

**Reading:** Proverbs 31:10-31

**Theme:** The Sentences on Eve. (v16)

We are in the section v14-19 and we have seen God passing sentence and judgement on those involved in the first sin on earth. We have seen **1. The sentences on the tempter** in v14 & 15 and last week we saw from v15 **2. The hope given** - even though it was contained within the cursing of the serpent, the devil by God. Yet in it God gave hope, a message of hope to mankind - like a brief glimpse of the sun breaking through in the middle of a dark storm. This hope centred on the Seed of the woman and in a very brief overview we saw how this pointed to the Lord Jesus and all He went through, endured and accomplished at Calvary - where His heel was struck and the devil's head was crushed.

God wisely, lovingly gave this hope and He did so before He passed sentence on the woman and then the man. They had tried to pass the blame from off themselves to another, but God would have none of it and He justly and rightly gave judgement on them. Mankind needs to realise that no one should think that they can excuse their wrongdoing and its guilt. People will not be able to pass the blame onto others, to have excuses before God. They may give reasons to others and people may accept them, but we are guilty before God and unless the Lord Jesus is their Saviour and has taken their sin, guilt and its due punishment, then people will have to face Him as their judge and be sentenced and condemned to suffer eternally in a real place - hell.

As we go on to look at the sentencing of the woman and then the man, note that, unlike the serpent and devil and also the

ground, they are not cursed. They are strongly reprov'd, have stern and awesome sentences proclaimed on them, but they are not cursed themselves. Even in passing judgement God dealt gently and tenderly with them at this point. Even though they deserved to be wiped off from the face of Creation, to suffer death in all its horrors - physical, spiritual and eternal, yet God did not do this, but after He has given them hope, He then proceeded to pass sentence upon them and so we see:

### **3. Eve's Sentence.**(v16)

Here in v16 we have the sentence passed upon the woman. It brought about great and sorrowful changes for Eve, for all women and all people. It affected her state in life and creation on 2 major levels. It brought her into:

**A. The State of Sorrow:** Eve had sought to enjoy the pleasure of life to its fullest. She aimed at pleasure, joy and self-satisfaction, but she had in its place sorrow and pain. The Hebrew word translated “sorrow” or “pain” has a similar sound for the start of the Hebrew word for tree (‘ets & ‘itstsabown) a play on words, like saying “tree” and “tremendous sorrow”.

Here the woman is told of her having children - seed, descendants, but every child she would bear would be a painful reminder of her disobedience to God's command. This is the first mention of pain or sorrow in Creation. It was as a consequence and judgement on sin that pain and sorrow came into the world – even in Eden Eve is told of pain and sorrow. These would have been alien concepts to her. No

pain or sorrow existed before the Fall and this sentence passed. It would seem from these verses that if Eve had given birth before the Fall they would have been no pain and so the body physiology of the woman was now in this sentence altered and enfeebled. We would be speculating if we said any more than that, as we are not given details, but realise all was in place for the reproduction of mankind before the Fall. In 2:24 the teaching of “one flesh” speaks of the sexual union and its right place in marriage and was known, experienced before the Fall.

With Eve suffering pain in childbirth as a sentence from God, this does not mean that no medicine and treatments can be used to ease and alleviate the pains of childbirth. Some have argued that in time past! If that were the case then we would have to argue against medicine or medical treatment of any sort to ease any pain - as all disease and sickness came in as a result of sin. Yet the sentence is not only in giving birth, but on childbearing. Matthew Henry wrote *“The sorrows of child-bearing are multiplied; for they include, not only the travailing throes, but the indispositions before (it is sorrow from the conception), and the nursing toils and vexations after”*. One of the old ladies in Pontefract when we were first there said to us about our children that at their age they were arm ache, but it was better than the heartache as they grow up!

We are to note God gave this as a sentence and He Himself brought it about and ordered it. Yet in that sorrow there is also great joy at the birth of a baby and God is so gracious and it is not all sorrow and pain.

I feel it is important for Christian men, who are, or will be husbands, to be mindful of their wives and to be as understanding and caring of them as we can be. The NT says we are to love and care for them as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her. Christian husbands are to be willing to lay down their lives for their wives, for their true good and benefit and we are to imitate our Saviour in His care for His bride that nothing is too great for Him to do for her. This love, care and desire for her best is to be the safeguard for the woman's loving obedience and submission to a husband and this brings us to the 2<sup>nd</sup> thing it brought to her:

**B. The State of Subjection:** here is the Lord making the punishment fit the crime! The woman was made from the man, to be a helpmeet, to be a companion. He and she were equal in worth and dignity. Yes they were different in strengths and yet complimentary to each other. I've quoted Matthew Henry's words before, but it will do us no harm to hear them again *"the woman was made of a rib out of the side of Adam; not made out of his head to rule over him, nor out of his feet to be trampled upon by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be beloved. Adam lost a rib, and without any diminution to his strength or comeliness (for, doubtless, the flesh was closed without a scar); but in lieu thereof he had a help meet for him, which abundantly made up his loss: what God takes away from His people He will, one way or other, restore with advantage. In this (as in many other things) Adam was a figure of Him that was to come; for out*

*of the side of Christ, the second Adam, His spouse the church was formed, when He slept the sleep, the deep sleep, of death upon the cross, in order to which His side was opened, and there came out blood and water, blood to purchase His church and water to purify it to Himself. See #Eph 5:25, 26.”*

In the created order Adam was the first and the responsible head of the woman. She had to defer to his leadership - not as a docile, servile creature, but one knowing he only wanted her best because of his love and care for her. In the fall into sin she disregarded his headship - she saw, she wanted; she ignored both her husband and the things he had taught and told her of God and His command. In fact her action said “*I am free to do as I want and choose!*” Adam’s loving and caring headship was ignored, sidelined and thrown out! She was all for women’s liberation and independence in marriage, so she ate and then she led her husband into sin. Shame on her and shame on Adam in not taking a stand for godliness.

What was before a loving safeguard for Eve, is now laid on her as a judicial sentence. The divine institution had been broken and disorder and unhappiness had occurred. Now the woman is put under a state of subjection to her husband as a judicial sentence and punishment. Sadly this can be, has been misunderstood and misused over the centuries and in doing so cruel, harsh men have used and abused their wives. This is not a statement saying women are inferior, or useless, or to be used and treated merely as things, nor are they to be

downtrodden and have no lives. Sadly some have viewed women as such.

Throughout the OT we see women given dignity and honour, leadership roles in exceptional circumstances and the picture we have of a wife in OT is best seen in Proverbs 31:10ff and there we see Ruby shown to us - she is industrious, trustworthy, earns and works hard for the benefit of her family. She is a market gardener and an entrepreneur - planting a vineyard. She's a practical woman and keeps the family well clothed. Her husband is a respected and honoured man as she is a commendation to him. She is not a harsh brash talking woman, but speaks with wisdom and in her tongue is the law of kindness (AV v26), faithful instruction (NIV). This woman is declared blessed. Yet she no doubt was in subjection to her husband and he was the head of the relationship. Sadly by NT times the Jews had been affected by pagan views of women and looked on them as inferior beings and mere chattels, things to be used and disposed of at their whim.

The NT reiterates the headship, the authority and responsibility of the husband to be the head and leader of the marriage relationship. Women are not to wear the trousers in a marriage and rule the roost. It is an inverting of divine order and not a good thing. Paul, in 1 Timothy 2:11-14, gives us Creation's order and Eve being deceived are placed side-by-side. This does not give any husband, Christian or not, the right to be a domineering, pigheaded ogre of a man! He has to remember 2 things:

**Firstly** - he has to remember that he is accountable to God first and foremost for his own life, but also his marriage and his home. He is head and accountable to God for all he knowingly lets happen in his home and in his family while under his roof. This was in place in OT e.g. Numbers 30:6-8 - a vow of his wife or a daughter heard by a husband or father could be annulled by him, or left in place even by his silent agreement. If he later said that he changed his mind about that, he would then have to bear the guilt of her breaking the vow.

**Secondly** - he would have to remember is that he is constrained to love her as Christ loves the church and Ephesians 5:22ff opens up on this. It is important to note that the woman's **submission is safeguarded** by the love of the husband to desire the best for her. Her submission to her husband is to be willing and joyful as he goes on in and leads her in the ways of God for their mutual well being. This is not to say she is inferior in worth, dignity or status, but that she recognises that in the God-given order of Creation he is the responsible head before God and she will desire to make his position and leadership easier. In fact godly Christian women are to encourage, even take the lead in making their husbands the leaders and heads of the relationship as God would have them be!

Part of the sentence on Eve was that the original God ordained plan and purpose in her relationship with Adam - subjection in wisdom, love, tenderness under his headship, coupled with dignified equality, would now be changed and would become like a heavy irritating yoke on her. In some

cases in the history of relationships between men and women, sadly husband and wives, they would learn to hate and be cruel to each other within the designed intimacy of marriage.

I had hoped to deal with this more quickly and move on to v17, but I realised in preparation I would not get that far! Yet we have gone through, too briefly and inadequately I feel, a number of aspects of the biblical view of marriage as an encouragement for us and to see the sad and low position the fall of Adam and Eve have dragged relationships through the ages. Yet we have heard something of the biblical basis of how our relationships should be under God and Christ.

I pray we would learn, apply and work out God's word in our lives as individuals and, if blessed with marriage, as a couple. Even if both partners are believers it does not guarantee a successful marriages as there can be tensions and difficulties caused by so many things in our backgrounds and personalities, caused by misunderstandings that develop, fester and spoil what marriages should be. Pray for marriage, especially the marriages of Christians, for Christian young people with so many pressures on them and pray that older believers would be good examples and Christian marriages would shine in these dark and confusing days to the glory of God.