

98-02-22a

One of the important concepts we're going to see this morning is the difference between the high and the low, being trodden down or being lifted up. And in Christ we have the extremes illustrated. And this is one of the passages that makes reference to that important truth.

Philippians chapter 2. Therefore, if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God. I would translate this, who, being in the form of God, did not consider equality with God a thing to be grasped or a thing to be held on to at any cost. But he made himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bond-servant and coming in the likeness of men.

And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted him and given him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven and of those on earth and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own deliverance, your own salvation, with fear and trembling.

For it is God who works in you both to will and to do his good pleasure. Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God, without fault, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain or labored in vain." The passage that is before us in Genesis chapter 4 is perhaps one of the most important in the entire Bible. In the story of Cain and Abel, we have God addressing Cain in conversation and, in a very few words, laying out for Cain the choice that faces him and that has faced every believer, indeed every human being from that time to this.

It is easy to get caught up in the murder of Abel and the mark of Cain and where did Cain get his wife and some of the other questions and miss the pivotal nature of this passage and, in particular, the statement by God that we find in verse 7 of chapter 4. We know that after Cain and his offering, his minkah, are rejected, God comes to Cain,

apparently seeks him out and says to Cain, why are you angry in verse 6 of Genesis 4? Why has your countenance fallen? Then in the New King James it says, if you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door and its desire is for you, but you should rule over it. Now we have moved a little further forward in chapter 4 than this, but to be honest, I was not happy with the coverage that we did on this verse and I want to return to it because it is so important. It is important for us.

We need to understand what God is saying here. When God speaks personally and directly, there is always a good reason. God does not waste words.

He does not ramble on as some of us in the human realm are capable of doing. Every word that proceeds from the mouth of God is important. These are the first words of God that we have recorded in scripture spoken outside the garden.

They are spoken on the occasion of many firsts. It is the first death in the human race is about to take place. You have the first rejection of a person who has come to God with an offering, with a minkah gift.

God knows the choices that face Cain. God knows the situation. He knows what has taken place at the fall and what the nature of man now is.

We want to be sure that we have a good grip on these things as we move forward. We are going to revisit verse 7 of chapter 4. This is going to require a little bit of concentration. We are going to talk about Hebrew and the gender of participles and things like that.

I don't want to get lost in those things, but it is really important to understand this. I have also observed that in some of the most important places of scripture, we often have textual problems. I see this in my own opinion, and it is my opinion, that Satan has attacked the text of scripture at certain points in the hopes of obscuring or deflecting our attention away from the truth that is contained there.

It is also my belief that God, where the text has been disturbed, shall we say, God has preserved the evidence to reconstruct it. We do not have a perfectly preserved Hebrew text. If you have gone through 1 Samuel from the Hebrew, that is perhaps the most poorly preserved of all of the Hebrew texts that we have.

Yet there is sufficient evidence at every point to reconstruct what is meant by that text. The same is true here in Genesis. I pointed out last week in verse 8 that we have a very obvious loss in the Masoretic text of Genesis.

It says, Cain spoke to Abel his brother... In fact, if you get the Tanakh, which is the Jewish Publication Society English translation, this would be the Jewish Bible. If you were still going to worship in the synagogue, you would go get the Tanakh. It has the Old Testament scriptures.

They are in the original biblical order where you have the law, the prophets, and the writings, not our modern day order. It is interesting to go and check and see how Hebrew speaking people of today, looking at the Hebrew text, translate it into English. How they have some unique insight into the text.

When you get to verse 8 of chapter 4 of Genesis, this is literally the way they translate it. Cain said to his brother Abel... and it came to pass when they were in the field. There is just a loss in the text.

Not unlike what you have in 1 Samuel when it talks about Saul. It says Saul had reigned blank years in Israel and after he had reigned blank years. There is no word there in any of the texts.

Let me outline for you briefly why verse 7 has been such a challenge for scholars through the centuries. As early as the translation of the Septuagint, which is 300 years before Christ, this was a problem verse. Yet it is one of the most important in Scripture.

We need to understand what it says. Does it say that sin is crouching at the door? If so, what does that mean? Is this an external presence? Is it a demon that is ready to pounce on us? Is it Satan himself? Is it our sinful nature? What is the door? Are we inside or outside that door? This is the first mention of a door. Pataak is the Hebrew noun for door.

It is also an important word when you study Hebrew for other reasons. But what is God saying here? Let me remind you first of all, we did do some work on this verb, if you do well, and that is the verb form from which we get the noun for good in Hebrew. One of the first things you learn when you take Hebrew, I took Hebrew first under Glenn Carnegie up in Tulsa.

The first thing he taught us was some conversational Hebrew. He would come in and if we were having class in the morning, we would say, Boker Tov, which means good morning. If it was evening, it would be Lila Tov, and the word Tov means good, T-O-V, depending on how German you want to be in your pronunciation.

So Tov is the noun for good. Yathav, Y-A-T-A-V, is the verb, and it means to accomplish the good, to perform the good, to produce the good, to participate in the good, to choose the good, to participate in action that is good. And that is what we have here.

If you do well, then the next phrase in our English here says, will you not be accepted? Well, the word translated accepted is actually from the Hebrew verb not to be accepted. It is not to be accepted, it is to be lifted up. In this case, it means will you not be lifted up.

However, that word is also commonly used as a synonym for forgiveness. Will you not be forgiven? To be lifted up has the idea of being forgiven. This goes back to the custom, what typically happened when someone assumed a posture of supplication? They

bowed, they got down on their face, you have illustrations of this all through the Old Testament.

When someone in vision or otherwise finds themselves in the presence of God, facing the angel of the Lord, you see people, as we say in the Marine Corps, on their face. Get on your face. You get down in a prone posture, nose to the dirt.

Well, in some cases, you see John in Revelation assuming this same posture. When it is, in fact, an angel, the angel says, no, get up. You're not to worship me.

The apostles did this in Acts. People fell down and worshiped them thinking that they were gods. They said, no, get up, get up, and they raised them up.

They said, don't fall down prostrated in front of me. There's no need for supplication. There's no need for contrition at this point.

So, raising up has the idea of someone who has fallen on their face in an attitude of supplication. You say, this issue is over with. Rise and stand on your feet.

You raise someone up and restore them to an upright posture. So, the verb came to be a synonym for forgiveness. Throughout these early chapters of Genesis, particularly, there are so many interwoven threads and word plays and structure devices that are used to tie the narrative together.

We have just had, in verse 5 and 6, the idea that Cain is angry and his countenance has fallen. And when God says, why are you angry? Why has your countenance fallen? And you have the verb in Hebrew for falling, and then immediately followed by the verb for lifting up, there is almost a double entendre here. God says, why are you angry? Why has your countenance fallen? If you do the good, if you yataw, will you not be lifted up? And it implies being lifted up from a prostrate position, being forgiven of sin, and having your countenance lifted again.

It's a very meaningful phrase when God says, if you do well, will you not be lifted up? Everything will be restored. Everything will be upright. The sin, the problem, the depression, or the fallen countenance can all be resolved if you will do the good, if you will do the right thing, if you will do what you are supposed to do.

And then that phrase is repeated, if you do well, in the next part of verse 7, if you do not do well. As I said a moment ago, God does not waste words, and when he repeats something, it's for emphasis. Everything depends on Cain's choice.

If Cain does well, there is a lifting up. There is a restoration. And this lifting up hangs in the balance of Cain's choice.

So God repeats it. If you do well, there is a lifting up. If you do not do well, there is some

other consequence.

What is that consequence? Well, this is where we get into deep water, but it's not all that complex. I can explain it to you, and you'll be further along than a lot of people who gaze at it in Hebrew and never figure it out. If you do not do well, in our English it says sin lies at the door.

Well, there is a problem with this, because sin here is a Hebrew word that is feminine, *katat*. C-H-A-T-A-T would be a way of rendering this into English. And the difficulty here is that the word for lying at the door or crouching is a participle.

In English, that's an I-N-G word. Swimming, running. In this case, lying or crouching.

But it's a masculine participle. There's no way around it. It doesn't have enough letters.

It doesn't have the right form. There's no way you can twist it or bend it and get it to be feminine. So you've got a feminine subject and a masculine verb.

We don't have that problem in English, but if you've ever taken Spanish or French or one of the languages where you have nouns that are either feminine or masculine, well, Hebrew is one of those languages. And these don't match. And it's a big problem, because if you're going to say sin is lying or sin is crouching, those things ought to agree, and they don't.

And God is not ungrammatical. God invented language. God knows how to speak correctly.

It's a big problem. And it is a flag, a red flag that says, text problem. There's a problem in the text.

We have not gotten an accurate record of what God says, because this just is an impossible construction. And it's been the cause of all kinds of speculation and attempted solutions. There is a way to resolve this, and it does require us to recognize that there is a problem in the text and to seek to reconstruct the text as it originally existed.

And in a nutshell, what this involves is restoring the phrase in the first part of what God says. Remember we talked about *nasah*, to lift up, and this is a noun that comes from that verb *sa'et*, which means there is a lifting up or there is forgiveness. But it seems vague.

Is he talking about this lifting up in terms of Cain's countenance? Is he talking about it with its forgiveness overtones? It's very vague. God just says, if you do well, there is a lifting up, or it will be lifted up. And we don't know, following hard on the heels of his fallen countenance, does he just say, Cain, if you do well, you'll be happy, your

countenance will rise, and you won't be depressed anymore? Is he talking about forgiveness? It's unclear.

Well, this is a solution that has been proposed and that many scholars have adopted, and I think it is probably correct. I would not die for this. I'm not telling you that this is the only way it can be solved, but I think it's likely.

The word for sin that we have falling down into the second part of what God says, if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. It's a very easy thing. If you ever look at some of the old manuscripts, when copyists are copying along, they, in fact, if you've ever done this, if you have transcribed, I transcribed last night for my brother a passage out of Kylan Dalich, out of Exodus, and it was several paragraphs and it's technical language, and you have to go back and proofread, because as your eye skips from one thing to another, or you look up and talk to someone, and you return to the text, your eye can skip from one word to another, or the end of one word to the end of another word, and you can lose something.

Then when you catch it, if you're writing on a manuscript in Hebrew with ink on leather or whatever, you've got to go above or below the line and write the word that you left out. It's easy for some later copyist to look at that and misunderstand where your inserted word is supposed to go, and so words can drift. I could show you dozens and dozens of examples where it's very obvious that a word has been misplaced.

Sometimes we have two copies of the very same poem, or the very same psalm. There'll be a psalm recorded like the Song of Moses that's also in the Book of Psalms, or a song of David that's recorded in 1 Samuel that you'll also find in the Psalms. We have two copies of the identical same text, and you can see in one copy, which has been preserved and transmitted separately from the other, that a word has moved.

You say, my goodness, how did that happen? You get to looking, and it was between words that had similar endings and so on. Here is the suggestion that I think is probable. The word for sin has fallen out of the first phrase down into the second phrase, and this has unbalanced the lines.

You have three beats in the first line in Hebrew. You have five beats in the second line, and you have four in the third. If you move the word sin back up to the first line, you have a beautiful symmetrical 4-4-4 structure.

And the fact that you have 3-5-4, the fact that sin in its gender does not agree with the verb that it's been put next to, tells us that something has happened to the text. If you put sin back up there, this is how it reads. If you do the good, is there not forgiveness of sin? And if you do not do the good, at the door, the croucher, or one is crouching.

That's our crouching word, robates. And this is a masculine, in English we would call it a

gerund, an ing word. It's everything scans correctly, all of our genders match, and all three parts of this pronouncement by God make sense.

This is my suggestion as to a solution. It's been put forward by men who know a whole lot more about Hebrew than I do, and it is the best of several solutions that I've looked at in great detail. And I will tell you now why, not just from language, but also from our context and from our biblical theology, this makes good sense.

If you do the good, is there not forgiveness of sin? Why does God come to Cain? Because Cain is committing the sin of anger. He is angry, and his countenance has fallen. God comes to him and presents him with a solution to that problem, because Cain is balanced at the point of choice.

What is he going to do with this? He can be restored, he can be lifted up, his sin can be forgiven if he does what he's supposed to do. And we have seen already that God has communicated to Adam and Eve, to Cain and Abel, the living truth that they need outside the garden. They have principles of sacrifice, they understand confession, they understand forgiveness, and we see these things in evidence in chapter 3 and here in chapter 4. If you do not do the good, it isn't sin that is crouching at the door, there is a croucher at the door that God does not otherwise identify.

Sin does not work, as I said, because of the grammatical problems here, but there is a croucher. And the interesting thing about this, let me give you this word, it is robates, R-O-B-E-T-S. And the O-E construction there in Hebrew, that's your standard masculine participle, O-E.

It's one of the clues when you're learning Hebrew and trying to parse words. The noun might be robots, with two A's, which is the normal form of a noun, and when you say robates, that's the participle. I think I said noun when I meant verb.

Robots would be the verb form, robates. So this word is very uncommon in Hebrew, but we have cognate languages of Hebrew, in this case Akkadian, where this word is frequent. And in Akkadian, there is a thing called a robates.

You know what it is? In their culture, they would have temples, and outside the temples, it's just like the New York Public Library, you know how they've got a big lion that sits on each side of the stairway? Well, at these temples, they would have gargoyles, or demon images, demon statues, that guarded the entrance, guarded the door to the place of worship. And these were called robates. They could be a crouching lion, or they might be a multi-composite creature, with the body of a calf and the head of a lion.

Something along the lines of the Sphinx, even, with an animal body and a human face. But a gargoyle type of thing, and the tradition of gargoyles is extremely ancient. And these were the crouchers.

They crouched and waited at the door of the place of worship. And they were called robates. And so you have the croucher.

Well, that's great if you know Akkadian, and if you have read the tablets and things that they've dug up that are written in that language, and you understand the Isagogics, but do we not have something here in the text of Scripture that would help us understand what God is saying? Well, let me direct your attention back to Chapter 3. This is often the point in a lesson where I feel like Perry Mason. Have you ever watched Perry Mason and the Hamilton Burger and the judge are all looking at him because he seems to be going off on some wild tangent and objection, Your Honor. This is irrelevant and immaterial.

And the judge looks at Perry and Perry says, Your Honor, I intend to tie this all together. I'm going to bring this all together and it'll make sense here in a minute. Well, that's kind of where we are right now.

If you'll bear with me, this will all tie together. Look at Chapter 3 when God last spoke on the occasion of the confession of sin by Adam and Eve confronting the serpent. All three of them are there before God.

And in verse 14 of Chapter 3, the Lord God said to the serpent, Because you have done this, you have deceived the woman. You are cursed more than all cattle and more than every beast of the field. On your belly you shall go and dust you shall eat all the days of your life.

The serpent is confined to the dust. The serpent is now essentially a croucher. He doesn't stand upright.

He is associated with the dust. The earth that God is about to curse, the dust that God is about to curse. Man who has sinned is going to return to the dust.

The dust speaks of death. Dust thou art unto dust, thou shalt return. The serpent dwells in the dust.

He doesn't stand up. He doesn't walk upright. He crawls on his belly and eats the dust.

Also in verse 15, God continues his speech to the serpent and he says, I will put enemyship between you and the woman and between your seed and her seed. He shall bruise, crush, strike at your head. You shall bruise, crush, strike at his heel.

Why is it the heel? It's the only thing the serpent can reach. It's the only place where he has any ability is at the point where the foot strikes the ground. It is a non-fatal wound unless you're Achilles.

Remember the story of Achilles where, I forget all the names of the other parties involved, but a god came down and told Achilles mother that if she would dip him in the

river as a baby, he would be immortal. So she takes the baby and grabs him by the foot and dips him in the water, but she's holding him by the heel so the heel doesn't go down under water. He grows up and becomes a mighty warrior and literally bullets bounce off, arrows bounce off, but the way Achilles dies is that somebody fires off an arrow that hits him in the heel that his mother was holding onto when he got dipped in this river.

That's his one vulnerable spot. So Achilles dies from this wound to the heel. That's where the phrase Achilles heel comes from and why they call it the Achilles tendon down there.

It all goes back to that fable. Here, the point of vulnerability is our contact with the dust, the place where the serpent dwells. When we sin, we are down in the dust.

Forgiveness raises us up out of the dust, raises us up out of contact with the cursed earth, with the realm of the serpent and so forth. There's a lot you can say about this. We've talked about the lifting up idea that is expressed in 4.7 of Genesis here.

You can think about John 3.14. Remember when Jesus is talking to Nicodemus and he says, as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up. Why does Jesus say that? Why in talking to Nicodemus about regeneration and being born again does he bring up this episode in the trek of Israel through the wilderness when they disobey, they complain, God smites them with a plague of serpents. They're being bitten by the serpents and dying.

Then Moses prays to God. The people repent. God tells Moses, make a serpent out of bronze.

You wonder how many people died between the time he got the instructions and he fashioned this serpent out of bronze. That takes some time. Got to do a casting.

But he makes this serpent, by the way you do the casting in the dirt, pour in the molten bronze, wait for it to cool, put it on a pole and raise it in the middle of the camp and as many as were willing to turn and look upon the serpent, which has been raised up out of the dust, has been brought out of the casting and put up on a pole, when they looked upon that, they would live. Jesus says the same way when Moses lifted the serpent up in the wilderness, even so the Son of Man must be lifted up. When he is lifted up, he bears sin.

He solves the sin problem. It's lifted up. It is removed from the ground, removed from the curse and it's dealt with and God's justice is satisfied.

And that of course is spoken of again in John 12.32. Jesus said, if the Son of Man, if I be lifted up, I will draw all men unto me. He was lifted up. The sin problem was solved and the issue now is, what do you do with that drawing? People talk about God's sovereignty in the election and so forth.

When Jesus says, no man can come to me except the Father, draw him. And they get the idea that only some people are drawn and others are not. Everyone is drawn.

Jesus says, if I am lifted up, I will draw all men. And that is a drawing that the Father does. It's what we do with that drawing.

It's what we do at the point of seeing the serpent raised in the wilderness. It's what we do when we see that God has solved the sin problem. In the Old Testament, it was looking forward to that.

In our age, it is retrospective. But lifting up and the dust, the lower realm and the higher realm being abased and being exalted, these have the idea of sin and what to do about it. God has solved that problem.

And that's what God is confronting Cain with. If you do well, if you pursue the good, if you lay hold of the good, if you Yataw, is there not forgiveness of sin? Has not God made a way? Your parents are still alive who committed a sin worthy of death in the garden. They did the good.

They acknowledged. They confessed. And God was able to forgive and to preserve.

If you do well, is there not a lifting up? Is there not a forgiveness of sin? If you do not do the good, if you do not choose the good, God here, this is an illustration of the drawing, isn't it? God has come to Cain. God confronts Cain with this choice. You can either do the good or not do the good.

It's your choice. If you do the good, if you associate with the good, if you seize and lay hold of the good, there's forgiveness of sin. If not, there is a croucher at the door.

Who is the croucher? How many creatures are there that anybody knows about on the planet right now that have any sort of volitional ability or responsibility? There are five that we know of. Adam, Eve, Cain, Abel, and the serpent. And when you look at chapter three, the serpent who has been consigned to the dust, to crawl on the dust, to eat the dust, and to strike at the heel of the seat of the woman from the dust, he's the croucher.

He's the one at the door waiting. And why is that? Well, take a look at, you remember, I went into some detail when we first started chapter four, when Eve conceives and has a son. What does she say when she bears Cain? She says, I have acquired a man, the sign of the Lord.

And we recalled at that time in 4.1 that this went back to verse 15 of chapter 3, that there would be a seed of the woman. So, who is Cain here? Cain is the seed, right? That's what Eve affirms when he's born. She says, I have gotten a man.

Here's my seed. Here's my offspring. This is the sign of Yahweh, the oath of Yahweh.

This is what God was talking about. And that is, in fact, Cain. Cain is the seed of the woman here, or the first iteration of the seed.

What's going to happen to the seed? What did God say in 3.15? I will put enmity between the two of you, between the serpent and the seed. He will strike at your head. You will strike at his heel, or crush, or bruise.

The word can mean all of those things. So, this is Cain's opportunity. And you remember when we studied this seed idea that this is a choice.

We choose whether we are the seed of the woman or the seed of the serpent. That's what God is facing Cain with in chapter 4, verse 7. If you do well, will you not be... is there not forgiveness of sin? If you do not do well, the croucher is at the door. His desire is for you.

He wants to bite your heel. But you must rule over him. You must crush his head.

That's the choice that every believer faces. That's the opportunity that every human being has to come to God and to become the seed of the woman. This is Cain's responsibility.

He's the firstborn. He's the hope of the human race. And so, these ideas of the dust, the curse, sin, the croucher, are all tied together here.

And to answer the question, what does it mean that sin is crouching at the door? Is this our sinful nature and so forth? I don't think so. I think that we are making the choice, just as Cain faces it here. We choose whom we will serve.

You remember in chapter 4, verse 7, Cain says, Romans, Paul addresses this choice. Back in Romans chapter 6, he says in verse 11, likewise you also reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Therefore, do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its desires.

Very resonant language in the light of Genesis chapter 3 and chapter 4. Do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. Stand up out of the dust. The dust is the place of death.

The dust is the place of sin. The dust is the place of the curse. Don't present yourself, your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin.

Present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. Verse 14, Romans 6, sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace. What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not.

Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death or of obedience leading to righteousness. We make the choice. We present ourselves to one or to the other.

Isn't that the same thing God is saying to Cain in Genesis 4? If you do well, there's forgiveness of sin. If you do not do well, sin, not sin, the serpent himself is crouching at the door. He is the chief sinner.

He is the originator of sin. His kingdom is the kingdom of sin and of death. God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered.

And the form of doctrine has changed from age to age, hasn't it? There was a form of doctrine that was delivered in the pre-law era from Adam to Moses. There was a form of doctrine that was delivered under the law from Moses to Christ. Here in the church age there is a form of doctrine.

The principles are the same. The manifestation, the results of obedience are slightly different. The universal indwelling of the Holy Spirit did not pertain until this age.

But the principle is the same. All of us face a choice. Are we going to be overcome by the kingdom of darkness? Satan roams the earth to and fro seeking whom he may devour, whom he can bite.

Now, if he's going to devour someone, how is he going to do it? Well, if he's the serpent, he's going to bite them in the heel. They're going to fall in the dust and then he can consume them. But we have a choice.

We don't have to be under that power. There is forgiveness of sin if we do well, if we lay hold of it. If we do not lay hold of it, if we do not do well, that's when sin's power can overcome us.

Sin has no power over us once we're forgiven. And it isn't a matter of if we sin or how often we sin, but what happens after we sin. The choice that we face is the choice that Cain faces here.

If we do well, there is forgiveness. If not, the croucher is at the door. His desire is for us.

There's nothing Satan would like better than for us to be held under the power of sin. This word for desire, by the way, is a fascinating word. It only occurs three places in the Old Testament.

One is here in Genesis 4-7. The other is in the Old Testament is in the preceding verse, Genesis 3-16, talking to the woman, God says, your desire shall be for your husband and he shall rule over you. The verb for desire and the verb for rule are identical in 3-16 and

in 4-7.

The other fascinating thing here, and there are so many word plays, and the more Hebrew we're comfortable with, the more intriguing things we can see here. Remember I told you that the word for nasah, to be lifted up or to forgive is nasah, which is N-A-S-A in Hebrew, and that S is a sheen. It's the little thing that looks like a pitchfork.

You know the thing that Mr. Spock does when he says live long and prosper, and he parts his fingers between the ring finger and the middle finger, and then he sticks his thumb out? You know where that comes from. That is the sign made by the Levitical priest when he's pronouncing the shema, when he's pronouncing the blessing. And the shema, the name of God, the Lord our God is one Lord, when he raises his hands this way with thumb, two fingers together, two fingers together, it's making a sheen.

It's making this S-H letter. And he does it with both hands, and this is supposed to be sort of a secret. Everybody's supposed to have their heads bowed and eyes closed when the priest raises his hands and pronounces the shema, but that's what he's doing, and these Star Trek people just ripped that off and used it for Spock.

Live long and prosper. It's a blessing. It's the shema.

It's the name of God being pronounced. Well, that letter occurs in two different forms. There's sheen and there is seen.

The only difference in Scripture is whether you have a dot over the right-hand branch or the left-hand branch. And when the dot is in one place, it has an S-H sound. When the dot is in the other place, it has a hard S sound.

Well, the fascinating thing here to me, and I may lose everybody when I say this, but the word for forgiveness or lifting up is nasah, and that's a sheen with the dot to give you a hard S. If you move that dot to the other branch and make it nasah, that is the word to deceive, to beguile. And you have that verb in Genesis chapter 3 when God confronts Eve. The Lord said to the woman in verse 13, what is this you have done? The woman said, the serpent deceived me.

It's the word nasah. And so the difference between being deceived and beguiled and being lifted up and forgiven is the difference of the placement of that dot. It's a choice.

And there are so many things that God does, so many different levels at which God communicates, especially in these early, very tightly woven poetic chapters of Genesis. It reminds us here when God says, if you do well, there is forgiveness of sin. If you don't do well, you just move that dot.

Now it's the deception of sin. It's the beguiling of sin. It's the croucher in the dust who's waiting outside the door.

His desire is to have you. He wants to have the seed of the serpent. He wants you to be the seed of the serpent instead of the seed of the woman that crushes his head.

He wants you to be the one who has his heel bitten, who falls in the dust and is devoured. So it's a powerful reminder that this is the choice that we face, every human being, and in particular, every believer faces this choice. What are we going to do in the presence of sin? Sin is going to be there.

There's no way around it. It will happen. We do not achieve sinlessness in this life.

It isn't whether or not sin occurs. It's what we do when it takes place that determines whether we are lifted up or whether we are cursed in the dust. Let's pause here and take our break.

When we come back, we'll continue.