

**THE CURSE
GENESIS 3:14-20**

NEED: TO UNDERSTAND THE TOTAL IMPACT OF HUMAN SIN

**PROPOSITION: BECAUSE OF HUMAN SIN GOD HAS PLACED
HUMANKIND UNDER A CURSE.**

**OBJECTIVE: TO LEAD MEN TO CHRIST SO THEY CAN ESCAPE THE
CURSE SIN BROUGHT ON THE WORLD.**

INTRODUCTION:

The sovereign Creator confronted the serpent, the woman and the man at the scene of the crime. The confrontation became judgment day for the whole human family. You and I still live with the consequences of that confrontation in the Garden of Eden.

The word that catches the essence of what happened that day is "curse." The Creator said to the serpent, "Cursed are you above all the livestock and all the wild animals! In His confrontation with Adam He said, "Cursed is the ground because of you." There is a curse upon the human situation and it has been there since the Garden. In order to understand the significance of the curse, we need to contrast it with the blessing. We heard Moses say earlier, "God blessed them and said to them, be fruitful and increase in number." We also heard God bless the seventh day. The curse of God is the opposite of the blessing of God. Under the blessing of God the whole created order is enabled to accomplish the divine purpose. However, under the curse of God the whole order is under limitations. There is a lack of ability to realize the fulfillment of the divine purpose.

Adam and Eve began to feel the consequence of this loss of blessing and imposition of a curse in every sphere of their lives. A careful look at the word that God spoke to each of those involved in this judgment will help us understand just how severe the curse is. The curse is upon the human situation and is still having its destructive affect in every part of life.

I. THE CURSE LEAVES HUMANKIND WITH A GREAT SPIRITUAL CONFLICT.

God addressed His first word of judgment to the serpent. He does not ask the serpent what he has done, but rather announces: "Because you have done this, cursed are you." We are to see in the serpent more than just a word to a snake. While it does have an obvious application to the role that the snake is to have in nature, there is behind it an even deeper word concerning the relationship between the serpent and the woman and her descendants.

1. The curse imposed upon the serpent - humiliation and defeat.

The word to the serpent was, "Cursed are you above all the livestock and all the wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life." These words are to be understood as having spiritual significance. While it is physically true that the snake has crawled upon its belly since this confrontation with the Creator, there is something more said here than just the physical posture of the serpent. To crawl on the belly is the sign of humiliation. To eat dust is descriptive of defeat. This word of judgment upon the serpent concerned the continual defeat of the serpent.

2. The curse involves continual enmity between the serpent and woman.

I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head and you will strike his heel." This statement to the serpent has been understood as being the first promise of a Savior in Scripture. We will come back later to explore this aspect of the statement. Our concern tonight is to see that it postured the woman and her descendants and the serpent in continual enmity toward each other. This means more than just that the woman and her children would look upon snakes as mortal enemies and would seek to kill them. It means that the woman and her children will be involved in a deadly conflict with the spiritual powers of evil all of their days. It is a source of great encouragement that there is this promise that the Seed of the woman would ultimately triumph over this enemy that stands against us. But a part of the curse that fell upon human existence because of the sin in the Garden is that we have to live out our days in the midst of spiritual conflict. This old world will never be what God intended for it to be until God someday binds the serpent and places him in the bottomless pit. Until then our existence will be plagued by this spiritual conflict.

II. THE CURSE BRINGS TO THE WOMAN MUCH SORROW.

It is great irony that the woman partook of the forbidden fruit because she wanted pleasure. What it brought to her life was not pleasure but sorrow. The Lord God said to the woman, "I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband and he will rule over you." The word addresses the two primary things in the role of the woman - bearing children and her husband.

1 The sorrow comes through child bearing.

If the woman and man had not sinned the bringing of children into the world would have been a tremendous joy. The consequence of sin is that this natural role of the woman has been changed from one of joy to one of great pain and sorrow.

There would seem to be two aspects to the pain that the woman knows. The primary one is it is just physical. The physical impact of the changed environment for the man and the woman is that childbirth itself becomes a painful experience. The other aspect of the pain is that the children that are brought into the world become a source of pain as well as joy. This could anticipate the great heartbreak that mothers would know because of the change in the human family through sin.

Every woman can testify to the reality of this aspect of the curse.

2. Sorrow will come through her relationship with her husband.

The statement that God made to Eve concerning her relationship with her husband has been discussed and debated much across the centuries. It has particularly become a point of focused attention in our day. What did God mean when He said, "Your desire would be for your husband?" The most common explanation of these words is that it is a reference to a woman's physical attraction to her husband or sexual desire. This particular word is used in the Song of Solomon in that kind of context. However, this particular word is used in the very next chapter in Genesis and gives a totally different connotation to the word. In God's confrontation with Cain He said, "But if you do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you but you must master it." This is the same word that is used in God's word to Eve. Could it

be that what God was saying to the woman is, "You will desire to possess and master your husband, but he will rule over you." Could it be that this is a word concerning a continuing conflict between the man and the woman? Instead of knowing a relationship of shared partnership in the purpose of God, the relationship has been disrupted and has become one of competition. I suspect that this latter understanding of the word is the better understanding. These words help us understand something of the shameful reality of wife abuse that we see in our world today. It also helps us understand the subjection of women to the role of men in much of the world. In that part of the world to which the gospel of Jesus Christ has not made its way in power or has been rejected, the role of women is usually one of utter subjection to man.

It is interesting that the increase of marital conflict in our day has paralleled the rejection of Jesus Christ in our culture. As our culture has turned its back upon the Bible and the Son of God presented in the Bible, the suffering that comes to womankind through the curse has become increasingly evident. The only relief woman has ever received has been where the Word of God has been preached and received by humankind.

Oh, the pain and the sorrow that comes to the citizens of this planet because of human sin!

ID. THE CURSE BURDENS THE MAN WITH A DIFFICULT WORK ENVIRONMENT.

As the word of judgment continues it is obvious that every aspect of man's life is filled with conflict. He is confronted with a spiritual conflict with the serpent, a conflict in his relationship

with his wife, and now the word is that he will find conflict in his work environment. The Creator God said to the man: "Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return. "

Work is not the curse that fell upon the man but rather the environment in which man is to do his work is the curse. Before man fell into sin he was assigned the role of master over the rest of the creation. As long as man was submissive to the rule of God in his life, the rest of creation was submissive to his rule. But when the curse fell, or when God removed His favor from the rest of creation and he began to encounter a disorder and rebellion in the creation, everything began to be abnormal.

It is worthy noting that God did not curse the man or the woman but rather he cursed the serpent and the ground. However, they live under the shadow of this curse that God has placed upon nature.

1. The toil.

Because of what happened to the ground through the curse, work became toil. We are lead to understand from this text that growing food for himself became quite a challenge. Where before the fall the earth naturally produced good food as man tended the garden. Now, the earth seems to naturally produce thorns and thistles. A West Texas farmer would probably want to speak of

weeds and useless grass. Anyone who has even had a small garden spot knows it is easier to get weeds to grow than tomato plants. It is easier to grow rag weeds than strawberries. There seems to be something in nature that makes it difficult to grow good fruit producing crops. This is the result of human sin. It causes it to be necessary for man to earn his food by "the sweat of your brow."

The work environment is described here from an agricultural point of view but the principle applies to wherever man makes his living. Making a living becomes a chore, toil. The only thing that can transform a man's attitude toward his work and the environment in which he does his work is a relationship with Jesus Christ which in part removes the curse.

2. Death

The result of all of this is that man will labor all of his life and then at the end of life return to the ground. "By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground. Since from it you were taken for dust you are and to dust you will return." Can you not sense something of the despair that is in those words? Man works all of his days to make sure that he has food to sustain life, but in the end he loses life and goes back to the dust. Every cemetery is an abiding testimony to the presence of the curse on the human environment. Human sin opened the door to death and destined man for dust.

This section concerning the curse could be one of the darkest chapters in all of scripture. If all we knew is what we find here then we would be without any hope. But thank God, there is another

word found in Scripture. The word of hope is that Jesus bore our curse on Calvary's tree. On the tree He paid the price of our sins and made the restoration of the favor of God possible. And before the work of Jesus Christ has finally been consummated every aspect of our being will have been removed from the curse. Even the earth itself is destined to have the curse removed. In a moving poetic passage the Apostle Paul describes the earth as travailing in pain like a woman in childbirth looking forward to the day when the curse will be removed and the favor of God will be restored. Someday Jesus Christ will return to earth to remove the curse from the earth and to cause the sons of God to be revealed in their glory.

The consequences of sin are severe! A curse is the primary consequence. If you feel yourself to be under a curse, then you need to come to Christ who can lift the curse from your life. He has made a way to return to the favor of God and to escape the curse. Receive Him as your Deliverer today!