

# *The Seed of the Woman, and the Seed of the Serpent*

**George Whitefield (1714-1770)**

*"And 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."* — Genesis 3:15

ON reading to you these words, I may address you in the language of the holy angels to the shepherds, that were watching their flocks by night: "Behold, I bring you glad tidings of great joy." For this is the first promise that was made of a Savior to the apostate race of Adam. We generally look for Christ only in the New Testament; but Christianity, in one sense, is very near as old as the creation. It is wonderful to observe how gradually God revealed his Son to mankind. He began with the promise in the text, and this the elect lived upon, till the time of Abraham. To him, God made further discoveries of his eternal council concerning man's redemption. Afterwards, at sundry times, and in divers manners, God spoke to the fathers by the prophets, till at length the Lord Jesus himself was manifested in flesh, and came and tabernacled amongst us.

This first promise must certainly be but dark to our first parents, in comparison of that great light which we enjoy: And yet, dark as it was, we may assure ourselves they built upon it their hopes of everlasting salvation, and by that faith were saved.

How they came to stand in need of this promise, and what is the extent and meaning of it, I intend, God willing, to make the subject-matter of your present meditation.

The fall of man is written in too legible characters not to be understood: Those that deny it, by their denying, prove it. The very heathens confessed, and bewailed it: They could see the streams of corruption running through the whole race of mankind, but could not trace them to the fountain-head. Before God gave a revelation of his Son, man was a riddle to himself. And Moses unfolds more, in this one chapter (out of which the text is taken) than all mankind could have been capable of finding out of themselves, though they had studied to all eternity.

In the preceding chapter he had given us a full account, how God spoke the world into being; and especially how he formed man of the dust of the earth, and breathed into him the breath of life, so that he became a living soul. A council of the Trinity was called concerning the formation of this lovely creature. The result of that council was, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. So God created man in his own image, in the

image of God created he him." Moses remarkably repeats these words, that we might take particular notice of our divine Original. Never was so much expressed in so few words: None but a man inspired could have done so. But it is remarkable, that though Moses mentions our being made in the image of God, yet he mentions it but twice, and that in a transient manner; as though he would have said, "man was made in honor, God make him upright, 'in the image of God, male and female created he them.' But man so soon fell, and became like the beasts that perish, nay, like the devil himself, that it is scarce worth mentioning."

How soon man fell after he was created, is not told us; and therefore, to fix any time, is to be wise above what is written. And, I think, they who suppose that man fell the same day in which he was made, have no sufficient ground for their opinion. The many things which are crowded together in the former chapter, such as the formation of Adam's wife, his giving names to the beasts, and his being put into the garden which God had planted, I think require a longer space of time than a day to be transacted in. However, all agree in this, "man stood not long." How long, or how short a while, I will not take upon me to determine. It more concerns us to inquire, how he came to fall from his steadfastness, and what was the rise and progress of the temptation which prevailed over him. The account given us in this chapter concerning it, is very full; and it may do us much service, under God, to make some remarks upon it.

"Now the serpent (says the sacred historian) was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made, and he said unto the woman, Yes, hath God said, ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?"

Though this was a real serpent, yet he that spoke was no other than the devil; from hence, perhaps, called the old serpent, because he took possession of the serpent when he came to beguile our first parents. The devil envied the happiness of man, who was made, as some think, to supply the place of the fallen angels. God made man upright, and with full power to stand if he would: He was just, therefore, in suffering him to be tempted. If he fell, he had no one to blame except himself. But how must Satan effect his fall? He cannot do it by his power, he attempts it therefore by policy: he takes possession of a serpent, which was more subtle than all the beasts of the field, which the Lord God had made; so that men who are full of subtlety, but have no piety, are only machines for the devil to work upon, just as he pleases.

"And he said unto the woman." Here is an instance of his subtlety. He says unto the woman, the weaker vessel, and when she was alone from her husband, and therefore was more liable to be overcome; "Yes, hath God said, ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" These words are certainly spoken in answer to something which the devil either

saw or heard. In all probability, the woman was now near the tree of knowledge of good and evil; (for we shall find her, by and by, plucking an apple from it) perhaps she might be looking at, and wondering what tree was in that tree more than the others, that she and her husband should be forbidden to take of it. Satan seeing this, and coveting to draw her into a parley with him, (for if the devil can persuade us not to resist, but to commune with him, he hath gained a great point) he says, "Yea, hath God said, ye shall not eat of every tree in the garden?" The first thing he does is to persuade her, if possible to entertain hard thoughts of God; this is his general way of dealing with God's children: "Yea, hath God said, ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? What! Hath God planted a garden, and placed you in the midst of it, only to tease and perplex you? Hath he planted a garden, and yet forbid you making use of any of the fruits of it at all?" It was impossible for him to ask a more ensnaring question, in order to gain his end: For Eve was here seemingly obliged to answer, and vindicate God's goodness. And therefore, Verses 2 & 3. The woman said unto the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die."

The former part of the answer was good, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden, God has not forbid us eating of every tree of the garden. No; we may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden (and, it should seem, even of the tree of life, which was as a sacrament to man in the state of innocence) there is only one tree in the midst of the garden, of which God hath said, ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die." Here she begins to warp, and sin begins to conceive in her heart. Already she has contracted some of the serpent's poison, by talking with him, which she ought not to have done at all. For she might easily suppose, that it could be no good being that could put such a question unto her, and insinuate such dishonorable thoughts of God. She should therefore have fled from him, and not stood to have parleyed with him at all. Immediately the ill effects of it appear, she begins to soften the divine threatening. God had said, "the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die;" or, dying thou shalt die. But Eve says, "Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die." We may be assured we are fallen into, and begin to fall by temptations, when we begin to think God will not be as good as his word, in respect to the execution of his threatenings denounced against sin. Satan knew this, and therefore artfully

"Said unto the woman, (ver. 4) Ye shall not surely die," in an insinuating manner, "Ye shall not surely die. Surely; God will not be so cruel as to damn you only for eating an apple, it cannot be." Alas! How many does Satan lead captive at his will, by flattering them, that they shall not surely die; that hell torments will not be eternal; that God is all mercy; that he therefore will not punish a few years sin with an eternity of misery? But Eve found God as good as his word; and so will all they who go on in sin, under a false hope that they shall not surely die.

We may also understand the words spoken positively, and this is agreeable to what follows; You shall not surely die; "It is all a delusion, a mere bugbear, to keep you in a servile subjection."

For (ver. 5) "God doth know, that in the day ye eat thereof, then shall your eyes be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil."

What child of God can expect to escape slander, when God himself was thus slandered even in paradise? Surely the understanding of Eve must have been, in some measure, blinded, or she would not have suffered the tempter to speak such perverse things. In what odious colors is God here represented! "God doth know, that in the day ye eat thereof, ye shall be as gods," (equal with God.) So that the grand temptation was, that they should be hereafter under no control, equal, if not superior, to God that made them, knowing good and evil. Eve could not tell what Satan meant by this; but, to be sure, she understood it of some great privilege which they were to enjoy. And thus Satan now points out a way which seems right to sinners, but does not tell them the end of that way is death.

To give strength and force to this temptation, in all probability, Satan, or the serpent, at this time plucked an apple from the tree, and ate it before Eve; by which Eve might be induced to think, that the sagacity and power of speech, which the serpent had above the other beasts, must be owing, in a great measure, to his eating that fruit; and, therefore, if he received so much improvement, she might also expect a like benefit from it. All this, I think, is clear; for, otherwise, I do not see with what propriety it could be said, "When the woman saw that it was good for food." How could she know it was good for food, unless she had seen the serpent feed upon it?

Satan now begins to get ground space. Lust had conceived in Eve's heart; shortly it will bring forth sin. Sin being conceived, brings forth death. Verse 6, "And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband, and he did eat."

Our senses are the landing ports of our spiritual enemies. How needful is that resolution of holy Job, "I have made a covenant with mine eyes!" When Eve began to gaze on the forbidden fruit with her eyes, she soon began to long after it with her heart. When she saw that it was good for food, and pleasant to the eyes, (here was the lust of the flesh, and lust of the eye) but, above all, a tree to be desired to make one wise, wiser than God would have her be, nay, as wise as God himself; she took of the fruit thereof, and gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat. As soon as ever she sinned herself, she turned tempter to her husband. It is dreadful, when those, who should be help-meets for each other in the great work of their salvation, are only promoters of each other's damnation: but thus it is. If we ourselves are good, we shall excite others to goodness; if we do evil, we shall entice others to do evil also. There is a close connection between doing and teaching. How needful then is it for us all to take heed that we do not sin any way ourselves, lest we should become factors for the devil, and ensnare, perhaps, our nearest and dearest relatives? "she gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat."

Alas! What a complication of crimes was there in this one single act of sin! Here is an utter disbelief of God's threatening; the utmost ingratitude to their Maker, who had so lately planted this garden, and placed them in it, with such a glorious and comprehensive charter. And, the utmost neglect of their posterity, who they knew were to stand or fall with them. Here was the utmost pride of heart: they wanted to be equal with God. Here's the utmost contempt put upon his threatening and his law: the devil is credited and obeyed before him, and all this only to satisfy their sensual appetite. Never was a crime of such a complicated nature committed by any here below: Nothing but the devil's apostasy and rebellion could equal it.

And what are the consequences of their disobedience? Are their eyes opened? Yes, their eyes are opened; but, alas! It is only to see their own nakedness. For we are told (ver. 7) "That the eyes of them both were opened; and they knew that they were naked." Naked of God, naked of every thing that was holy and good, and destitute of the divine image, which they before enjoyed. They might rightly now be termed Ichabod; for the glory of the Lord departed from them. O how low did these sons of the morning then fall! Out of God, into themselves; from being partakers of the divine nature, into the nature of the devil and the beast. Well, therefore, might they know that they were naked, not only in body, but in soul.

And how do they behave now they are naked? Do they flee to God for pardon? Do they seek to God for a robe to cove their nakedness? No, they were now dead to God, and became earthly, sensual, devilish: therefore, instead of applying to God for mercy, "they sewed or platted fig-leaves together, and made themselves aprons, "or things to gird about them. This is a lively representation of all natural man: we see that we are naked: we, in some measure, confess it; but, instead of looking up to God for succor, we patch up a righteousness of our own (as our first parents platted fig-leaves together) hoping to cover our nakedness by that. But our righteousness will not stand the severity of God's judgment: it will do us no more service than the fig-leaves did Adam and Eve, that is, none at all.

For (ver. 8) "They heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the trees of the garden, in the cool of the day; and Adam and his wife (notwithstanding their fig-leaves) hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God, among the trees of the garden."

They heard the voice of the Lord God, or the Word of the Lord God, even the Lord Jesus Christ, who is "the word that was with God, and the word that was God." They heard him walking in the trees of the garden, in the cool of the day. A season, perhaps, when Adam and Eve used to go, in a n especial manner, and offer up an evening sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. The cool of the day. Perhaps the sin was committed early in the morning, or at noon; but God would not come upon them immediately, he staid till the cool of the day. And if we would effectually reprove others, we should not do it when they are warmed with passion, but wait till the cool of the day.

But what an alteration is here! Instead of rejoicing at the voice of their beloved, instead of meeting him with open arms and enlarged hearts, as before, they now hide themselves in the trees of the garden. Alas, what a foolish attempt was this? Surely they must be naked, otherwise how could they think of hiding themselves from God? Whither could they flee from his presence? But, by their fall, they had contracted an enmity against God: they now hated, and were afraid to converse with God their Maker. And is not this our case by nature? Assuredly it is. We labor to cover our nakedness with the fig-leaves of our own righteousness: We hide ourselves from God as long as we can, and will not come, and never should come, did not the Father prevent, draw, and sweetly constrain us by his grace, as he here prevented Adam.

Verse 9. "And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Adam, where art thou?"

"The Lord God called unto Adam." (for otherwise Adam would never have called unto the Lord God) and said, "Adam, where art thou? How is it that thou comest not to pay thy devotions as usual?" Christians, remember the Lord keeps an account when you fail coming to worship. Whenever therefore you are tempted to withhold your attendance, let each of you fancy you heard the Lord calling unto you, and saying, "O man, O woman, where art thou? It may be understood in another and better sense; "Adam, where art thou?" What a condition is thy poor soul in? This is the first thing the Lord asks and convinces a sinner of; when he prevents and calls him effectually by his grace; he also calls him by name; for unless God speaks to us in particular, and we know where we are, how poor, how miserable, how blind, how naked, we shall never value the redemption wrought out for us by the death and obedience of the dear Lord Jesus. "Adam, where art thou?"

Verse 10. "And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid." See what cowards sin makes us. If we knew no sin, we should know no fear. "Because I was naked, and I hid myself." Ver. 11, "And he said, who told thee that thou was naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I (thy Maker and Law-giver) commanded thee, that thou shouldst not eat?"

God knew very well that Adam was naked, and that he had eaten of the forbidden fruit, But God would know it from Adam's own mouth. Thus God knows all our necessities before we ask, but yet insists upon our asking for his grace, and confessing our sins. For, by such acts, we acknowledge our dependence upon God, take shame to ourselves, and thereby give glory to his great name.

Verse 12. "And the man said, the woman which thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat."

Never was nature more lively delineated. See what pride Adam contracted by the fall! How unwilling he is to lay the blame upon, or take shame to himself. This answer is full of insolence towards God, enmity against his wife, and disingenuity in respect to himself. For herein he tacitly

reflects upon God. "The woman that thou gavest to be with me." As much as to say, if thou hadst not given me that woman, I had not eaten the forbidden fruit. Thus, when men sin, they lay the fault upon their passions; then blame and reflect upon God for giving them those passions. Their language is, "the appetites that thou gavest us, they deceived us; and therefore we sinned against thee." But, as God, notwithstanding, punished Adam for hearkening to the voice of his wife, so he will punish those who hearken to the dictates of their corrupt inclinations. For God compels no man to sin. Adam might have withstood the solicitations of his wife, if he would. And so, if we look up to God, we should find grace to help in the time of need. The devil and our own hearts tempt, but they cannot force us to consent, without the concurrence of our own wills. So that our damnation is of ourselves, as it will evidently appear at the great day, notwithstanding all men's present impudent replies against God. As Adam speaks insolently in respect to God, so he speaks with enmity against his wife; the woman, or this woman, she gave me. He lays all the fault upon her, and speaks of her with much contempt. He does not say, my wife, my dear wife; but, THIS WOMAN. Sin disunites the most united hearts: It is, the bane of holy fellowship. Those who have been companions in sin here, if they die without repentance, will both hate and condemn one another hereafter. All damned souls are accusers of their brethren. Thus it is, in some degree, on this side of the grave. "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat." What a disingenuous [deceitful] speech was here! He makes use of no less than fifteen words to excuse himself, and but one or two (in the original) to confess his fault, if it may be called a confession at all. "The woman which thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree;" here are fifteen words; "and I did eat." With what reluctance do these last words come out? How soon are they uttered are they uttered? "And I did eat." But thus it is with an unhumiliated, unregenerate heart; It will be laying the fault upon the dearest friend in the world, nay, upon God himself, rather than take shame to itself. This pride we are all subject to by the fall; and, till our hearts are broken, and made contrite by the spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be always charging God foolishly. "Against thee, and thee only, have I sinned, that thou mightest be justified in thy saying, and clear when thou art judged," is the language of none but those, who, like David, are willing to confess their faults, and are truly sorry for their sins. This was not the case of Adam; his heart was not broken; and therefore he lays the fault of his disobedience upon his wife and God, and not upon himself; "The woman which thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat."

Verse 13. "And the Lord God said, What is this that thou hast done?" What a wonderful concern does God express in this expostulation! "What a deluge of misery hast thou brought upon thyself, thy husband, and thy posterity? What is this that thou has done? Disobeyed thy God, obeyed the devil, and ruined thy husband, for whom I made thee to be an help-meet! What is this that thou hast done?" God would here awaken her to a sense of her crime and danger, and therefore, as it were, thunders in her ears: for the law must be preached to self-righteous sinners. We must take care of healing before we see sinners wounded, lest we should say, Peace, peace, where there is no peace. Secure sinners must hear the thunderings of mount Sinai, before we bring

them to mount Zion. They who never preach up the law, it is to be feared, are unskillful in delivering the glad tidings of the gospel. Every minister should be a Boanerges, a son of thunder, as well as a Barnabus, a son of consolation. There was an earthquake and a whirlwind, before the small still voice came to Elijah: We must first show people they are condemned, and then show them how they must be saved. But how and when to preach the law, and when to apply the promises of the gospel, wisdom is profitable to direct. "And the Lord God said unto the woman, What is this that thou has done?"

"And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat." She does not make use of so many words to excuse herself, as her husband; but her heart is as unhumiliated as his. What is this, says God, that thou hast done? God here charges her with doing it. She dares not deny the fact, or say, I have not done it; but she takes all the blame off herself, and lays it upon the serpent; "The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat." She does not say, "Lord, I was to blame for talking with the serpent; Lord, I did wrong, in not hastening to my husband, when he put the first question to me; Lord, I plead guilty, I only am to blame, O let not my poor husband suffer for my wickedness!" This would have been the language of her heart had she now been a true penitent. But both were now alike proud; therefore neither will lay the blame upon themselves; "The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat. The woman which thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat."

I have been the more particular in remarking this part of their behavior, because it tends so much to the magnifying of Free-grace, and plainly shows us, that salvation cometh only from the Lord. Let us take a short view of the miserable circumstances our first parents were now in: They were legally and spiritually dead, children of wrath, and heirs of hell. They had eaten the fruit, of which God had commanded them, that they should not eat; and when arraigned before God, notwithstanding their crime was so complicated, they could not be brought to confess it. What reason can be given, why sentence of death should not be pronounced against the prisoners at the bar? All must own they are worthy to die. Nay, how can God, consistently with his justice, possibly forgive them? He had threatened, that they day wherein they eat of the forbidden fruit, they should "surely die;" and, if he did not execute this threatening, the devil might then slander the Almighty indeed. And yet mercy cries, spare these sinners, spare the work of thine own hands. Behold, then, wisdom contrives a scheme how God may be just, and yet be merciful; be faithful to his threatening, punish the offense, and at the same time spare the offender. An amazing scene of divine love here opens to our view, which had been from all eternity hid in the heart of God! Notwithstanding Adam and Eve were thus unhumiliated, and did not so much as put up on single petition for pardon, God immediately passes sentence upon the serpent, and reveals to them a Savior.

Verse 14. "And the Lord God said unto the serpent, because thou hast done this, thou art accursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life;" i.e. he should be in subjection, and his power should always

be limited and restrained. "His enemies shall lick the very dust," says the Psalmist. (Verse 15.) "And 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."

Before I proceed to the explanation of this verse, I cannot but take notice of one great mistake which the author of the *WHOLE DUTY OF MAN* is guilty of, in making this verse contain a covenant between God and Adam, as though God now personally treated with Adam, as before the fall. For, talking of the second covenant in his preface, concerning caring for the soul, says he, "This second covenant was made with Adam, and us in him, presently after the fall, and is briefly contained in these words, Gen. 3:15 where God declares, 'The seed of the woman shall break the serpent's head; and this was made up, as the first was, of some mercies to be afforded by God, and some duties to be performed by us.'" This is exceeding false divinity: for those words are not spoken to Adam; they are directed only to the serpent. Adam and Eve stood by as criminals, and God could not treat with them, because they had broken his covenant. And it is so far from being a covenant wherein "some mercies are to be afforded by God, and some duties to be performed by us," that here is not a word looking that way; it is only a declaration of a free gift of salvation through Jesus Christ our Lord. God the Father and God the Son had entered into a covenant concerning the salvation of the elect from all eternity, wherein God the Father promised, That, if the Son would offer his soul a sacrifice for sin, he should see his seed. Now this is an open revelation of this secret covenant, and therefore God speaks in the most positive terms, "It shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." The first Adam, God had treated with before; he proved false: God therefore, to secure the second covenant from being broken, puts it into the hands of the second Adam, the Lord from heaven. Adam, after the fall, stood no longer as our representative; he and Eve were only private persons, as we are, and were only to lay hold on the declaration of mercy contained in this promise by faith, (as they really did) and by that they were saved. I do not say but we are to believe and obey, if we are everlastingly saved. Faith and obedience are conditions, if we only mean that they in order go before our salvation, but I deny that these are proposed by God to Adam, or that God treats with him in this promise, as he did before the fall under the covenant of works. For how could that be, when Adam and Eve were now prisoners at the bar, without strength to perform any conditions at all? The truth is this: God, as a reward of Christ's sufferings, promised to give the elect faith and repentance, in order to bring them to eternal life; and both these, and every thing else necessary for their everlasting happiness, and infallibly secured to them in this promise; as Mr. Rastan, an excellent Scots divine, clearly shows, in a book entitled, "A view of the covenant of grace."

This is by no means an unnecessary distinction; it is a matter of great importance: for want of knowing this, people have been so long misled, They have been taught that they must do so and so, and though they were under a covenant of works, and then for *DOING* this, they should be saved. Whereas, on the contrary, people should be taught, That the Lord Jesus was the second

Adam, with whom the Father entered into covenant for fallen man; That they can now do nothing of or for themselves, and should therefore come to God, beseeching him to give them faith, by which they shall be enabled to lay hold on the righteousness of Christ; and that faith they will then show forth by their works, out of love and gratitude to the ever blessed Jesus, their most glorious Redeemer, for what he has done for their souls. This is a consistent scriptural scheme; without holding this, we must run into one of those two bad extremes; I mean Antinomianism on the one hand, or Arminianism on the other: from both which may the good Lord deliver us!

But to proceed: By the seed of the woman, we are here to understand the Lord Jesus Christ, who, though very God of very God, was, for us men and our salvation, to have a body prepared for him by the Holy Ghost, and to be born of a woman who never knew man, and by his obedience and death make an atonement for man's transgression, and bring in an everlasting righteousness, work in them a new nature, and thereby bruise the serpent's head, i.e. destroy his power and dominion over them. By the serpent's seed, we are to understand the devil and all his children, who are permitted by God to tempt and sift his children. But, blessed be God, he can reach no further than our heel.

It is to be doubted but Adam and Eve understood this promise in this sense; for it is plain, in the latter part of the chapter, sacrifices were instituted. From whence should those skins come, but from beasts slain for sacrifice, of which God made them coats? We find Abel, as well as Cain, offering sacrifice in the next chapter: and the Apostle tells us, he did it by faith, no doubt in this promise. And Eve, when Cain was born, said, "I have gotten a man from the Lord," or, (as Mr. Henry observes, it may be rendered) "I have gotten a man, -- the Lord, -- the promised Messiah." Some further suppose, that Eve was the first believer; and therefore they translate it thus, "The seed, (not of the, but) of this woman:" which magnifies the grace of God so much the more, that she, who was first in the transgression, should be the first partaker of redemption. Adam believed also, and was saved: for unto Adam and his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them: which was a remarkable type of their being clothed with the righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This promise was literally fulfilled in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. Satan bruised his heel, when he tempted him for forty days together in the wilderness: he bruised his heel, when he raised up strong persecution against him during the time of his public ministry: he in an especial manner bruised his heel, when our Lord complained, that his soul was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death, and he sweat great drops of blood falling upon the ground, in the garden; He bruised his heel, when he put it into the heart of Judas to betray him: ad he bruised him yet most of all, when his emissaries nailed him to an accursed tree, and our Lord cried out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Yet, in all this, the blessed Jesus, the seed of the woman, bruised Satan's accursed head; for, in that he was tempted, he was able to succor those that are tempted. By his stripes we are healed. The chastisement of our peace was upon him. By dying, he destroyed him

that had the power of death, that is, the devil. He thereby spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly, triumphing over them upon the cross.

This promise has been fulfilled in the elect of God, considered collectively, as well before, as since the coming of our Lord in the flesh: for they may be called, the seed of the woman. Marvel not, that all who will live godly in Christ Jesus, must suffer persecution. In this promise, there is an eternal enmity put between the seed of the woman, and the seed of the serpent; so that those that are born after the flesh, cannot but persecute those that are born after the spirit. This enmity showed itself, soon after this promise was revealed, in Cain's bruising the heel of Abel: it continued in the church through all ages before Christ came in the flesh, as the history of the Bible, and the 11th chapter of the Hebrews, plainly show. It raged exceedingly after our Lord's ascension; witness the Acts of the Apostles, and the History of the Primitive Christians. It now rages, and will continue to rage and show itself, in a greater or less degree, to the end of time. But let not this dismay us; for in all this, the seed of the woman is more than conqueror, and bruises the serpent's head. Thus the Israelites, the more they were oppressed, the more they increased. Thus it was with the Apostles; thus it was with their immediate followers. So that Tertullian compares the church in his time to a mowed field; the more frequently it is cut, the more it grows. The blood of the martyrs was always the seed of the church. And I have often sat down with wonder and delight, and admired how God has made the very schemes which his enemies contrived, in order to hinder, become the most effectual means to propagate his gospel. The devil has had so little success in persecution, that if I did not know that he and his children, according to this verse, could not but persecute, I should think he would count it his strength to sit still. What did he get by persecuting the martyrs in Queen Mary's time? Was not the grace of God exceedingly glorified in their support? What did he get by persecuting the good old Puritans? Did it not prove the peopling of New-England? Or, to come nearer our own times, what has he got by putting us out of the synagogues? Hath not the word of God, since that, mightily prevailed? My dear hearers, you must excuse me for enlarging on this head; God fills my soul generally, when I come to this topic. I can say with Luther, "If it were not for persecution, I should not understand the scripture." If Satan should be yet suffered to bruise my heel further, and his servants should thrust me into prison, I doubt not, but even that would only tend to the more effectual bruising of his head. I remember a saying the then Lord Chancellor to the pious Bradford: "Thou hast done more hurt, said he, by thy exhortations in private in prison, than thou didst in preaching before thou was put in," or words to this effect. The promise of the text is my daily support: "I will put enmity between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."

Further: this promise is also fulfilled, not only in the church in general, but in every individual believer in particular. In every believer there are two seeds, the seed of the woman, and the seed of the serpent; the flesh lusting against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh. It is with the believer, when quickened with grace in his heart, as it was with Rebekah, when she had conceived

Esau and Jacob in her womb; she felt a struggling, and began to be uneasy; "If it be so says she, why am I thus?" (Gen. 25:22) Thus grace and nature struggle (if I may so speak) in the womb of a believers heart: but, as it was there said, "The elder shall serve the younger;" so it is here, -- grace in the end shall get the better of nature; the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head. Many of you that have believed in Christ, perhaps may find some particular corruption yet strong, so strong, that you are sometimes ready to cry out with David, "I shall fall one day by the hand of Saul." But, fear not, the promise in the text insures the perseverance and victory of believers over sin, Satan, death, and hell. What if indwelling corruption does yet remain, and the seed of the serpent bruise your heel, in vexing and disturbing your righteous souls? Fear not, though faint, yet pursue: you shall yet bruise the serpent's head. Christ hath died for you, and yet a little while, and he will send death to destroy the very being of sin in you. Which brings me to show the most extensive manner in which the promise of the text shall be fulfilled, vis. at the final judgment, when the Lord Jesus shall present the elect to his Father, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, glorified both in body and soul.

Then shall the seed of the woman give the last and fatal blow, in bruising the serpent's head. Satan, the accuser of the brethren, and all his accursed seed, shall then be cast out, and never suffered to disturb the seed of the woman any more. Then shall the righteous shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father, and sit with Christ on thrones in majesty on high.

Let us, therefore, not be weary of well-doing; for we shall reap an eternal harvest of comfort, if we faint not. Dare, dare, my dear brethren in Christ, to follow the Captain of your salvation, who was made perfect through sufferings. The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head. Fear not men. Be not too much cast down at the deceitfulness of your hearts. Fear not devils; you shall get the victory even over them. The Lord Jesus has engaged to make you more than conquerors over all. Plead with you Savior, plead: plead the promise in the tent. Wrestle, wrestle with God in prayer. If it has been given you to believe, fear not if it should also be given you to suffer. Be not any wise terrified by your adversaries; the king of the church has them all in a chain: be kind to them, pray for them; but fear them not. The Lord will yet bring back his ark; though at present driven into the wilderness; and Satan like lightening shall fall from heaven.

Are there any enemies of God here? The promise of the text encourages me to bid you defiance: the seed of the woman, the ever-blessed Jesus, shall bruise the serpent's head. What signifies all your malice? You are only raging waves of the sea, foaming out your own shame. For you, without repentance, is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever. The Lord Jesus sits in heaven, ruling over all, and causing all things to work for his children's good: he laughs you to scorn: he hath you in the utmost derision, and therefore so will I. Who are you that persecute the children of the ever blessed God? Though a poor stripling, the Lord Jesus, the seed of the woman, will enable me to bruise your heads.

My brethren in Christ, I think I do not speak thus in my own strength, but in the strength of my Redeemer. I know in whom I have believed; I am persuaded he will keep that safe, which I have committed unto him. He is faithful who hath promised, that the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head. May we all experience a daily completion of this promise, both in the church and in our hearts, till we come to the church of the first-born, the spirits of just men made perfect, in the presence and actual fruition of the great God our heavenly Father!

To whom, with the Son, and the Holy Ghost, be ascribed all honor, power, might, majesty, and dominion, now and for evermore. Amen.



**ReformedLiterature.com**