

# Paradise Lost

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] We're going to read together from Genesis chapter 3 in the Old Testament. Just four verses, verses 16 to 19. So that's printed in your bulletin. It's in the Bible.

There's Bibles at the back. There's Bibles at the top if you'd like to have a copy of that. Feel free to grab one at any time. And I'm going to invite Jean to come and read for us. Genesis 3, 16 to 19. To the woman he said, I will surely multiply your pain and childbearing. In pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be for your husband, and he will rule over you. And to Adam he said, Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, you shall not eat of it. Cursed is the ground because of you. In pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the plants of the field.

[ 1 : 0 1 ] By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground. For out of it you were taken, for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.

We're in a series on Genesis chapter 3. And the word Genesis, which the book is titled by, just means beginnings. So Moses wrote the book of Genesis to the second generation of Israelites that were about to go into the promised land.

And they had been slaves in Egypt. So these now freed slaves, they are wondering, who are we? And who is this God who has brought us out of the land of Egypt?

And so the book of Genesis is written to really explain that. And we've talked the whole way through about foundations. What are the foundations? Who am I? Who are we? What is wrong with this world? That is one of the foundations that we need to answer.

And Genesis 3 is the chapter that focuses on that. What is wrong with this world? And the answer that we've said every week is sin. And sin began. Sin began.

[ 2 : 0 6 ] All that's wrong with this world began with a snark. An attitude against God. It wasn't an argument. It was an attitude. Thomas Nagel was the philosopher, emeritus philosopher at New York University.

And he wrote a really powerful book called *The Last Word*. And there's this moment. Lots of people quote this moment in Thomas Nagel's book. He writes, I want atheism to be true.

And I am made uneasy by the fact that some of the most intelligent and well-informed people I know are religious believers. It isn't just that I don't believe in God and naturally hope that I'm right. It's that I hope there is no God. I don't want there to be a God, he writes. I don't want the universe to be like that at all. We have an attitude as human beings from the very beginning of our history against God.

And Thomas Nagel, one of the great philosophers of our time, he says, I don't want there to be a God. And from the very beginning of human history, we wanted to be gods so we didn't want there to be a God.

[ 3 : 1 3 ] And it's an attitude, sin, that broke the world. And that's the cause of all of our problems. And we have been looking week by week at the consequences of that. We looked at the fact that we are alienated from ourselves.

We do not tell ourselves the truth about ourselves. We do not really know who we are sometimes. And we're alienated from one another. Adam blamed Eve. You know, he said, she did it. It wasn't my fault. And we see alienation in relationships. And we're alienated from God. Most importantly, we saw that last time. We actually hide from God when he shows up in our lives. And today, this penultimate consequence we'll look at is we are also alienated from the purpose for which we were made, from our vocations. We're alienated from the world all around us as well.

So, the things that we were made for that were meant to bring us the most joy in our life, that still can bring us joy, these are the very places that now, because of sin, bring us the most sorrows quite often.

[ 4 : 15 ] And so, let's think about paradise lost, paradise regained, paradise foreshadowed. That's what we learn here in these four verses.

Paradise lost and regained and then foreshadowed. So, first, paradise lost. Sin ruined not just us. What we've been looking at is how it decimated everything.

And it decimated our relationship to the world. And so, in Gene Redforest 16 to 19, it's all about the curses that were brought upon Adam and Eve. And to understand the curses, you've got to step back to Genesis 1 for just a second to see exactly why the curses are listed like they are.

So, in Genesis 1, 28, God made humanity in His image. It says that He made them and He blessed them and He commanded them. So, the original command of God was also blessing to us.

It's our purpose, our mission, our vocation. And He said, what is it? What are we made to do? And He said, first, be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and then take dominion over the land. So, that's a command to have romantic relationship, get married, be fruitful and multiply means have children.

[ 5 : 28 ] And then the very next thing is take dominion. In other words, go and work the land, till the land, be farmers, be gardeners, create institutions, work. And the land will yield its fruit to you.

And so, from the very beginning, that's our vocation, that's our purpose. Some of the aspects of life that we were meant for as human beings. The vocations that we were made for in the very beginning that have such potential to bring us the greatest joys because of sin have now become the locations that can bring us the greatest sorrow.

That's what the curses are all about. And there's four of them. Let me mention them to you briefly. The first is in verse 16. And the first thing, the first curse to Adam and Eve, to Eve, to the woman, He said, I will multiply your pain in childbearing.

In pain, you will bring forth children. Now, that word pain is not just a designation for the actual physical pain of labor and delivery, the moment. I can attest that it is painful not personally, but I have been a witness and I know that it is a painful event.

But the word pain has a much broader scope than that. And you see that when you read the rest of the Bible. I was reading a book this week, looking at a book this week from a historian about 17th century England.

[ 6 : 49 ] And the historian made the claim in this book that 50%, about 50% of all deliveries, mom and baby, about 50% ended in death in the 17th century in England.

So that was not very long ago. And he makes the further claim, and I don't know if this is true, but this is one historian's sociological research. He said that beyond that, 75% of all children that did survive did not make it in 17th century England past age 5.

And that's the curse. The curse of the curse. The curse of the pain of childbearing, the very thing that brings the most joy in life, bringing children into this world, comes with such sorrow.

Not only the actual pain of delivery, but we could talk for a long time about the deep, deep wounds and pain and struggle of miscarriage, of infertility, of postpartum depression, of stillbirth, of all the pain and toil that comes.

And it's all right here. The second curse that we read about, let me take you to the third one that's mentioned in verse 19. If you jump down to verse 19, he turns to Adam and he says, Because you've listened to the voice of your wife, and then at the end of that sentence, Cursed is the ground because of you.

[ 8 : 12 ] Thorns and thistles will rise up against you and fight back. And you see, to Eve he said, Cursed is childbearing. But to Adam, to all of humanity represented in Adam, he said, Cursed is the land, the ground, the earth because of you.

And that means that not only are we alienated from ourselves, alienated from each other, alienated from God, but now he's saying you are alienated from your work, your labor. You were made to work the ground, to till the land.

And he said, Now thorns and thistles will rise up and fight back against you. I was reading one commentator on this, and he was saying that the plants, it's not just that we now have thorns, it's that the plants are growing their thorns at us.

And he said, Every time that you go to the zoo in Edinburgh and you pass by the lions, well, they're rather tame there. But if you pass by the lions, boy, if you pass by the wrong lion out in the wilderness, they sniff and they snarl.

The wolves, you know, they look at you and they're hungry. And the sheep are sheepish around us humans. And the commentator was saying, Why? And it's because every time we men and women, boys and girls pass by them, they look up and they know they did it.

[ 9 : 20 ] You know, the animals did their job. The plants glorified God in all the ways they were supposed to. But it's we that decimated nature. And the wolves are sniffing at us and saying, You did it.

You broke the world. And now our relationship to nature, creation, and to our work, the labor of our hands. Can you imagine a life where you go to work and everything you do is just fruitful?

Everything you do is so full of joy and fulfilling and fruitful. You're never frustrated. You love your boss. Can you imagine? You're never frustrated with your colleagues.

But that's what was meant. And sin has decimated our relationship to work, to our toil. In English, we have a way of talking about this.

You know, between the curse of childbearing and the curse of work, what do we call that? One word, labor. You know, when a child, it's labor. And when we go to work, it is labor.

[ 10 : 20 ] What was meant to be so good? It's still a gift to us, but it's bent. It's curved. It's broken. It's not what it was meant to be. The third we see here, to back up just a bit, to the second part of verse 16.

Very famous, very difficult at times to interpret what God says here exactly. But he says, Your desire, Eve to the woman, your desire shall be for your husband, and he will rule over you. Immediately we see here that not only is childbearing cursed, not only is our work cursed and the ground cursed, the thorns and thistles and the sheep, but also that the relationships between men and women, that is cursed.

That is painful. That is hard. Amen? We struggle with one another, the two genders. And what does this mean? He says, Eve, your desire will be for your husband.

He shall rule over you. And at times, this has been taken as describing something positive, something about complementarity. But that's not the case, I don't think, because if you flip over to Genesis 4, verse 7, if you have a Bible, you can see this, the same exact pairing is used.

[ 11 : 32 ] God is talking to Cain, and he says, Sin is crouching at your door. Its desire, same word, very rare word in Hebrew, its desire is for you, and you must rule, same word in Hebrew, over it.

See that same pairing? Eve, your desire is for him, he shall rule over you. Cain, sin's desire is for you, you must subdue it, you must rule over it. And in Genesis 4, 7, it's clear that sin is like a lion, a tiger, crouching, wanting to devour the soul of Cain.

And that's the word that's used in Genesis 3 for Eve's relation to Adam. Very rare word, desire. And it's saying that women sin against men. The desires are not, that women will seek to hurt men.

And then, you know what he turns around and says? And men, Adam, you will rule over her. That's not a positive word, it's a negative word. You will take dominion, you will abuse. And it's a description.

It's saying that in the male-female relation, in both directions, it is bent and broken. The first word, desire, is more connected to attacks against the soul, attacks with words.

[ 12 : 42 ] The second is a little bit more weighted to it, physical abuse, domination, overleading, domineering. And we don't have to recount the history today at all of how often it is true that men dominate in the most unhelpful and harmful and sinful ways, right?

And that's exactly what's being described here because of our sin. Right here in the beginning of human history, the history is clear on this. It's so clear. One of the Greek poets named Hesiod wrote a very famous myth about Pandora's box.

So most of us will be somewhat familiar with Pandora's box. And in it, in this Greek myth, Pandora was the first woman that the gods ever made. And the box, many interpreters say, is meant to be a metaphor, an image of Pandora's womb, of a womb.

And in the myth, the one thing that Pandora must not do is open the box or all the evil will come out. And of course, she does open it. All the evil spills forth into this world.

The world is completely devastated and broken. She shuts it at the last minute and there's a little bit of hope left. And many interpreters have come and said the Greek view, the Greek view is that

women ruin the world.

[13:56] Pandora's box. And Aristotle said exactly that. So one of the most famous Greek philosophers thought that the big problem with this world is women. And unfortunately, some Christians throughout church history and in theology have said things like that, misreading Genesis 3 and saying it's all his fault.

When Genesis 3 actually puts the majority of the blame on Adam, if you look carefully. Now, in modernity, in many of the subcultures of the Western world, you well know that many people will say, men are the problem.

Men are the issue. You know, if we didn't have men, everything would be okay. Men are often depicted as cartoonish figures in modern literature, modern film, modern television.

And in both directions, we've been blaming one another. And the Bible will not let you do it. The Bible is democratic. It's impartial. It says we are equally sinners.

We equally do wrong. And it waits that men, women desiring, men domineering, dominating, abusing. And we don't need to recount the history of that. We all know how true that is throughout world history.

[15:07] Look, paradise lost. Can you think of all the ways that our sin has decimated the world life, brought pain into our life, the toils and the snares that come throughout this life that we're living?

Do you, let me put it this way. Let me put it this way. The Bible gives you such great explanatory power for the fact that romance and marriage and work are things that we desperately want as human beings, yet desperately can't stand at some times at the same time.

We want to go to work, yet we hate work. We want romantic relationships, yet they are the place with some of the hardest work in our lives, the deepest struggles, the greatest sorrows, right? And you see, you need this.

Christianity explains why. That these things were made good, but sin has decimated them. Sin has bent them. Sin has broken them. Why the curse?

Why the toil? Why the pain? Why did God bring this to us in the beginning of human history? Our broken bodies, our labor, our toil, our relationships, feeling so much pain. And I think the most important thing that we can take away from this passage today, all of us, is that this passage, these curses are here because they are an invitation.

[16:26] They are asking you not to move away from God in whatever pain you are experiencing in these domains right now, but to move back towards God. The curses are there as a goad, and don't kick against the goad.

They are an invitation not to move away from God in pain, but to come toward God. Let me give you an example. Do you come to church at St. Columbus?

Yes, you do. You're here today. And that means that you did one of three things to get here. You either walked up Johnson Terrace. You came up the steps of the ETS car park through the close. You walked up the mound or the Royal Mile. And when you got here, you had to wipe sweat off your face. So it doesn't matter if it's two degrees outside, if it's negative two degrees outside.

When you come to St. Columbus, you have to wipe sweat off your face from whatever direction you come. And I've thought in my heart at times, if only St. Columbus was on a level ground.

[17:24] If only we had a level ground in a giant car park. Boy, what would the possibilities be? And after reading this passage, I realized, no. It is a gift.

It's a gift. Because by the sweat of your brow, you come to church. And by the sweat of your brow, the reason the curses actually exist, the pain, the discomfort. We broke the world. But when God sends curses, they are a mercy.

And the pain, the pain, we are not irredeemable. The land is not irredeemable. Nothing is. Only Satan. And the pain, the sweat of our brow is meant to drive us and say, come back to the Lord. Let it be a goad to you, the pain. And when you come to church and you're sweating, you walk in that back door. Remind yourself every time, the Lord is calling me by the sweat of my toil, come back. There is relief. And it's really clear in the New Testament, in Romans chapter 8.

Romans chapter 8 talks exactly about this. And it explains to us what we should think about this. And what does it say? It says, the creation was subjected to futility. Not by its choice.

[18:29] It's not, the animals did not want to be subjected, but they were subjected by our choices. And it says, in hope, they have hope. Even the animals, the sheep, the thorns, the thistles. It says,

there is hope in them for the liberation that is to come.

The healing of the land one day that is to come. And then Paul turns and says, but you too, you Christian, your body feels the pain, the decay. You feel the weight of the curse upon your soul, upon your life, upon your mortal body.

And it says, why? So that we would wait for the redemption of our bodies in the land with patience. He tells us, he says, is it really hope if it's already arrived?

But he says, but you wait for it with hope. In other words, the curses are there to tell us that we are redeemable. There is hope in front of our eyes. Don't run away from God in the midst of your pain. Come back. Come home. And the promise here is that God is going to heal the land. Now, we're spending most of our time on our first point. The last two will be very brief. But let me give you the fourth and final curse.

[ 19 : 37 ] The fourth and final curse. And that's in verse 19. And he turns to Adam and he says, from dust you were made, and to dust you shall return. The curse of death is the final and heaviest curse that faces us as human beings.

And we learn here, we were meant to subdue the earth, and now the earth subdues us. We were meant to water the land, and nothing but fruit come from the land.

And now we fertilize the land. And the curse of death has befallen us. And there are many religions, many philosophies that have come and said, death is not a bad thing, it's a good thing.

And just like Christianity gives you the explanatory power to say, I love work and I hate work at the same time, and sometimes I don't understand why. It gives you the explanatory power, the ability to say, in the face of death, I hate you.

And C.S. Lewis writes that every single funeral rite, as he did some research across many cultures and religions, show that no one really experiences death as natural. He says, when you look at the funeral rites of the other world religions, nobody wants this.

[ 20 : 43 ] We hate it, we hate it. And you have the ability, as a Christian, as a believer in the Bible, to look at death and say, I hate you, you are the last enemy. It is not natural, it's a curse. What do we do?

We groan. We wait. Where can hope be found? And so, secondly, paradise recovered. Hope is to be found in the connection between Genesis 3.15 and verses 16 to 19.

Now, last week, we said, if you were here, that in Genesis 3.15, there is this great promise in the midst of sin, that one day, a male child, a son, the seed of the woman, would be born to the offspring of Eve, Mary.

And the seed, the boy, he would come and he would crush the head of the serpent, sin, Satan, death, and evil. And now, we learn something new, that he would come and he would heal the land. He would fix our groaning bodies. He would fix the distortion between us and our work. He would heal all of it. There's a deep connection between Genesis 3.15 and 16 to 19 and the curses.

[ 21 : 51 ] And it's called redemption. Now, if you read just the rest of the book of Genesis, just stop there. Don't read the rest of the Old Testament. Just the book of Genesis, you find that this very story, the relationship between verse 15 and verse 16 and 19, is playing out in the rest of the book of Genesis.

The three great matriarchs in Genesis are Sarah, Rachel, and Rebecca. And all three of them were barren.

All three. All of them unable to have children. And then God miraculously blessed them with children. Why? Because there must be one day the seed of the woman who would reverse the curse.

Sarah's boy, Sarah's children becomes Rachel and Rebecca's boy and Rebecca's children. And who does that become? And that becomes Tamar's kids and Rahab's kids and Ruth's kids. And Ruth's great grandson is who? King David. And David, through great sin with Bathsheba, brings forth children. And through Bathsheba, and you flip over to Matthew chapter 1 and you realize through the curse, the curse that was placed upon childbearing becomes the very medium and vehicle by which God saves the world.

[ 23 : 09 ] The one, the seed, the boy, born of woman, Jesus Christ. And in Paul, in 1 Timothy chapter 2, he says that Adam and Eve brought such decimation to this world, yet they would be saved.

How? Not by their good works, not by their performance. How would they be saved? Paul says, by childbearing. The seed of the woman. Reversing the curse. Through the very pain of barrenness, he brings forth a son.

And we could go on and on. Matthew Henry says, Did death come into the world with sin? Yes. Through Adam, he, the son of the woman, he became obedient unto death. Thus, Matthew Henry writes, is the plaster, the plaster is wider than the wound.

Our sins, they are many. His mercy is bigger. The wound is great. The curse is big. The plaster, the band-aid is far wider. He comes, the son of the woman, to heal all the wounds. And you could say, Genesis 3, 16 says, The curse is upon childbearing, so the son was born.

By childbearing, God saved the world. Genesis 3, 16b. Adam and Eve, relationally, marriage, romance, broken. Men dominating women throughout world history.

[ 24 : 29 ] But in the gospel, the true and better husband. The true and better husband, the one that would come and lay down his life for his ultimate beautiful bride. He came. Genesis 3, 19.

Thorns and thistles will rise up against you in your work, in your toil, in your labor. Jesus Christ's thorns were shoved into his brow when he went to the cross, you see. He, Jesus, bore the curse of the ground upon his forehead.

He wore the thorns. He wore the curse. Galatians 3, 13 says that we curse the world. Adam and Eve, we did. He became the curse for us. Genesis 3, 19.

To dust you shall return. So Jesus Christ, the son of God, against everything that should be, God the son was pulverized. He died. We brought death into the world, so he came and died.

He came to take every bit of the curse upon himself and reverse the curse. And promised that one day he will heal the land. He will heal the body. We groan with hope.

[ 25 : 35 ] We groan, but we groan with people. Not without hope. And so the final thing we learn about here is this. Paradise foreshadowed. Look, only Christianity gives you the explanatory power, on the one hand, for why we love and we struggle with these great gifts.

They're good, but they've become decimated. And so we struggle with them. But only Christianity also tells you where the balm lies. The plaster that can put the healing upon the whole wound.

And it's in the son of the woman, Jesus Christ. In the Lord of the Rings, the return of the king, the very last book, there's this moment right after the ring had been destroyed at Mount Doom.

And Sam has been sleeping. He's been unconscious. Sam was one of the hobbits, Frodo's best buddy. And Sam wakes up and he's surprised there to see Gandalf right in front of him.

He wakes up from his sleep and he says to Gandalf, Is everything sad going to come untrue? What's happened to this world, he asked. Now that's right.

[ 26 : 43 ] He asked the right question. What has happened to this world? Let me ask you today, do you have an explanation for that question? What has happened to this world?

And then do you have a way to answer the question, is everything sad going to come untrue? And the plaster is whiter than the wound. Jesus Christ is the balm of Gilead.

He can heal the land. He can heal the body. He can heal everything that's wrong with you.

Everything that's wrong with this broken world. Mike Kruger commenting on this, he says, In this sense, every single person has to have an eschatology.

The believer, the atheist, the agnostic, the Hindu, everyone has to give an account for how evil is going to be dealt with. Everybody has to answer that question. The question is only this, whether your account is coherent, compelling, and can really heal the land.

And the answer of the Bible, the answer of the gospel is Revelation 21.5. Jesus Christ says, Behold, I am making all things new. I am making everything sad come untrue. Now, let me turn and say to this as we close.

[ 27 : 54 ] Romans 16, Paul says, You too, if you believe this today, You too will one day crush the head of the serpent. So Paul includes us in that.

He says, Not only the son of the woman, Jesus will crush the head of the serpent. You too will stamp on the head of the serpent. Evil, death, sin, disaster, disease, the shadow. You too will step on that.

It is the job now, Christian believer, to go forth today into the city and to be a witness temporarily to what is to come in the future. When the land is healed, when the body is healed, when the shadows flee away, we now have the opportunity, the mission to witness towards that.

And so in every one of these domains of the curse, there is a calling in our lives to directly fight against them. And so men and women, when you become a Christian, you've got to say different things about women and men than you used to just say.

You've got to talk differently. You've got to treat men differently and women differently. That's got to change. When you go to work, it's got to change. Your approach, because of the cross, because of the power of the gospel, has to change.

[ 29 : 00 ] But let me, as we close, just speak very briefly to each one of these. And so let me say first, for women who desire to have children, and there's loss there, there's pain there, there's a not yet there, there's infertility, there's miscarriage there.

I'm reminded, as I try to say something about this, the depression maybe that's come after the fact, of Henry Nouwen, who's a theologian of the 20th century. He writes this to pastors.

He writes this to people trying to help others walk in grief. And this is what he says, the friend who can be silent with us in a moment of despair or confusion, who can stay with us in our hour of grief and bereavement, who can tolerate not knowing an answer, not trying to cure it, not healing, and face with us the reality of our powerlessness in the face of the curse.

That is a friend who cares. And I think what he's saying there is, we mere humans cannot fix it.

Jesus Christ, the balm of Gilead, does and can bear the grief.

And only he can heal the land and heal the body. And I think the one application, I gave it in the beginning of Genesis 3, 16 to 19, to take away today is this. When the pain is most acute in all of our lives in whatever way it is, don't run from God.

[ 30 : 22 ] Let the pain bring you closer. Come to the one who can heal. Come to the one who can, Romans 8 says, creation groans, we groan in our pain.

We groan. But then there's one more line and it says, right now the Holy Spirit also groans for us. So it says that the Holy Spirit right now in the heavenly domain representing us before God is groaning towards the Father for these pains.

And saying, Lord, come and heal. And I don't know what that means, but I know that Jesus is going to do it. Relationships between men and women. I don't have time to talk to everybody here, so let me talk to the men.

Men who have families, men who want to have families in this room. Here we see that two great issues with men in Genesis 3. One is obvious, domination, domineering, abusiveness.

But the other you might have missed, and the other is, God comes to Adam and says, because you have listened to the voice of your wife in Eden. He's not accusing Eve there exactly.

[ 31 : 32 ] He's saying to Adam, you were with her all the way. You knew what I said, and you let her die. What is he talking about? He's talking about passivity. So on the flip side of the problem of dominion, domineering, abusiveness, is passivity.

And it may be that passivity is a greater problem for the majority of us than domination. It may be.

And so I think, what does it mean? When you look to the cross, you can say, every aspect of my life towards women that has been domineering, over leading, is forgiven at the cross.

Every aspect of my life that's been under leading, passive, has been forgiven at the cross. And today, man, you can go forth and say, I want to care about the spiritual well-being of my family. I want to lead.

I want to take up this calling. That's the reversal of the curse. That's pushing back the shadow.

That's participating in all that Christ is doing. And then finally, penultimately, work.

We don't have to say much here. What can we say as Christians when we look at our work? We can say, work is not agony. Work is not merely a curse.

[ 32 : 38 ] Our work is not a burden. It sometimes is. But as Christians, we come and say, in the Lord, my labor is not in vain. I expect to go to work with thorns and thistles.

I expect to not like this sometimes. And yet, in the Lord, my labor is not in vain. I love what Dorothy Day says. She says, we do not live, we do not work, I should say, in order to rest.

We rest so that we can go to work. Work is a calling. It's a gift. And every single one of us has to ask, in what ways has God, has the cross itself called me to reassess the way I work, why I work, the things for which I work?

And let me just give you two. Do you work for the glory of God every day to the point where God is your true boss? You know, the beauty of Christianity is it says that now your boss is relative.

You know, your boss matters some, but not that much. That's good news. But your ultimate boss is the Lord. You work for the Lord. You work for His glory.

[ 33 : 39 ] It's a much bigger boss, a much better boss. And you can go to work every day and know a why, and you can know a how, you can know that you work for the common good of humanity, to seek the good, not just for profit, not just to get to the weekend and go to the concert, also good, but you work for something much bigger, much bigger than that, the common good of humanity.

And lastly, death. The Christian who is facing death, if you are facing death, if you have a loved one facing death, so far, from what I understand, the death rate is one out of one.

So that means that we will all face death. We as Christians have the ability to prepare for that and to look at death, and you can say, in Christ, death, you are a curse.

Death, where is thy sting? You can say, I'm just passing through. Death is an entrance. It's not the end for me. And you can say today, death is a wicked, evil, terrible thing that should not exist.

And death, the lower you lay me, the higher you'll raise me. And so today, friends, the pain, the toil, whatever it is that's going on in your life, let me ask you, don't move away from God in the pain.

[ 34 : 50 ] Come towards God. Keep going. Keep going in the pain. Keep going with Jesus. Keep going all the way to the end. There's hope in Him. He is the great balm.

And in Him, you can say, to pain, toil, the curses of this life, the lower you lay me, the lower you lay me, the higher He is going to raise me. Let us pray.

Father, Father, be a balm to our hurt, Lord, today. We despise the curses that have brought such shadows to our lives.

Yet we know that underneath them, there is good vocation, there is good calling, work, and romance, and marriage, and relationship, and men and women, and the relationships we have in every domain, and life.

Lord, you promise life. Lord, I pray that somebody today in this room would break through and stare at the face of death and realize the hope of life in Jesus. Would the plaster be far bigger than the wound for us today?

[ 35 : 54 ] We pray in our hearts. In Jesus' name, Amen. Amen. Thank you.