

# (Genesis #4) Thunder-Peals in Paradise

by J. Glyn Owen

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*The sermon explores the theme of accountability and the consequences of sin, using the story of Adam and Eve in the book of Genesis as a backdrop.*

**Duration:** 55:26

**Scripture:** Genesis 3:8

**Topics:** "Rebellion"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the confrontation between God and Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. He emphasizes that God's justice is not without mercy, even in this situation. The main themes discussed are the divine summons for Adam and Eve to explain their actions and the divine sentence that follows. The preacher highlights the principle that sin is always followed by judgment and emphasizes the importance of being accountable to God.

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## Transcript

In our evening services latterly, we have been turning over and over again to the first book of the Bible, the book of Genesis. And our attempt has been to let Genesis speak for itself. It is to stand back, as it were, and let the thrust of this divine word reach us and speak to us in the clarity and the pungency of its own message.

We are well aware of the various kinds of criticism levelled at this book from one quarter or another. But at this point of any rate, we are evading most of them. And we are just letting the book speak for itself.

Now, I'm going to continue that policy tonight as we turn to yet another important passage in this very remarkable book. Now, tonight we are going to look at the passage that begins with verse 8 and goes on to verse 19. What we want to do is just to get the substance of it, see exactly what God is saying to us here in the Scriptures.

Eden has been called a paradise. And I think that the more we come to know about Eden before the fall, the more we appreciate the significance of that term. It appears to have been a setting of beauty, a place of joy, almost idyllic.

Of course, we have to be careful here, because we don't know all that much about it. Reading the early part of this Genesis narrative, I feel very much like the experience one has had more than once of going

into a room, it's dark, you switch on the light, and the bulb fuses. But before the bulb fuses, you've had at least a good look around to know what's in the room and you know the way to go.

Now, there is something of that about the first two chapters of the book of Genesis. It gives you a flash of light, blazing into this early paradise of man's experience. But then the light goes out.

Paradise is lost. We remember some of the things, but we must not read too much into the picture, not more than the Scripture warrants. And yet I suggest to you that we know enough about it to acknowledge the accuracy of this designation of Eden, before sin entered as a place of paradise.

But that Edenic paradise was short-lived. In no time it became a scene of warfare, that is, warfare against God. A rebellion started there, that we have already considered together, when man chose to take his side against God.

And whatever else we see there, whatever else Scripture later on tells us took place there, this we must never forget. It is clear in the book of Genesis here, it is clear in chapter 3, that in Genesis, kingdom became divided against kingdom. The kingdom of man and the kingdom of Satan on the one hand, over against the rule and the kingdom of God.

From that moment on you have the great division of history, the great division of mankind, into those who come willingly under the rule of God and those who remain under the dominion of the serpent. That occupies quite a strategic role in Scripture until we come to the very book of the Revelation, when we see the end of this dismal creature. Now, following upon the serious realignment of forces described in the first paragraph in chapter 3, with kingdom set against kingdom, the scene changes.

In the passage that we are looking at tonight, it resembles more like, it resembles almost a scene in a court of law. Gone is the idyllic beauty of a garden, and in its place that garden becomes a law scene, a scene depicting a law court. All the trappings are not here, of course, especially those that you and I are accustomed to if we visit law courts.

I hope we don't very much. But you don't have any of the trappings, but you have the centerpiece. You have here a situation where there is an arraignment of accused persons to answer to an indictment.

That is followed by the sentencing of the guilty. That is the centerpiece in any court of law. Now, ere we look at this epochal confrontation, then, between the Creator and the first pair of human creatures, it may be wise to interject with a reminder that God's justice is not unmixed with mercy.

Tonight, because we can't cover more of the ground, tonight we shall be listening to the thunder peals in that ancient paradise. But we must remember, even as we come into the storm and listen to the raging of the divine symptoms, that there is light that comes even into this dark place. And in the will of God, that will occupy us when we meet again.

But tonight we're going to hear the dark thing that God would have us learn from this challenging scene in His Word. Now, there are two main things, then, that will occupy us tonight. The first is this.

It's the divine summons to explain what has happened. Principles are unchanging in Scripture. God summoned this first pair to give an account of themselves.

He'll do exactly the same with you and with me. Maybe not yet, though there are times when He comes very near to us in this world and demands of us that we acknowledge and tell Him all about things that we've been trying to hide. But one day the trumpet will sound and the dead shall be raised, and we shall all be arraigned before the judgment seat of the Bhima, or the throne of God, to give account of ourselves.

That principle is written right into the first book of the Bible. Man is accountable. Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

But even in the reaping, man has to give an account of himself to God. Now, that's the first main picture here. Two subsections of that.

First of all, we see God seeking man and man hiding from God. Then we see God questioning man and man equivocating in reply. Let's look at these two very briefly.

One, God seeking and man hiding. Now just cast your thoughts back. You will agree with me if you do that this is a most remarkable thing.

If what we have read and what we have studied thus far is true, then man is God's own creature and creation. God brought him to birth. He was made by the hands of God.

He was made after the image of God. He was God's own creature. Why hide from God? This is exactly what we have here.

The creature is hiding from his creator. Now if we are really to recapture the imagery here and the thread here, we are to imagine God coming into the garden in the cool of the day and Adam and Eve hear him coming. Now you say, surely you don't believe that kind of thing.

Well, I'm tempted to be involved with some of the criticisms at that point, at least to this extent. Those of you who are really familiar with the Bible will know that before God became incarnate in Jesus Christ, before he became manifest over a period of thirty-three years in the Lord Jesus, he often manifested himself temporarily to men. There is a theological term for this.

People call them theophanies, appearances of God. God often appeared to men just for a moment, just to say something or to do something. For example, he appeared to Moses in a bush that burned and was not consumed.

Now that was just a momentary thing. It didn't happen, it didn't last very long, but God had something to say to the man Moses. In order to say it and to say it clearly and get the message across, he became, as it were, involved in a bush that was burning.

But it was God in the bush. That's what made it singular. It was an appearance of God.

Now, you have the same kind of thing. I'll give one other illustration. In the temple with the prophet Isaiah.

Isaiah came into the temple one day, and this day it was so different for him. In the year that King Uzziah died, he said, I saw the Lord high and lifted up on his train, the train of his garments, fill the temple. Well, now, there were other people in the temple that day.

Doubtless they didn't see what Isaiah saw. But God appeared to Isaiah. He felt the whole threshold of the temple moving.

God appeared to him. There are other such manifestations, such theophanies, quite a number of them in the Old Testament and some indeed in the New. As, for example, when the Holy Spirit comes down in the form of a dove.

That is a theophany. The Spirit is Spirit, but the Spirit becomes into the form of a dove in order to convey a certain message. Now, that's the kind of thing we have here.

God assuming a certain form because he wants to speak to a man, and he wants to speak to him directly, face to face, eyeball to eyeball. Adam and Eve heard God coming into the garden in the cool of the day, and the first thing they did was to run and hide. There's something so foolish about this, isn't there? But behind the folly, will you notice the tragedy? They're already wearing fig leaves, as we see from verse 7, the end of the last paragraph, because they've become aware of nakedness, their own nakedness.

They become suddenly uncomfortable, the one in the presence of the other. And the way they overcame that was by sewing fig leaves together because they were very self-conscious. But now notice, that wasn't enough.

And so what they do is they run and hide behind the bushes, behind the trees of the garden, believing in their crazed stupidity that a bush can hide from the eyes of the Almighty. And yet, is it as stupid as all that? My good friend, aren't you sometimes trying to hide from God? As if there was something that could come between you and the penetrating eye of the Almighty that made you. You know, there isn't.

Nothing is hid from the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. He is all-knowing and His eyes all-penetrating. Wear any mask you like.

He sees you. Whither shall I flee from thy spirit? Where can I go to and hide from God? There is no place. No hiding place from God.

So Adam and Eve mapped out a pattern of behavior that all their children in all the generations have followed. Something goes wrong and what we do instinctively is when God is after us we try to hide. God-seeking, man-hiding, God-questioning, man-equivocating.

There are two or three questions that God is insistent upon asking and He must have the answers to them. But mark the equivocation here. Adam, where art thou? says God.

As if, of course, He didn't know. You know, there are some questions that are asked out of knowledge, others out of ignorance. God's questions are questions that betray His knowledge rather than His ignorance.

If you are involved in some aspect of science or art and you ever sit on a panel and you listen to people asking questions about your own subject, you know exactly some people ask questions because they're ignorant. But other people's questions are asked because they know. The very way a question is asked reveals whether the person who is asking knows or knows not.

God's questions are asked because He knows and every question gets to its target. Adam, where are you? Well, says Adam furtively, I heard your voice in the garden and I was afraid because I was naked. But then comes the second question.

Who told you that you were naked? Now, that question sounds stupid to us. But it wasn't. It was a question that got right at the root of the matter.

You see, when Adam and Eve were made, they were made and they were, they stood together and they lived together in all the simplicity of nakedness. And there was no shame. There was no self-consciousness.

There was no evil. There was no impurity in the mind. All was pure and all was bliss.

There was no self-consciousness whatsoever. But when sin came, the whole mind was upset and the whole heart and the imaginations. And the moment sin came, man and woman became aware of something wrong and something sinister, something evil, something impure coming in between them.

They covered one another. Adam says, I heard your voice in the garden and I hid. Why did you hide? Because I was naked.

Who told you you were naked? Thus God brings them right to the heart of the issue. How did they know? How had they become aware of the consequences of their nakedness in this self-consciousness and sense of guilt? Says God, asking another question, which brings him right there. Did you eat of the fruit I commanded you not to? Notice the equivocating pursuing.

Adam, as it were, now looking into the eyes of God, manifested in some form or other in the garden, says to him, The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me the fruit and I ate. Isn't this the pattern that has been followed all the way through human life? The woman whom you gave me, she took it and she gave me and I ate. I didn't eat, but yet I did.

The woman. That was factually true, but it was morally inadequate as an explanation. Adam can only blame Eve for giving him the fruit.

He must blame himself for eating it. He stands responsible for his own action. But Mark, that's not the only equivocation that we have here.

I missed something out. The woman, says Adam, whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me the fruit and I did eat. Will you mark that sinister word? Not just the woman gave me, but the woman whom you gave me.

What are you doing, Adam? Shall I tell you? The language is clear enough for anybody to see. What Adam is trying to do is this. He's trying to blame God for it all.

He says, you gave me this woman to be my help. She's the cause of the trouble. I did nothing.

I only received what she gave me and you gave her to me. So you are responsible. God turns to Eve.

She tried the same approach. When asked what she had done, she replied, Oh, she says, the serpent beguiled me and I ate. You know, we're tempted to laugh at this, aren't we? You see, it's a mirror.

It's exactly what we all do. We refuse to stand on our own two feet and to accept our own responsibilities. We say, society made me do it.

Somebody else made me do it. Somebody else and somebody else all the time. When God says, look, man, look, woman, stand on your own two feet.

You've got to answer me for what you've done in the flesh. The serpent beguiled me. Factually true, but morally inadequate is an explanation.

Eve can only blame the serpent for beguiling her or putting the notion in her head. She can only blame herself for choosing to obey Satan rather than the God who had commanded her not to eat. The knowledge which Satan promised has turned out to be something different from what Adam had expected.

You shall be as gods. Do you remember that? You know, that was really, that was really the character. You shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.

Aha. What a wonderful thing to know the difference between good and evil. We shall be as gods or as God.

But the knowledge that has come to them of good and evil is the kind of knowledge that makes them fear and makes them hide and makes them cringe in the presence of their Creator. It's not an objective knowledge of sin, but it's the knowledge of sin from the inside. It's the knowledge of sin that comes to the guilty and the befouled and the fallen and the condemned.

You know, Satan never, never keeps his word. There's always a twist. There's always a twist.

What he offers you as light may be darkness by the time you get it. A summons to judgment. One day, let me repeat, you and I will be summoned to explain what we've done with our lives and to do so to the same all-knowing God as summoned Adam and Eve from their hiding place right back here.

So, if you quibble and if you argue concerning some of the factual details in the book of Genesis, at least remember this, the principles enunciated here are enunciated all through the Bible and one principle is this, sin is followed by judgment. There is no scientific school on earth that can gainsay that principle. Now, that brings us to the second main thread here, the sentence of God, verses fourteen to nineteen.

The divine sentence. The first is the summons to court, to give an account, to be cross-examined. We've seen that, albeit in brief.

Now we come to hear the thunder crack, the thunder peals, the sentence of God. When God and sin meet, there has to be a sentence. God cannot remain neutral in the presence of sin.

This is involved in the biblical portrait of God, the biblical doctrine of God. Our God is a moral being and he simply cannot be neutral in the presence of sin. Sooner or later, he has to pass sentence and to condemn.

And this is what we're going to look at now for a little time. Now, there are four things here, two doubles, two doublets. The thunder peals we speak of are, in the first place, two curses.

A curse upon the serpent and a curse upon the soil. And then, following that, something that the Bible doesn't call a curse, but it's condemnation nevertheless. The condemnation of Eve and the condemnation of Adam, and in that order.

Now, we must look at these things because we have something to learn from them. First of all, we hear God curse the serpent and then God curse the soil. I believe that there are some questions that can only

be answered in life by reference to this passage in the book of Genesis.

God curses the serpent. Listen to these words. Because you have done this, cursed are you above all cattle and above all wild animals.

Now, looking specifically at the serpent now, God says that he's cursing it. And there is a two-fold curse that I want you to notice. First of all, the curse of humiliation, and then the curse of isolation.

Upon your belly, says God, you shall go and dust shall you eat all the days of your life. Now, this is addressed directly to the serpent as a creature. Henceforth, it shall eat the dust.

Eat the dust. We have a phrase like that in our modern English, do we not? About licking the dust. Now, that's exactly what it means here.

It has an idiomatic touch about it. What it means is this, that somehow or other this creature is to be humiliated, to slither around on its belly and to eat of the dust of the ground all the days of its life, with one other rider which comes elsewhere in the Old Testament. Not only is this a token of humiliation, but of abomination.

I read in Leviticus chapter 11 and verse 42 that whatever goes on its belly you shall not eat, for such is an abomination in the sight of God. Here, then, is the first element of the divine curse upon this creature that tempted our first parents. The curse of humiliation with abomination, and the second is this, the curse of isolation.

I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed. Now, you notice what that means. If you put enmity between me and my wife, then we're separated.

If you put enmity between any two persons, they're separated. They're divided. And God says to this creature, look, He says, I will put enmity between you and the serpent, and between your seed and her seed forever.

Now, I'm going to return to that when we shall be looking at the joyful note in this third chapter in the book of Genesis. And I'm simply going to leave it there now. I just want to refer to it.

The condemnation to be isolated, an isolation which comes to its consummation in the book of the Revelation in the Bible. When Satan is cast into the lake of fire, and it is left there forever and ever. Ultimate, eternal isolation.

The word is given here. Throughout the history of the church, this is what is happening in the life of every godly man, of every Christian man and woman throughout the ages. If you're a Christian man, you're becoming more and more isolated from Satan.

And the holier you become, and the more Christ-like you become, the greater the chasm, the greater the gulf between you and this creature. Brought our first parents to their knees spiritually in the garden of Eden. So then, the curse upon the serpent is twofold.

The curse of humiliation and the curse of isolation. Can I say a word here? I think that this is a very real application to anybody who tempts other people to sin. Now, it is one thing for a man or a woman to sin, himself or herself.

But it is quite another thing for a man to lead other people along with him into destruction. And to involve, perhaps, your children or your friends or someone else that you've only known for a couple of hours. Be careful, my friend.

God's curse falls upon the agents of temptation and seduction. God's curse upon Satan. God's curse upon the soil.

Curse it be the ground, says God, because of you. But how can the ground be cursed? Well, let God explain himself. Let the words say, let it speak for itself.

What does the book say? How can the ground be cursed? Two things. The cursed ground produces thorns and thistles as well as other good things. First part of verse eighteen, Thorns and thistles it shall bring forth to you.

Now, if we rightly understand the meaning of what we have been seeing before, Eden seems to have patterned for what God meant for the entire human race, human family. The soil of earth would probably have been as fertile as the soil of Eden had man not sinned. Its beauty and its bounty would have been extended.

But as we have seen, it happened differently. And he who was meant to subdue the earth and have dominion over it as well as to till a garden, he, man himself, who was meant to be the viceroy of all the world, of all the earth, fell and became enemy of God, an enemy of God. Now, in consequence of that, the soil will not willingly yield its crops.

To a man who has taken his stand against the Creator, there is a curse upon the soil in virtue of which it will yield thorns and thistles when you have not sown any. There is a threat and a shadow of death that will harass man right here in trying to procure a livelihood from the earth. Of course, he will sow the seed in the soil and he will get some benefit.

He will reap some harvest. When we go on further into the book of Genesis, we have the law of the harvest and the promises of God and the covenant of God at the time of Noah. But at this point, God says, whatever else will emerge out of the soil, you will have a crop, you will have sufficient.

But along with that, there will be this other sinister thing, something that will hurt your hand and prick your fingers and something that will choke the good in the soil. And it will be like trying to work against the clock. Now, will you please notice what this is? God is bringing death and the shadow of death even to a workaday world.

He is telling Adam, look, it is going to cost you to live from now on. The earth is not willingly going to yield to you the food you need. You ate the fruit of the tree that I commanded you not to.

You are not going to find it all that easy to live having disobeyed me. The sentence is not unrelated to the sin that had occasioned it. He who ate of the divinely forbidden tree will find it a battle to produce his means of sustenance.

Cursed be the ground. The ground produces thorns and thistles, and the cursed ground which produces thorns and thistles will only produce food with toil. Now, if you were able to read the first book of the Bible in the language it was written, you will notice that there is a distinctive challenge here.

The language is very clear and hits you between the eye. In toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. In the sweat of your face, literally the sweat of your nostrils, you shall eat bread.

You shall eat bread. Yes, there is grace even here. There is mercy even here.

You shall starve. But by the sweat of your brow, by the toil of your hands and of your body, it will be hard going, says God. Yes, judgment is tintured with mercy.

More so than we can properly assess just now. He shall have bread, but work has become toil. Now, mark that change.

God instituted work as something that was good for man before the fall. I find that there are very few people that really note this today. And it's something that needs to be preached in almost every corner.

Work was meant for man. Man was meant to work. God ordained it as something that was good for man, and it's not the consequence of man's fall.

But because of the fall, some work has become something different. It's become toil. It's become a battle with the elements, if not the thorns and the thistles, then some other.

And so the sovereign who was meant to rule easily over the whole of creation now can only get his bread by the... Why is this, my friend? It's because of sin. That's what the book says. Sin has brought something sinister into life.

And henceforth, nature will not willingly and openly and ungrudgingly give of herself to support the sinner upon whose life lies the condemnation of God, the curse upon Satan, and the curse upon the soil. Now, you and I live in a world that is under that curse. Therefore, whether you're a psychologist or a philosopher or a philosopher or a scientist or anything else, if this is a truth that is enunciated in the word of God, you and I have to look at the world in which we live in the light of these truths.

Politicians don't believe it. Many others don't believe it. But this is the bedrock upon which the whole writing of Scripture in the Old Testament and in the New Testament rests.

Everything is built upon this as a foundation. But there is a thread that goes right through life which is a dark thread. This twofold curse rests upon the serpent, Satan, and the soil of earth.

Now come with me to the next two, the condemnation of Eve and the condemnation of Adam. And that's the order of Scripture. It's not my order.

But will you please notice this? It's very necessary for a real, clear understanding of things. God's curse did not come directly upon man or woman. It could have, but it did not.

God's curse came indirectly upon Adam and Eve, and it has come indirectly upon us, in that it is a curse upon Satan and a curse upon the soil. But God's condemnation came upon Eve and upon Adam, and it has come upon every sinner since, for we are condemned who have sinned against God. One other thing I want you to notice before I come to this, because we can't deal with it tonight, but before God speaks to Eve and to Adam in terms of condemnation, He first announces a Saviour.

And that is in verse fifteen. I have already read this. It's one of the most delightful words in the Old Testament.

I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed. It shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. Now that is the first indication of a Saviour in the Bible.

An enmity is going to grow between Satan and the seed of the woman. Not the seed of Adam, but the seed of the woman. And it is taken that this is a faint gleam of the evangel that was to come, and of the Saviour who was to be born.

The seed of the woman who will bruise Satan's head. Paul, towards the end of his epistle to the Romans, tells the Romans that the day is fast coming when someone will bruise Satan's head. In other words, the victory of salvation is coming when the enemy of mankind will be completely overtaken.

Now let's look at the condemnation here. What does it mean? We look first of all upon the temporal condemnation upon the woman. And again, there are many things here that can only be explained in terms of this book of Genesis.

Look at the first part of verse 16. Having announced that there is hope coming, now God speaks the dark things of condemnation. First to the woman.

To the woman he said, I will greatly multiply your pain and childbearing. In pain you shall bring forth children. Two things I want you to notice there.

First, woman was condemned to the travail of parenthood. Secondly, she was condemned to the tensions of partnership. The travel of bringing a child in the world, the tensions of living in the world with a husband.

Let's look at them very briefly. She was condemned to the travel of parenthood. I will bring, I will greatly multiply your pain and childbearing.

In pain you shall bring forth children. Oh yes, she shall take her part in the original mandate to be fruitful, and to multiply the seed, and to fill and replenish the earth. Oh yes, but not without pain.

You cannot break the laws of God and not suffer pain. The pleasure of conception will be matched by the pain of birth. God says so.

That's what this book says. The pleasure of man and wife coming together, all that will be matched by the pain of producing the child that has been conceived. And it's to be a reminder of the sin that brought man and woman from the throne God meant them to occupy.

Just as the man will find the shadow of death in the toil and the struggle for sustenance, notice, so will the woman find tears and pain in the struggle to produce a child, to bring the fetus to the birth. She will have children and she will rejoice when she has a child, as the book tells us and as experience tells us. She will fulfill her native desires for motherhood.

Yes, yes, there's mercy in judgment. But life cannot be altogether as if Eden had never happened, as if disobedience had never taken place. A sorrow and a cloud of pain which is closely related to death will mark her womanly pilgrimage, mitigated in many, many ways by the providence of God and by His grace, mitigated increasingly over the years by the grace of God.

But it is still there. And it is there, according to this passage, because of the sin of man and the rebellion of mankind against God. And it is particularly the temporal consequence of sin upon the woman, that not only was she condemned to the travel of parenthood, but to the tensions of partnership.

Your desire shall be for your husband. That's understandable. Sex was a gift of God.

Desire is desire. God gave it, God ordered it, God ordained it that way. But this is the strange twist in the providence.

And He shall rule over you. And the word for rule means dominant. The promise of being one flesh is not withdrawn.

God does not withdraw His promises. But gone is the prospect of a sweetly harmonious relationship of two beings bearing the image of God, loving one another without tensions, without any disharmony. Gone is the hope of it until Jesus Christ saves man from sin.

That's why there are tensions in the world. That's why families break up. Because into this intimate aspect of life there comes something whereby man receives what he desires and does not always return good for good, but begins to dominate.

I came across a comment on this which I think is worth repeating. The phrase, Your desire shall be for your husband, with the reciprocating, He shall rule over you, portrays a marriage relation in which control has slipped from the fully personal realm to that of instinctive urges, passive and active. To love and to cherish becomes to desire and to dominate.

While even pagan marriages can rise far above this, the pull of sin is always towards it. Partnership between fallen beings cannot other than get sour at certain points. It is only the grace of God.

And it is only the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and the light of the Word and the things that stem from our salvation that can bring order and beauty and peace and harmony into this relationship again. Don't forget that the first children born to Adam and Eve after this so quarreled with one another that a brother murdered a brother, turned sour indeed. If Eve, out of a desire for sensual pleasure, a pleasure, ate the fruit of the forbidden tree, she is destined to be a creature of desire all her days.

And he who satisfies that desire will take advantage of her because he is now a fallen being. That brings me to the last thing, the temporal consequences upon man. Just as in the case of Eve, two things are to be said.

We have already referred to the one of them in passing, so I don't need to dwell upon it, but here they are. Man is condemned to toil with the soil for his living. Refer to it.

Suffice it to say then that the struggle for subsistence is nowhere easy. There are thorns, there are thistles, there are weeds, there are other such factors to be found everywhere in the world. Oh, in some places the soil is very fruitful.

Never without weeds. Never without weeds. Remember visiting in the south of England, and if you know the south of England, you know that the soil is really marvelous there, and the grass is lovely and green.

And to have a well-ordered garden in the south of England is invariably a picture. I remember visiting a home, and the garden was idyllic. And I passed a comment, and the gentleman who lived there said to me, he saw very well for you to say that, he said, you know, we were away for two months, the beginning of the summer.

You won't believe me when I tell you, he says, that three of us had to clear away the overgrowth when I came back. Three of you clear away the overgrowth, the weeds, and the thistles, and various other things. It's just like that.

Anywhere in the world, leave the sweetest, the most beautiful, the most fruitful, the most beautiful garden you ever saw, leave it to itself, and what happens? You know. Man was condemned to a life of toil, and though God's grace has allowed a mitigation of it in certain areas, it will not be completely taken away until the Lord returns. He is condemned to toil with the soil for his living, and man is condemned to return to the soil at his dying.

Listen to this. Till you return to the ground, for out of it were you taken, you are dust, and to dust you will return. Now, I don't know that I can possibly bring out the pathos of the tragedy that lies in that statement.

Who are we talking about? Who is this man? It was made in the image of God. He was made to be a king of the universe, the vice-regent for God, to rule and to subdue everything according to the will of God. Something went wrong.

Now God says to him, Man, Adam, he says, you're nothing but dust. Dust you are, and to dust you will return. Do you remember what we heard a little earlier on about dust? Do you remember? The serpent grovels in the dust and lives on it.

Man, made in the image of God, is destined to disintegrate physically into dust and become the element for the serpent. There is something awesome about to commit a little funeral service, if we bear in mind its significance. Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust.

Thus does the king of all the earth, I mean king with a small k, king under the great king, thus does the appointed prince of the universe fall into dust. Mark that all these features in Adam and Eve's condemnation are but shadows of death or intimately related to it. They have died spiritually, and all these things are symbols of death itself.

Eve's travel in childbirth and her tensions in marriage. All these things are symbolic of death, aspects of death or its outworking. Adam's toiling with the soil in his living and returning to the dust in his dying.

In other words, a shadow of death has come over the whole of the world and over the whole of living. Thunder peals in paradise. Sin must be a terrible thing, sin must be a serious thing, if God deals with it like this.

My good friend, it is. It is. And you see, the tragedy with the world is this, that we take an entirely different view of things.

This is one reason why I'm walking along this pilgrimage, why I'm taking it in these days. I feel that really we're not seeing things with the seriousness of men and women who believe the book. We've been so indoctrinated by human ideas and philosophies and cults sometimes, that we're just missing the wood for the trees.

Sin is serious. It is so serious as to bring the curse of God not only upon the serpent, Satan, but upon the soil of earth. Paul tells us that nature was made subject to vanity.

And if you listen carefully, he says, you will find the undertones of travail awaiting for the day of the redemption when something different will take place. Thanks be to God. This is not the end of the story.

One day our Lord Jesus Christ is coming back. One day this whole universe shall be lapped in flames that will purge it, says Peter. We shall look for a new heaven and a new earth, he says, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

And in that expurged earth, the lion shall lie down with the lamb. And once again, the desert shall blossom as the rose. And when sin is expunged and the blood of Christ has clenched the universe, and the regeneration of all things emerges, the tragedy of Eden will lead to the glory of God's new creation.

Will you be in it? Only if, only if, by the grace of the same Saviour, you were made a new creation beforehand. Not that defileth shall enter into that new world. That's from the book of the Revelation.

It's not my word. Not that defileth shall enter into the city. Very well then, there is only one thing.

I must be cleansed. I must be purged. And I must be changed.

There is only one who can do that. By His infinite grace, He is here with us tonight. By His Spirit.

We have His promises. Come unto me. And I will give you rest.

I have forgiveness for your wounded soul from my wounded body. I have peace for your troubled heart. But I breathe out upon you.

Will you receive me? O my friend, if Jesus Christ is not yours tonight, come to Him. Open your heart. Open your life.

Open your soul. Open your being to Him. Let Him come in and make another Eden of the garden of your heart.

Now, I've done a thing tonight which is very daring. In hope of what we're going to think of next time, rather than in misery, on the basis of some of the things we've heard tonight, I have chosen a hymn in which you will hear these words. No more let sins and sorrows grow, nor thorns infest the ground.

He comes to make His blessings flow far as the curse is found.

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