

“PAIN IN THE MIDST OF BLESSING”
The Curse upon the Woman: Pain in Childbirth
Genesis 3:16
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INTRODUCTION

God gave mankind a period of prolonged existence upon the earth—He could have killed them instantly. This is a dispensation of longsuffering, like a respite granted to criminals under a sentence of death. Yet, the Lord still indicates both the bitterness of sin and the reality of the wrath to come.

God put a thorn in every pleasure, and made love itself a source of pain.

I. SORROWFUL AND PAINFUL LABOR AND TOIL

- Note that the same word “toil, labor” is used in v. 17 of man’s toil.
- Difficult and unpleasant labor seems to be the main idea.
- “Greatly multiply”: **Not** that without sin the woman would have experienced *some sorrow or pain*; but, there was *some labor* associated with childbearing, though not unpleasant in the woman’s perfect state.
- The literal rendering of the phrase is “the labor of your conception.” It should not be read “your labor **and** your conception.” God did not multiply the conception of the woman; conception was to be **frequent** anyhow, even in the perfect state.
- Bearing children is not a form of punishment. Only now difficulty is associated with it.
- The next phrase confirms the view that only the unhappy aspects are described: “In hard labor (toil) you shall bring forth children.”
- Thus, the entire childbearing process—conception through birth—is accompanied by discomfort etc.
- We see divine wisdom and justice in this curse:
Wisdom—keeping awake in women a direct remembrance of the fateful deed of Eve.
Justice—the Curse is in direct relation to her sin.
- The woman sought sweet delights in eating the forbidden fruit; instead she gets unpleasantness and pain.
- Ruin comes upon the entire human race; each new entry reminds her of that ruin.

II. DESIRE FOR AND SUBMISSION TO MAN

A. “Yet your desire shall be for your husband.”

- The woman might seek to avoid having children because of the pain associated with childbearing.
- “Yet,” her desire will be for her husband—note the emphasis upon proper marriage even in this circumstance.
- “Desire, yearning”—there is an attraction that women experience for men that they cannot rout from their nature.
- Feminists often seek to banish such desire, but it persists.

- An Instinctive urge takes the place of personal control; Eve intelligently and rationally and willfully desired Adam; now this desire leaves the realm of voluntary control and is part of woman's constitution.
- B. 'He shall rule over you.'
- Man's instinctive nature is to assert authority or power and to dominate.
 - The relationship is no longer a voluntary, intelligent one—now submission is an obligation. The woman must submit; man must rule.
 - Sin distorted God's original program.
 - Yet, in Christ, intelligent control can still take hold to a large extent.
 - Spouses may **"love and cherish"** instead of "desire and dominate."
1. Justice of this aspect of the Curse
 - Eve sought to act independently of Adam; now she finds continual attraction for him as unavoidable.
 - She sought to control him by taking the initiative and then seducing him; now she is the one controlled.
 2. Distortion of this aspect of the curse
 - In subsequent history the rule of man has often become distorted and the woman has become a slave and has been oppressed.
 - The woman's desire can be distorted into helplessness or excessive craving
 - But God intended these evidences of the curse to be wholesome restraints and to be reminders to the woman.
- C. Alternate view of the statement based on Gen. 4:7: "You will desire [to rule over your husband] and he [must] master you—keep you under control.
- But such are not so much a "curse" as they are evidences of man's perverse nature.
 - Moreover, the second element would really address the man, not the woman.

III. GRACE IN THE MIDST OF THE CURSE

- A. The Joy of Motherhood still outweighs the suffering (John 16:21; still the greatest joy for most women).
- B. Childbirth is a foreshadowing of Christ's suffering resulting in the joy of offspring (Is. 53:10-11; Heb. 12:2).
- C. Childbirth is typical of the deliverance of the entire universe (Rom. 8:19, 21-22).
- D. God's grace—freely given—can both mitigate and destroy the effects of this curse; God soothes the inevitable ills of life for the believer.
- E. Childbirth in a sense becomes the very means of salvation for the woman—assuming that she accepts her place in life as she evidences faith, love, holiness, and self-control (I Tim. 2:15).
- F. Women in Christ have a new right to man's full and reciprocal affection; husbands are to love their wives as Christ loves the church (Eph. 5:25-33).

CONCLUSION

The Gospel of Christ has restored woman "to her true place in society, and investing her, as wife and mother, with her best patent of nobility."

What grace, in the midst of the curse!