

# Genesis: Foundations of the Christian Faith

## “The Crushing Blow of God’s Pledge” (Genesis 3:15)

*I will put hostility between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed. He will crush your head, and you will crush his heel.*

People close to you seem to have a knack for saying exactly what needs to be said and what you need to hear at just the right time. Maybe they were words of comfort in a time of stress or sorrow, expressions of appreciation when nobody else said much at all, compliments at something you had a hand in doing. Maybe it was just a little note on your desk, in your email inbox, a text message to your phone, or a comment to a Facebook post. The words people say at just the right time might be exactly what needs to be said to you or to someone around you on your behalf.



The lone verse of Scripture we consider today may seem like that short note or a text message in the whole of chapter Genesis 3 and really all of Scripture, but it was words God spoke at just the right time. These words, spoken not to Adam and Eve, but to the serpent, Satan himself, are God making a pledge on behalf of mankind who had fallen into sin. A pledge is simply a promise. You are declaring that you will do something. This promise, this pledge declared a crushing blow to Satan. Yet to Adam and Eve this was the initial announcement of grace, God’s undeserved love. It was what they needed to hear at that moment in the Garden of Eden.

Recall what had happened in the garden. Satan came and tempted Eve with lies about that forbidden fruit. “You certainly will not die. In fact, God knows that the day you eat from it, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God knowing good and evil.” Then she ate from that Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. She gave some to Adam and he ate too. They sinned.

By eating the fruit, Adam and Eve had become willing servants of Satan. They had obeyed his lies. Through that one action, they renounced their trust in God and withdrawn their obedience from him transferring both to Satan. Over all this Satan must have been rejoicing as there now was hostility, or enmity as some translations say, between God and man. A perfect relationship was ruined. By eating the fruit they had become God’s enemies, hiding from him in fear, refusing to accept responsibility for their disobedience. Since that first sin in the garden, there was a wall of hostility between people and God. If man was to be helped, this hostility would have to be redirected in its proper place - between Satan and man.

Yet God did not proceed to advise Adam and Eve to redirect their hostility against the serpent. They lacked the power to follow such advice. They couldn’t act to save themselves from what they had done. They couldn’t pick themselves up off the mat. So in his grace, God pledged. God announces his intentions to redirect hostility and how he would save sinful man. “I will put hostility (enmity) between you and the woman.”

This pledge and promise may not have been spoken to Adam and Eve, but it was good news that they needed to hear. As God spoke of his intentions to Satan, all Satan could do was listen to this announcement of judgement. God did not invite him to respond. God simply spoke in a matter of fact way that he was going to move that wall of hostility back to where it belonged between humans and Satan. “I, the God of free and faithful grace, pledge to put hostility between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed.”

By seed, of course, we understand this to be offspring. So who is this the offspring of the woman and the offspring of Satan to which God is referring? The serpent's seed would be all of Satan's followers. When Satan rebelled in heaven, other angels followed him. But his followers are not just those evil angels or demons as they are also called, they include unbelievers. Satan's offspring are all who like Satan himself would be enemies of God because of sin. Conversely, as Eve heard God's speak, she would be brought to trust this pledge, this promise. So her offspring would be those in whom the Lord would likewise awaken a humble trust in his saving grace.

That wall of hostility would no longer be between God and man. God pledged to place it squarely between Satan along with those who do not believe God's promise and those who by faith trust his promise of grace pointing to one particular person, a specific descendant of the woman. "He will crush your head, and you will crush his heel."

Satan had come to tempt Eve in the form of a snake. When a person wants to get rid of a snake, they might trample it's head delivering a single fatal blow to kill it. In the process though, the heel of the one stepping on the head might be bruised or bit inflicting a relatively minor injury compared to the blow which was delivered on the snake. Yet the biting does not rob the person of his complete victory. Since the snake's head is crushed, its ability to slither around and harm has been destroyed.

What the Lord announced to Satan for the comfort of Adam and Eve, you and I, all sinners, in our fallen state was this: A descendant of Eve, as the champion and substitute of all mankind, would win a victory over Satan crushing him with one decisive blow robbing him of his power, the power he had gained over mankind through the sin. In winning this victory over Satan inflicting that crushing blow, this woman's seed would himself undergo suffering and pain at the hand of Satan. Yet it would not leave him crushed in defeat. This is what God pledged to do in this first Gospel promise of grace. It was a pledge he kept repeating.

Throughout the Old Testament, God spoke through prophets giving more details about this seed of the woman who would come to crush Satan and along with him sin and death. Yet he didn't just speak of this pledge, it was a pledge repeated in tangible ways as a visible reminder of his grace. As sacrifices of lambs, bulls, and goats were offered up in the tabernacle and later the temple, those sacrifices in and of themselves did not give forgiveness of sins. None of them crushed Satan, but they did point God's people to the one who was coming to crush the serpent's head through a single perfect sacrifice. Those sacrifices day in and day out, year after year were visible reminders of what God pledged to do all the way back in the Garden of Eden so that his people would put their trust in his promise to save. Finally God kept that pledge on Calvary.

As Jesus hung on the cross in the darkness of Good Friday, we see God's pledge and promise happening before our very eyes as hostility is redirected to between Satan and people, and the offspring of the woman is crushing the serpent's head. We see the crushing of Jesus' heel in death. Yet that blow would not deprive him of ultimate victory as he rose from darkness of the grave victorious over Satan, sin, and death. From Eden to Calvary, from pledge to action, from promise to fulfillment we see God's undeserved, unmerited love that saves sinners like you and I.

Yet God still keeps his pledge in front us even today. As he did in the time before Jesus came, God keeps repeating to us not only his promise, but also how he kept it through his Word that has its focal point on Jesus. However we can't forget or neglect how God also keeps his pledge in front of us in a tangible way too through his Holy Supper. As you take, touch, eat, drink, and taste ordinary bread and wine you hear that proclamation. "Take and eat. This is the true body of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ given into death for the

forgiveness of your sins. Take and drink this is the true blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ given and shed on the cross for the forgiveness of your sins.”

Hearing his Word, receiving the body and blood of Jesus in the bread and wine, God is constantly keeping his pledge in front you and I telling us, “I have put hostility between Satan and the woman, between Satan’s seed and you. Jesus has crushed his head and even though Satan crushed his heel in death, Jesus stands victorious over Satan, sin, and death!” As God’s pledge is kept before us, our trust in his promise of grace is renewed.

God spoke these few words of promise at just the right time. Adam and Eve faced the guilt of their disobedience. They heard the crushing blow of God’s pledge being spoken to Satan for his judgment and for Adam and Eve’s salvation. They believed and remembered his pledge, this first promise of grace. Just as his pledge was made at the right time, so God kept that pledge at just the right time too in exactly the way he said it would happen. In Eden, God promised that wondrous crushing blow. On Calvary, Jesus delivered that crushing blow with his mighty foot on the cross saying to you and I exactly what we need to hear at just the right time, “I have done all this for you.” Amen

