

This week I read about a short-term missions trip that Pastor Dan Meyer of Christ's Church in Oak Brook Illinois took. This is what he wrote about it:

Years ago I traveled to Ecuador and spent a couple of weeks traveling in the mountains. The Quechua Indian people I met there lived amidst the most mind-numbing squalor. The disease and disfigured bodies were heartbreaking. The bugs and stench were everywhere. People were living in a hole in the ground and calling it a house. They were feeding on rotten food and prizing garbage as possessions. But they didn't know it. Why? Because everyone lived that way. They had never been given a picture of what it means to be a genuinely healthy human being.

That is our problem, too. It's the reason we think of ourselves as largely innocent people—people who have little to do with bringing about the Cross of Christ. We don't get how sick and undeveloped we are spiritually. ... In other words, we are condemned, and we don't even know it.

Look again at his last sentence... “We are condemned, and we don't even know it...”

This morning we are going to study the curse of God... (given when Adam and Eve sinned) ... and yet it condemns us all. Today... you may discover some elements... which are part of this condemnation... and... you have not been aware... OR... maybe you have personally experienced portions of it... but never understood why.

Today's message is an invitation to recognize these different elements of the curse... for which we will need to depend more heavily on Christ... every day of our lives. ... (You see)... Even as believers... we can be living in mind-numbing squalor... and completely unaware... that we can be doing much better... Today's message is a reminder that through Christ... we need to live above the curse... as much as possible.

Let's have that focus today... as we consider God's judgment of sin... in the Garden of Eden. Let's ask ourselves: "*Which of these elements are common to me... and needing a greater dependence on the curse-reversing work of Christ in my life?*"

The first part of the curse in our passage deals with Satan... and the serpent (who allowed Satan to use his body.) But even in this... we find some effects on you and I... in which we need to apply the finished work of Christ.

The man and woman had rebelled against God. Previously they were involved in a relationship of growth and understanding of God. There had been no fear. The sound of God's voice was welcome. ... This time it is different. Adam says, '...I heard Your voice... and I was afraid...' (3:10). Joy – (without fear at the presence of God) - was forever lost. ... Adam and Eve must have been trembling mightily as God speaks. 'And the Lord God said unto the serpent..'

Genesis 3:14

In Genesis 3:14-15... the snake... (as a creature) is cursed... and the power behind the snake (Satan) is also cursed (often with the same words....) What is said of one... (in large part) is also a pronouncement of

judgment for the other. (But this is not the case... when we come to the second part of verse 15... which the wording will make clear.) So up to that point... the words have double fulfillment (with specific application to Satan... and specific application to snakes.)

Why did God have to curse the creature...? ... Did the snake have something to do with allowing Satan to use him? ... Possibly. (Before the snake tempted Eve... in Genesis 3:1 we are told that the snake was more crafty than any other beast. This word “crafty”... does not make any sense when applied to the creature... unless snakes had an ability to make choices. (“Crafty” implies a will that tries to affect the best outcome for oneself.) So perhaps the snake (who made choices)... did play a part in rebelling against God.) We don’t know what any creature (or the creation) was like before creation was cursed. But we do know that it was different than it is now... And I think that verse 1 is telling us that the snake used it’s willful craftiness... to connive with Satan (against God)... in tempting Eve.

James Montgomery Boice holds that the serpent (before the curse) walked upright and was a most magnificent creature. Boice says:

"There is something very striking in this literal judgment. We do not know what the serpent looked like before this judgment, though he must have been a beautiful and upright creature, perhaps the most splendid of all the creatures. What we can know—because we can put ourselves in their place—is the horror of Adam and Eve as they heard the voice of God and witnessed the terrifying transformation of this once beautiful creature into the hissing, slithering, dangerous creature we know as a snake today. They must have recoiled in mortal fear, recognizing that God had every right to pronounce this same or even a more terrible judgment on themselves. They must

have expected that He would do so, and the devil must also have expected this judgment"

Now... let's consider the concept of "eating dust." ... There is both a literal (physical) sense to eating dust... and there is a figurative (symbolic) sense.

A body that bows low and clings to the ground... has a figurative sense... as a picture of misery. Look how the Psalmist uses the symbolic imagery in Psalm 44...

Psalm 44:23-26 (ESV)

*²³ Awake! Why are you sleeping, O Lord? Rouse yourself! Do not reject us forever! ²⁴ Why do you hide your face? Why do you forget our affliction and oppression? ²⁵ **For our soul is bowed down to the dust; our belly clings to the ground.** ²⁶ Rise up; come to our help! Redeem us for the sake of your steadfast love!*

Donald Grey Barnhouse says:

"To eat dust is to know defeat, and that is God's prophetic judgment upon the enemy. He will always reach for his desires and fall just short of them. There will be continuous effort, but never any realization"

For the creature (the snake)... crawling on its belly and eating dust was literal. This is what snakes do today. But for Satan it is more (as the Psalmist used it) – figuratively. "Eating dust" is literal for snakes and figurative for Satan. (LISTEN!) Satan's curse is that he "*will always reach for his desires and fall just short of them. There will be continuous effort, but never any full realization...*"

Genesis 3:15

The first part of this verse addresses both creaturely snakes... and Satan... once again. The second part will only deal with Satan... and we will see (why we know this) in just a moment.

The word *enmity* (ebhah) means “hatred”... “antagonism”... “hostility.” This hatred... hostility... and antagonism... has been the case throughout all history... and applies to both snakes and Satan.

“I will put enmity between you” (singular) *“and the woman”* (singular)...” (This is between two particular individuals - Satan and Eve.) ... Satan hated Eve from the moment she was created from Adam’s side... because she was made in the image of God. ... But now —from the moment of this judgment — Eve would hate Satan.

Now look at the next phrase in this verse... *“...and between your offspring* (plural... meaning many) *“and her offspring”* (plural... or many...once again)” This is between all snakes that we have in the world today... and all humans.)

What a fittingly repulsive image a snake is. I know some people delight in snakes... including one of my immediate family members... who informed the rest of us... Thursday evening... as we saw one on television... that she happened to like snakes. ... However... that is an acquired taste... and it is the exception! Even Indiana Jones feared snakes! John Calvin had it right when he said:

"It is regarded, as among prodigies, that some take pleasure in them; and as often as the sight of a serpent inspires us with horror, the memory of our fall is renewed."

Serpents continue to keep the revolting image of Satan before our eyes. Isaiah 65 pictures the whole of creation delivered from the effects of the fall - except for the serpent... which lives in perpetual disgrace... fulfilling the sentence *"all the days of your life."* Isaiah 65 discusses the future when the

curse is reversed... and in verse 25... it says the wolf and the lamb will lie down together... but then... the verse goes on to say... the serpent will still eat dust.

For certain(!) Satan will never be redeemed. His current state under the curse will last forever... and I believe... Isaiah 65:25 indicates that this will also be true for snakes. ... All of creation (in the Millennium) will be restored... except snakes. They will still eat dust.

There is evidence of this in our text today. ... Go back and look at the first part of verse 14... in Genesis 3. *The LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field..."* ... God cursed all of creation – but the serpent was cursed more severely. Creation will be restored. But I believe that snakes (who are under a more severe curse) - will not.

When Genesis 3:15 says "*...and between your offspring and her offspring...*" it speaks about the enmity between humans and snakes... but it's dual fulfilment also speaks about Satan's multiple offspring.

The godly seed (or "offspring") of the woman is in a struggle against the ungodly seed of the devil. ... History is to be a stage upon which the play of conflict is to be acted out... a conflict between the godly and the ungodly. There is a godly humanity and an ungodly humanity upon earth... and there always will be.

(Today is Sanctity of Human Life Sunday... so allow me to use this example) ... When a high school student who has hidden her pregnancy suddenly and prematurely delivers her child and... (in a panic of

confusion)... discards it in a dumpster - criminal charges are pursued... and news programs are filled with compassionate stories of how the baby's life was saved. ... But... not even a mile away... the dumpster of an abortion clinic... contains the fragments of a child (the same age)... from the womb of an equally confused high school student. The same news reporters (who were horrified by the first student's actions)... **support** the claims to the rights of the second student – “to exercise choice.”

Such convoluted thinking about the dignity of human life is only one of many areas of society where the blows of the Satan's offspring are evident.

But wait a minute...? Does Satan really have offspring...? ... Yes. In the Parable of the Tares (Matt. 13:24-30, 36-43)... Jesus states clearly that Satan does have "*children.*" What's more... Satan places his children in good Christian churches. They are people who profess to be true believers... but who are actually counterfeits. ... Jesus' parable reveals that wherever God "plants" true children of the kingdom... Satan comes along and plants counterfeits. The two plants grow together and won't be separated until the harvest at the end of the age.

But note this: God will **not** let Satan triumph. There will **always** be godly people upon earth. (LISTEN!) ... No matter how much Satan tries to destroy godliness upon earth... God will make **sure** there are always some godly people (**someplace**) upon earth. ... Satan and his followers will never be free from the enmity they feel toward the godly... the true followers of God. Satan's followers "*will always reach for their desires... and fall just short of them. They will have continuous efforts... but never attain full*

realization...” The ungodly will burn with enmity against **true godliness** as long as the earth stands.

Don't forget this as you watch or listen to the news media! Such ungodly people... who... driven by spirits or demonic forces... may work to destroy life... and ultimately to destroy Christ. ... But the victory will be Christ's... on behalf of the human race.

... ..

Up to this point... verse 14-15 have been about **both** Satan and snake creatures. In the second part of verse 15... there is a change. It is noticed by a change in grammar. The pronouns are no longer *plural*... as they have been. Now they are *singular*. “**HE** (singular) shall bruise **YOUR** head... and **YOU** shall bruise **HIS** (singular) heel...” The subjects in this sentence are not **all** of Eve's descendants... and it is not all the creaturely snakes of the world. This is about **one** particular (future) descendant of Eve (who would be the Messiah)... and **one** particular snake... (who is Satan!)

Jewish Rabbi's saw this grammar change and have understood this... (since long before the days of Christ)... to be the Old Testament's first prophecy about the coming Messiah. ... You and I... as New Testament believers look back on this and see it as the very first declaration of the Gospel. (How ironic! It is right here in the curse of mankind!)

The devil—from this point on—would try to destroy **this one** offspring of the woman... (this promised Messiah.) But note: God never said **which** woman would bear the Messiah. Satan was always left guessing. In fact... Satan

has tried from the very beginning to destroy **this one** offspring of the woman. He has been waging war against the *Seed* of God... the Savior of the world... ever since God promised to save the world.

This is how Satan has attempted to hurt God... by doing all he could to devour the woman and her godly descendants... down through the centuries. ... He did all he could to keep the Savior... (the Lord Jesus Christ)... from being born. ... Now that Christ has come... Satan does all he can to turn people away from the judgment to come. ... Even when people do repent and turn to follow Christ... Satan does all he can to turn the followers of the Lord away from Him.

Satan bruised Christ's heel by having Him crucified. But Christ crushed Satan's head by dying **for man**, by bearing all of man's guilt and punishment for sin. ... On behalf of man... Christ took all of man's sins upon Himself and bore the judgment of God against sin.

As Adam and Eve witnessed the curse of God to the snake and to Satan... we can only image what fear they must have felt as God now turned to address **them**. ... Next... God pronounced judgment on Eve (and her descendants...)

Genesis 3:16

The first two lines of verse 16... quite literally reads... "*I will greatly multiply your sorrow... trouble... and pain - in child-**raising**... in general*" (not in giving birth. That comes in the next two lines of this verse...) The next two lines add) "*...and in particular...great pain in giving birth.*" ... This verse describes two separate things. ... The first part is about raising children (being a mom in general)... and the second part is about the birth process.

Verse 16 uses the Hebrew word “itz-shebhon” ... and it means “trouble”... “sorrow” **and** “pain.” Bringing children into the world... and then raising them... will involve “trouble”... “sorrow”... and “pain” (great pain... especially in giving birth.)

God says He is going to intensify woman’s trouble and sorrow... and when we look at the life of women (in general)... this is exactly what we see. ... Because of her nature... the woman usually feels things more deeply than man. ... She usually **experiences** trouble and sorrow more than man... and she usually feels this for others more than man. ... She seems to understand the feelings... needs... trouble... sorrow... and pain of others more deeply. ... But as commendable as this trait is... it often causes trouble... sorrow... and pain for **her**... both physically and mentally. ... Because she feels more deeply... she often suffers more.

By her very nature... (more tender... delicate... and sensitive nature)... the woman feels and suffers greatly for her children when they suffer or go astray. ... Many sons and daughters sin... and when they do... the mother usually suffers much more of the sorrow and pain... than the father. The woman (by her very nature) has to bear more of the sorrow and pain when children... speak sharply... rebel... and fall into sin... (or when they are victimized by the sin of others.)

When Eve gave in to temptation... she had turned away from God and sought the pleasure of life on her own. She bought into Satan’s lie that you don’t need God! ... So her judgment from God... was that she would thereafter live... as she had chosen... to experience more deeply what life is like... without God. It is trouble... pain... and suffering.

The mercy of God is seen in this: sorrow and pain often... (and always should) arouse a person to call upon God for help. ... So... live above the curse... as much as possible... through Christ. ... Allow your sorrow and pain to stir repentance... trust... dependence... and hope in God. This is probably one of the reasons women seemingly turn to God more easily and sooner than most men.

The travail of childbirth is painful, so painful it is often used in Scripture to picture severe suffering and grief (John 16:21; 1 Thes. 5:3; Rev. 12:2; Micah 4:10). ... Without modern medicine, these pains are described as the worst possible agony for humans. ... Yet... it is through childbirth (the unique act of woman) that redemption shall come to the human race.

The woman's penalty impacts her two primary roles: childbearing and her relationship with her husband. And now we come to the second part of verse 16. "*Your desire shall be for your husband...*"

The desire that is spoken of here is the desire of the woman to usurp the leadership and the headship of her husband. The Hebrew word for **desire** is ***teshuga***. It is formed from an Arabic root word which means "**to seek control over, compel, or urge.**" It is used in Genesis 4:7 where we find sin is wanting to control Cain. "*Sin is crouching at the door, eager to **teshuga** (control) you...*" Wives will want to take the lead (take charge) in their home. But God made man to be the leader.

Because God wants our homes to be run efficiently... God... in His mercy... selected a leader for every home. ... But this efficiency suffers... when His design is challenged.

That struggle would characterize life from now on. Today we see many marriages display such a conflict... or struggle. Unfortunately it is just as common in Christian homes.

But... Men (!) Here is something for us... The verse continues... "*the man shall rule over you...*" ... This is a negative thing. It is another part to the struggle... which is part of the curse. Men will dominate women. ... This word **rule** gives the meaning of a **harsh, authoritarian rule** which was not part of God's design for the home. (How unfortunate that we also see this in Christian homes!) ... But the husband is to love and cherish his wife as Christ loved the church. However... when Adam and Eve sinned... the battle of the sexes began and still continues today. ... The woman tries to control the man and he tries to harshly rule over her.

Dominant male societies... which have been so prevalent in culture after culture throughout history... is one of the effects of original sin... and its curse. ... But make no mistake! It is not part of God's will! We are not to be content with it. As it is true for every part of the curse... in Christ... we are to overcome it!

How tragic that the great blessing and thrill to Adam's life was now (and thereafter)... viewed as a problem... and a responsibility. ... It is (today) the challenge of godly people... to remove such tension from a marriage... and live above the Curse... as far as possible. ... Marriage should not be a relationship characterized by manipulation and mastery.

Christ's curse-reversing effects can (and ought to) be applied in a Christian home! The Holy Spirit in the believer can take the sting out of the Curse.

These verses simply declare what life will be like... if we do not die to our old sinful selves... each and every day.

Genesis 3:17-19

Here we must observe that in the same way that "the woman's punishment struck at the deepest root of her being as wife and mother... the man's punishment strikes at the innermost nerve of **his** life – (namely) his work... his activity... and provision for sustenance." ... The "pain" that verse 17 describes as Adam's lot is the **same** word twice used for the woman's "pain" in verse 16. It is again... the Hebrew word "itz-shebhon"... which means "trouble"... "sorrow" and "pain." ... His will not be focused on child-rearing and birth... but it will be in struggling against nature... for the basic necessity for life – food!

Man was condemned to struggle against the thorns and thistles of the earth. Before man's sin and fall... the earth had produced every good fruit and plant imaginable for man. Nature was completely under control. All of man's necessities were abundantly met. But **not** now... not since man's sin. Nature is no longer under control. It produces thorns and thistles and all kinds of problems for man. Man always has to struggle against nature—struggle to control nature—in order to protect his most basic necessity... the very food he eats. ... Imagine! Just to eat—just to meet his most basic necessity—man would have to struggle and fight to control nature itself.

But "thorns and thistles" applies to **all** work involved in human culture... (not just to farming.) ... Painful toil will assault every soul who attempts to be productive in this world. ... Apart from God... no man's work... none of

man's achievements... fully satisfy — whether it be as a farmer... or artist... or craftsman... or executive or teacher — regardless of his accomplishments. That from which we seek fulfillment is a perpetual source of pain. The gift of work is good, but it is covered with thorns. It is a struggle... and it never fully satisfies.

I believe that the writer of Ecclesiastes gives us the connection between man's struggle to have food... and his return to the dust:

*What does man gain by all the toil
at which he toils under the sun?
A generation goes, and a generation comes,
but the earth remains forever. (Ecclesiastes 1:3, 4)
And whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them.
I kept my heart from no pleasure,
for my heart found pleasure in all my toil,
and this was my reward for all my toil.
Then I considered all that my hands had done
and the toil I had expended in doing it,
and behold, all was vanity and a striving after wind,
and there was nothing to be gained under the sun.
(Ecclesiastes 2:10, 11)*

Having food to survive will be a struggle... and then... once life is over... what was the point...? It is all vanity!

Part of God's curse on man was that his "itz-shebhon" (his "trouble"... "sorrow" and "anguish" of life would be his struggle to find purpose and meaning in life. How do I leave a legacy...? How do I gain a sense that my

life was more than just chasing after the wind...? When it is all over... how will I be remembered...? What difference will my life have made...? What mark will I leave...? That I worked **hard** in order to eat is not enough.

Man now has to suffer...

- the pain of stress, pressure, tension.
- the pain of toil, labor, and work.
- the pain of mental and physical fatigue.

But why...? ... That I worked hard in order to eat... is not an answer that satisfies.

Furthermore... Notice: The ground — (nature itself!) —had been cursed because of man's sin. ... Think about the earthquakes... tornados... storms... diseases... starvation... attacks... and struggles for survival that take place. Man's "itz-shebhon" (his "trouble"... "sorrow" and "anguish") would be in dealing with nature being cursed and out of control. And then afterward... having overcome natural disasters and obstacles... like thorns...or in the **midst** of such hardship... to understand why? ... "*I came from dust... experienced such suffering ... and then returned to dust... But **why?**" ... God's curse declares... "Man... you will have difficulty surviving and providing for your family... and even though you may obtain food... you will still have a deep and empty void in your life!"*

My friend... without a personal relationship with Christ... you will never have a satisfactory answer to the question of purpose and meaning for your life. Only God can reverse this effect (and all effects) of the curse.

Let Him be your Lord! Live your life to do His will ***in all that you do***. Work for... and long for... His coming Kingdom... when all the effects of the curse will be reversed. That day ***is*** coming... and dedicating your life to working for it... is the most satisfying purpose anyone can have! Don't just work for a paycheck... for food... or to have a good time. Get involved... Participate in Christ-centered activities that grow believers and spreads the Gospel to others.

And if you have never accepted Christ's punishment on the cross for every one of your sins... the full wrath of God's curse still resides on you. Please receive (for free) Christ's curse-reversing effects in you life. Believe that He took your punishment for you... Messiah Jesus came (as prophesied)... He bruised the head of the snake... and it is enough to satisfy God's penalty for your own sin.

We serve a God who created our humanity... weeps at the fall of our humanity... became our humanity... and is redeeming our humanity.