

The Story of Hope #4

Hope Hidden in Hardship

Genesis 3:14-24

Story of hope Sections 7-9

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Have you ever found something valuable in an unusual place? Found some treasure in a pile of trash? And no, not the lint covered quarter in your couch, but actual treasure? From a can full of gold in a landfill, to \$100,000 dollars in a recycled tv, the world is full of stories where people have found absolute treasures without searching them and in the most unusual places. In this section of our story we will see just that. Hidden in the midst of a passage defined by hardship, God places a treasure of Hope. In this section we will see the key themes of **God, Man, Sin, Death, Christ, Life.**

Man and woman have disregarded God's one command. They have been caught in their disobedience and called to stand in front of their loving creator, and in the place where love and joy and desire once was, is now fear and shame and deception. Everything was perfect, now, it couldn't be worse. They knew that God had promised that "they would surely die", now they are about to find out what this "death" or "separation" is all about, and just how far the impact of their sin will reach. Yet, even as God gives them a glimpse of the hardships they are now going to face, He has hidden within these "curses" a Hope that the rest of this story hinges upon, and this Hope will begin to answer the question, "what is God's going to do now?"

In Genesis 3:14-19 we see that the curses are handed down in the same order that sin came into the world, the "serpent" first, then the woman, then the man. We see right away that the consequences are widespread and are not only for them, but for all the generations to follow. There are just a few specifics at this point, but as the Story continues we will see that all creation will be impacted by this moment of rebellion. Death is going to spread throughout the whole world. Yet, as bleak as this picture has now become, it has, hidden in it, a powerful promise of Hope, a promise of a **rescuer**. God promises that the woman's offspring will "bruise" the head of the serpent. It is clear that the serpent represents more than the simple creature, and includes the one who used the serpent, namely Lucifer. This promise reveals that there will be conflict between the offspring of the Woman and Lucifer, and although the "serpent" will strike a blow to the sons heel, the "son" will deal a deadly blow to the serpent's head. Here, tucked in the message of hardship, is their only hope. One day this battle will end, with the son of the woman victorious, and lucifer defeated. Someday, God will use a man, a **rescuer**, to make it right. The son of the promise.

As important as that future promise was, there were other things that God needed to do with Adam and Eve at that very moment. First, God addresses their need to be covered. He never scolds or corrects their desire to cover up, it was an appropriate response to their sin. They do indeed have a real need to be presentable in the presence of God. However, their attempt at covering up was dramatically insufficient. The leaves they had stitched together simply wouldn't make them presentable to God. God needed to make for them garments that would clothe them, only God was able to provide a sufficient covering, only God's gift was able to fill their need.

Secondly, there in the middle of the garden, the two trees still stood, bearing their beautiful and delicious fruit. The Tree of Life, and the Tree of Knowledge. Through the Tree of Knowledge, Adam and Eve had brought death into their lives, so wouldn't the obvious solution to this death be the Tree of Life? At least that consequence could be solved through a simple bite of fruit right? The answer to that question is a resounding yes! If Adam and Eve ate of the Tree of Life they would indeed never die! But never physically dying would have a consequence of it's own. Through their disobedience, sin and death had entered the very body of mankind, and if that body was allowed to live forever, Adam and Eve and their descendants would be trapped in sin and death forever! So in an act of mercy, God made Adam and Eve leave the garden and placed an angelic guard at the Tree of Life to ensure they wouldn't eat of it, and to ensure that their now broken sinful bodies would die. While this seems at first to be a cruel punishment, we will see that somehow, someday, God is going to use this physical death to bring about an incredible rescue.

God has a plan. God was not caught unprepared when Adam and Eve disobeyed him. He didn't sit down in shock and try to think of how He could deal with sin. He knew exactly what He was going to do. He had a plan. The severe consequences of sin are still there, the pain and sorrow that mankind will now feel, isn't going to go away in this life. Yet we see even in the curses, that God reveals just a hint of what is coming. This man, born of woman, will put the wrongs to right, and rescue God's most precious creation, from the sin and punish we so deserve. The world seems like a place of complete evil, confusion and chaos. It looks as though everything is broken, even man's attempts to make things better often fail or are corrupted. It seems as though God has left this world to it's ugly and evil demise. But He hasn't. He hasn't stop working and moving and making sure that there is a way for us to be with Him again. We see that even in life's hardest moments, God gives us Hope, and we will see this Hope revealed in greater detail as the story continues.

Only God's provision is sufficient. Adam and Eve knew they were guilty. They knew that they needed to cover up, but their efforts with the fig leaves proved to be insufficient. Their desire to try to fix things wasn't totally wrong, just they way they went about it was. God needed to be the one to cover them, to provide for this new need, just as God had provided for ALL their needs. The same is absolutely true for us today. When we see we are not right with God that is a good thing! Obviously it's not good that our relationship with God is broken, but good that we recognize it! Getting a cancer diagnosis isn't a good thing, but if there is cancer in your body you sure what to know about it! And the sooner the better! The same is true with our relationship with God. The broken relationship with God is the true source of all our problems, but there aren't multiple ways to deal with that problem. There aren't "many ways to God" as our world would have us believe. We don't get to choose how WE make it right. If we try to fix it, we will see all our efforts, no matter how hard we try, are simply not enough. Our attempts to cover ourselves and make ourselves presentable are completely insufficient. Only God can provide what is needed to fix what we have broken, and He is more than willing to do it.