

THE JUDGMENT ON THE WOMAN AND ADAM
(SUNDAY, APRIL 13, 2014)

Scripture Reading: Gen. 3:16-19; Rom. 8:18-30

What are three foundational truths we learn from Genesis 1-3 that are vital for making sense of the world?

Creation, Fall, Redemption

The universe and everything it contains was created by an all-powerful, all wise, and good God. Because of man's rebellion, a curse has been placed on creation.

God in His grace brings salvation to lost sinners allowing them to find joy and victory even in the midst of a sinful and cursed world.

These three truths allow you to make sense of reality.

They are not in anyway contradictory.

Your own life can only be understood in the light of these three great truths.

Your work only makes sense in light of these three great truths.

Today, we consider the judgment pronounced upon the woman and Adam as they are identified in this passage.

We must acknowledge the judgment that God has brought because of man's rebellion and rejoice that our Savior fully bore the eternal judgment we deserve.

We will look at Genesis 3:16-19 in two parts.

The judgment upon the woman, v. 16

The judgment upon Adam, vv. 17-19.

GENESIS 3:16 – THE JUDGMENT UPON THE WOMAN

Gen. 3:16 To the woman He said: "I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; In pain you shall bring forth children; Your desire *shall be* for your husband, And he shall rule over you."

To understand the judgment of chapter 3, we should first recall the blessing given in chapter 1.

Gen. 1:26 Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." **27** So God created man in His *own* image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. **28** Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

As we look at verses 16-19, keep in mind the connection with the blessing first given.

The judgments are not simply the reversal of the blessing but the complication of the blessings and duties given to men and women.

As we continue with verse 16 and then later verses 17-19 we should notice a difference with the judgment pronounced upon the serpent.

What is one significant difference you should see?

The serpent is specifically cursed – given the greatest curse.

Eve and Adam are not directly said to be cursed. They are given a very severe judgment.

I think it is helpful to look at the judgment in verse 16 as having two main parts.

The first relates to the bearing and raising of children: I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; In pain you shall bring forth children

The second relates to marriage: Your desire shall be for your husband and he shall rule over you.

Let's look then at the first part of the judgment, "I will greatly multiply your sorrow and conception."

The word sorrow could also be translated as pain. It is similar to the word pain also used in this verse.

It is the same word used in verse 17 to speak of the difficulty that Adam would experience because of the curse on the ground.

It is also used in Genesis 5:29 speaking about the birth of Noah, "And he called his name Noah, saying, "This one will comfort us concerning our work and the toil (sorrow/pain) of our hands, because of the ground which the LORD has cursed."

Edward Young observes that in Hebrew the word sorrow or pain sounds similar to the word tree.¹

Eve desired to eat from the forbidden tree. Her judgment appropriately would be sorrow and pain.

I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception.

The NKJV and KJV translate quite literally from the Hebrew as sorrow and conception, but likely these two words are to be connected.

The ESV reads, "your pain in childbearing."

We should understand that the word conception is not just referring to becoming pregnant but is a word representing the entire process of birth and childrearing.

The blessing that God gave to Adam and Eve in Genesis 1:28 would be something now involving great pain and sorrow.

Eve looked for happiness apart from God and His Word.

Her judgment properly then would be difficulty and hardship and frustration in the work that God called her and all other women to do.

The opening words of judgment in verse 16 are again emphasized.

¹ Edward J. Young, *Genesis 3*, 123.

“In pain you shall bring forth children.”

The Hebrew word for beget or bring forth again can also refer to raising children.

The entire process of birth and training would be a painful process.

And I am guessing that many if not most mothers would actually consider the pain of pregnancy and of giving birth to be secondary to the pain and difficulty involved in the raising of children.

When Eve gave birth to Cain, she exclaimed with joy, “I have acquired a man from the LORD.”

Certainly the greater pain she would experience was not in giving birth but in the later rebellion of Cain and the death of Abel.

The book of Proverbs in a similar way focuses also not on the pain of childbirth but on the difficulties of raising children to serve the Lord.

There is an interesting verse in 1 Timothy 2 that relates to this curse and pain.

In 1 Timothy 2:15, Paul writes, “Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety.”

Obviously Paul is not saying that women are saved that is justified by giving birth to children.

But this verse does relate to both Genesis 3:15, where Christ would eventually come as the seed of the woman, and then also to Genesis 3:16,

Faithful women will through the grace of God still be used to advance God’s purposes.

They will bear the pain and trials of life. They will endure the hardships of having children and by God’s grace raise faithful children who will themselves serve God.

Let us consider the second part of the judgment.

“Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.”

There are some difficulties translating the word desire and understanding exactly the nature of the judgment.

What is of help is that the word desire which is used in a positive sense in Song of Solomon 7:10 is used in Genesis 4:7.

Gen. 4:7 If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire *is* for you, but you should rule over it.”

Very significantly the words desire and rule used in Genesis 3:16 are found also in 4:7.

According to the Talmud, the curse means that women will miss and desire their husbands when they are away on a journey.

I don’t think that is the best interpretation given what we see in Genesis 4:7.

What is the second aspect of the judgment found in Genesis 3:16?

The judgment is the sinful conflict between a wife and her husband.

What is the nature of this conflict?

It is one where the wife will desire to control the husband.

It is one where the husband in turn will dominate the woman.

Again we go back to the harmony found in Genesis 1:26-28 which now because of man's rebellion is upset.

Do we not see abundant evidence of this judgment?

We see it in terms of feminism and also the great cruelty many women face.

In some Greek thought, women were thought to be the result of the incomplete development of a man.

Before the British came to India, when a Hindu man died, his wife was usually burned alive at his funeral.

Even today in India as we witnessed from the movie, Veil of Tears, many women face a very difficult situation – the fruit of this judgment.

According to Sharia law, the witness of a woman is equal to half that of a man, "because of the deficiency of the woman's mind."

Also according to some Muslim traditions, a husband can simply divorce his wife by saying, I divorce you, I divorce you, I divorce you in the presence of witnesses.

In some Jewish thought, women also have not be treated with the respect they deserve, in part because of a misunderstanding of verses like Genesis 3:16.

We earlier noted I Timothy 2. In that passage, Paul does note that women should not have authority over men or teach other men in the setting of worship.

Paul argues that Adam was first formed, then Eve.

Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression.

So there is an established order that God has given, and it is not just the result of sin and God's judgment

In light of the judgment found in Genesis 3:16, you perhaps can better appreciate the commands given to husbands and wives throughout the NT including Ephesians 5.

Eph. 5:22 Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. **23** For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. **24** Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so *let* the wives *be* to their own husbands in everything.

Eph. 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her,

The judgment of Genesis 3:16 does not simply disappear for the Christian woman.

It is not that all becomes well for her and she lives a life free of pain.

No, a godly, Christian woman will know much pain throughout life.

A godly Christian woman is not somehow entirely delivered from sinful desires to control and manipulate her husband.

She also is not freed entirely from the harshness and unloving actions of her husband.

But through God's grace she recognizes what is most important – deliverance from the eternal curse and judgment of sin.

Through God's grace then also a Christian women will find God's grace sufficient for the many pains she will experience.

By God's power she will submit to her husband and respect him.

The joy of the Lord will be her strength and she rejoices in the faithfulness of God to her, a sinner redeemed by God's grace.

GENESIS 3:17-19 – THE JUDGMENT UPON ADAM

Gen. 3:17 Then to Adam He said, “Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, “You shall not eat of it’: ‘Cursed is the ground for your sake; In toil you shall eat *of* it All the days of your life.

18 Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, And you shall eat the herb of the field.

19 In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread Till you return to the ground, For out of it you were taken; For dust you *are*, And to dust you shall return.”

From the first part of verse 17 we observe that Adam was judged for obeying the voice of his wife and eating from the tree forbidden to him.

Remember from Genesis 16 the connection with this passage in that Abram heeded the voice of Sarai.

This passage is not saying that men should not listen to their wives.

The problem was Adam followed the voice of Eve rather than the clear command of God.

I think we also can see that God is dismissing Adam's earlier excuse where he tried to blame Eve.

Again you can observe from these verses that Adam is not said to be cursed.

It is the ground that is cursed, which, of course, was a great judgment for Adam.

This particular word cursed is a key word used in the first part of Genesis.

Gen. 4:11 So now you *are* cursed from the earth, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand.

Gen. 12:3 I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

Also observe that in verses 17-19, the verb eat is used five times.²

Adam's rebellion in eating of the forbidden fruit would involve a judgment that would directly affect his ability to eat and live.

The LORD's curse of the ground would mean painful labor for Adam all the days of his life.

Verse 18 explains what it means that the ground was cursed.

Thorns and thistles would now grow up from the ground rather than just what we read in Genesis 2:5, 9 concerning plants, herbs, and trees.

Think today of how much time, money, and energy are spent dealing with the effects of thorns and thistles.

For all that modern science has been able to develop, this judgment continues.

Notice that God did not say that no food could be grown from the ground but rather the process of growing food would be made much more difficult.

Look at the last phrase in verse 18 – And you shall eat the herb of the field.

What is meant by this phrase?

It likely is already a hint that Adam and Eve will soon be leaving the garden.³

It might also mean that since man will have to eat both wild and cultivated plants, he will always be having to deal with thorns and thistles.

Verse 19 continues to speak about the difficulty of man's work because of his rebellion and judgment.

Here we find emphasis again on the difficulty of raising plants for food.

This particular word sweat is used only here in the OT.

What a powerful picture you find in the words – **in the sweat of your face you shall eat bread.**

The verse ends with a twofold reference to death.

You will return to the ground.

For dust you are, and to dust you shall return.

Listen to the insightful comments of the NET Bible here.

The theme of mankind's mortality is critical here in view of the temptation to be like God. Man will labor painfully to provide food, obviously not enjoying the bounty that creation promised. In place of the abundance of the orchard's fruit trees, thorns and thistles will grow. Man will have to work the soil so that it will produce the grain to make bread. This will continue until he returns to the soil from which he was taken (recalling the creation in 2:7 with the wordplay on Adam and ground). **In spite of the dreams of immortality and divinity, man is but dust (2:7), and will return to dust. So much for his pride.**

² Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, vol. 1 of Word Biblical Commentary. Accordance/Thomas Nelson electronic ed. (Waco: Word Books, 1987), 82.

³ Wenham, 82.

I should emphasize how important it is to understand that physical death was part of the judgment and is not to be seen as merely part of the world as an evolutionary worldview teaches.

If we are going to take seriously the word of God we have to believe that man's sin brought about a number of very significant changes to God's very good creation.

Rom. 5:12 Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned.

CONCLUSION:

Consider, my friends, some of the key words in this passage that are connected to our redemption in Christ.

What are some of the key words from our passage in Genesis 3?

Tree, sweat, thorns, dust of death.⁴

There is no accident that these words found in Genesis 3 are significant in describing the sufferings of our Lord.

Just about all of us know what it is like to really work a difficult, sweaty job.

Each one of us could give an account of the frustrations we face in life or in our work.

But who but our Lord has sweat in the face of a time of testing for us so that his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.

We probably all have cut our fingers on thorns; we all can appreciate how much of a pain it is to deal with thistles and weeds.

But only our Lord knew the pain and humiliation of a crown of thorns thrust down over his head.

Unless the Lord returns we will all know the reality of death.

But our Lord did not just face death but the fullness of God's wrath because of our sin, for all of God's people.

Gal. 3:13 Christ has redeemed us from the **curse** of the law, having become a **curse** for us (for it is written, "*Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree*"),

We must acknowledge the judgment that God has brought because of man's rebellion and rejoice that our Savior fully bore the eternal judgment we deserve.

Closing Hymn – 403

⁴ NET Bible, s.v. Genesis 3:19.

BENEDICTION – EPHESIANS 3:20-21

Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.