

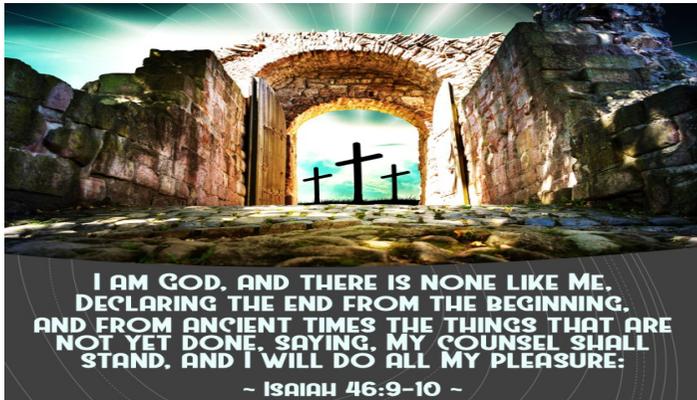
## “DEFEAT OF DEATH” (1 Corinthians 15:19-26; 53-58)

The word “death” came part of human life because of one simple cause – SIN. That is often overlooked in this subject. Human life has a 100% mortality rate. So death has a powerful message to us all. An old believer once made this observation, “I met a sermon, for I met a funeral.” But death will not have the final word on humanity. The Bible promises for the saints of God, “*The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.*” (1 Cor. 15:26) Indeed, death disappears into the lake of fire forever, “*And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.*” (Rev. 20:14)

## ETERNAL PLAN TO DEFEAT DEATH

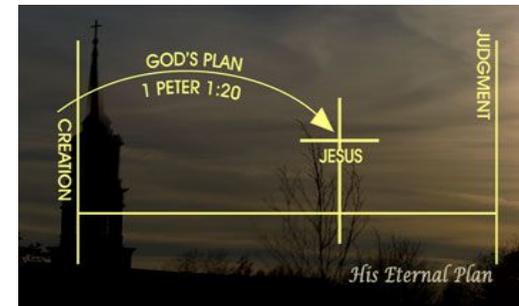
We as humans live in time and it is integral to our lives. It is very difficult for us to comprehend the concept of “before time began,” much less what took place then. Indeed, many scientist argued for centuries that time was eternal. But the Bible makes clear that time was created by God (who transcends time) and there was a moment when time, as we know it, *did not exist*. God alone existed before time in eternity past, “*For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy.*” (Isaiah 57:15a) The plan to deal with the problem of death did not begin with man. It was all of God. Before the universe was created, the Bible reveals that God knew that we (in Adam) would sin. He knew all about His children in advance of creation,

**The LORD possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. (Proverbs 8:22-23; cf. 1 Cor. 2:7)**



The Bible reveals that not only has God always existed and knew the future in eternity past, but that He made great plans in eternity past, “*Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.*” (Isaiah 46:10) God was at work before time, space and matter existed in devising His plan to deal with the problem of sin and death. RC Sproul explains,

“The Bible has much to say about God’s activity “before” the world was made. The Bible speaks often of God’s eternal counsel, of His plan of salvation and the like. It is a matter of theological urgency that Christians not think of God as a ruler who *ad libs* His dominion of the universe. God does not “make it up as He goes along.” Nor must He be viewed as a bumbling administrator who is so inept in His planning that His blueprint for redemption must be endlessly subject to revision according to the actions of men. The God of Scripture has no “plan b” or “plan c.” His “plan a” is from everlasting to everlasting. It is both perfect and unchangeable as it rests on God’s eternal character, which is among other things, holy, omniscient, and immutable. God’s eternal plan is not revised because of moral imperfections within it that must be purified. His plan was not corrected or amended because He gained new knowledge that He lacked at the beginning. God’s plan never changes because He never changes and because perfection admits to no degrees and cannot be improved upon.”



The Triune God then planned for the Son of God to step into history to provide the ultimate sacrifice,

**Who hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began. (2 Timothy 1:9)**

**But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, (1 Peter 1:19-20; cf. Rev 13:8)**

This plan is an unstoppable, undefeatable, invincible plan for the salvation of His people because it is based first not on our choosing God but on God’s choosing of us. It is a plan for every individual believer,

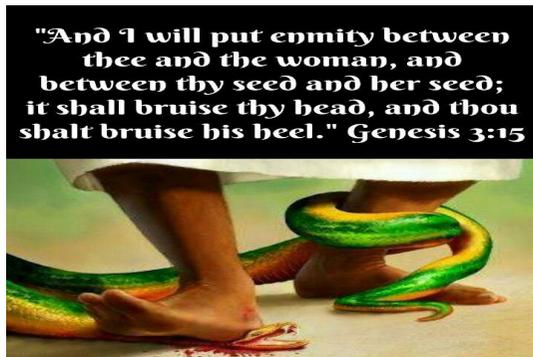
**Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: (Ephesians 1:3-4; cf. John 17:24)**

This plan encompasses all of creation. For instance, the Lord knew as He made the stars that one would be used to announce the birth of His Son, and He knew as He made the trees on the third day that one of them would eventually be the tree that His Son would be nailed to, and He knew as He cursed the ground He knew that the same thorns would one day pierce the head of His Son.

## THE PLAN ANNOUNCED

Amidst God's grief and anger towards sin, we must notice His unconditional love and grace toward sinners. He does confront and then judge Adam and Eve but He also offers them the hope of salvation by grace alone because He *"is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us"* (Eph. 2:4). This is sometimes called the Covenant of Grace.

When Adam and Eve fell into sin, this brought all the consequences of suffering, disease, and death into the human race. But God swiftly introduced His plan to reverse the effects of that. In Genesis 3, the Lord revealed that He had a perfect plan through a perfect Man to deal with sin and death. It is surprisingly announced in the judgment of the serpent. The devil is told, *"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)



This judgment declared upon the serpent has an implicit blessing and introduces what is commonly referred to as the *Protangelium*, i. e. the first gospel proclamation. It reveals how God will bring the final humiliation of the serpent. This verse 15 contains the veiled gospel in a nutshell. It is succinct but infinitely profound.

Now the devil must have thought that he had conquered mankind permanently in the Fall. Man had listened to him over God and chosen the authority of the serpent over the authority of God's Word. The devil may have rejoiced that his power and influence was now extended not just to the fallen angels, but also to the kingdom of men. Instead of mankind being his permanent ally in his long war against God, the Lord declares, *"And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed."* The devil will have his seed (John 8:44; Eph. 2:2-3) but he will not take all of humanity with him. God will choose out a seed for Himself that will wage war in the "battle of the ages" with the serpent.

In fact, the Lord states that from the very woman he tempted into sin would emerge a specific "seed" that *"shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."* The woman who caused the

curse would produce the One who would lift the curse. Only grace could do this. Now, God never revealed to the devil who this specific "seed" would be. So the devil will live in dread of every descendant of Eve. The very "seed" the serpent thought was now his exclusively will be his ultimate downfall. This fatal blow would be at the Cross, when Jesus Christ the virgin-born seed of the woman (Gal. 4:4) would inflict on the devil his greatest defeat, *"And having spoiled principalities and powers, He made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it"* (Col. 2:15; cf. John 12:31; Heb. 2:14; 1 John 3:8). The serpent will *"bruise his head"* at the Cross, but that will be within the redemptive purpose of God, as it leads to the crushing of the head of the serpent and the defeat of sin and death.

## COVENANT OF GRACE

Despite the terrible incursion of sin into God's perfect world, the Lord is at work in grace and mercy. As spiritual death descended on the first couple, the Lord was working to prepare the way for them to become spiritually alive. It is clear that we cannot provide our own righteousness because *"all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags"* (Isa. 64:6). We are debtors who cannot pay our debts. So God will have to fully reverse the effects of the curse of sin.

God in mercy and grace instituted a covenant known as the "Covenant of Grace." This was by God's sovereign decree. He was not forced to do so or advised to do so by man. This Covenant of Grace was between the Persons of the Godhead. God Himself would have to provide the work required to fulfill the conditions of this covenant. God the Father covenanted with Jesus Christ as the federal head of a new race as the *"last Adam."* Jesus Christ agreed to perfectly fulfill the law and give His life as a ransom for many (John 10:17-18).

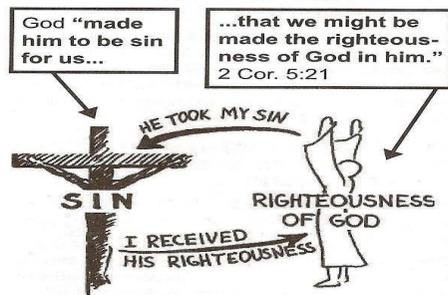


The first Adam failed to obey God's perfect law but the last Adam would keep it all perfectly in His earthly life. This life of perfect obedience established a perfect righteousness before God. Paul explains this, *"Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous"* (Rom. 5:18-19).

By His perfect obedience, Christ satisfied the demands of God's law and merited eternal life for us. Jesus did not die on the Cross for Himself but for us, *"But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed."* (Isaiah 53:5) Jesus Christ not only positively fulfilled the law but also negatively

received the penalty of the law for our sins. This meant that the benefits of Christ's perfect obedience to the obligations of God's perfect law could now be transmitted to those who are adopted into His new race in salvation. The perfect righteousness Christ established by His life and death can now be imputed or credited to us by grace, which is received by faith alone. In return, God imputed our sin to Jesus Christ making Him liable for the penalty of it. A classic summary of this exchange is described by the Apostle Paul to the Corinthian saints, "*For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him?*" (2 Cor. 5:21).

When we believe by faith in the perfect Person and Work of Christ we exchange our unrighteousness for Christ's perfect righteousness. God then declares us justified. This moment is called our justification. It is a gift of grace from God. We could not pay the price but only Christ could. That is why some have defined grace as: **God's Riches At Christ's Expense.**



Jesus' death was like no other. It didn't defeat Him, He defeated it, "*Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be bolden of it.*" (Acts 2:24) Our identification with the first Adam gives us the pattern and hope for identification and union with the last Adam,

**But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. (1 Cor. 15:20-22).**

### THE PLAN ACCEPTED

God had just finished pronouncing the awful gloom that awaited Adam, "*for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return?*" (Genesis 3:19). But He had just left a window of mercy open to Adam and Eve. Now the great question is: how will Adam and Eve react to this act of grace to them?

Adam clearly was listening carefully to the hope implied for humanity in the judging of the serpent in Genesis 3:15. Amidst the despair and shame of the exposure and judging of his sin, Adam's heart must have been quickened by grace. For we read, "*And Adam called his wife's name Eve; because she was the mother of all living.*" (Genesis 3:20) His response is to give his wife the name "Eve" meaning "life" or "mother of all living." Now, the background context of this should not be overlooked. Adam had already given her the name "woman" because she was taken out of man

and Eve has not yet given birth to any children. They were under the sentence of death and the effects of death have already begun to affect both her and Adam's physical bodies. The last words Adam had spoken were to blame Eve for his sin and even implying that God was culpable by creating Eve. However, as part of the judgment upon the serpent, God gave a promise that Eve will be the means of bringing forth a redeemer (Genesis 3:15).

Adam's naming of Eve not only reasserted his authority over the woman but evidences that he clearly believes by faith in that promise of a redeemer who will destroy the serpent. He could have called her the "mother of the dying" or the "mother who caused the fall" but he sees her as the mother of life. He no longer is seeing her as someone to blame for his sin, but representing hope for him. Adam took God at His word and claimed the promise of verse 15. He does not even ask for a physical sign. Essentially he is testifying, "I believe God." That is saving faith, "*So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God?*" (Rom. 10:17). Faith takes God's promises and acts upon it. Luther put it this way: "Faith is the ring that clasps Jesus Christ, who is the diamond." No one has ever been saved by good works. Salvation from the beginning has always been this way, "*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast?*" (Eph. 2:8-9).

This is a beautiful moment in this chapter, as the man who plunged humanity into sin now reaches out to grasp the outstretched hand of his Saviour. Adam and Eve had not always believed in the promises of God. When they took the forbidden fruit, they believed in the promises of the serpent and rejected the promises of God. Previously, he rejected God's word despite all the evidence of creation, but now he trusts God's word alone. Adam could see no external evidence for a redeemer, but he, like Abraham, "*believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness*" (Rom. 4:3). There are no "ifs or buts" in his faith. His heart was now fixed in longing for the One who would come to crush the serpent. Adam has now rejected the lies of the serpent. He sees the dire consequence of his sin and recognises, "*What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death?*" (Rom. 6:21). The instant he does so, this man is wonderfully and eternally justified. The naming of Eve is the testimony that he has repented and trusted in Jesus Christ by faith. Adam is doing what John the Baptist said was necessary, "*Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance?*" (Matt. 3:8). Justification always produces the good works wrought by sanctification to evidence it.

**EVE** - We must also be hopeful that Eve also believed in this promise of a redeemer. She does not reject the spiritual leadership of her husband in naming her as the mother of all living. Eve must have understood the implication of the name "Eve" yet she embraces it also by faith. We see further evidence of her faith in the naming of her firstborn (Genesis 4:1). This faith still perseveres even after the failure of Cain as seen in her naming of Seth (Genesis 4:25-26). It should not surprise us that we see our first parents in heaven, as God was the first and greatest evangelist.

### THE PLAN EFFECTED

Adam and Eve had responded to God's great offer of mercy and grace. God has begun the turnaround in humanity of electing out and calling a seed to make war with the serpent's seed. The next thing the inspired author wants us to note is God response to these faltering steps of faith. This next step is another sovereign action by the Lord Adam and Eve do not suggest or dictate to God what He must do. God is not simply a God of severe penalties, but of gracious provision, "*Unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them.*" (Genesis 3:21)

This is far more than mere protection from the natural elements. If it were just that, then God could have given a more elaborate fig leaf garment! It is also not for God's benefit as every man is naked before His eyes (cf. Heb. 4:13). When they clothed themselves in the fig leaf aprons this signified their attempts to cover up their shame, guilt, and evil desires by man's efforts. Now God in providing new garments will signify that they are being clothed spiritually with different garments. It also denotes that only God can provide an acceptable covering for man's shame.



Even the choice of garment is significant. God did not clothe them with leaves from another plant but by the skins of an animal. In doing so, it is implied that an innocent animal must have sacrificially died by the shedding of blood to provide this covering. Adam and Eve may well have witnessed the death of this animal. It would have brought home to them the serious consequence of sin. This is the first physical death in the world and it is the death of an innocent substitute to cover the shame of fallen man. This is a beautiful picture of the death of the innocent Son of God on the Cross in shedding His blood for sinners. It was not the animals that saved Adam and Eve but the One to whom the shed blood of the animals pointed. The same truth applies to us today. Only God's covering of Christ's perfect righteousness can cover the shame and guilt of our sins.

The fact that both Adam and Eve are given and then accepted God's garments is also suggestive that both were converted at that moment. The first marriage was being torn apart because of sin until the gospel reconciled this couple. Instead of the first divorce, we had the first Christian marriage and home established. In the first family we saw the first spiritual death at the Fall but then we saw subsequently the joy of the first spiritual new birth.

This new birth means the second death is abolished for believers and physical death will not have the last word on our lives. Christ brings the only hope to overcome death.

**So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Cor. 15:54-57)**

The first Adam has lost Paradise, but it will one day be regained through the last Adam. Jesus Christ has defeated death. Now, every one of the 7 billion persons on this planet today is either still in Adam or is now in Christ. As 1 Corinthians 15:22 says, "*For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.*" There is no third man! There is no other possibility. **Your eternal destiny hangs upon your knowledge and relationship to these two men.**