

The Curse on the Man, Part 1

Scripture: Genesis 3:17–19

Code: 90-245

We have some time, of course, tonight to look in to the Word of God, and I would encourage you to turn in your Bible to Genesis chapter 3 - back to the beginning. Genesis 3, the origin and impact of sin. That is really the title for the whole chapter. We find ourselves tonight in verses 17 to 19, the divine curse on the man.

Our modern civilization has come to an astonishing grasp of the physical world and all of its elements. I think all of us are fairly well staggered by the scientific advancement that we have seen in our lifetime. Science has achieved things that we never, ever could have imagined.

A few weeks before I came to be the pastor here at Grace church back in 1969, they had a guest preacher who preached a sermon titled, "Why Men Will Never Reach the Moon." A few weeks later, he was proven wrong. I don't think anybody stoned him over it, but he had no way that he could conceive that such a thing could happen. And now that seems like a small accomplishment in the complexities of space travel.

We have seen man figure out ways to unlock the genetic code, to study DNA and to repair DNA. We have seen man effectively work in cloning animals. His work in satellite communications staggers me. Driving along, plucking the right voice out of space on my little cell phone is still a wonder to me. Chemicals have been used in every imaginable way to provide a level of life, both in terms of comfort as well as treatment medically. Industrialization has brought about manufacturing of things that are really astounding for us.

All of that simply to paint a bit of a picture in your mind that indicates to us that we have made staggering progress in our grasp of the elements of the physical world, and we seem to be moving at an incredibly rapid rate. Computerization is mind boggling to all of us, and what is being achieved in little chips staggers the imagination.

Equally amazing to me is the absence of any understanding of spiritual reality. We haven't gone anywhere at all. While there has been all of this amazing physical advancement, there has been virtually zero spiritual advancement. The natural world is in our grasp. We have been able to extract the wonders of creation in ways that generations before us would never even imagine and I'm sure shall in the future unlock the mysteries of the physical world in ways that we now can't even imagine.

And while we have made these wondrous discoveries and come to astonishing and astounding capabilities with the physical world, the supernatural spiritual world is completely unknown to modern man. And with all of his physical advancements, he cannot resolve any of the issues of the human heart. He cannot solve any of the problems of the world, the troubles. He does not understand man, does not understand why he is the way he is; therefore, he cannot explain nor can he remedy his problems.

Things in the hearts of people are the way they are, not because of evolution, not because of mutation, not because of bad education, not because of bad psychology or lack of self-esteem. There is no natural explanation for the way things are and, consequently, man can't understand why they're the way they are because all he knows is the natural world. Making immense physical progress, he has made no spiritual progress at all. In fact, while he is advancing physically, he is declining spiritually.

The fact of the matter is: man is worse than he's ever been spiritually, and man will never be able to solve his problems, his moral problems, his spiritual problems, the problem of evil, the problem of crime, the problem of dissatisfaction, disappointment, lack of fulfillment, shattered relationships, et cetera, et cetera, without a proper understanding of the problem. And we go back to what we've been saying all along in this series: Unless you have an accurate worldview, unless you see things the way they really are, then you cannot solve the problem. The diagnosis is critical if you want the cure.

You can take all the secular educators of the world, you can take all the secular teachers of the world, you can get together all the erudite philosophers of the world and all of the professors and all of the researchers and all of the writers and all of the psychologists and all the doctors of all sorts, and you can gather them all together and they will not be able to diagnose man's problem. And because they can't diagnose it, they can't cure it. No matter how well they grasp the intricacies and the mysteries of the physical realm, they are utterly oblivious to the realities of the spiritual one.

There's only really one way that they can turn if they want to understand the supernatural and to understand the spiritual and that is they have to turn to us, the people who know the Word of God - and they aren't interested in doing that. They want us out of the public discourse. They want us out of the public dialogue. They do not want the Bible in the schools. They don't want the Bible anywhere near the public discourse. They don't want any information from Christians. People who believe the Bible threaten them.

You can take all the criminologists, you can take all the behaviorists, all the child psychologists, gather them together, and they cannot understand why people are the way they are and why they behave the way they behave. The only way you'll ever know that is to turn to the Bible because the Bible tells us why people are the way they are. Why we are the way we are.

Genesis chapter 3 is where the story begins. This is God's history that He wrote (using the pen of Moses) to describe for us why things are the way they are in man's world. In Genesis chapter 1, when God created man, in verse 26, God said, "Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, over the cattle and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth. And God created man in His own image. In the image of God, He created him; male and female, He created them.

"God blessed them. God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth, subdue it, rule over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the sky, and every living thing that moves on the earth.' God said, 'I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of all the earth, every tree which has fruit yielding seed, it shall be food for you. And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the sky and to everything that moves on the earth which has life, I have given every green

plant for food and it was so.' And God saw all that He had made and behold, it was very good."

The original creation, it was very good. Man was very good. There was no evil in the world. There was no dissatisfaction in the world. There was no lack of fulfillment in the world. There was no crime in the world. There was no evil in the world. Everything was very good.

Over in chapter 2, the story goes on, verse 7, recapitulating how God actually made man. It describes the making of man in chapter 1. It describes it in more detail in chapter 2 but it's the same creation. Giving us more detail, it tells us in verse 7, "The Lord God formed man from dust," dust from the ground, "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. Man became a living being. And the Lord God planted a garden toward the east in Eden. There He placed the man whom He had formed.

"And out of the ground, the Lord God caused to grow every tree that is pleasing to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." Here's the introduction of the very concept of evil. Down in verse 16, "The Lord God commanded the man, saying, 'From any tree in the garden you may eat freely, but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die.'"

There was a probation in perfection in this paradise called Eden. There was a probation there, and that was that God put man on probation to see if he would be obedient by giving him only one prohibition, one thing he could not do. He said, "Don't do that. Just that one thing. You can have everything else I've made in the paradise, just do not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil or if you do, you'll die." Everything was very good then, everything was wonderful then. Bliss.

And then in chapter 3, verse 6, "The woman saw that the tree" - the tree of the knowledge of good and evil - "was good for food, it was a delight to the eyes. The tree was desirable to make one wise. She took from its fruit and ate. She gave also to her husband with her and he ate." And in that act of disobedience, sin entered the world and the whole human race was plunged into iniquity and evil.

In Romans chapter 5, it says in that act, the whole human race died. Read Romans 5:12 to 19 and you will read that in Adam, all died, the whole race died. Adam sinned, Eve sinned, and therefore, the principle of death became operative in the world, in all parts of the world - the plant world, the animal world, the bacteria world, the insect world. Even the physical universe began to decay and disintegrate, and man fell from his innocence and his goodness into sin.

Literally, that one act catapulted the whole universe into iniquity, and that's why things are the way they are, because of that act in the garden. That is the only revelation that we have from God of the reason that the things are the way they are. When Adam and Eve ate and disobeyed God, the principle of death entered into the world. God had said, "In the day you eat, you'll die." They didn't drop dead on the spot, but the principle of death began to operate.

And so the world is dying. The planet is dying. The stellar bodies are dying. The other planets, the solar system is dying. Everything on the earth is dying. The earth itself is dying. And man is in the cycle of death. That is the immediate consequence of sin. That is why the world is the way it is, because man is a dying sinner. He is perverted, he is twisted, he is wretched, he is evil, and that's why he behaves the way he behaves, and he cannot remedy that on his own, nor can society

remedy it for him.

But you have something in addition to that. The world is the way it is, not only because of the consequences built into man's disobedience, but the world is the way it is also because in addition to the principle of death that is now operative and the principle of sin that is now operative, you have the specific curses of God, and they are in addition to that. And we've come in chapter 3 to those curses. We've seen in verses 14 and 15 that God cursed Satan and cursed the serpent, and then in verse 16, we saw that God cursed the woman - actually, verses 15 and 16 because the woman is mentioned in verse 15, although the specific curse that falls in her realm comes in verse 16.

"To the woman, He said, 'I will greatly multiply your pain and conception. In pain you shall bring forth children, yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.'" Now, you remember the woman has the principle of sin operative because in the disobedience, the principle of sin took hold, took root in her nature and, of course, she passed it on to the whole human race. But in addition to the principle of sin and death, in Adam we all died, in the sin of Adam and Eve the whole race fell into death and decay and degeneration and iniquity.

But in addition to that, the woman is also given a curse in the realm where she lives her life. It affects her childbearing and her relationship to her husband. The home is where God designed a woman to be. That is her realm. That is her sphere. And so God places a unique curse on her realm so that she is going to find life particularly difficult in her relationship with her children and her husband. Childbirth itself will take her right down to the edge of death, and she will have multiplied conceptions in a way never intended before the fall, which puts her at the door of death very frequently.

And for most of human history, as you well know, and in third-world countries today, women routinely die in childbearing, as well as routinely losing their children even if they survive. So a woman feels the curse in the very realm in which she exists in that of bearing children and in the relationship with her husband. She desires to have her own way and have her own will and dominate, and he controls her. So there in the very sphere of her life, she finds the curse operating, which is a constant reminder - designed by God to be a constant reminder - of the terrible nature of sin.

Every woman who struggles with the pain of childbirth, with the problems of conception, with the struggles of raising children, every woman who knows the experience of conflict with her husband should be reminded by that of the terribleness of sin.

But what is a man's realm? If the woman's realm is the home, where is the man's world? Well, let's look at verse 17 and find out because here comes the curse on the men. "Then to the man, He said, '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, cursed is the ground because of you. In toil, you shall eat of it all the days of your life, both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you, and you shall eat the plants of the field by the sweat of your face; you shall eat bread until you return to the ground because from it you were taken, for you are dust and to dust you shall return.'"

There's a lot of dirt in that curse. And if the woman's place is the home, the man's place was the field. It's the workplace. Of course, in Genesis, that's toiling in the field. That was an agricultural

realm in the which man lived. A man was not deceived like the woman, he chose to disobey God willfully and premeditatedly, chose to do what his wife wanted him to do. He chose his wife over the Word of God. And he, not the woman, as the head of the union and the head of the race, was held culpable for the sin. That's why in Adam we die, rather than in Eve. He is the head of that union, he is therefore the head of the race.

And so he, joining in the sin of his wife, is then held responsible because he abdicates his authority and submits to her for plunging the whole human race into decay, disorder, disease, destruction, and death. Paradise was lost, then, for all time for all humanity. The whole race became sinful.

But the curse is something beyond just decay and disorder and disease, death, destruction. The curse has to do with his world. Her world is the family, she's cursed in her world. His world is the field, the workplace, and he's cursed in the workplace. She struggles with the reality of sin in the home; he struggles with the reality of sin when he goes out to plow the field. All of the natural effects of fallenness and sin are there, but these are the special effects, not the natural effects. These are the special effects. They come in the dominant sphere in which the woman lives and the dominant sphere in which the man lives.

Now, as we look at these three verses, 17, 18, and 19, just three things to think about: the cause of this curse, the curse itself, and the consequence of it. Let's look at the cause of it, verse 17a: "To Adam, He said, '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, cursed'" is the next word. And the reason is in the first part of verse 17, "because you listened to the voice of your wife and you have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying you shall not eat from it," that's why you're cursed.

God speaks to Adam here and He says to him, "There is a reason for this special effect." This isn't just the natural effect of decay and death, there's a reason for the special effect which is designed to be a particular punishment placed upon the man as a reminder of the severity of sin. And in God doing this, He gives us a very simple, very straightforward, and very complete statement of Adam's motivation. You wonder, how did Eve get Adam to get into this thing, how did she gain his complicity in it? Back in chapter 3 and verse 6, it says that she took from its fruit and ate, she gave to her husband with her and he ate."

At that point, it doesn't say why he did that. Maybe when we were going through that, you were saying to yourself, "Why would he do that? Well, what did she say? What was going on? What was the dynamic?" Now, we know from 1 Timothy 2 that he was not deceived. It tells us there the man was not deceived. He was not deceived by Satan and, therefore, we can assume that perhaps he wasn't even there when the conversation was going on between Satan and Eve. And that would have been the way Satan would have chosen to have it, so that he could pull the woman out from under the man's protection and authority and deceive her.

What it tells us here in verse 17 is what it doesn't tell us back in verse 6. The reason that he did this was because he listened to the voice of his wife rather than the voice of God. He decided to do what she wanted him to do rather than what God commanded him to do. It's that simple.

Women have always had great power over men. And apparently, she had some power over Adam. I think it's good to meet the desires of your wife, it's good to meet the requests of your wife, but not when she is asking you to disobey God. This is clear-cut. She knew what God had said, he knew what God had said. But she wanted him to eat. She had done it under the delusion that she would now know good and evil, that she would be like God. This was an act of self-exaltation. She wanted him to do it. And he listened to her voice rather than the command of God, it's that simple. He did what his wife wanted him to do.

Now, we all cave in to that in life in general. And sometimes it may not even be what we particularly want to do. There's a certain measure of that that's reasonable and probably good for the relationship, but never when we are being asked to violate a divine command.

Let's go back to the text, look a little more closely. Verse 17, "Then to Adam, He said," by the way, this is the first time man is named Adam. It's the first time. He's always the man up to now, the man and the woman, but this is the first time the man is called Adam. Down in verse 20 is the first time the woman is called Eve. The Hebrew grammar indicates that the word for man, *adam*, that's the word that's been used, should now be considered a proper noun. Why? Because the definite article is dropped. Up until now it's been the man—the *adam*, the *adam*, the *adam*—and now it's Adam.

So he takes on the name from the word that means man, and I think it's right that this is a name because the Hebrew language makes the distinction. "And God says, 'Because you listened to the voice of your wife rather than the voice of God, because rather than ruling her, you let her rule you, rather than showing her by example what was right, obedience to God, you followed her example of disobedience to God; rather than honoring God, you honored your wife who, rather than honoring God, had honored the serpent.'"

There was no deception here on the part of Adam. There was no ignorance on the part of Adam. There was no confusion on the part of Adam. There are no subtleties here, it is very simply this: He did what his wife told him to do and she told him to do what she wanted rather than what God wanted and he did it.

Hopefully, you never let your spouse draw you into sinful behavior, draw you into sinful conversation, draw you into sinful entertainment, draw you into sinful attitudes, draw you into sinful self-indulgence, draw you into sinful materialism, draw you into sinful unfaithfulness, draw you into sinful worldliness or carnality or anything else that is contrary to the will and command and the glory of God. But that is exactly what Adam did. "You've listened to the voice of his wife," God said, "and you've eaten from the tree," it's that simple.

You don't need to get too profound about it, she wanted it, and he wanted to please her rather than pleasing God. It was a deliberate, premeditated act of rebellion against God in which Adam chose his wife over God. And you know, as you think about it, it is quite interesting thing that the act itself didn't have any moral element to it, in that I mean there's nothing immoral about eating something. In fact, in 1 Timothy 4 - the New Testament - verses 3 and 4 says that you can eat anything. Everything has been provided by God and is to be received with thanksgiving, right? You can eat anything.

Nothing immoral about eating. Nothing immoral about picking a piece of fruit off a tree and eating

it. Nothing immoral about picking a piece of fruit off a tree and offering it to your husband. I mean it didn't break any moral law. It didn't harm any other person. It wasn't any kind of violation of relationships. Yet that one act of eating catapulted the whole human race out of paradise into hell. Amazing.

And you know, if it had been some moral thing, if it had been something that we would sort of paint as a major iniquity, we might be under the illusion that it is the major iniquities that concern God. Let me tell you something, folks. This, on the surface, appears very simple, very non-moral, but any violation of God's law is a damning violation - any violation, even something as simple as this. I think that may be what the apostle Paul had in mind when he said, "Whether you eat or drink, do all to the glory of God."

And the key is, "I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat from it,' but you did." So here is the cause of the curse. The man is indicted by God, he is indicted for premeditated, willful disregard for God's clear word. We can understand that, can't we? There's nothing mystical here. This is just plain and simple, God said this, my wife said this, I chose to do what my wife wanted me to do.

So the man is indicted for a first-degree crime, premeditated, willful disregard of God, and the man deserves to die. He does not deserve to live, he deserves to die, and he well deserved to die on the spot. Obviously, that's not what happened. The seeds of death began to operate and decay immediately entered in, and death would come inevitably and eventually. But he deserved to die on the spot and so did Eve.

Why didn't God kill them? Why didn't He? There's one reason: because He's the God of what? He's the God of grace and mercy. You know, these liberals and critics of the Bible say, "Oh, the God of the Old Testament is a terrible God." The God of the Old Testament, some in the past called Him a demiurge, a scandalous, vicious sub-god. Anybody who would do the things that He would do, wiping out the Canaanites, calling for the death of some little boys who yelled "baldy" at a prophet and have bears come out of the woods and shred those little boys - they weren't really little boys, they were young men in the Hebrew.

Now, what kind of God is going to open the ground and swallow people? What kind of a God is going to tell the Israelites to massacre people, to kill people? What kind of God is this? What kind of a God kills those people?

Well, that's not really the question. The question is what kind of a God lets anybody live? Isn't that a better question? Because we all deserve to what? To die. The question isn't why did God kill those people, the question is: Why does He let anybody live? The killing is the exception. And this is a matter that is central to Scripture, that God is the God of mercy, and you see it immediately in the case of Adam and Eve. And when we get down to verses 20 to 24 in our next study, we're going to learn in those verses that redemption is actually promised right then and right there, immediately after the curse.

So they were called to honor God, they were called to glorify God, to obey God. They didn't do it. They didn't find in God their highest love, their purest delight, their greatest joy. They disobeyed. They had a clear word from God that the sentence for that disobedience was death and yet when they sinned, God withheld His hand and demonstrated mercy and grace to them. And the promise of

redemption also was in the curse to Eve, that there would come one from the woman who would bruise the serpent's head. There's more of that redemptive promise in verses 20 to 24, as I said.

But the question when you study the Old Testament is not the question, Why does God kill these people? The question is, Why does He let so many people live who should be dead? The wages of sin is what? Death. The soul that sins, it shall die. And the critics say, you know, there's Nadab and Abihu in Leviticus chapter 10, and God kills them. And there's poor Uzzah - the ark is being transported, and as it's being transported (2 Samuel 6) it bounces along on the back of a cart - they shouldn't have had it on a cart, it was supposed to be carried on poles.

But they put it on a cart, which was against what Scripture said. Nonetheless, the thing starts to fall off the cart. A man named Uzzah holds his hand over and tries to stop it from falling off the cart and being desecrated some way and immediately God kills him. People say, "What kind of a God would do that?" Korah, Dathan, and Abiram and the ground swallows them up. What kind of a God does that?

That's not really the question. Sure, there are people that God executed, and they are illustrations from time to time of what we all deserve immediately. Let me show you an illustration of that. Look at Luke 13. I think this is really a very fascinating portion of Scripture that often gets overlooked, but it teaches a profound lesson. Luke 13, verse 1. "Now, on the same occasion there were some present who reported to Him" - to Jesus - "about the Galileans." There were some Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifice.

Here's the picture: Some of the Jews up in Galilee had come down to Judea, to Jerusalem, to the temple to offer sacrifices. And they're in there, offering their sacrifices. That's supposed to be the right thing to do, they were following Old Testament sacrificial prescription. They were doing what the Old Testament said they should do. And these Galileans were down there offering their sacrifices and Pilate comes in _____ men and executes them. And the question in the mind of the people is: What is God doing?

I mean these are obedient people, these are people at the temple doing their sacrifices according to the law of God. How can God let the pagan Romans come in and slaughter them? What kind of a God does that? In verse 2, Jesus answered and said to them, "Do you suppose that these Galileans were greater sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered this fate? Or maybe you think the answer to the question is, 'Well, even though they were doing their sacrifices, even though they were making their offerings according to the Old Testament law, the truth of the matter is they were wretched and terrible sinners, and holy God was so offended by their sin that their sacrifices were mere hypocrisy, and He just sent the troops of Pilate in there to massacre them.'

"Do you suppose that? They were just greater sinners than everybody else?" Verse 3, "I tell you" - what? - "no." No, they weren't greater sinners. "But unless you repent, you will all likewise perish." Wow. Do you get the answer? They're saying, "Why did this happen? Were these worse sinners than everybody else?" And Jesus says, "No, they weren't, and let me tell you something: If you don't repent, the same thing could happen to you."

God doesn't need any reason to execute a sinner at any time He chooses to have it happen. Right? The question is not why do people die, the question is why does anybody live, that's the

question. And Jesus' answer affirms it. He simply says, "Well, they weren't the worst of all sinners, and I'm telling you, if you don't repent, the same thing could happen to you." God interjects into history plenty of illustrations of what all of us immediately deserve.

In verse 4, He carries the thing a little further. There were some eighteen people. He says, "Do you suppose those eighteen people on whom the tower in Siloam fell" - now, apparently, what happened was, there was a tower in the area of Siloam, and it fell over. And there were just eighteen innocent people standing there, and it crushed them to death. "Do you imagine," He says, "that they were worse culprits than all the men who lived in Jerusalem?" Did the tower fall on them because they were worse than everybody else?

Verse 5, "I tell you" - what? "No." No, they weren't worse than everybody else. "If you don't repent, the same thing could happen to you." You see, God doesn't have to justify why it is that certain people die. They die because they deserve to die, because anybody who sins against God deserves to die. The question isn't: Why do people die? The question is: Why do people live? That's mercy.

Well, when we look back - let's go back to Genesis 3. Adam and his wife, they should have died on the spot. People say, "Well, there's certainly no grace in the Old Testament." There certainly is. There's plenty of grace in the Old Testament. You want to hear something? There is as much grace in the Old Testament as there is in the New Testament - because sinners live. That's common grace, mercy. And as I said, in verses 20 to 24, we're going to see that God even provides redemption for Adam and for Eve.

And God didn't do to Adam or Eve what He did to the disobedient angels, cast them out of heaven with no hope of redemption, sentence them to an eternal lake of fire. But they deserved to die because it was a premeditated and willful act. Oh, the woman, she was deceived. Adam was not. Adam, being the head of the union between himself and the woman and therefore the head of the race, when he sinned willfully in a premeditated way, plunged the whole race into sin, and for that reason a special curse is pronounced upon the man. This is the special effect - not the natural effect - of his sin.

The curse then follows the cause. The curse in verses 17 and 18, "Cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life, both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you, and you shall eat the plants of the field; by the sweat of your face, you shall eat bread." This is the curse.

Now, notice that the curse - interesting - isn't particularly on the man personally but it's on the sphere of the man, as in the case of the woman. The curse was in her relationship with her children and her husband, her realm. And so it is with the man. Man, the king of the earth, becomes subordinate to dirt. The ground feels nothing, "cursed is the ground," the ground isn't going, "Oh, woe is me." The ground is senseless, inanimate. It doesn't know anything. It doesn't feel anything. But the man feels it.

By the way, the word "ground" is *adamah*. The man is *adam*, the ground is *adamah* because the man comes from the ground, dust to dust. And he has a relationship with the ground because it's out of the ground that man draws his life. Everything we eat comes out of the ground, doesn't it? You say, "Well, what about chickens? Animals above the ground?" They survive by eating what comes

out of the ground, right? The ground is the source of food in the food chain, even among the animals.

The curse is not directly on man as it was not directly on woman, but is indirectly on them both because it affects the sphere in which they live, and the woman's sphere is the home, and the man's home is the field. The woman suffers the effect of the curse in the home, the place of her life and labor. The man suffers the effects of the curse in the field, the place of his life and labor. For her, the pain comes in a relationship between her children and her husband; for him, the pain comes in relationship with the ground as the battle for bread is waged.

The woman engages in the battle for the holiness and the happiness of the family. The man engages in the battle for the food and support of the family. Man's life is not going to be easy. Not only is he personally sinful, depraved, fallen, decaying, and headed toward death, but he's going to have another problem, he's going to find that the very ground which provides for him his life and sustenance for himself and his family is not going to willfully submit to him. Life becomes for him hard work. The joy of paradise is gone.

You know, once, when he was in the garden, there was just everything there - everything for him to eat, back in chapter 2. It was all pleasing, verse 9. It was all good for food, and he could just enjoy it. Oh, he needed to do a little cultivating but he expended no energy, he just plucked its wondrous fruits. And now all of a sudden the ground becomes his enemy and he has to subdue it. He becomes subordinate to the dirt. There's a permanent rupture in man's easy relationship to the life that God had originally given him in paradise.

Now, to help you understand what this means, I can flip it over and what would a blessed earth be like? Turn to Deuteronomy chapter 33. It's good to kind of teach a little bit by contrast here. Deuteronomy 33, verse 13, we get here a picture of a blessed earth, blessed ground. This is what it would be like. Deuteronomy 33, verse 13, speaking of the blessing of God here on Joseph, it says, "Blessed of the Lord be His land," and here's what it would be like if God really blessed the land. "The choice things of heaven, the land would know dew and from the deep lying beneath."

In other words, it would be well watered. There would be water coming down from above. There would be water coming up from below. "And there would be a choice yield of the sun and there would be choice produce of the months." In other words, the seasons, the sun would create the growth that the water would support. "And there would come" - verse 15 - "the best things of the ancient mountains and choice things of the everlasting hills," verse 16, "choice things of the earth and its fullness." That would be the blessed ground, well-watered, fertile, productive land.

That would be a blessed land and that would be much like Eden. You remember back in chapter 2 of Genesis that Eden was well watered. There were actually four rivers, a river flowing out of Eden and splitting into four parts, incredibly fertile land. It was productive and it was free from weeds, free from thorns and thistles, free from drought. And all a man needed to do was just pick its treasures and enjoy them without exerting himself.

A cursed ground is the opposite, then. Lack of water, problems with the soil, problems with weeds, problems with the elements, problems with the weather, problems with destructive animals, problems with destructive birds, problems with destructive organisms and insects. Those are all the problems that plague the ground. The earth will yield enough, it'll yield its bounty. In fact, the earth will yield a

rich and wonderful variety for man to enjoy, but in order for that to happen, it's going to take a tremendous effort to get that bounty out of the ground.

Today for lunch, my wife gave me a little stack of carrots to munch on, and normally I just munch away, you know. But when I was eating those little carrots, you know, those little small baby carrots, rounded off carrots, I had a new appreciation for them because I just went through the Bolthouse carrot plant in Bakersfield a few days ago where they produce nine million of those little bags a week. This is a massive place, and I learned about all of the issues that they go through to get that little thing on my lunch plate. Staggering.

The massive amount of land that has to be subdued, the massive amount of water that has to be piped in, the very great care that's taken to protect the crop from insects, organisms, weeds, and how carefully everything is done. And I went over to the machine shop where they literally manufacture their own machinery to get those carrots out of the ground. They build them from the ground up. The only thing they bring in is the engine, the rest they build to make sure they get all of that out of the ground delicately and send it through a process.

And then, once those carrots come into this massive plant where thousands of people are all lined up, they put those carrots through the kind of equipment that cuts them into those nice little baby carrots and then they take all the rest that's left over and they make carrot juice and carrot sticks and carrot diced for your little salads and on and on and on they go. And the manufacturing was absolutely incredible. And, you know, we at this end of the food chain just eat the little carrot. But I had a new appreciation for the staggering effort that is behind this little carrot.

Man has had to tax his mechanical ability, his engineering ability, his agricultural ability, his scientific ability, his chemical ability, his relational ability to develop a team of workers - it's a staggering thing. You go to a third-world country and you see the opposite of all of that. You see people with very primitive instruments in their hands, out somewhere in a little piece of ground. They're fighting, in many cases, an absolutely losing battle to get out of the ground something to feed their family. The earth can yield a great amount, but it takes a massive effort, and either you do the work or you pay the money for the people who do the work.

Someday the world is going to see an earth where the curse has been removed. Look at Isaiah chapter 30. We can't look at all of the passages but Isaiah chapter 30, verse 23, this describes the coming kingdom, the millennial kingdom, when the curse is mitigated. And it says, "Then the Lord will give you rain for the seed which you will sow in the ground, bread from the yield of the ground, it will be rich and plenteous. On that day, your livestock will graze in a roomy pasture. Oxen and donkeys, which work the ground, will eat salted fodder which has been winnowed with shovel and fork.

And on every lofty mountain and on every high hill, there will be streams running with water on the day of the great slaughter, when the towers fall. The light of the moon will be as the light of the sun," which means everything will grow even in the night. "The sun will be seven times brighter, like the light of seven days as the Lord binds up the fracture of His people and heals the bruise He has inflicted."

There's going to be a change in the earth and its productivity. In the thirty-second chapter of Isaiah and verse 15, it talks about the wilderness becoming a fertile field. The fertile field will be considered

like a forest. In other words, the crop will just grow, and it'll grow fast and it'll grow tall and be like a forest because it'll be so profuse.

The thirty-fifth - what a wonderful chapter this is, thirty-fifth - listen to this - of Isaiah, "The wilderness in the desert will be glad, the Arabah" - or the desert - "will rejoice and blossom like the crocus," which is a bulb plant that we're familiar with. "It will blossom profusely and rejoice with rejoicing and shout of joy. The glory of Lebanon will be given to it, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon. They'll see the glory of the Lord, the majesty of her God." Again, this is the future kingdom on earth. This is going to be a wondrous kingdom.

"The eyes of the blind are going to be opened," verse 5, "the ears of the deaf will be unstopped, the lame will leap like a deer, the tongue of the dumb will shout for joy; waters will break forth in the wilderness, streams in the Arabah. The scorched land will become a pool and the thirsty ground, springs of water. In the haunts of jackals, its resting place, grass becomes reeds and rushes. A highway will be there, a roadway - be called the Highway of Holiness," and so forth and so forth. This is going to be in the future earth when the Lord is King.

In Isaiah 41, the prophet has more to say about that in verse 18. "I will open rivers on the bare heights, springs in the midst of the valleys, make the wilderness a pool of water; the dry land, fountains of water. I'll put the cedar in the wilderness" - that is, trees will grow in the desert - the acacia, the myrtle, the olive tree, I'll place the juniper in the desert, together with the box tree and the cypress."

Over in chapter 43, it goes on, verse 19, "I will do something new, I'll make a roadway in the wilderness, rivers in the desert." Again, the great need for water in the wilderness. You see it again, just one more, in the fifty-fifth chapter of Isaiah, verse 12, "You will go out with joy, be led forth with peace. The mountains, the hills will break into shouts of joy before you, the trees of the field will clap their hands. Instead of a thorn bush, the cypress will come; instead of a nettle, the myrtle will come as a memorial to the Lord, the everlasting sign which will not be cut off."

So there, you get a little bit of a glimpse of what the earth is going to be like when the curse is removed. That is the way the world will be when Christ takes the curse off. It'll be something like (although not exactly like) it was in Eden. But until that time - let's go back to Genesis chapter 3. Until that time, this ground is cursed and man, in order to get out of it what he needs to support his life and feed his family, is going to have to toil. It says, "Cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life."

Toil is *itstsabon* in Hebrew, it means misery, it means sorrow, or it can be translated as here, toil. Human labor is in view, and it's not just agriculture, it's more than that. It's all the work in which man engages. The ground is representative of man's sphere. In that day it was only agrarian work. Psalm 127:2 says, "The bread of sorrows, the bread of anxious toil." For us to eat, for us to provide food and a place to live for our families calls for a life time of work, toil, effort.

Proverbs 5:10, "Let strangers be filled with your strength and your hard-earned goods go to the house of an alien." Again, goods are hard earned. It takes a lifetime of work. In chapter 10 of Proverbs, verse 22, we find that it is the blessing of the Lord that makes rich, but everywhere else in Proverbs, it is associated with hard work. It says in that verse, "It is the blessing of the Lord that

makes rich and He adds no sorrow to it.” The work part has the sorrow built into it; God adds no sorrow to the things that He graciously gives us. In Proverbs 24, verse 23, again it’s a similar thing and you find it in Isaiah 63.

So the realm of man’s life is a place of toil, a place of sorrows. I love that, Psalm 127:2, “He eats the bread of sorrow.” Men will eat and he will provide for his family, just as children and husbands will be a blessing to their wives and their mothers but not without great effort and not without great toil and not without great pain. The earth yields, but it yields only with immense effort.

A worker’s appetite (Proverbs 16:26) urges him on, works for him, because of his hunger. If he wants to eat, he has to work. That’s the way it is. In Proverbs 27, “Know well the conditions of your flocks,” verse 23, “pay attention to your herds.” You better do that because if you don’t take care of what you have, you’re going to lose it. So we live in a life of work.

Look at Ecclesiastes for a moment. I want to just kind of fill up this picture for you. Ecclesiastes chapter 2. This, of course, is a man looking at life, and in verse 11 of Ecclesiastes 2, he says, “Thus I considered all my activities, all my work which my hands had done and the labor which I had exerted. And behold, all was vanity and striving after wind, and there was no profit under the sun.”

(“What am I doing in my life? Work, work, work, work, work, and what does it lead me to? More work. If everybody died, I wouldn’t have to work. As long as I keep feeding them, they stay alive. I have to keep working. It’s a vicious circle.”) Verse 17: “I hated life, for the work which had been done under the sun was grievous to me because everything is futility and striving after wind, so I hated all the fruit of my labor for which I had labored under the sun, for I must leave it to the man who will come after me.” (“And then the worst part is I’ve done so well, I’ve got a whole lot, I’m going to leave it to somebody.”)

“I don’t even know” - verse 19 - “if he’ll be a wise man or a fool, yet he’ll have control over all the fruit of my labor, for which I have labored by acting wisely under the sun. This, too, is vanity.” (“I don’t like the whole idea. I don’t like the idea of working. I don’t like the idea of working and succeeding and having to leave it to some fool who may waste it.”) Verse 23 says, “All his days of labor are painful and grievous and even at night, his mind doesn’t rest.”

Can you identify with that? You work all day, you go home, you can’t go to sleep because you’ve got a problem at work you’ve got to solve or because you’ve got some problems in your job or you’ve got some bad relationships or you might lose your job or you don’t like things the way they’re going. Work, work, work, work.

Chapter 3 of Ecclesiastes verse 9, “What profit is there to the worker from that in which he toils?” You do it, you do it, you do it, you do it, and for most people, they just do it because they have to do it, not because they love to do it. What do you get out of it? Enough to keep yourself alive so that you can keep doing it to keep yourself alive so you can keep doing it to keep yourself alive.

In verse 8, he says - of chapter 4, in the middle, towards the end of the verse: “For whom am I laboring and depriving myself of pleasure?” (“Why am I doing this? I could be having fun. Here I’m working, working, working. My wife keeps having more babies. It’s a life of toil and I go home and it’s conflict with her, conflict with my kids. What am I doing? On the other hand, I’m better off busy.”)

Ecclesiastes 3:13, "Every man who eats and drinks sees good in all his labor. It's a gift of God." It's true. It's worse if you didn't work, isn't it? Sitting around, staring at the wall, not being productive.

It is a gift from God to sinners. We need to keep our hands occupied or they'll get into things they shouldn't get into. Chapter 5, verse 19, again he says, "A man can learn to receive his reward." You can learn to take your check and rejoice in your labor, "this is the gift of God." It would have been fine if we were sinless. Adam didn't need to work. He didn't need to expend energy. He didn't need to get into this cycle because he was perfect. And so, you know, the old adage, right? "Idle hands are the devil's plaything." So it's better for sinful people to be working because if they're not, too much idle time leaves too much time for iniquity.

But, frankly, when you put it all together, it seems as though the writer of Ecclesiastes is saying, "I know it's a gift of God, but I still don't like it" and - I mean I know you identify with that. What do you spend your time doing at work? Probably planning for the weekend. And when you get down the years, you start to look ahead, and you start to dream about your retirement and you started out thinking it was going to be at 65 and now you're thinking you'd like it at 45, and you want to get as much money as fast as you can so you can stop working and you can buy all the toys and play.

Well, back to Genesis 3, men, we have been cursed to do this. In toil, we're going to eat all the days of your life. You say, "Oh, man - I could live to be 70 or 80." Don't tell me your problem. Adam died at nine hundred and thirty. Give me a break. Your song doesn't make me sad. Nine hundred and thirty. You're going to toil in the ground all of the days of your life. "Adam, how long you been doing this?" "Nine hundred years." And you want to retire at forty-five. Give me a break. If I work until I'm seventy-five - I mean I can't even - I can't even carry Adam's pitchfork.

The ultimate penalty will fall. The ultimate penalty on man is death. But man was not cast immediately into death; rather, he was given life. But in that life, he would never be able to forget the impact of sin. And every man who goes to work to provide for his family is living out the illustration of how painfully sin affected life.

God intended for us to have a permanent vacation at no cost with no effort, and he botched it up for the whole race. But now that we're all sinners, we need to work. There's some dignity in work. There's some accomplishments and achievement and we make provision and it is a gift from God. But it is also a reminder - isn't it? - of the deadliness of sin and how it has corrupted the world. Do you think the world's philosophers understand this principle? They don't. The fury and the flurry of work around the planet is a direct result of this.

By the way, don't you see in the curses an initial affirmation of the sphere in which a man and a woman are to conduct their life? Where does a woman belong? In the home. Where does a man belong? In the workplace.

Well, there's more detail to come but look what time it is. Let's pray together.

Father, we know that this that we've talked about regarding work is a curse, but we didn't get to the point that we'll get to next week and that is that because of Jesus Christ, work is transformed into a way of worship. It's literally transformed. Spiritually, it takes on a completely different dimension in Christ, and we can work to your glory. It becomes a form of worship. We are anticipating studying

and learning that great reality next time and also learning more about the difficulty of the curse and then about the redemption that you provide for us who are cursed.

Thank you, Father, for the revelation that helps us understand the way things are in this world and why they're that way and how they're going to be changed and are changed through the wonderful salvation that you provide us in Jesus Christ. We pray in His name. Amen.

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