

Perhaps the most powerful and long-lasting lesson to take away from Chapter Three of Genesis is the realization that everything we know and are—everything around and about us: about our environment and about ourselves, how we think and act, how we perceive everything around us—is at odds with what it *should* be, and was intended from the start.

We easily grasp that the first man and woman were utterly changed by their fall from grace because of rebellion against Yahweh God. We understand, too, from this passage and Romans 8:22, that the earth itself was altered that fateful day. But the result of the curse goes far beyond that: *Everything* in this life is not what it was supposed to be; *everything* is skewed away from true north. What we believe to be normal, is really not; it may be “typical,” but if “normal” is seen as God’s intention for this world, everything is *abnormal*.

Thus most everything we do that is an echo from early Creation—loving, marriage, family, raising children, working, farming—all are made more difficult than they were intended because of the Fall and the resulting Curse. In fact, every aspect of just *living* is made more difficult since that day in Eden. Need proof? Just go back and review all our many prayer requests.

It is a little like comparing our “good” to God’s good; our very best is like filthy rags compared to His (Isaiah 64:6). The very best our life can be, though seemingly wonderful to us, is little more than a shadow of what it could have been absent the Fall.

On that uplifting note, it is now time to examine what Yahweh God had to say to the woman.

Read Genesis 3:14-19.

v16

*To the woman He said,
“I will greatly multiply
Your pain and conception,
In pain you will bear children;*

There is a depth to this verse that is easily missed—especially in the first portion, and especially because of how it has been translated in most of our versions. The NASB, ESV, and NIVs all have “pain **in** childbirth” or “**in** childbearing—that is, the interpretation is that the pain God is inflicting on the woman is specific to giving birth. That is not entirely incorrect, but it is an insufficient translation of the text. To the editor’s credit, the NASB, as is so often the case, includes a footnote that points to the literal text, which is reflected in the LSB and KJVs: “I will greatly multiply your pain [KJVs: “sorrow”] **and** conception.” That one small change in the conjunction makes a big difference to the scope of the curse set upon the woman.

The first interpretation limits the pain or sorrow (*itstebhon*, pain, toil, travail) to *heron*, a word that pretty much includes all components of childbearing, from conception, pregnancy, to the birth itself. This particular pain is indeed included, but is only one category among countless.

Leupold: What is done is that woman from this time onward has numerous forms of pain laid to her lot. Physical infirmities of a painful kind are in a great measure her portion. Because of her more [sensitive] makeup many things besides cause her a greater measure of mental and spiritual pain. The just retaliation lies in this that she who sought sweet delights in the eating of the forbidden fruit, finds not delights but pain—not joy but sorrow. For *’itstsebhon* includes both “pain” and “sorrow,” in fact, everything that is hard to bear.

The “and” in the text means “and in particular”—i.e., “I will greatly multiply your pain **and [in particular, your pain in] conception.**” There are exceptions, of course, but generally, since the Curse, the female of the species suffers more, and more deeply, than the male—not at all limited to physical pain, but spiritual, mental, emotional sorrow, along with the pain and sorrow that comes with bearing and rearing children. This in no way diminishes the concomitant joy, nor does it diminish the pain and sorrow experienced by the male. But women, from this moment forward, are to bear an extra helping of that.

This is illustrated throughout history, but the scene is telling when the baby Jesus is presented in the temple and seen by Simeon.

Read Luke 2:27-35.

Simeon did not address his remark to Joseph, the supposed father, but to Mary, the mother: "...and a sword will pierce through your own soul as well."

It is also possible that this verse in Genesis 3 implies that without the woman's rebellion against Yahweh God, childbirth itself would have been less painful. Everything in human life descends from that fateful moment; because of one woman's desirous sin, all women henceforth would suffer—and especially where the birthing and rearing of children is involved.

But let us pause here and appreciate the *good* news in this curse.

Martin Luther: This is the punishment which was inflicted on the woman; but a punishment full indeed of joy and gladness, because it varied not in the least from the sentence just before pronounced on Satan. For seeing that the glorious promise still remained that the head of the serpent should be crushed, there was a sure hope of a resurrection from death. And whatever is imposed on man as the punishment of his sin is possible to be borne, because this hope remains to him firm and sure. And this is the reason the Holy Scriptures are so very careful not to say anything in the punishment of the woman, which should be contrary to or at all militate against the sentence just before pronounced against the serpent. God did indeed impose a punishment on the woman, but he still left her the hope of a resurrection and of a life eternal. The death which she had deserved by her sin God transferred on the other and less honorable part of man, namely, on the flesh; that the spirit might live, because of righteousness through faith as the apostle says, Romans 8:10, "The body is dead because of sin, but the spirit is life because of righteousness."

Just as I pointed out in our discussion of God's judgment on the serpent, there is *good* news woven throughout this passage of multiple curses inflicted on the players in this drama. Luther concludes,

All these evils and sorrows however pertain to the animal life or to the flesh itself only. But there remains to her all the while the hope here given her of a spiritual and eternal life after this present life.

Your desire will be for your husband,

I would divide this verse—the curse, the judgment pronounced against the woman—into two parts. The first we have just looked at: pain, sorrow (one commentator justifiably uses the word “misery”), and particularly as pertains to childbearing and childbirth. So the first part focuses upon the woman as mother.

The second part, which focuses on the woman as wife, is broken into two parts: the first part speaks of what the woman may now attempt to do in the marriage, while the second part speaks of the man’s role as a result. “Your desire will be for your husband,” on the surface, doesn’t sound like such a bad thing. But this is referring to something darker than simply love and affection, or sexual desire. Before we dig into that, let’s remind ourselves how the marriage relationship was first created by Yahweh God.

Read Genesis 2:23-25.

As conceived by their Maker, the man and woman would enjoy an almost supernatural bond: they would be “one flesh,” the man himself declared, that this one created from the raw material of his own body was “bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh.”

Read Genesis 1:27-28.

There is a subtext of joy and anticipation in that passage, and an abundance not just of children, but of happy mastery over *all* things. The two were intended to work together harmoniously; the woman was to be “a helper suitable for” the man.

We might at first imagine this line in v16 to indicate that the woman will henceforth have an emotional or sexual desire for her husband alone. But most agree that the Hebrew *teshuqah* (tesh-oo-KAW) refers to a darker—some say even violent—stretching out after; its root means to run after, or to run over. This will be God’s judgment against her for daring to independently listen to and obey the serpent.

K&D: The woman had also broken through her divinely appointed subordination to the man; she had not only emancipated herself from the man to listen to the serpent, but had led the man into sin. For that, she was punished with a desire bordering upon disease (*teshuqah* from *shuq*, to run, to have a violent craving for a thing), and with subjection to the man.

We get a picture of what this sort of “desire” looks like in the next chapter, when Yahweh addresses Cain about his anger at his offering being rejected.

Read Genesis 4:6-7.

(Same word for “desire.”)

In v16 this is a picture of the ideal union of husband and wife breaking down. The woman’s sin was not limited to her falling for the serpent’s temptation, *but for doing it on her own*, to supplanting the role of the man.

Albert Barnes: The woman had taken the lead in the transgression. In the fallen state, she is to be subject to the will of her husband. “Desire” does not refer to sexual desire in particular. It means, in general, “turn,” determination of the will (Genesis 4:7). “The determination of thy will shall be yielded to thy husband, and, accordingly, he shall rule over thee”... Under fallen man, woman has been more or less a slave. In fact, under the rule of selfishness, the weaker must serve the stronger. Only a spiritual resurrection will restore her to her true place, as the help-meet for man.

Under earlier dispensations this was true; in most ancient societies women were little more than chattel. By specifying “*spiritual* resurrection” I take it that Barnes refers to our transformation in Christ—with which I heartily agree. Although we still battle with our fallen flesh, in Christ man and woman in a Spirit-led union are at least partially restored to Creation’s ideal: one flesh working together for family good.

But the first man and woman are not there yet; the Son of God will not be incarnated for thousands of years. Creation is still raw, in its infancy, and in *this* dispensation the rules—and consequences—are different.

According to John Sailhamer, “the sense of ‘desiring’ in v16 should be understood as the wife’s desire to overcome or gain the upper hand over her husband.” In other words, in this second part Yahweh is not so much addressing the woman, than He is the marriage as a whole, the relationship between man and woman. What was once harmonious—as Yahweh intended—now will be combative, contentious. Because of the woman’s transgressions a battle will be engaged between the two for supremacy in the marriage, in the family.

And he will rule over you.”

I take it from this that prior to the Fall the man and woman were on a more level playing field. Think of it this way: Prior to the Fall the man was the dominant character in the pair; he was created first, and the woman was creating from his raw materials. But the man did not *dominate* the woman; prior to the Fall he was dominant; now he will dominate. There was heretofore a natural and companionable hierarchy in the marriage bond; now the woman will contest for supremacy, while the man will be required to dominate her to hold his God-ordained position.

Again, historically, culturally, spiritually this is not a black and white issue, but one painted in shades of gray. There have been periods—especially those closest to Creation itself, when this was literally the case. The man dominated the entire family, could do as he wished to wife and children with no moral or legal penalties involved. In some cultures this was not the case, yet even in relatively recent history, such as the nineteenth century, women even in the Western world (e.g., Great Britain, United States) had few rights and were entirely under the thumb of their husbands.

Today women have more rights, but we see this combative tension still being played out—especially in the culture of the left. The relationship between married individuals and between those just living together can be—and often are—combative, with the man and woman constantly jousting with each other in their struggle for supremacy. Women demand power, while quite often the men become emasculated—and no one seems happy, or even content. The marriage is certainly *not* a picture of the harmonious, mutually supportive union as first created.

And we can't kid ourselves that this never occurs in Christian marriages. The cancer of Eden can seep into those relationships as well.

Nonetheless, in Christ marriages have their only hope to regain at least some of what was lost at the Fall. So if we step back and look at this through a wide-angled lens we see that

- the woman sought to act independent of man by taking the fruit;
- as a result, Yahweh God's penalty cast upon her would be that this same yearning would continue in and become a disruptive component of her marriage;
- to counter this, the man would become the God-ordained *ruler* over the marriage and family;
- the introduction of sin and death upon the earth at the Fall would mean that over the centuries and millennia of human civilization this unhappy arrangement would become even more corrupt and perverse;
- with the Incarnation of the Son of God, and the subsequent Christian way of life introduced into the world, some of this would be ameliorated, repaired, but not expunged;
- only in heaven, and ultimately the Eternal State on a *new* earth, will relationship between the sexes be returned to their pristine, perfect condition—as God had intended from the start.

Until that glad day we have the counsel of the NT teaching to strike the proper balance in a marriage.

**But because of sexual immoralities, each man is to have his own wife, and each woman is to have her own husband. The husband must fulfill his duty to his wife, and likewise also the wife to her husband. The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does; and likewise also the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does.
(1 Corinthians 7:2–4)**

There is the proper balance in a healthy, God-honoring marriage.

SESSION 29

Judgment, part three

Genesis 3:16

Perhaps the most powerful and long-lasting lesson to take away from Chapter Three of Genesis is the realization that everything we know and are—everything around and about us: about our environment and about ourselves, how we think and act, how we perceive everything around us—is at odds with what it *should* be, and was intended from the start. *Everything* in this life is not what it was supposed to be; *everything* is skewed away from true north. What we believe to be normal, is really not; it may be “typical,” but if “normal” is seen as God’s intention for this world, everything is *abnormal*.

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