

Genesis 3:20-24 "The First Sacrifice"\*

Proposition: In Genesis 3:20-24, we see the first sacrifice. What's more, we discover that the first sacrifice was necessary because of two reasons. The two reasons are two attributes of God.

I. We see God's justice (1-19).

A. Man sinned (1-13).

B. God pronounced judgment (14-19).

1. He sentenced the serpent (14-15).

2. He sentenced the woman (16).

3. He sentenced the man (17-19).

II. We see God's grace (20-24).

A. The first evidence is what Adam did (20).

1. He named Eve.

2. In so doing he exhibited faith.

B. The second evidence is what God did (21-24).

1. He clothed them (21).

· We see the principle of modesty.

· We see the principle of substitution.

2. He banished them (22-23).

· He did it for His own glory.

· He also did it for man's good.

3. He prevented them from going back (24).

· We cannot erase the past.

· We must look to the One who gives hope for the future.

Response: Ponder the implications of the first sacrifice...

1. Our sin separates us from God.

2. We need God to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves.

3. The good news is that is exactly what God did.

As followers of Jesus Christ, we love to sing about the blood of Jesus, don't we? Our hymnbook is full of songs that talk about the blood:

"Would you be free from the burden of sin? There's power in the blood, power in the blood. Would you o'er evil a victory win? There's wonderful power in the blood." Those are the words of Lewis E. Jones.

Elisha Hoffman penned this series of questions: "Have you been to Jesus for the cleansing power? Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb? Are you fully trusting in His grace this hour? Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?"

Here's an older song, written by Nicolaus von Zinzendorf and translated by John Wesley, "Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness my beauty are, my glorious dress; Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed, with joy shall I lifte up my head."

You fill in the blanks of this one by Robert Lowry: "What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_." The blood of Jesus!

And perhaps the most vivid song about the blood, written by William Cowper, begins as follows: "There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Immanuel's veins, and sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains; lose all their guilty stains, lose all their guilty stains; And sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains."

Why do we sing about the blood? "Well," you say, "It's because Jesus shed His blood for us." Yes, indeed He did.

But why? Why did He shed His precious blood? Why did He become a sacrifice? Why was His sacrifice necessary anyway?

We could turn many places in God's Word to answer that vital question. But this morning, we're going to answer that question by looking at the *first sacrifice* that ever occurred on this planet. It's found in Genesis 3.

In Genesis 3:20-24, we see the first sacrifice. What's more, we discover that the first sacrifice was necessary for two reasons, namely, because of two attributes of God. The first sacrifice occurred, first of all, because God is *just*.

### I. We see God's justice (1-19).

The first sacrifice occurs at the end of the chapter, but we'll never appreciate its necessity if we fail to grasp the events that preceeded it. We've been doing an expositional study of Genesis for a couple of months now. Our focus for the past couple of weeks has been Genesis 3. We've seen two events that provide the backdrop for the first sacrifice. Here's the first.

A. Man sinned (1-13). For the sake of time, we won't reread the account, but simply hit the highlights.

God created the first man and woman, and put them in a perfect environment in a beautiful garden. But tragically, they refused to obey God's command. They ate the forbidden fruit, thus committing the world's *first sin* (1-7).

"Adam, where are you?" God asked (9). The question wasn't for God's sake, but Adam's. "Where are you?" The one created to tend the trees was now hiding in them, cut off from God and filled with shame.

Then came the world's *first excuse* for sin (8-13), as the couple began to blameshift. "Did you eat from the

forbidden tree, Adam?" God asked (11). "The *woman* gave it to me!" Adam replied (12).

"What have you done?" God asked Eve (13). And following her husband's example, Eve likewise blameshifted, "The serpent deceived me--and remember, you created the serpent, God--that's why I ate."

So there's the first event. Man sinned. Here's event #2...

B. God pronounced judgment (14-19). It came in the form of a three-fold sentence. God declared the consequences for the three guilty parties.

1. *He sentenced the serpent (14-15)*. Verse 14, "Cursed are you above all the livestock." Notice the word "cursed." The same word is used of the ground in verse 17. God pronounced a direct curse on the serpent and the ground. When God pronounced judgment, all three parties were judged--including the man and the woman--but only the serpent was cursed.

Last time we discussed two effects of God's curse on the serpent. There would be *humiliation*--verse 14, "You will crawl on your belly and eat dust." And there would be *enmity*--according to verse 15 between the serpent and the woman, and between the serpent's offspring and the woman's offspring.

Let's elaborate on this aspect of *enmity* by making three observations. First of all, notice that this is a *divine promise*. "I will put enmity between you." Who is speaking? *God* is. This is God's guarantee. God will do it.

Secondly, this "enmity" will be *for Adam and Eve's good*. Why did Eve say she sinned? Because the serpent deceived her, right? So God says, "I'll take care of that problem. I'll put enmity between you and the serpent. Then you won't be so inclined to listen to His Word over mine."

Here's a third observation. The enmity speaks of a *future conflict*. Verse 15 concludes, "He will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."

Answer this. In an ultimate sense, when did the offspring of the woman and the offspring of the serpent engage in a head-to-head conflict? The answer is, at the *Cross*. Let's go to the New Testament to verify this.

In Luke 10:18-19 Jesus gave this interesting response to His disciples. He gave it right after they expressed their delight at the ability to cast out demons. "He replied, 'I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you.'"

What kind of power did Jesus say He had? Power over *the enemy*. What enemy? The same one that enticed Eve in the garden. And it was at the Cross that the conflict peaked.

What did Jesus do at the Cross? Colossians 2:15 tells us, "And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross."

Perhaps no text explains it more succinctly than Hebrews 2:14-15, "Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death--that is, the devil--and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death."

There's the fulfillment of Genesis 3:15. "He will crush your head and you will strike his heel." That's often referred to as the *proevangelium* (meaning "the first gospel"). Derek Kidner (p. 70) calls it the "first glimmer of the gospel," and remarks, "It comes, not as a direct promise to man, but as a sentence passed on the enemy. Redemption is about God's rule as much as it is about man's need."

When God pronounced judgment He started with the serpent. Then...

2. *He sentenced the woman (16)*. The judgment would affect her child-bearing--she would henceforth bear children in pain. It would also affect her marriage relationship--"Your desire will be for your husband [the idea being she would "desire" to possess or control him] and he will rule over you." Marital harmony will no longer be the norm. Disharmony will be.

That's why two people who do what's natural will have a *disastrous* marriage. I guarantee it. Why? Because they are sinners, and sinners are *self-seeking*.

Is there hope? Yes, but the answer isn't to try harder. Nor is it merely learning some new "techniques." The answer is to turn to the One who alone can *reverse the curse*.

Thirdly, when God pronounced judgment...

3. *He sentenced the man (17-19)*. In Adam's case, the divine judgment affected his work and his future. First, his work (17-18)--from now on he will have to exert back breaking toil to get food. The ground will now produce weeds and thistles.

Don't miss the fact sin had a drastic effect on the physical conditions of this planet. Prior to sin there was luxurious plant life; after sin there was noxious growth. Prior to sin Adam worked to take care of the earth and it was a joy; from now on it will involve painful toil.

But worst of all, were these words--God told Adam (19), "For dust you are and to dust you will return." You're going to die, Adam.

The skeptic says, "See! God didn't keep His Word. Didn't God say, 'Eat and you will surely die.'?" Adam ate, but he didn't die right away. Explain that!"

Okay. For starters, he did die. At this very moment Adam is spiritually dead, cut off from God. In time, he will die physically. The reason for the delay? Grace.

You see, in the Bible death is the reverse of life, not the reverse of existence. To die doesn't mean to cease to be, as Henri Blocher explains, "In biblical terms it means 'cut off from the land of the living,' henceforth unable to act, and to enter another condition."

Even in judgment, we see indications of God's grace. In God's sentence upon the man He told him he would have to work hard, that's true. But three times He said to him, "You will eat (3:17, 18, 19)."

Dear friend, whether you realize it or not, you, too, are living on borrowed time. The fact that you are alive today is due to grace. Please don't presume upon grace. Yes, Adam lived to be 930 years old (5:5), but in the end he died. And so will you.

Oh, how terrible sin is! Here is what the first sin resulted in--God sentenced the serpent, the woman, and the man. God cannot wink at sin. He cannot overlook it. Why not? Because of His justice.

The justice of God is what makes sacrifice necessary. Grace is what makes it possible. The God of the Bible is both just *and* gracious. And His grace is what we see in verses 20-24...

## II. We see God's grace (20-24).

I hope you cherish grace. I hope you are a student of grace. It's possible to read Genesis 3 and see the justice of God and miss His grace. Many people do. I believe there are two evidences of God's grace in the final verses of chapter 3.

A. The first evidence is what Adam did (20). "Adam named his wife Eve, because she would become the mother of all the living." What is the first thing we're told Adam did after the Fall?

1. *He named Eve.* You say, "What does naming Eve have to do with grace?" It's the evidence of it, and here's why.

In Hebrew the word for Eve looks very much like the word for "living" or "life." Ponder that. What prompted Adam to name his wife "Life," especially at a time like this? He had just heard the sentence of death, hadn't he? Why the name change? Because of God's grace.

By grace, Adam grasps the significance of the promise he'd just heard God give. Yes, he knew suffering and death were coming. But he also knew that God promised a future. God had promised that Eve would bear children, in pain for sure, but children no less. The Reformer, Melancthon, rightly called Eve "the seal of grace."

Yes, Adam heard God's promise. He heard about the coming seed of the woman who would crush the serpent's head. And he believed it. So he named Eve.

2. *In so doing he exhibited faith.* Why did Adam name his wife Eve? Verse 20 says he did it because he knew she would become the mother of all the living. The act of naming was an evidence of Adam's faith.

Was God through with mankind? No. God said the world would continue. And Adam believed God. He took steps to show it, too.

According to James 2:17, faith without works is dead. Faith is the substance of things *hoped for*, the evidence of things not seen (Heb. 11:1). Without faith it is impossible to please God (Heb 11:6)." And according to Ephesians 2:8 where does faith come from? "For by *grace* are you saved through faith--and that not of yourselves--it is the gift of God." Faith is a gift from God, an evidence of His grace.

So if we see Adam exhibiting faith here, we can know why. It's because of grace.

By the way, don't miss the word "all" in verse 20--Eve would become the mother of "all" the living. Did God create other people besides Adam and Eve? The answer is *no*. Why not? The text states that Eve would become the mother of *all* the living. No human being ever walked on this planet who was not a descendant of Adam and Eve.

And furthermore, if Eve is not the mother of all people we have a theological problem. There would be people *not* in Adam's lineage. But Christ came to rescue Adam's descendants, right?

I see two evidences of grace at the end of Genesis 3. The first is what Adam did.

B. The second evidence is what God did (21-24). God did three things with Adam and Eve. First...

1. *He clothed them (21).* "The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them." This is beautiful. Adam and Eve had a need, and in His grace God met that need.

Why did God clothe them? They had already clothed themselves, hadn't they? Actually, they put on fig leaves, but those wouldn't last. Our attempts at self-righteousness never do. They needed what God alone could provide for them. We see two important principles here.

· We see the principle of modesty. God made "garments" for them [the KJV says "coats of skins"]. The Hebrew actually says "tunics of skin."

Wenham explains (84), "A tunic, the basic outer garment worn next to the skin, was a long shirt reaching the knees or ankles...Whereas the human couple could only produce inadequate loincloths (3:7), God provided them with a proper outfit."

Why do we wear clothes today? Is it a cultural matter? No. Modesty is rooted in the very activity of God in Genesis 3.

I don't mean to be crude, but it's true. Sinners want to take off what God put on. What did Adam and Eve feel after they sinned? *Shame* (3:7, 10). So God provided a remedy for their shame. What was the remedy? Clothing.

"Ah! That's prudish. But I've got a right to wear whatever I want!" the critic responds. Actually, the issue is, who are you trying to please.

"But Adam and Eve were naked and shameless!" the critic returns. "Why can't we get rid of old fashioned, Victorian narrow-mindedness and learn to celebrate the beauty of the human body?"

Answer this. *When* were Adam and Eve naked and unashamed? The answer is, in Genesis 2--*before* the Fall. What were Adam and Eve doing by the end of Genesis 3? Wearing clothes, right? And why? Because God knew they needed them. The truth is, we don't live in a Genesis 2 world, do we? We live in a Genesis 3 world. And there's no going back.

Let's be very practical. Christians ought to be modest in their attire. Why? For several reasons, but here's the first. Clothing was a gift from God. God doesn't want us to live in shame. His actions are the basis for our modesty. Do you honor God by the way you dress?

· We see the principle of substitution. Notice what the text says, "The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife." What's the implication? Don't miss it. Animals had to die in order for people to be covered.

This is amazing. By clothing Adam and Eve, God did two things. First, He met their immediate need. But He also illustrated their *ultimate need*.

We see the principle of substitution here. Blood was shed that day. A substitute died so a sinner could live. I hope you are thankful for the doctrine of substitutionary atonement. We see a picture of it right here. We'll see another one next time in Genesis 4:4 where Abel brings an offering to God. What kind of offering? A sacrifice, a slain animal.

Who wrote Genesis? Moses did--he wrote the first five books of the Bible (called the Pentateuch). Does the Pentateuch have anything else to say about animal sacrifices? Does it ever!

In Genesis 15, when God entered into a covenant relationship with Abraham, what did God tell Abraham to do? "Bring me a heifer, a goat and a ram, each three years old, along with a dove and a young pigeon (15:9)." Why? Because the establishment of a covenant was based on the shedding of the blood of a substitute.

Then we come to the books of Exodus and Leviticus. Anything about animal sacrifices there? Listen to what God told Moses in Leviticus 17:11, "For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life."

Don't miss this. Sinful people cannot approach a holy God while in their sins. But God provided a way. What was it? Blood sacrifice. God said that if a substitute died, the sinner could live.

So for 1,400 years animals were sacrificed in Israel. Hundreds, thousands, tens of thousands of animals died, their blood shed on the altar.

Did those sacrifices take away sins? No, not according to Hebrews 10:3-4, "But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins, because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins."

Why were they offered then? They couldn't remove sins. They just covered them temporarily. Until what? Until the final sacrifice was made.

Why don't we offer animal sacrifices today? Because *The Lamb* has been slain! Hebrews 9:27-28 explains, "Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people." Christ's sacrifice did what animal sacrifices could not do--take away sins forever (see also Hebrews 10:11-12).

For family devotions, Martin Luther once read the account of Abraham offering Isaac on the altar in Genesis 22. His wife, Katie, said, "I do not believe it. God would not have treated his son like that!" "But, Katie," Luther replied, "He did."

2. *He banished them (22-23)*. "And the LORD God said, 'The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever.' So the LORD God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken."

Why did God expel the man and the woman from the garden?

Keil and Delitzsch state (107), "The expulsion from paradise...was a punishment inflicted for man's good, intended, while exposing him to temporal death, to preserve him from eternal death."

- He did it for His own glory.

- He also did it for man's good.

3. *He prevented them from going back (24)*. "After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life."

He "drove them out." This is a stronger term than "send out." Later in the Pentateuch the word is used to depict the expulsion of the Canaanites from the Promised Land (Ex 23:28-31).

The cherubim are interesting creatures. They are angelic beings according to other texts. In the tabernacle there were emblems of the cherubim embroidered on the veil that barred access to the holy of holies (Ex 36:35; 37:7-9).

Do you recall what happened to the veil the moment Christ died? The veil was rent in two (Matt 27:51). Do you see the significance? The cherubim once blocked sinful man from the holy presence of God. But no

longer. Christ's atoning sacrifice opened the way.

The "revolving" sword is interesting. The word suggests the image of forked lightning, zigzagging to and fro (Wenham, 86). Because of its movement this sword is sure to hit its mark.

Why on the "east"? Apparently that was where the entrance to the garden was. Remember what the garden was. It was a place of intimate fellowship between man and God.

It's interesting that the entrance to the tabernacle was likewise on the east. The garden, then, was like a sanctuary where God was uniquely present with people. It was that presence that man forfeited.

Isn't it interesting what God *didn't* do? He didn't destroy the tree of life before their eyes. Nor did He destroy the garden. Instead, He simply cut off their access to it.

For how long? Until the time when the Seed of the woman would come to root out sin and abolish death forever.

Please notice. The way back is more than hard. It is impossible. The man cannot save himself. Nor can we.

- We cannot erase the past.

James M. Boice offers the following analogy, "We may illustrate what happened by imagining that Adam was born on the edge of a steep pit and that when God created him he said, 'Adam, do not jump into that pit; because if you do jump into the pit you will not be able to get back out again.' As long as Adam stayed on the edge of the pit he had free will so far as the matter of his jumping or not jumping was concerned. But once he decided to jump in, free will was lost in that area. He still had free will to walk around on the bottom of the pit or sit down. He had the choice of being complacent about his condition or else complaining about it. He could cry for help or be silent. He could blame himself or try to shift the blame to another. He had free will in each of those areas. But in the crucial fact, the fact of his being unable to get out of the pit, he was impotent."

That's what happened to Adam. He fell away from God. He didn't have to, but once he did he lost the possibility of returning to God on his own.

What's more, every person born into this world is born "in Adam." We're born in the same shape we see Adam in at the end of Genesis 3--cut off from God.

Boice continues, "Some are complacent; some are angry. Some are resigned; some are anxious. Most are hardly aware of what has been lost. But regardless of their state of mind, all are in the same condition so far as God is concerned. They cannot choose him. And none do choose him until by grace God reaches down into the mud pit of human misery and sin, picks up the sinner, places him upon the edge of the pit once more, and says, 'Now this is the way; walk in it.'"

- We must look to the One who gives hope for the future.

Revelation 22:3 makes this amazing statement about the new heavens and new earth. "No longer will there



be any curse." No more curse. Why not? It's because Jesus came to reverse the curse.

Do you know Him? Have you placed the confidence of your life in the One who alone can give hope for the future?

Response: Ponder the implications of the first sacrifice...

1. *Our sin separates us from God.*

2. *We need God to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves.*

A.H. Strong once stated, "God requires satisfaction because He is holiness, but He makes satisfaction because He is love."

The following story appeared in *Christianity Today*: "Alila stood on the beach holding her tiny infant son close to her heart. Tears welled in her eyes as she began slowly walking toward the river's edge. She stepped into the water, silently making her way out until she was waist deep, the water gently lapping at the sleeping baby's feet. She stood there for a long time holding the child tightly as she stared out across the river. Then all of a sudden in one quick movement she threw the six month old baby to his watery death.

Native missionary M.V. Varghese often witnesses among the crowds who gather at the Ganges. It was he who came upon Alila that day kneeling in the sand crying uncontrollably and beating her breast. With compassion he knelt down next to her and asked her what was wrong.

Through her sobs she told him, "The problems in my home are too many and my sins are heavy on my heart, so I offered the best I have to the goddess Ganges, my first born son."

Brother Varghese's heart ached for the desperate woman. As she wept he gently began to tell her about the love of Jesus and that through Him her sins could be forgiven.

She looked at him strangely. "I have never heard that before," she replied through her tears. "Why couldn't you have come thirty minutes earlier? If you did, my child would not have had to die."

Each year millions of people come to the holy Indian city of Hardwar to bathe in the River Ganges. These multitudes come believing this Hindu ritual will wash their sins away. For many people like Alila, missionaries are arriving too late, simply because there aren't enough of these faithful brothers and sisters on the mission field."

3. *The good news is that is exactly what God did.*