
 Redeemed from Adam's Curse: Sweat of Suffering

As follows in Jesus' name:

Genesis 3:16, 17b-19

To the woman He said,

"I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children.

Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you."

And to Adam He said,...

"Cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life;

Thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field.

By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground,

for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return." (ESV)

St. Luke 22:39-44

And He came out and went, as was His custom, to the Mount of Olives, and the disciples followed Him. And when He came to the place, He said to them, "**Pray that you may not enter into temptation.**" And He withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and knelt down and prayed, saying, "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from Me. Nevertheless, not My will, but Yours, be done." And there appeared to Him an angel from heaven, strengthening Him. And **being in agony He prayed more earnestly; and His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.** (ESV)

This is Your Word, heavenly Father; sanctify us in the truth, Your Word is Truth. Amen. (John 17:17)

In Jesus' name. **Amen.**

People Loved by God,

In Genesis 2, immediately after we are told of the creation of man, Moses writes:

The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. Genesis 2:15

For an unknown length of time, Adam and his wife lived and worked in this perfection.

They could eat freely of the fruits of the garden, the fruit of the work of their hands.

Now this does not mean that there was no sweat involved in this time of perfection, as if tilling the earth was an effortless task and they simply worked like Mary Poppins cleaning a room, snapping at things, magically making them do what they wanted.

Work is good. Even hard work is good. It is part of God's perfect creation.

The goodness of work is so much a part of our fabric and frame that when, in this sin-corrupted world, we don't have work, when we are unemployed, it is not common for people to suffer a depression.

... But we are getting ahead of ourselves. Let's return for the moment back to the garden.

It was while they were at work in the garden, tending to it, that Satan entered and tempted Eve.

Notice, it was not just, "See how good this fruit is. Don't you want to taste it?"

But insidiously, there was a temptation to be discontent with God's rule and her husband's headship.

Rather than trusting what God had said, and submitting to her husband's directive, she thought that becoming her own decision-maker was within her reach.

Well, she was right and wrong at the same time. She made that decision, but it was the wrong one.

The two had known good; they had known the beautiful and perfect unity of husband and wife,

working together as one, not in tyranny and subjugation, but in harmonious service to one another. But now they only knew evil, and the disfunction would only grow from there.

Lack of love for the other, aversion to work, dereliction of duty, laziness, tyranny and rebellion... all these and much more have resulted from the simple bite of a forbidden fruit... a food that was not the fruit of their own hands, but stolen, as it were, from the Lord.

...

That evening, they felt new feelings: guilt... and fear probably being among the most prominent.

Where previously they had enjoyed their evening strolls with the Lord, that evening, when He came in the cool of the day, they hid – ashamed.

Now they were to account for their actions.

And we see the effect of sin immediately: neither one wants to take responsibility for their actions and the unity they once shared so perfectly is now dashed as Adam distances himself from his wife and leaves her to fend for herself.

But notice, that the Lord did not curse Adam or Eve. There are consequences to be sure, as we heard, but He does not curse the people; instead He **curse the ground**.

The fruits that Adam had harvested before, would still come forth, but now there would be struggle.

“In pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life... By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread.”

The ground would not yield its strength to him and would even work against him with thorns/thistles.

The work that had been so good, would now produce the sweat of toil and struggle and pain.

But that sweat of suffering would also entail the emotional frustration of constant conflict,

not only with those that annoy you or would harm you but even those you love and cherish.

This comes out also in the Lord’s word to the woman, and woman-kind,

“in pain you shall bring forth children.

Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you.”

The husband-wife relationship of mutual and complimentary service to the other

now can find itself in competition and contention for supremacy, or feelings of being used/neglected.

But do I really need to describe these things to you?

You live with these consequences every day of your life.

And after all this turmoil, finally, mercifully, yet also sadly, this life comes to an end,

and this mortal body returns to dust, leading to the continued suffering as loved ones mourn.

...

But God is not one to stand back from getting His hands dirty.

The Lord, who molded man from the dust originally and breathed into him the breath of life,

once again got Himself dusty and, through His conception and the pain and suffering of childbirth, took into Himself the very dust of our mortal flesh.

And just as our life is not merely dust, but also soul, the Son of God took into Himself a human will.

So enter now this other garden, the one called Gethsemane, “the olive press.”

Listen to your Savior speaking to His Father, humbly petitioning Him on His soiled knees,

pleading that the cup of suffering that has been earned by all humanity, !except for Him!, be removed from Him.

Jesus is in agony.

The emotional distress, the mental turmoil, the hurt of friends abandoning Him,

the anguish of injustice to be inflicted upon Him by those He came to save,
the anticipation of the physical trauma to come, the burden of bearing the weight of humanity's sins,
the struggle between His human will which does not want to suffer and die
and His Father's will which says "**it is necessary**" for Him to suffer and die—
that **it is necessary** to drink that cup of suffering, gulping it down to the dregs so that nothing remains
— it all takes its toll on His mortal clay.

His sweat of suffering was not a mere glistening,
but it pressed out of Him in such measures that it seeped upon the cursed ground
as though it were drops of blood, a foretaste of the agony yet to come.

And yet... He does not turn away. He does not flee.

He receives the strength sent by His Father through His heavenly angel.

"Nevertheless, not My will, but Yours [dear heavenly Father], be done."

In obedience, Jesus rose up, turned to His captors, and handed Himself over to be sacrificed.

Where Adam and Eve lived in that garden paradise, yet fell under the devil's temptation,
in this garden of His agony, Jesus continued to submit to His Father's will.

He would not give up until all your suffering, all your agonies, all your pain were borne by Him.

He took your neglect, your selfishness, your contentions, your desire for supremacy,
and gave His sweaty mortal body up to death on the cross, thus ending sin's reign over you.

...

But the story goes on. He does not leave you in the dust.

Though Adam's body, and your body too, returns to dust after death,

Jesus' body did not, the Holy One did not see corruption.

Instead, His body has become for us the prescribed fruit from the tree of life.

The Lord invites you now to eat of this Bread, not by the sweat of your face, but by the sweat of His.

And while the forbidden fruit brought death and corruption,

Jesus' body brings life and immortality.

Just as He has risen from the dead, so you who live and die in Jesus will likewise be raised up
from the dust again, and in your flesh you will arise, glorified and incorruptible.

And of this resurrected life, we get a brief glimpse from St. John:

"Therefore they are before the throne of God,

and serve Him day and night in His temple;...

They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore;

the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat.

... and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes." Revelation 7:15-17

...And for sure, every drop of sweaty suffering from their face.

In Jesus' name. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria