

“THE CURSE UPON THE MAN”

GENESIS 3:17-19

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INTRODUCTION

God gave Adam both leadership and responsibility; Adam failed and now must be punished.

The woman is included in much of this; but man as “breadwinner” is given prominence.

The text reads merely: “*unto the man/Adam*”—since he is in contrast with “*to the woman*” v. 16.

Moreover, the curse applies to all men, not merely to Adam.

I. REASON FOR THE CURSE (17a)

Once again the punishment is related directly to the sin: “**Because....**” The punishment exactly fits the crime.

- Adam submitted to his wife when he was to rule! “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you saying, ‘You shall not eat from it...’”
- Now he finds insubordination from nature.
- He denied God’s lordship; now his lordship is spoiled also.

II. SUBSTANCE OF THE CURSE

A. Difficulty in securing sustenance: “**Cursed is the ground because of you. *Man is responsible for the cursed condition of this earth—See Romans 8.***”

1. Eat of the produce of the ground by toil—troublesome labor, including *sorrow and pain*—same word as for the woman in v. 16.
 - Cf. “the sweat of your face” in v. 19
 - Permanent condition—“all the days of your life”
 - The same is true of all humans.
 - Imperfect man cannot live in a perfect environment.
 - Man needs to be made aware of his inward wretchedness; he needs humbling, and must be brought to repentance.
 - Earth “waxes old as a garment (Heb. 1:11); withers (I Pet. 1:24).
 - Yet, even in the curse we see **grace**—“You shall eat of it.” He does eat food from the earth.
2. “Thorns and thistles it [the ground] shall grow for you—what a treat!
 - A material object—fruit of the vegetable kingdom—was used in the temptation.
 - An animal was used in the process of temptation.
 - Because of man, both of these realms fall!
 - Man’s blessing of rule now becomes a curse to him.
 - We can see evidence of such in man’s inventiveness—which enables man to bring greater ruin upon himself!

“The world is so beautiful that for a time we can forget God and our guilt before Him... the world is so terrible that we might on this account often despair of God.” [Sauer, 58]

- Man either becomes a Satan to the creation—a tyrant to misuse it,
- Or, he worships the creation in servile fear.
- Thorns and thistles are representations of the disorder of **all creation**.
- A kind of disorder most easily and commonly observed in agriculture—all must eat from such a source.
- Thorns and thistles are mutations after the Fall; they deteriorated into harmful characteristics.
- Likewise, animals with teeth and nails likely mutated into fangs and claws.
- Bacteria and viruses developed harmful processes.

- Moreover, through all of this God checks limitless proliferation.
 - Thorns, thistles, and weeds grow without man's attention. His sustenance is a constant struggle with the elements.
 - Man's diet is still **vegetable**—"You shall eat the plants of the field."
 - Yet, his diet now seems more restrictive compared with 1:29—"Every plant...." Moreover, he is restricted from the trees of the Garden of Eden.
3. "By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread."
- Contrast this with the *pleasant work* in the Garden.
 - Hard labor is now necessary in order to obtain food.
 - "Bread" is representative of all food; similar to "toil" in v. 17.
- B. Death—"Till you return to the ground."
- "Your hard labor will finally kill you!"
 - The soil will finally conquer man and claim him!
 - Such would not have been man's lot if he had not sinned.
 - Man was taken from the ground; since he is now sinful he will return to it.
 - Man is "dust" and he returns to dust. **How can man exalt himself?**
- "Forthwith 'life' is merely a gradual dying, and birth is the beginning of death."

III. REMEDY OF THE CURSE

- A. Christ was made a **curse for us**—Gal. 3:13
- He is "the Man of sorrows" (Is. 53:3)
 - He wore **thorns** as a crown (Mk. 15:17)
 - In His agony in Gethsemane, His sweat became as drops of blood (Lk. 22:44)
 - He died for the sins of the world.

CONCLUSION

Restoration in Christ of a cursed world: [Comparing Genesis with Revelation]

- The cursed ground (Gen. 3:17)—No more curse (Rev. 22:3)
- Daily Sorrow (3:17)—No more sorrow (21:4)
- Thorns and thistles (3:18)—No more pain (21:4)
- Sweat on the face (3:19)—Tears wiped away (21:4)
- Eating herbs (3:18)—Twelve kinds of fruit (22:2)
- Return to the dust (3:19)—No more death (21:4)
- Continual evil (6:5)—Nothing defiling (21:27)
- Coats of skin (3:21)—Fine linen, white and clean (19:14)
- Satan opposing (3:15)—Satan banished (20:10)
- Kept from the tree of life (3:24)—Access to the tree (22:14)
- Banished from the Garden (3:23)—Free entry into the city (22:14)
- A Redeemer promised (3:15)—redemption accomplished (5:9-10)

Even now we have a foretaste of all of this!

- We have sorrow, yet rejoice (II Cor. 6:10)
- A thorn in the flesh, yet grace that is sufficient (II Cor. 12:7-9)
- Labor night and day (Acts 20:31), yet rest in Him (Mt. 11:28)
- Conformable unto His death—but yet we experience the power of His resurrection (Phil. 3:10)