

Genesis 3:16

We have been studying Gen 3. We have divided the chapter as follows,

1. The Temptation, vs 1-5.
2. The Fall, vs 6.
3. Immediate Consequences, vs 7-8.
4. The Divine Confrontation, vs 9-13.
5. Long term Consequences (The Adamic Covenant), vs 14-19
6. The Expulsion from the Garden, vs 20-24.

Last time we started our study of Gen 3:14-19. This passage has been called the Adamic Covenant as it outlines the judgements God brought upon the serpent, Satan, the man and the woman, and creation. As a review, a covenant is a binding agreement or a seal between two or more parties. Biblically, covenants are either conditional in that both parties have responsibilities within the agreement, or they are unconditional which means one party has responsibilities while the other is passive and has none. Biblical covenants also have scope, in other words they either apply to all mankind, or are only directed to Israel. Lastly, Biblical covenants have a time element. They are either fully in effect, partially or yet to be fulfilled, or completed and therefore no longer applicable.

In this passage, God discharges stipulations and judgements that are decidedly one sided; therefore this is an unconditional covenant and it is applicable to all mankind, hence it is universal in scope. It is also still fully in effect. All of the judgements God proclaimed, we still experience.

So, for review, we began last week by noting the five principles who were judged.

1. Verse 14 details judgement on the serpent.
2. Verse 15 details judgement on Satan.
3. Verse 16 details judgment on the woman.
4. Verses 17 and 19 detail judgement on the man.
5. Verse 18 details judgment on the creation.

We then spent the bulk of our time noting specifically the judgements on the serpent and on Satan.

For the Serpent.

Although the serpent was only an animal, with no moral or cognitive function, it was cursed because it was an accomplice to the deception and fall of mankind. The serpent becomes a symbol for God's judgement on Satan that comes in verse 15. Note the threefold judgment the serpent carries,

1. He is cursed above all creatures. Though creation as a whole is cursed, the serpent is singularly chosen to be cursed above all created animal life.
2. He will crawl on his belly. This is both literally and figuratively true. Literally the snake adheres to the ground; but figuratively, when someone crawls on the ground, it implies defeat, defilement, cursedness, and that he is despised, and detestable.
3. He will eat dust. This again is figurative language which means to be especially cursed.

For Satan.

We then turned our attention to verse 15 in which God pronounces judgement on Satan. Note the four stipulations,

- a. Enmity between Satan and the woman. The word enmity means animosity or hatred. God stated he will put enmity between the woman and Satan; and the reason for this enmity is that the woman will produce a seed (or descendent) who will crush his head.
- b. Enmity between the woman's seed, and Satan's seed. This enmity will extend to the offspring of the woman and Satan. The offspring of the woman is Christ and the offspring of Satan is the anti-Christ; and the reason for this enmity is given in the next phrase,
- c. The woman's seed will crush Satan's head. In other words, Christ will crush Satan, thus rendering him non-operative and non-threatening; but in crushing Satan,
- d. Satan will strike the woman's seed on the heel. I mentioned last time the picture here is of someone killing a snake in the middle east. One would crush its head into the ground with your heel. Here we have a picture of Christ's heel coming upon Satan's head and as it does so, Satan strikes out and bites Christ on the heel. It is a painful and terrible bite, but it is not fatal. This is the reality of the cross and the resurrection. Satan strikes Christ but the wound is not terminal. We know Satan is still operative today but his power over us has been broken at the cross. Satan's ultimate demise comes at the end of the Millennial kingdom when he is finally cast into the lake of fire for all eternity.

Today we will get through the curse on the woman noted in verse 16.

For the Woman.

Vs 16, *To the woman he said, "I will make your pains in childbearing very severe; with painful labor you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you."* (NIV).

Notice the threefold judgment

- a. Pain with childbearing,
- b. Pain in childbirth,
- c. Subjection to her husband, accompanied by the desire to rebel against that subjection and rule him.

Note there are three judgements but they fall into two domains, or categories. The first is the domain of children and second is the domain of her marriage.

Pain with childbearing

Vs 16a, *To the woman he said, "I will make your pains in childbearing very severe;*

At this point, it is important to note that there is a general curse on all of mankind as a consequence of the fall. We all experience danger and disaster, disease and decay, aging and ultimately death, but here, in verse 16, God gives the woman a triad of special judgements, and in verse 17 and 19, special judgements are given to the man.

For the woman, the first judgement is pain with childbearing. The NLT translates this passage as, *I will sharpen the pain of your pregnancy*. The ASB reads, *I will greatly multiply your pain and thy conception*.

The word *pain* refers to physical discomfort, but can also mean sorrow, vexation, and to be grieved, while the word *severe* means intense and much. The idea is everything associated with a woman's childbearing machinery will increase in pain, vexation, and sorrow. This means menstruation, conception, and carrying a pregnancy. All phases are affected, so even if you are a woman and have not had relations with a man or have never born a child, you will know the curse, for every month you will be reminded of God's judgement. Indeed, we have a whole branch of medicine devoted to alleviating the effects of this curse called obstetrics and gynecology. Now some commentators have speculated that Eve's child bearing capacity was sped up at the fall; hence the monthly cycle. The reason being that with the introduction of death, she would need more opportunity to conceive to fulfill God's command to multiply and fill the earth. In other words, death would take some of her progeny, hence she needed a greater reproductive ability to replace them. There is no confirmation of this in scripture, but it is interesting to postulate.

Pain with childbirth and sorrow

Vs 16b, *with painful labor you will give birth to children.*

The second part of the triad is found in vs 16b. The KJV and NKJV translate *with painful labor you will bring forth children* as, *in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children*. The implication is twofold. First, women will have increased physical pain with the act of labor and delivery, but secondly, the child itself will bring forth sorrow. Any of you ladies, knows it hurts to have a child. But here is the other point the verse is trying to make. Once a child is born, he or she can bring heartache and sorrow. A child will grow into an adult. They have free moral agency, and make decisions that are sometimes contrary to what you as a godly parent may desire—and it brings heartache. I think this is worse for a woman, as in general, a man can compartmentalize and emotionally distance himself from a wayward child more easily than a mother. Childbirth and child rearing brings forth pain and sorrow.

The third part of the triad is found in verse 16c.

Subjection to her husband and the desire to rule over him

Vs 16c, *Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you."*

I mentioned that though there are three judgements they fall into two domains. The first and second judgements concern the domain of her children, while verse 16c concerns the judgement within the domain of her marriage. Note there are two components to this judgment; first the woman's *desire will be for her husband*, and the second is, *he will rule over you*.

Before we start, I recognize this is a difficult passage that has received a great deal of attention so I want to treat it carefully so we all know what it means. And to start we need a quick review and elucidation of what we know of the dynamics of Adam and Eve's relationship from our reading of Gen 1 and 2.

We can say they are both equal in that

1. They were both made in the image of God.
2. They share a common name, Is and Issa.
3. They both equally share in having dominion over the earth.

We can say Adam has a leadership role in that

1. He is made first.
2. She is made for him, and from him -implying an authority difference (see 1 Cor 11).
3. He names her.
4. He is given the commands from God and not her.

There are two words here we need to be very clear about. One is leadership and the other dominion. Leadership is the idea of influencing, serving, and empowering people to grow while dominion implies control over both people and things (both animate and inanimate) through authority, fear, and domination to achieve compliance. These are very different ideas.

The other thing to note is Gen 3:16 is pronounced in the context of the relationship between husband and wife, and not in general male -female relationships. So I want this to be very clear, as related to husbands and wives, Eve is under Adam's leadership but they equally share earthly dominion. She is not under his dominion, she is under his leadership. This is where a lot of relationships get messed up - the husband thinks he has dominion over his wife. He does not. He has leadership and the two share dominion.

So, let us examine the first phrase, *your desire will be for your husband*. The key word here is *desire*. And no, this isn't physical desire, although every man wishes this was the case! And it is not a good desire, say for his well-being, or his career. No, the desire here is a negative thing. The word comes from a root which means to seek control. It also implies a craving or longing. So literally the verse could read, *your craving or longing will be to seek control of your husband*. In other words, the woman will desire to take the leadership role of her husband. She will want to take charge, to take control, and master her mate. Now this can manifest itself in many ways. For some woman it is very explicit, and for others it is a silent smoldering, but no matter how it is manifested, her desire seeks to usurp his leadership role.

Think about what happened when Eve was created. She was taken from the man. She was to be his compliment. God gave Adam the authority to name her indicating God had given Adam authority (not dominion) over her. He also was to protect her, for it was God who told Adam not to eat of the tree. God didn't tell Eve. God expected Adam to warn her and protect her from eating it. Eve was no less valuable, or less smart, or less capable, or less of a person than Adam, rather she held a different role than he did. She was his compliment and under his headship, his leadership, and thus his protection. This was the intended divine order. But what happens? In Gen 3:1-5, Eve is independent of her husband. This is not to say she can't do something apart from him. But in this spiritual test she is apart from the protection of her husband and fails to seek her husband's counsel. She is deceived as to where the serpent is leading her. She talks to the serpent. She trusts him. She believes him even though he contradicts God's explicit command. She takes the fruit. She eats the fruit, she gives it to her husband and he eats, leading him into sin. She operated outside of the divine arrangement. She makes the spiritual decision to talk to the serpent outside the sphere of her husband's protection. She makes the spiritual decision to eat. She makes the spiritual decision to give the food to her husband. She does all this independently. I am not excusing the man, for Adam was a willing participant and we will get to him in the next verse, but the woman is operating outside the complimentary sphere for which she was designed. Well what should she have done? She should have told her husband there is serpent out in the back yard trying to get me to eat the fruit you told me not to eat. I think you ought to go talk to him.

As a result of all this, vs 15 tells us God puts enmity between the woman and the serpent, and He puts enmity between the woman and Satan, and now in vs 16 He puts enmity between the woman and her husband. She usurped his role with the eating and now God says that's the way it's going to be from here on out. Eve, from this day forward your craving will be what you just did. To go above, below, around, and outside of your husband's sphere of authority and protection, in order to control him to do what you want him to do.

Now I can see some doubting faces, so turn to Gen 4:7. Here the same word for desire is used as it is in Gen 3:16. In Gen 4 we have the story of Cain and Abel. Both men bring a sacrifice to the Lord, but God rejects Cain's and accepts Abel's. This causes Cain to get very angry and God asks him a question and makes a comment in verse 6 and 7, *Then the Lord said to Cain, "Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast?"* ⁷*If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it.* Note the phrases *sin is crouching at your door* and *it desires to have you*. This is the exact same sentence construction as Gen 3:16. In other words, just as sin desires to control us so is the desire of a woman to control her husband. In both instances, whether sin is desiring you or you as a woman are desiring to control your husband, that desire must be controlled (*but you must rule over it*).

The second phrase, *he will rule over you*, means the husband will be frustrating this desire. So, now here is the essence of the post-fall husband-wife relationship; she seeks to rule him and take over that leadership position, and he seeks to either stuff her back in the box, or he passively accepts her rule and then simmers in resentment and bitterness.

Here is a quote by E.J. Young an OT scholar, "Emancipation of women is an illusion. Woman cannot free herself. She is not the equal of the man. Only before God is she equal. The tragedy is that her husband will now rule over her. She had sought to rule him in giving to him the forbidden fruit, now he will rule over her. Although there was an original divinely planned subordination for the woman, this was to be a blessing for her. The man was to be her head in the sense that he loved her with a love in which no sin was mixed. He was to love her as he loved himself and no blot of evil would mar the relationship. All was now changed for the Fall had taken place. Instead of the mild and tender love of Eden, the husband would now domineer over his rebellious wife. Over her he would become a despot."

Let us conclude this morning by noting that all is not hopeless in the husband and wife relationship. God has provided grace for marriage, especially for those who are Christians. In 1 Pet 3:1-6, Peter outlines a pathway for women to be successful in their relationships—it is through submission. Note men have a pathway as well, as it is mentioned in 1 P 3:7 and Eph 5:25-29, and that is through consideration and love. However, the details of these pathways are a large subject unto themselves and are not our focus this morning. Note submission, consideration, and love, are all contrary to our sinful nature. They are only manifested when we all submit ourselves to the enabling power of God's Spirit. Amen, Amen.

Next time we will look at the curse God imposed on Adam.

