

## Prayers

### To God

*Weekly theme: Pray for the Lord's protection*

*Pray for the Lord's protection by reflecting on the great spiritual 'armour of God', listed by Paul in Ephesians 6:13-17; the 'belt of truth', the 'breastplate of righteousness', the 'shoes ... of the Gospel of peace', the 'shield of faith', the 'helmet of salvation', the 'sword of the Spirit'.*

### For myself

*Continue your reflections on what these great Scriptural phrases mean and how you can place them on yourself in order to be protected from the 'cosmic powers of this present darkness ... the spiritual forces of evil in heavenly places' (Eph 6:12)*

### For others

**Thank You Lord God for the immense potential You have placed within humanity. May we use the wit and wisdom, the temperament and ability, and the energy and enthusiasm of those who seek to solve the worlds problems today, however insurmountable they may seem; and may all of us recognise that some problems can only be overcome when people come together with common purpose and intention to build what is right for the good of all humanity. AMEN**

## Meditation

Lord God Almighty:

Give us joy; that we may delight in You and Your presence;  
Give us mercy; that we may do what is right for those in need;  
Give us faithfulness; that we may not let other people down;  
Give us grace; that we may reflect the love of God in the world;  
Give us kindness; that we may be a blessing to others in all we do;  
Give us patience; that we may continue to trust You all the time;  
Give us peace; that we may rest in Your love and be refreshed;  
Give us love; that we may follow our Saviour throughout our lives;

Lord God Almighty;

Give us Yourself; that we may always be witness to Your glory.

# Bible Passage

## Genesis 3:20-24

*<sup>20</sup> The man named his wife Eve, because she was the mother of all those who live.*

*<sup>21</sup> And the LORD God made leather garments for the man and for his wife, and clothed them.*

*<sup>22</sup> Then the LORD God said, "The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil." Therefore, in case he were to reach out his hand and also take from the tree of life, and eat, and lives forever, <sup>23</sup> the LORD God sent him out of the garden of Eden, to work the soil from which he was taken. <sup>24</sup> He drove out the man; and he placed the cherubim to the east of the garden of Eden, and a swirling fiery sword to guard the way to the tree of life.*

## Review

This passage concludes the second story of Creation. Since it began in chapter 2 much has happened; Adam has been made in the famous 'Garden of Eden', woman has been made from man, and the story of the Fall has unfolded with its tragic consequences (3:1-19). Today's passage comes after the three famous pronouncements by the Lord against the serpent, the woman and the man (3:14-19). In different ways, each had sinned; the serpent by being the agent of evil (Satan), the woman for giving in to selfish desire and temptation, and the man for blindly accepting temptation and sin from his wife without discernment. The damage had been done and a barrier created between God and His creation, and we might imagine that there is nothing more to say. The Fall has happened, and that is that.

But this is not the way God looks at things. The Lord God has never meekly accepted the presence of sin and evil in His world, and here He acts to protect His creation in four different ways. Again, we might imagine that God would be angry and full of wrath because of what has happened, but the tone of His voice in this passage appears restrained and sad. His action is forthright and strong (3:24), of course, but surprisingly full of compassion (3:21). This is the beginning of God's relationship with fallen humanity, and it therefore does not reflect mere wrath; God's words and actions look further ahead..

There are four features of this text, each of them adding considerably to what we already know about what happened in the Garden of Eden. First, in the naming of Eve, Adam began to fulfil God's earlier prophecy (3:16) that he would dominate her, for to 'name' something or someone was to exercise power and control over that which was named. The idea seems foreign to us until we realise how important it is to know people's names in church, for example, when you want to get something done! Yet Adam appears to have named his wife not merely with control in mind, but with a degree of love, giving her a name reflecting what God had said to her about her glorious, though difficult, role of childbearing. He called her 'Eve', meaning 'life', or 'the mother of all living' (3:20).

The second feature is God's clothing of Adam and Eve. When the two of them realised their sin and attempted to clothe themselves, that is, before God found them, Adam and Eve had attempted to cover themselves up by sowing together fig leaves (see 3:7) but this was never likely to last long! God, however, made them substantial clothes from skins of leather, presumably from animals; leather was highly valued in ancient times for its longevity and its protective qualities. In this way, God acts like a parent providing for a child leaving home; He does His best to prepare them for the world they are about to enter! It is a picture which is not far from the truth (2:24).

The third feature indicates God's dilemma about what to do with Adam and Eve as people, indeed, as His creation. He is now obliged to evict them from the Garden of Eden itself, because the Garden represented the perfection of the original creation, and this perfection has been blighted. Adam and Eve have fallen prey to their own desires and cannot be allowed to remain in the Garden because of the essential spiritual divide created by their sin, separating them from the holiness and perfection of Almighty God. Nevertheless, God still cares deeply for the two of them because although fallen, they are still made in His likeness. Verse 22 depicts God thinking about He can do with Adam and Eve, as if mulling over the awful consequences of what has happened with the heavenly council, and thinking about how it can all be handled. He sends Adam and Eve away, but crucially with the ability to procreate and provide for themselves in the new world that awaited them.

The final feature of this passage is the manner in which God prevents Adam and Eve from returning to the Garden, by placing a cherubim and a 'swirling fiery sword' at the east of the Garden. These insurmountable obstacles represent the essential difference between earth and heaven. Firstly, the difference between what is sacred and profane is represented by the guarding cherubim; angelic beings are charged with the protection of Ark in the Temple – see Exodus 25:18. Secondly, the difference between life immortal and death, which is guarded by the fiery sword; this is a symbol of division and war, but also the Word of God in later scriptures – see Micah 4:3f. Psalm 37:14; Eph 6:17). Adam and Eve cannot go back in time to change what has happened, and the world has been changed forever.

In all this, something happens in the story almost subversively. Genesis 3 begins with the text talking about *'the man'* and *'the woman'*, as if describing people generally. However, towards the end of the chapter, and only here in the last few verses, it slips into using the names *'Adam'* and *'Eve'* as two names for two individuals. Here, for the first time in Scripture, we are speaking about two personalities, two characters with whom we can relate. After all that had happened, now we have two 'real' people like us, who have before them the challenge to live, as we do, within a fallen world. Adam and Eve now come to life as real characters within the Bible story with lives to live and in whom we can see God's purposes at work.

## Discipleship

### ***Application***

#### ***Final consequences***

These few sentences of the end of the second story of Creation appear to be a short hotchpotch of verses which give us just a glimpse of the final results of the Fall. As the third and final set of consequences of this highly significant event, it tells us a great deal. It continues to talk of the relationship between men and women, and in the provision of clothing describes God as caring for Adam and Eve despite all that has happened. The new clothes also point to God's provision for an important new life, and the banishment from the Garden completes the whole story of the Creation of the world, the creation of men and women, and the Fall.

#### ***Death the great divide***

Finally, the passage mysteriously describes the reality of death which stands like a sentinel between heaven and earth. It is a spiritual division, but not between what is spiritual and what is not. Death divides the spiritual perfection of God from the fallen spiritual nature of created man and woman.

### ***Plenty more to discover***

This second story of Creation from Gen 2:4 to 3:24 is no casual description of the world in which we live, of God, or of the fallen nature of men and women. It is a profound analysis of truth, blessed by God through millennia and included in His Word for our instruction. There is much more within it we have yet to discover, and we should never assume we have reached the end of what it has to say to us about who we are, the nature of God and the world in which we live. Will we be satisfied by hearing a sermon or two on this in the course of our lives? Or does the Lord ask His people to explore this for themselves? We might be surprised as our eyes are opened by the glories of all He has made!

### ***Ideas for what to do***

- What picture do you have of God? Is he a great father figure dominating everything and issuing commands to you and to everything around, or is He a friends walking with you, for example? There are many possible pictures by which we may be blessed, but do ask the Lord whether you are picturing Him correctly.
- Pray for those who find it difficult to have any particular image of God either through fear or because they have been robbed of their self confidence in spiritual matters. Pray that God will bless them with a new experience of His grace.

### ***Questions (for use in groups)***

1. What impression do you have of the character of God from this text? Describe these characteristics of God.
2. To what extent is it true that people know the difference between good and evil (3:22) and how does this affect real life?
3. What does it mean to us now for there to be a 'cherubim and a sword' between us and God?

## **Final Prayer**

Jesus, we give You our praise, knowing that You are with us in remarkable ways; for You read our minds, You touch our hearts, You see what our eyes see and You sense our feelings. However, Lord Jesus, please make Yourself known to us in each and every moment, and guide us according to Your will by the power of Your love. AMEN