



WEEK FOUR: Genesis 4:9-24 Sermon Outline:

In this text the disruption in the created order that the first couple's foolish act of disobedience introduced is described in greater detail. However, this is not essentially a story about sin, but about the Lord God's response to it. And the response is characterised by grace, shaped by his commitment to his purposes.

In the aftermath of their transgression the man and his wife, who have hidden themselves among the trees in their fig-leaf digs, are confronted by God. The Lord God has not, however, come in anger and great wrath, but with questions that invite confession. We are left to wonder how the story might have gone if they had come forward in repentance rather than blame.

The man, asked if he had eaten of the forbidden tree, blames his wife but also God who put her in the garden with him. When the Lord asks her what she had done, she too deflects blame to the serpent who, she claims, deceived her.

The Lord has heard enough and the judgment begins, moving in reverse order: from the serpent, to the woman, to the man. It is here that we must remember that this is part of the prologue; important to the story, but not the story. The judgments and curses here are almost never reflected on in the rest of the Old Testament and, importantly, they don't say everything that can be said (and will be said) about the disruption of sin. It is also here that we learn more about God than about the state of the world.

The judgment on the serpent – again emphasising its creatureliness – is described in two parts. The first is a curse that uses the imagery of humbling in the rest of Scripture (1 Sam. 2:8; Ps. 113:7; Isa. 26:5). In other words, this is not the story of how the snake lost its legs, but is the humbling of what the serpent represents. In the ancient near east serpents were a complex symbol that incorporated death, life, protection, and wisdom. All that symbolism sits behind the serpent and leads into the second part of the judgment. This is a declaration of a final conflict between the offspring of the woman and of the serpent.

Many see in this the earliest declaration of the good news. While it is fulfilled in Jesus, it is also quite likely that the first couple wondered if Cain, Abel, or Seth might have been the "offspring" spoken of here. Either way, there is an expression of grace in judgment (at least for the man and woman).

The Lord then moves to the woman who is not cursed like the serpent is, but whose pain in childbirth will be multiplied. There are also expressions of grace here. While labour will be increased, children will still be born. This also hints that the creation mandate of being fruitful, multiplying, and having dominion still stands – also an expression of grace.

Then we come to a verse that has often been misused. The 'desire' that the woman is to have towards her husband (not to mention the context of childbearing) places this in the context of a marriage relationship, not all men and all women. It is likely, given the (limited) use of this word (here, Genesis 4:7; Song 7:10),

that this is sexual desire – which also makes sense of the marriage context; desire to have children even in the face of increased pain in childbirth.

The other term, ‘rule’, is still in the context of the marriage relationship. It is the same term used to describe the dominion of the “greater light”, “lesser light”, and the stars in Genesis 1:18 and elsewhere to describe the rule of God over Israel (Psalms 22:28; 59:13). Whatever else it might mean, it does not give husbands the right to “rule” their wives with tyranny, domination, and control. In the context of the judgment on the woman it is likely, as Richard Davidson argues in *Flame of Yahweh*, that his rule is to be a servant-leadership.

One last thing should be noted about this verse. It does not represent the Lord God’s original intent. If we believe that the Lord will restore and renew all things there is every reason to pursue the pre-fall relationships of equality!

The man, who is judged for eating the forbidden fruit, not for listening to his wife, is also not cursed. Rather, it is the ground that experiences the curse. While we had seen some disruption in the relationship between the man and his wife and between them and God prior to verse 9, this is “new”. One of the consequences is that the very created order now groans because of their unfaithfulness and folly (See Romans 8:20-22). There is grace here too. Work will include frustration but the land will still bear a harvest.

It is only here that the death that was promised is mentioned. The man (and the woman) will return to dust from which they were taken. This death sentence, however, is suspended. Adam lives to a great age! This grace is multiplied in the Lord’s final actions in this chapter. He clothes them with garments to replace their fig-leaves. This was the act of a king or queen to their favoured subjects (See Genesis 45:22; 2 Sam. 1:24; Esther 4:4). It also covered their nakedness so that they could remain in his presence (an important part of the priestly work in the Law).

He also cuts them off from the tree of life for their own good, lest they live forever.

The disruption of their folly is substantial, but is tinged with grace and the Lord God has demonstrated his commitment to his purposes and to remain with them in the disruption. This is *the* tension of the narrative; what will God do to overcome the disruption that has been introduced into the world?

Questions to Ask

NOTE: The questions below are arranged into two sets. The first three are very open, allowing for wide exploration and discussion. The second set are more specifically tied to the sermon. Use one, both, or a mix of the two depending on your group.

1. What stood out to you in this sermon?
2. What questions do you have about this text? [If you meet prior to Wednesday, you can access the Big III question portal and ask some of these questions there.]
3. What might the Holy Spirit be inviting you to do in response?
4. The disruption of sin and the judgments contained in Genesis 3:14-19 are largely introductory. What do they tell us about what is to come in the biblical narrative and what don’t they tell us?
5. How does the context of marriage change the way you see Genesis 3:16 and its reference to ‘desire’ and ‘rule’?
6. The grace of God is evident throughout the judgment scene. In what ways does this shape our interpretation of God’s judgment?
7. “The Bible is not a story about sin but about God’s commitment to undo the disruption of sin.” Discuss.

A Prayer to Pray

Pray that we might be aware of God's commitment to undo the disruption of sin and of his gracious commitment to us in the midst of that disruption even as we experience the disruption in our work and relationships.

A Practice to Try

Pay attention to the disruption of sin in your life and, when it raises its head, intentionally turn your attention to the Lord whose commitment to us in Jesus provides us with hope.

Readings to Read This Week

Last week, Marc promised an annotated list of Scriptures that provide an overview of the whole story of the Bible. The first part is now available under Life Group Resources. The readings below reflect the first few readings.

- Genesis 12:1-7
- Exodus 3:1-15
- Exodus 19:1-8
- Leviticus 19
- Deuteronomy 1:19-2:7

A Mission Commitment to Reflect on

One of our strategic priorities is Community Engagement. This has a number of broad focuses, but one of them is evangelism. This series in Genesis is a broad introduction to the story that leads to Jesus. Is there someone in your life who you might invite to listen to these sermons, attend a service with you, or who might even join your Life Group?

A GBC Initiative to Promote/Celebrate

Each week we will provide you with a key aspect of our community news that we would encourage you to remind your Life Group about.

1. Sunday, August 31 we will be holding our third Soundings event from 11:30-1:00. This is an opportunity to make your voice heard and to contribute to our discernment process as we begin to look towards 2026. Our focus will be on Spiritual Journey and we'll be asking participants to discuss a few questions to help us think this strategic priority through.
2. On Sunday we completed our annual survey. We will be sending out a link to our community of faith this week so that those who were not there will be able to complete it. Please encourage your group members who weren't there to complete the survey. It is one way that we seek to reflect our belief that we are a priesthood of all believers!