

Suffering as a Result of the Fall? Gen 3:14-19

Sunday, November 20, 2022

Covenant Church

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Gen 3:14-19

¹⁴ The LORD God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, cursed are you among all animals and among all wild creatures; upon your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. ¹⁵ I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will strike your head, and you will strike his heel.”

¹⁶ To the woman he said, “I will greatly increase your pangs in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children, yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.”

¹⁷ And to the man he said, “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten of the tree about which I commanded you, ‘You shall not eat of it,’ cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life; ¹⁸ thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. ¹⁹ By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread until you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”

Reminder:” Maltese logic” in Acts 28:1-6 forces us to ask about the cause of our suffering...

A. Why Suffering is Important to Understand

1. Understanding...

The shape of Scripture

True confession

Centrality of (retrospective-looking) story

2. ...and responding

“And now my hour has come... Until my death I wish to speak live to my God, like a simple man, alive, who has the great but fatal privilege of being a Jew. I believe in the God of Israel, even if he has done everything to shatter my faith in him... I believe in his laws, even if I challenge the justification for his actions; I bow before his grandeur but I will not kiss the stick that beats me. I love him, but I love his law even more. I love his justice even more, Job and countless others would say today. And even if I were wrong about him, I would continue to adore his law. God signifies religion, but his law signifies the wisdom of life. You say we have sinned. Obviously we have sinned. That we should be punished for this, I accept as well. I would nevertheless like you to tell me if there is a sin on earth that deserves such a punishment as this. I tell you all this, my God, because I believe in you, because I believe more than ever in you, because I know now that you are my God, and not the God of those whose actions are the horrible fruit of their militant impiety. I cannot praise you for the acts that you tolerate, but I bless you and praise you for your majesty, which inspires awe. Your majesty must be really immense for all that is happening now not to make an impression on you... I am dying peacefully, but not satisfied; as a man who has been laid low, but not in despair; as a believer but not as a supplicant; loving God, but not a blind mumbler of Amen. I have followed God, even when he has pushed me far away from himself. I have fulfilled his commandment, even when in return for this observance he struck me. I have loved him. I was and am still taken with him, even when he has lowered me down to the ground, has tortured me to death but I will always believe in you: I will love you always, even in spite of yourself. And these are my final words, my God of anger: you will not succeed {in making me deny you}. You have done everything so that I should no longer believe in you, so that I might fall into doubt. But I die as I have lived, with an unshakable faith

in you.” —Excerpt from “Testament in the Furnace” (from Lytta Basset, *Holy Anger: Jacob, Job, Jesus* (London: Continuum, 2007), 94–95), attributed to Jossel Rachower, an Austrian Jew who died in the destruction of the Warsaw Ghetto after his wife and six children had already perished

B. Causes of Suffering

1. Potential causes

Consequence of my actions? Consequence of another’s actions? Consequence of the fall? Spiritual warfare? God’s discipline/ God’s working in strange ways we don’t understand now?

2. Act-consequence

Luke 17:2 It would be better for you if a millstone were hung around your neck and you were thrown into the sea than for you to cause one of these little ones to stumble.

2. The Fall as cause

My intention had been, [God] is saying, for you to have a life free of trouble and distress, rid of all pain and grief, filled with every pleasure and with no sense of bodily needs despite your bodily condition. — Chrysostom, *Homilies on Genesis* 17.30-31, 36

Rom 5:12-17 Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death came through sin, and so death spread to all because all have sinned— sin was indeed in the world before the law, but sin is not reckoned when there is no law. Yet death exercised dominion from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sins were not like the transgression of Adam, who is a type of the one who was to come. But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died through the one man’s trespass, much more surely have the grace of God and the free gift in the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abounded for the many. And the free gift is not like the effect of the one man’s sin. For the judgement following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brings justification. If, because of the one man’s trespass, death exercised dominion through that one, much more surely will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness exercise dominion in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.

Rom 9:19-21 For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

Isa 11:6 The wolf shall live with the lamb, / the leopard shall lie down with the kid, /the calf and the lion and the fatling together, /and a little child shall lead them.

Question(s) 1: What has caused your suffering? How does suffering fit into the story of your life? Where is God in this suffering?

Question 2: What is one thing that God may have said to you through this sermon?