

Following the Biblical Stream:

By Philip E. Busby

Part XVIII

As we continue our look at chapter 3 of the book of Genesis, beginning in verse 14, we see what most like to call “the curses.” However, we need to have a clear view of what God did here and not be so general. When we use the word “curse,” we think of bad things. Then, we make the mistake of talking as if God cursed man. This culminates in an attitude that God simply did bad things to man so his life would be miserable. In retribution for man's disobedience, we say God cursed us. This attitude brings negativity to everything God did in these verses, and that is a bad way to think!

I talked about this issue last time, and we will discuss the fine points of each action as we continue to take this chapter, verse by verse. However, I want to start by taking a simple view of what God did in these verses. We should make a list, of sorts, if we want a clear view, so here it is. God curses the serpent and changes its physical attributes. Then, He puts enmity between the serpent and the woman and their seed. Next, God multiplies the sorrow and conception of the woman and the sorrow in childbirth. God also points out the life she has chosen will result in the submission of her desires to those of her husband. Then, God curses the ground for man's sake. That, in a nutshell, is what God did. Nothing catastrophic to the moment, but long term, these actions would definitely have an effect. How great the effect would be on our existence would depend on the choices man would make.

Note here, out of the three beings God is dealing with, only one of them is cursed, and that's the serpent. The sorrow, conception, and childbirth issues God tells Eve she will endure, is not defined as a curse. Neither is the next item for the woman. These are, in many ways, simply consequences of the path she chose by taking the fruit. Then the ground was cursed. This was done because Adam listened to his wife in the matter of the fruit, but it's a curse of the ground, not Adam himself. The effect

of this would have consequences for all life on the planet! This is why we read the words in Genesis 8:21 where God states He will not again curse the ground for man's sake nor smite every living thing again, as He did with the flood. God determined He had directly caused His creation to suffer enough because of man's actions, and God would no longer touch the rest of His creation to get through to man. This is how we know the wording in Revelation is not telling us a story of God destroying the planet, but a story of man by his own actions and choices, bringing destruction upon himself!

Even so, we continue to see God interacting with us through this process of life. He is trying to get us to open our eyes and see the truth. What the Bible tells us is, most people not only ignore the truth but go to great lengths to try and blot it out! The “curses” God puts down here in Genesis, are only the beginning of God's love for us “...while we were yet sinners.” Romans 5:8 The devil has tried to get us to look at God's interaction with us as hardship which we must overcome, when in reality, God is trying to lead us to the cross of Christ and His life giving blood! (Matt. 16:24-25)

So, in Genesis chapter 3 verse 15, as God put enmity between man and the serpent, God does this so man would understand Satan was and is, not a god. Enmity is not a word we use much in the English language anymore. However, it is a good word, deep in meaning. It does not simply mean hostility, but a deep, angry, bitter hostility as between enemies. God wants us to know Satan is our enemy not simply the other option. With Satan there is only one end, death and destruction. (Rom. 6:23)

We should understand this enmity was something very different for humans at the time. In today's world, all different kinds of animals are feared by man. However, this begins at the time of the flood. In Genesis chapter 9, God gives man permission to kill animals for food. This, however, comes with a consequence. From then on, animals would have a fear and mistrust of humans that they

did not have before. Further, if animals were to be killed by humans, then humans would be killed by animals! This relationship of eat and be eaten did not exist at the time of Adam and Eve. The idea of hostility between any animal and humans was completely foreign to them. This is why the specific warning is given that the serpent would bruise man's heel and man would bruise the serpent's head. When God put enmity between man and the serpent, man, for the first time, had something to be cautious of while he walked the planet. The serpent would fight and man would be forced to fight back!

This new and strange relationship between the serpent and man would be illustrative of the fact man could not ignorantly stumble through life but must be on his guard against the devil. It also illustrated how this would be ongoing. The only way for this to end, would be for Satan to be removed from our lives. Revelation tells us, for a thousand years Satan will be locked away from man and Jesus brings peace. However, at the end of those thousand years when Satan is released, many follow after him again. (Rev. 20:7-9)

As people who desire the ways of God, we need to overcome Satan, not just in a temporary way but in a permanent way. The Bible tells us to resist the devil and he will flee from you. (James 4:7) However, the devil will come back anytime he feels your resistance is down. He is kind of like a cold or flu in that way. He is always lurking not too far away, looking for the opportunity to catch us off guard. This is no way to live for eternity, and God wants us to be free. Of course, we could only be ultimately set free through the work of Christ on the cross. Then the key would be simple, do we want to be free? If we do, then it is still up to us to overcome the devil as individuals. How do we do that? Revelation tells us those John sees in heaven with the Lord had, "...overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death." Revelation 12:10-11 The "curses" of Genesis were meant to show us this path.

Post innocence, this life was going to be hardship and toil. The end of a sin-filled life will

always be death and destruction. The things God implements here in Genesis are physical and mental things which show us this fact in obvious everyday ways. God needs us to keep our eyes on Him and the life which lies beyond this one. Loving our lives not unto death is part of how we overcome Satan, and it is not just in the aspect of giving our lives to Christ in spite of those who would martyr us. It is also in the simple day by day way we live our lives and what we make most important!

As we go back to our verse by verse study, we are ready to look at verse 16. Verse 16 deals with the woman. The wording here is tricky in the English. God says to the woman, He will "...greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception;..." The word "and" is used here, that is to say "sorrow" and "conception" will be multiplied. To understand this you have to take a look at each of the three main words in this statement.

We probably all get the sorrow idea. However, the original language word doesn't mean just sadness. It also means things like worry and toil. A good word to use in the description today would be stress! The original language word we translate "conception" from is larger than we use the word conception for today. Today, we seem to only apply the word conception to the initial moment a child is formed. In this verse, the word is talking about the whole process from what we would call conception all the way through the birth. In many ways the wording is even more broad than that. In reality, it is referring to the idea of family life in general: the process of being a woman, deciding to have a physical relationship which could result in a child, the birthing, the raising and caring for that child, as well as the watching them live on their own someday. Bringing children into this world would be a worry filled experience for the woman. It is mothers who bear most of the worry when it comes to their children. It is not that fathers don't worry, but it is much different and not as universal as with the mother.

The third word in the line is "multiply." This word means "to increase." Whether you are using the word increase or multiply, keep in mind, this is

not telling us there was nothing there before. The woman had emotions connected to her job as a mother even before the fall. However, these emotions would greatly increase or multiply. They would exist at an unhealthy level. To put it altogether, God was telling the woman, her job in the family unit was going to be much bigger than before. Her sorrow in the matter would be much greater. Her job as a mother would be a lot harder! A mother's concern for her children's well-being will never end in this life. This fact is part of the reason for the scripture in Revelation which assures us that, in the end, God will wipe all the tears from our eyes. (Rev. 21:4)

The next line in verse 16 says, "...in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children;..." This is where we see the fact that bearing children would come with pain. God did not say He would increase this sorrow. He simply tells the woman there would be sorrow. This "sorrow" comes from the same prime root as the one in the line before, but it is not the same word in the original language. This "sorrow" comes with a stronger indication of pain and discomfort of a physical sense.

The next line is simple if we would just be honest, "...and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee." This is another lesson in what a weak language English is. The word "desire" is the key in this line. However, we do not have words in English which differ in their description of what kind of desire we are talking about. In many ways, we have trouble even understanding there is a difference. In our world today, we are not taught to think on a deeper level and express deep thoughts and emotions. It is one of the things which leads to much misunderstanding among humans today. This fact is why we must be cautious of Bible versions which continue to be "translated" into "modern English." English at the time of the King James translation was weak enough, and English has only gotten worse overtime. This shallowness in our relationships and expression of thoughts causes great unhappiness and frustration with life in general. We shouldn't let it affect our ability to study the Word of God!

There is a difference in the way we desire things! There is a desire which is a deep longing. Something you want because you want it. It is not because external forces are driving you. This is like the desire King Solomon had to build the temple of God! It is the desire a true artist has to paint, sculpt, etc. It can be almost an unexplainable compulsion. Then there is a desire which is a seeking. This can many times be because something is driving you. The hunter desires to find his prey, or a farmer desires to bring in his crop. He may be hungry or he knows his family will be hungry. It is a desire driven by necessity. This kind of desire can also range between points of extreme, such as - I'm hungry now and want something to eat, all the way to - I'm starving and I must find something to eat. Desire can be negative or it can be positive. It can come in all different ways.

The desire talked about here in verse 16 is a desire which can not be fulfilled. Solomon felt great as he built and finished the temple. The hunter and his family can be filled with meat, satisfied for at least a time. However, the desire talked about here would be another one of those items which, here in this life, could never be satisfied, not even for a time. It is an overflowing desire which cannot be contained. So, what does all this mean? Well, it means, down inside, the woman would never stop longing for what was lost in the garden! When God created Adam, God said it was not good for him to be alone. This is why God created Eve, utilizing a piece of Adam. In I Corinthians 11:7-8, Paul says it this way, "For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man." When God brings the woman to Adam, he says this is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh. There was an intended relationship between man and woman which would be equal. Not because they had exact physical and emotional attributes, but because they were two halves of one complete relationship. Together, they could walk hand in hand, being more together than they could alone.

Men have a certain psychological profile. That profile includes leadership, but leadership is very different from rulership. God knew the struggles humans would face in life would cause great stress

on man's ability to lead his family. God knew man would turn to more of a rulership role, in place of the leadership role God had intended. In any dictatorship, there are those at the top and those underneath. Man has taken this concept so far, as a society, that man went beyond the family unit, of man, wife, and many times children, to form what we call governments. The forefathers, of the United States, understood there was no way to form a government without the structure of greater than and less than. This disturbed them because they had seen firsthand the damage this could cause. Their solution was to take turns as to who was greater than and let everyone have a say in who would be in these roles and when. It may be about as good as man can do with government, but it still is not great!

Through the centuries of building tribes, nations, and empires, we have almost lost what it means to be a simple family unit. We barely understand what it means for a man to leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife. (Gen. 2:24, Matt. 19:3-6) The idea of individuals building family units, which often result in the future formation of new family units, is not the way we see human existence. We mark human achievement as a society. Many factors have played a part in shaping our world, but ultimately the bottom line is simple, we live in a rulership world. It is not the free world God intended humans to have!

So, God was telling the woman she would desire her husband to be who he was created to be. She would even try to fulfill this desire by trying to take man's natural position at times. The end result is that you can never go home again! The man was not created for the woman, the woman was created for the man. The woman's desire would always be for the relationship God built her to have with man. Her desire would be for the husband's leadership not rulership, but the response whether personally in marriage or overall as in society is that, "...he shall rule over thee."

Keep in mind, this is not to say women have no role in the bad way the world has turned out. It was Eve who chose the fruit first and gave it to her husband. It was she who desired to have the

wisdom and freedom from God she believed the tree could bring. Talking about all this is to point out, you cannot have it both ways! You cannot go your own way and expect to have the blessings which following God can bring. You can not get all the things you want and be honestly surprised when the negative consequences follow. You can not refuse to follow the instructions of God then be upset when others don't.

I said earlier that God did not call what He said to Eve a curse. This shows us a very interesting point. God was not enacting anything for the woman. God was simply pointing out the consequences of her actions! God said "I will..." in the first part of verse 16. This is an example of something we see in the Bible which many do not understand. God is working for our good. That does not mean everything which happens to us is pleasant. Our decisions force God to take actions which are good for us but have very bitter repercussions. This is what we are talking about when we say, it will be worth it all when we see Jesus. We must endure the trials of this life, knowing the end reward God is working for us is the wonderful life beyond our hopes and dreams. God will ultimately do this by ending this world and taking all those who desire God's way of life to a new place which Jesus is preparing for us. (John 14:1-3)

So, as God talks to Eve He says "I will..." But understand what God is saying is not that He will reach down and implement these specific feelings and pains. The sorrow would come because of the world man would build. Remember, God does not curse Adam or Eve. God curses the ground for man's sake and the rest follows naturally. The more man fights the curse of the ground the worse all this gets! Why would a woman's job as a wife and mother get harder? Because the world would become increasingly unsafe. Sin would abound, making marriage harder and raising children in the ways of God next to impossible. The emotional profile of a woman makes all this very stressful. There was never a reason before the fall to worry about the safety of a human. The responsibilities of parenthood would have been the same. A child

would need to be fed, bathed, carried from place to place and all the things involved in general care. A child would need to be taught things, and would go through varying stages of development. However, there would never have been the fear involved, and we would always have had God nearby.

After the fall, sin would cause sickness and disease. This would lead to the constant deterioration of the human body. As time marches forward, we continually face new problems. We believe we have wiped out some diseases, but a new and often more aggressive one comes our way. Children would get sick and this would tear at the emotions of a mother in ways a father just can't comprehend. The deterioration of the woman's body means carrying a child would be a constant concern. Greater physical pain would exist in carrying and birthing a child as well.

As we've already talked about, the desire a woman would have toward her husband and the fact he would rule over her are also simple consequences to the path they had chosen, by taking the fruit God told them not to. God uses the wording "I will" here because God takes responsibility for His creation. Throughout the Word of God, we see God taking responsibility not just for those actions He specifically takes, like the flood of Noah's day, but also those actions He chooses not to take. When talking to Israel, many times God said I will do this or that; but in many cases, He was referring to the simple fact He would not intervene and help. God created a nation by bringing them out of Egypt and placing them in a land flowing with milk and honey. They did not get their freedom or land by their own strength. Therefore, they were not going to keep it by their own strength. If God simply stepped back and let nature take its course, the armies would come and destroy.

So, we see God takes responsibility for His actions and inactions. It is vital we understand this point as we study the Word of God, or we will never understand the nature of God. The point Eve needed to understand was, it was her decisions which caused God to take action or desire not to. A

point we need to keep in mind is that at the time of these verses there were only two humans. This meant God could deal with the entire human race based on these two and their choices. As man increased in number, the dynamic became very complex. This is why we can not question God's actions; we must examine our own. We must seek to be sure we are in the place God wants us to be, and we should realize that knowing whether we are in that place or not can't be judged by what is going on around us. It can't be judged by whether we think our personal life is going good or bad. In a world filled with sin, we must take on the attitude of Job when he said, "...shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" Job 2:9 The only way for us to know we are right is by having a relationship with God where we can hear His voice in our everyday actions!

I'll see you next time!

