

**Reading:** Genesis 3:17-19; Romans 8:18-27

**Theme:** Man's Sentence.

Last time we saw the sentences on Eve and noted she especially, also all were brought into a state of sorrow, that she and all women were brought into a state of subjection. In further reading commentators say it also introduced into human history the subjection of people to others as a judicial penalty. Instead of a happy, harmonious cooperation of men and women with others for the good of society, there is a proud, self-centred rule of a minority upon the majority and this inflicted even by force. We are in the last few verses of the section v14-19 in which we are shown the sentences brought on those involved in the first sin on earth and in v17-19 we see:

#### **4. Adam's Sentence.**

Adam had listened to the voice of his wife. He, as we noted last week, should have taken the lead and showed her the way in which she should have gone. He should have rebuked her and her wrong action, standing up for God and His ways. As Adam gave in to her words, so he abandoned his God given position as not only head in their relationship, but his headship, his authority over all Creation and creatures. We are to remember that Adam was appointed as supreme over Creation (1:28-29) and he could name all the creatures (2:19-20). Because he had listened to the voice of his wife, who had listened to the voice of the serpent, Adam forfeited his headship over the woman and Creation. By a judicial act, the headship over the woman is restored, but with creation he would be in a constant battle and he would no longer be the steward and ruler of this world!

God pronounced a threefold sentence on Adam and therefore upon mankind also. This threefold sentence affected where they lived, how they lived and when and how long they lived. Let's look at these 3 areas of the sentence upon Adam and mankind.

## **A. Their Environment** (v17)

Because of Adam's disobedience to the command he heard from God, the ground was cursed. Back in 1:29 Adam was told to take the fruit of the ground and he was told in 2:15 to work the ground and take care of it. The earth, the soil would have been easy to work and it would have produced the food and fruit in abundance with little effort on Adam and Eve's part. There would not have been toil of the soil. It needed planting and doing, but it would not have been a hard slog as they were to care for the land.

The Bible teaches us that "work" is an ordinance of creation and mankind was designed for work, is designed to work and not to be idle. Yes times of rest and relaxation are necessary, but permanent idleness is not a good thing and it can affect dignity, self worth and health - both physical and mental, even if we were rich enough it would be difficult to do nothing and feel content. We are designed, created to do and to achieve things. Part of mankind's duty from their creation is to care for this world. Ecology and looking after this world and our environment is very much in the Christian arena and should be something we can get involved in and not simply dismiss ecology as for the "greens" or "extremists". We need to have a Christian view of stewardship of not only our local environment, but the world. It is God's and He has put mankind on earth and part of our duty is to take care, as stewards, of His creation. Yes there are many areas we can be involved in, but we should be careful of our environment and what we do as individuals. I'm not going to develop that any further, just plant the seed for you to think about.

As God sentences Adam, He curses the ground - here the ground is used to represent the whole of creation. It wasn't that the earth, the ground, creation had done anything moral as it is a created inanimate thing, but it is cursed in respect to man. From that time

onward we are told that “*creation groans*” (Romans 8:22) from the curse it was put under. I remember back in school days when we were waiting for a lesson to start when one or 2 in the class were making a noise and in walks the teacher and he put the whole class in detention - oh the groans, complaints that we made! Creation was cursed, was frustrated and not able to do as it should and produce as it should and could have. Paul also wrote of creation’s frustration in Romans 8:20.

This world with all its wonders, beauty; with all its variety of plants and animals, seas, rivers, mountains etc is not as God originally made it or intended it to be. It is a fallen, cursed world; one that has known cataclysmic events and none more severe than Noah’s flood. These things have changed this world dramatically from the world Adam and Eve lived in. We are to realise that now there is a curse on creation, now there is a cruel nature which is red in tooth and claw; now it is an unsettled world that has huge cataclysmic events such as earthquakes, tsunamis, drought, floods and all these are as a consequence of Adam’s sin, a part of the sentence on sin which brought about huge changes in their and our environment.

What was once home soil is now enemy territory. It no longer produces its plenty, but it produces thorns and thistles - weeds, wrong plants in wrong situations which would affect the crops necessary for food. Useful, helpful bacteria would now become harmful; animals would need to be domesticated and used and even be a threatened danger. Yet even in the cursing of the soil there is hope given - they would be able to eat of it and be able to produce food. It was not all barren, useless and unproductive. Again we see there is hope and mercy mixed in with this sentence.

When we are weeding, getting infected crops, when we hear of “natural” disasters - which are not natural, but unnatural in God’s original plan for creation, then remember the sin of Adam and Eve

brought this about. Yes grieve for their sin and its consequences, but realise God's mercy also - as they were told of the hope of the ground producing the food they would need. In NT, indeed OT, we are told of the time when the curse on creation, on the ground will be removed and a new heaven and earth established, with no sin, or sin's curse affecting it and even creation is looking forward to that day (Romans 8:20ff). Yet the sentence also affects:

### **B. Their Employment and Enjoyment.** (v18-19a)

It would be brilliant to have a lovely and productive garden where we could move a few plants, or plant the seeds and pick produce in abundance. Sadly it is not the case. Productive gardens need much work and slog. In v17 Adam is told of painful toil - a hard slog and in v19 he is told of the sweat of his brow, literally 'nostrils'. It would seem that before the Fall this work was a pleasure, a stimulus and was pleasant. He would always have enough to eat and his body be sufficed. After the Fall all that changed. Matthew Henry wrote "*If Adam had not sinned, he had not sweated!*"

The harmonious relationship between Adam and all creation had been changed and a disorder was put in place. We've noted of these disorders caused by sin - the disorder in relationship between man and God, between man and woman, now it is a disorder in relationship between mankind and creation - both the ground and the creatures. Sin leads to disorder, to confusion and, as we will see, to death.

Work was no punishment, for it was there in place before the Fall, but now after the Fall, the same ground will frustratingly and reluctantly give to mankind its produce. Eve had been told of pain and sorrow in childbearing and rearing, but here it seems Adam is told how pain and sorrow would affect his employment in life and his enjoyment of life. Even as Adam and Eve obtained good things, these would be tinged, infiltrated with sorrow. They would have

food, but achieve it in such a hard slog, with sweat, work, tears, backache and heartache. We can see this today - we seem to have to work longer, harder, but thankfully modern methods have taken out the real slog and labour for most work in the west, but we work to earn to have...

Yet in our employment and enjoyment there seems to be something missing. Advertisers pick up on this and make us believe we need their products for our satisfaction, but such will not really satisfy, especially if all we have our focus on is what we can get and have in this life. Augustine said that in each of us there is a God shaped void which only God can fill. Many try to stuff it with anything and everything and yet these do not satisfy. Only God can satisfy our hearts' true real need. God has placed eternity in our hearts and as much as we live for time that eternity awareness will still be present and known to a greater or lesser extent. Until that is satisfied, we will always be yearning for something to fill it and as we try stuffing the wrong things into our lives, we will never be satisfied.

All our employments and enjoyments are tainted and affected by sin, by the punishment of God on our sin. Pain and sorrow can suddenly descend on us in the midst of great joy; great disappointment can be ours instead of the great pleasure we were expecting from something which we had looked forward to, or expected or worked so long and hard for. Adam and mankind had this sentence put on their employment and enjoyment. It is still in place and will always be so until this world is made new. See the final part:

### **C. Their Existence.** (v19b)

Adam is told that the sentence on their employment and enjoyment would be "*all the days of their life*", for it would be an ongoing thing. Yet then in v19 Adam and Eve are told of the end of their

lives. They had desired to be as God, but they are brought down to stare at the earth and its dust and are told this was the end of their mortal bodies! Chemically mankind is basically carbon and water, with other chemicals in various percentages. We are frail creatures and it doesn't take much to cause pain or to kill us. A microscopic bacteria or virus can do it; a burst capillary; 2 missed heartbeats if our heart's electrical system malfunctions; wrongly dividing cells and mutations occur and can soon spread. We are dust, feeble and frail, even the strongest man or woman is but dust.

We are mortal creatures and we will return to dust. Where are the greats of history, or even the conquerors and tyrants? Most are gone, are dead and buried and for many their dust cannot be found. Physical death is proclaimed to Adam and Eve. If man had not sinned, man had not died as we are told in Romans 5:12 *"just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned"*. What a tragedy sin unleashed on the world - death, pain, suffering, hardship and creation cursed.

All this came for a nice-looking bit of fruit! Would we have taken the fruit if we had been warned? Sadly the answer is "Yes!" We are no better than Adam. We'd have done that sin of Adam, in fact we are counted as being in him when he did it, as he is our federal head and we are included in Adam's sin and guilt. So even if we would bust a gut to always think the right things, say and do the right things, then we still have Adam's original sin and guilt and stand condemned before God and subject to death. Physical death will occur to us sooner or later, unless Christ returns to earth. This is the most noticeable effect of the warning God gave if Adam took and ate the fruit *"in dying you shall die"*. Physical death is a separation of this body of dust and our eternal soul, spirit. Yet Adam and Eve were spiritually dead from the moment they took the fruit - their eternal soul was separated from God at that moment and they were

dead spiritually, separated from the life of God. This is what we are naturally and why we are described in NT terms as being “*dead in trespasses and sins*”. If we remain like that and die physically, then there is also eternal death - to be ever separated from the love and life of God, separated to His eternal wrath and punishment in hell - a place originally designed for the punishment of the devil and the demons.

If we were left to ourselves we could not make ourselves alive to God spiritually. We could do nothing to change our spiritual state and so we would have ended this life and faced eternal death even if we did our best, tried to get right with God and tried to be alive spiritually. Thankfully where we could do nothing, we learn how God has done all that is necessary and has made a way for us to have eternal life. Paul wrote of this in Ephesians 2:1-8 - there is a way for man to rise to that sublime abode, there is a way for men and women, boys and girls to have eternal life and it's all through what God has done in and through the Lord Jesus.

We are to realise that although physical death is grievous and painful for us as we have all had loved ones die and we grieve over the loss of life in accidents and disaster, yet in many ways death is a blessing as none of us would want the likes of Hitler, Stalin, Pol Pot, Genghis Khan, Alexander the Great and many other cruel and violent men and women, who if they had remained alive would have continued to inflict unending suffering, pain, violence and misery in this world. All such ones have been and will be ushered from the scene of time, but sadly and painfully so too have our loved ones, as well as many who have done good.

We are to realise this evening that the sentence of death is upon us all - physically, as sooner or later we will all die. Death has been called the ultimate statistic, as one out of one die! Isn't it thrilling that although we live in these frail and temporal mortal bodies, we

know spiritual and eternal life and we know that we have an eternal hope which can affect our lives now? One day when our eyelids close in death, that eternal part of us will soar away to heaven and yet there is a time coming when we will have resurrection bodies - no pain, sorrow, sickness, death or sin affecting them. Then we'll enjoy and glorify God in a perfect new heaven and earth.

All this is only possible when we have the Lord Jesus as our Saviour, and not only is our sin all forgiven and we are given new life, but all this is ours, is a right inheritance for those who are heirs and joint heirs with Christ. What Adam lost in sinning, we gain much more in believing on the Lord Jesus. In Romans 5:12ff Paul writes of what we lost in Adam, but he contrasts that by saying frequently "*how much more...*" Then he goes on to describe how much more we have in Christ in contrast to what we lost in Adam. God's grace eclipses Adam's sin and we are heirs of God's grace and all the life that He gives us, so we are to live out that grace in the sure and certain hope of the glory ahead.