confesses those three sins, doesn't he? These are the most recent sins that he has committed.

He was afraid of God, he was ashamed of his nakedness, and he hid himself. He tried to escape the presence of God. Then in verse 12, the woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree and what? I ate.

What is Adam doing here? Well, in Greek we would call it homologeo, acknowledging the truth of one's failure. Adam confesses his sin before God. What is the basis of receiving God's forgiveness and cleansing in the life of a believer, that we know from many passages in the Old Testament and in the New? It's acknowledging our sin before the Lord, isn't it? Throwing ourselves on His mercy.

First John 1.9 says if we acknowledge, if we confess our sins, He is faithful. He is just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Not just the sin that we confessed at the moment.

The attitude of repentance, the attitude of returning to God. And Adam makes this decision the moment he speaks up. He could have continued to cringe behind the foliage in the garden.

But when God speaks and says, where are you? Adam pipes up, as we say in the military. They call your name off in the roster and you pipe up, you sound off. God says, where are you? And Adam says, here I am.

I have sinned. I hid myself. I ate the fruit.

And it's a wonderful picture right there in the first failure of the opportunity to receive God's forgiveness and God's cleansing. Adam confesses his sin and you will notice in what follows that Adam is not cursed. It is an amazing thing that actually the consequences are far less severe than you might expect for having disobeyed God's command.

And there are two sides of that coin because you also look at the initial sin. Wouldn't it have made a better story if Adam and Eve had continued in the garden and they had gone ahead and had a couple of children and you've got Cain and Abel and they're getting ready to enjoy the presence of God in the cool of the day or something and Cain gets upset with Abel and kills him and that this is the first sin. I mean, if you're just starting from scratch and thinking, well, let's build a religion.

Let's write a Bible. Wouldn't that be the archetypal sin, murder? If you're going to condemn the entire human race, well, let's have a real worthy sin. He rose up and slew his brother and then God comes and renders judgment.

What is this sin? When we think of sin, you think of the deadly sins. I think the Catholic Church has a list of deadly sins. You've got the standards of the world that some things are just awful.

You think of pedophiles and you think of some really horrible, gross things. People think back to World War II and the death camps and so on. We think of murder.

We think of adultery and betrayal and things like this. What is the first sin? What is the sin that condemns the entire human race? Biting a piece of fruit is the overt expression of it, but what is it really? What caused Eve and Adam to fall? It's a mental attitude sin, isn't it? It is rejection of God's command. God has said, don't eat.

I think I'll eat. If their arm fell off and they never reached out and took the fruit, the sin has still been committed because it is rejecting and acting contrary to God's authority and God's command, and it is a mental sin. The first sin in the human race is a mental attitude sin.

It is deciding that one's own plan and one's own way is preferable to God's, that there's

something wrong with God's policy, there's something wrong with God's plan, there's something wrong with God's prohibition, and choosing something different. The reaching out and partaking of the fruit is simply almost an afterthought. And God emphasizes that when He pronounces the judgment.

He says, because you have partaken of something that I told you not to partake of, it is the violation of the command. It is the rejection of God's authority and the violation of the requirement for obedience. That is the sin.

So we find ourselves observing a lot of unexpected things here. The sin that we would think, well, maybe God creates another woman and Adam goes off and betrays Eve and that's the first great sin, or Cain kills Abel and that's the first great sin. The first great sin is consciously choosing to disrupt relationship with God, violating God's authority, rejecting God's plan and God's purpose.

And it happens in the soul, it happens in the heart. But hard on the heels of that, on that same day, God comes and Adam has another choice to make. Here is the presence of God.

What am I going to do? His initial response is run away. You see something that makes you afraid, your first instinct is to flee. That's what the old adrenaline pump gives us, the fight or flight instinct.

And obviously you can't fight Almighty God, so flight is the action of choice. But when God calls out, when God initiates conversation, Adam responds. And that is also a choice in the soul.

Adam could have just hunkered down and said, I'm not moving from this spot, I hope he doesn't find me, but I'm not responding to that call, maybe he'll go away. Eve and I will figure something out. We've got this fig leaf thing going here, we've got some options.

I don't want to get involved in a conversation with God. That was an option. But Adam pipes up, Adam sounds off, Adam confesses his sin to God.

And when we think of confession of sin, we typically say, well, if you want to support that from the Bible, go to 1 John 1.9. You can go to Genesis 3 for confession of sin, because Adam's confession here, Eve's confession here, the serpent's lack of confession here are highly significant. Adam acknowledges his sin. Eve acknowledges her sin.

The serpent deceives me in verse 13, and I ate. Both of them explicitly name their sin. The serpent doesn't pipe up and say, you know, Lord, I deceived these people.

I committed a wrong here. And when you think about the three persons here to whom God is speaking, two of them confess their sin, one does not. How many of the three are cursed? How many of them does God say, you are cursed? The one that does not

acknowledge is wrong.

The Lord God said to the serpent in verse 14, because you have done this, you are cursed. God doesn't say to Adam, because you have done this, you are cursed. He doesn't say to Eve, because you have done this, you are cursed.

Come under this category of seed. When it says here that the seed of the woman will bruise the head of the serpent, and the heel of the seed of the woman is going to be bruised or crushed by the serpent, is that true of every member of the human race? It's not. Is there enmity between all members of the human race and what the serpent represents? Not at all.

In fact, there is great affinity with those who share the serpent's disaffection with God and disregard of God and desire to live independently of God. So we want to note here that when God says, I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your seed and her seed, that this is not a synonym for the entire human race. To be the seed of the woman is not just to be a member of the human race.

It is to be on the Lord's side. It is to be regenerate. It is to be one of the redeemed.

It is to be one who receives the benefit of the work of Jesus Christ. And that is a synonym for believers of every age. And so that, I think, makes pretty good logical sense, doesn't it? But think about what that says about Eve.

Because God is speaking to Eve here and he says, I will put enmity, well, he's actually speaking to the serpent about Eve, when he says, I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your seed and her seed. Well, now, if seed represents the regenerate, those who are redeemed and it's an ultimate reference to Jesus Christ himself, and that is referred to as the seed of the woman, then what is the woman? Unregenerate or regenerate? Lost or saved? Well, seed of the woman is the one that is going to triumph over the serpent. The enmity is going to be between the believers and the unbelievers, between good and evil.

So by being called the seed of the woman here, it tells us something about Eve right here at this point. Is Eve, as God speaks, lost or saved? She's saved. I will put enmity between you and the woman.

There is a difference. There is a dividing line. There is an opposition between the serpent and what he represents and everyone who joins with him in that philosophy and in that way of thinking and the woman and her descendants, all of whom are grouped together as the seed, as those who are in opposition to the serpent.

So it's an intriguing thing to realize that the response to God's call in the garden is in effect a picture of redemption, a picture of salvation. Eve is treated here as redeemed, as at odds with the serpent and everything that he represents. Contrary to, opposed to,

on the other side of the line from the serpent.

Right here at this point. He shall bruise your head and you shall bruise his heel. This is a reverse of what we would expect.

Normally the last line of a pronouncement like this is where the emphasis is. And we would expect God's emphasis to be on the victory of the seed of the woman. Wouldn't it have been sort of poetic for God to say, I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your seed and her seed.

You shall bruise his heel and he shall bruise your head. If I was writing it, that's how I'd write it. Stand by serpent, you may think that you get a little wound going there on his heel, but he's going to crush your head, you're finished.

But it's interesting that this is reversed. And the place of emphasis here is on the bruising of the heel. Why is that? Why does God choose to emphasize the damage that the serpent is going to be able to inflict rather than the ultimate victory of the seed of the woman over the serpent.

Obviously crushing the head, bruising the head is a fatal wound. Bruising or crushing the heel is painful but not fatal. And in this statement of God, we have the promise of ultimate victory.

And this has been called the Proto-Evangelium, the first statement of the gospel in the Bible. Proto-Evangelium I think is Latin. But we have the bruising of the heel in the place of emphasis here.

Why is that? Well, think about what's happening. This is a time of loss and this is a time of temporary victory for the serpent. Who seems to have won out here in the garden? God or the serpent? Who has achieved their goals in the immediate sense? The serpent pretty much got his way.

He deceived the woman, got the man and the woman to fall. They're going to be expelled from the garden. They're going to suffer.

They're going to endure sorrow. They're ultimately going to die. They are going to die on this day in one sense.

So the serpent seems to be having his day. Well, that's the point. Remember Psalm 37 that we began with this morning? It appears that the wicked prosper.

It appears that they have their day. They seem to be winning out. What is our reaction? What is our response to that apparent truth? Have faith.

Trust in God. The righteous, the faithful are going to prevail. God is going to deliver.

And the wicked who seem to be having their day will be cut off. After having looked at this statement of God, it's interesting to go back through Psalm 37 and look at the contrast that God draws. It may seem like certain things are prevailing and certain things are the way of the world and that this is really the way to get ahead is to follow the way of the serpent.

But trust in God. That's not how things are going to end up. You will reap what you sow.

You can sow bad seed and there's a period of time where you don't reap the results. You sow the seed and you go away. It's a long time before the seed grows up and sprouts and turns out to be bad.

There's that interim period that we have to deal with. That's what this statement tells us. We have an interim period to deal with.

There is going to be a period when we're experiencing the bruising of the heel rather than the crushing of the head. And that is the opportunity for faith. That's the opportunity to learn.

That is the reason we thank God for suffering and we thank God for adversity because it's something that God uses.