

GENESIS: THE BEGINNING IS NOT THE END

Why Is Life So Hard?

TEXT: Genesis 3:17-19, Rom. 8:22, Rev. 22:3, Heb. 4:15-16

INTRODUCTION: Do you ever find yourself in a series of things going wrong, and you just mutter to yourself, "Why does this have to be so hard?"

I remember a year ago when I was going to Togo to teach the Acts 1:8 Strategy at the Togo Baptist Convention. About a week before departure, I had a checkup with my doctor. He did his exam and looked at all the numbers from my regular blood tests and said, "You seem to be in pretty good health." I thought, "Thank You, Lord. That's a good report for a guy who had quadruple bypass 18 years ago and cancer 7 years ago."

I no more than finished my unspoken prayer when the doc said, "Except for the numbers on your kidneys; that's a little bit out of the normal range." And he asked, "Are you taking any NSAIDS, like Ibuprofen or Aleve?" I said, "Sure, I take 2 Aleve every morning, and if something hurts during the day, I take more." He said, "Quit. Use Tylenol if you need something. NSAIDS are hard on your kidneys, and let's see if we can't get your kidney numbers back in the normal range." I said what we always say to the doctor, "OK!"

And I did, and for the next 5 days I didn't notice any difference at all. I probably had that much excess Aleve stored up in my system.

- Then I left for Togo.
- I noticed in Atlanta that I was walking a little slower and my legs felt a little achy.
- That night, I didn't sleep as well on the plane as I usually do. My back hurt.
- Then my flight landed in Paris where I was to connect to a direct flight to Lome, Togo.
- We landed, and I stood up in the aisle to get my carry on backpack and said, "Oh no! The heel of my left foot felt like the ligaments were being forcibly peeled off of the bone. My plantar fasciitis had returned.
- I shifted my weight from heel to toe and it felt like someone stuck a red hot ice pick into the joint beneath my big toe. My gout had returned. Both in the same foot.
- I believe that is when I said it the first time on that trip, "Why does this have to be so hard?"
- I gritted my teeth and limped off the plane remembering that all my medications for plantar fasciitis and gout were NSAIDS. When I got inside the terminal, I got some Tylenol out of my bag. I was soon to discover that as wonderful as Tylenol can be

for a headache, it did nothing for my foot. I was by myself, so I had no appearances to maintain, so I think I actually said in a low voice, "Why does this have to be so hard?"

- Well, to be honest, it stayed hard and got harder.
- I checked for the gate of my connecting flight. I looked at the map of Charles de Gaul International Airport. Know where my next gate was? Yep. You guessed it. On the exact opposite end of the airport, I kid you not. And I said, "Why does this have to be so hard?"
- The good thing was, I had about a three hour layover, so I did not have to hurry. I had all the time I needed to suffer!
- I limped through the airport with people zipping by me right and left wondering two things:
 - How do they put five miles of hallways in one airport?
 - Why don't the French know about those moving sidewalks?
- I walked ten minutes and sat five. Walked ten, sat five. It takes a long time to go five miles, ten minutes at a time. Every time I started walking again, and the pain engulfed my foot, I thought, "Why does this have to be so hard?"
- I did get to the gate. It only took me about an hour and a half. I sat down, glad I could sit for a good long while, get on the plane, sit for several hours. My foot did not hurt too much when I was just sitting.
- Sure enough, after about a half hour, the pain had really subsided. I could think about things beside my heel and toe feeling like they were on fire. I could think about things like, "It's an hour before an international flight from Paris to Togo. Why isn't anyone else at this gate?"
- "Lord, just when things were a little better, why does this have to be so hard?"
- I limp back down the hallway to a bank of monitors thinking I am about to see a major delay on my flight, explaining the absence of all the other passengers. No, I see my flight number and just to the right of it the word CANCELLED.
 - CANCELLED! – NO! I HAVE TO PREACH TOMORROW MORNING!
 - THEY CAN'T DO THAT! DON'T THEY KNOW HOW IMPORTANT THIS IS?
 - "Lord, this is Your work!!!! Why does this have to be so hard?"
- I did stop and pray.

- I saw an Air France representative at another gate. I went to talk to her, and thanked the Lord when she replied in English.
- She confirmed the flight was cancelled but said she could not rebook me from the gate. I would need go back to a help center to an Air France counter.
- Every step seemed worse. Now I was in a hurry. “Lord, why does this have to be so hard?”
- I made it. Long line. Finally to an agent. No problem, sir. We will book you on tomorrow’s flight. Tomorrow? I’m preaching tomorrow! The agent did not seem to know anything about the urgency of preaching! He kept checking his computer; I stood there praying with my eyes open.
- At last he said, “There is a flight to Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire. It will be a tight connection, but you can catch a shuttle flight to Togo and get in about 1 in the morning.” I said, “Book it!”
- I began hobbling to my new gate and thought, “Why does this have to be so hard?”
- I caught the new plane and settled in for the 4 ½ hour flight, and as the pain again subsided, I paused for a bit longer prayer.
 - I thanked the Lord that although my foot really hurt, I could still walk. I have had days when the gout was so bad I could not walk. It hurt, but I could walk.
 - I thanked the Lord for an alternative flight that still offered me hope of getting in in time to begin preaching on the convention schedule.
 - I ask Him to enable me to catch the next flight taking me into Togo.
 - I ask God to begin healing my foot so that it would not hinder my teaching the Acts 1:8 Strategy to my fellow pastors.
- The flight arrived on time, and I exited the plane as fast as my foot would allow. I only had 30 minutes, but it had to be a small airport.
- It was, and the arrival hall led to three tiny openings, each manned by a uniformed soldier with another soldier with a machine gun over his shoulder standing by him. Between these six gatekeepers and me were about 200 men, women, and children, all trying to work their way through one of these three doorways. No lines, no order, just a sea of people between where I was and where I needed to be in less than 30 minutes or I was not preaching tomorrow.
- As I scanned the crowd in front of me, I looked to the side. There was a lady in an Air France uniform holding a sign. It said in big bold letters, “Michael Claunch.” I went to her and pointed at the sign. She said, “Are you Mish –ay –el? I didn’t bother with correction of pronunciation. I said, “That’s me!” She said, “I thought you would be a woman.” Nope!

- This little lady then led me around the crowd, bypassed all the guards and to the line where they were boarding my plane.
- I sat down in my seat and closed my eyes and said, "Thank You, Lord. It's been hard, but You are getting me through."
- I began teaching on time the next morning.
- The week continued to be hard physically, but in spite of not having any medicine, the pain from both the plantar fasciitis and the gout began to lessen. The pastors and their wives in those settings can endure more at one time than most of you, so I was standing on my feet teaching for 2 to 2.5 hours at a time. But God kept making it possible.
- The devil tried lots of ways to kick up dust to try to hinder the work God had sent us there to do. Bro. Rick and Cathy sent me a notice they received, supposedly from me, to transfer more than \$15,000 to an account in Texas for some unknown project we were going to sponsor. They thought it was fraudulent, but they were making sure I had not sent that message. I had not, and they notified the police.
- Even when the convention was over and I went to the airport to catch a flight heading home, the Exit Immigration Officer in Togo would not let me go board my flight until I paid him a bribe.
- "Why does this have to be so hard?"

Ever have times like that? Of course you have! Some of you may be saying, "My life is like that!" So do you ask that question: "Why? Why does this have to be so hard? Why does life have to be so hard?"

I think last week I may have indicated that we were through with Genesis 3. I misspoke. We aren't, because the answer to this question is in Genesis 3, specifically in Gen. 3:17-19. So, if I promise you that next week I will go to Genesis 4, would you like to know the answer to the question, why is life so hard?"

- Now, **remember the context.**
- **Satan entered the body of a serpent and deceived Eve**, telling her that eating the forbidden fruit would not cause her to die but would make her wise like God.
- So, **both Eve and Adam sinned by eating the forbidden fruit.**
- Immediately, God pronounced a curse on Satan and promised a Savior would come Who would utterly crush and defeat him. And we saw last week that the Lord Jesus completely fulfilled that prophecy by His death for our sins upon the cross.
- But that is not all God said. In ...

Genesis 3:17–19 17 Then to Adam He said, “Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, ‘You shall not eat of it’:

“Cursed *is* the ground for your sake;

In toil you shall eat *of* it All the days of your life.

18 Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you,

And you shall eat the herb of the field.

19 In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread

Till you return to the ground,

For out of it you were taken;

For dust you *are*,

And to dust you shall return.”

- **God expelled the man and the woman from the Garden of Eden.**
- **Adam began to farm the land outside the garden to have food for his wife and himself.**
- **Adam and Eve began to die, although they would yet live for hundreds of years, the cycle of death began that day.**
- **And thereafter they began to have days, sometimes weeks, sometimes seasons that went beyond the length of a year when they asked the question, “Why is life so hard?”**

But they knew the answer. They had lived and enjoyed days in which life was not hard at all. Everything they needed was available for the taking. They worked, but it was not laborious. It was enjoyable. They were managers of God’s garden and of the earth outside of it. It was the dream job in the dream location for the Dream Boss.

They knew when it changed and why it changed. They knew the truth we need to know.

I. LIFE IS HARD BECAUSE SIN BROUGHT GOD’S CURSE UPON THE WORLD.

Folks, when hard times come, and they do come, we need to know that

A. Hard times do not come upon us because God does not care.

God does care. He loves us with an everlasting love.

Expelling Adam and Eve from the garden and even the sentence of physical death were actually acts of love and mercy on the part of God.

If Adam and Eve had continued to have everything they wanted and life forever after they sinned, their rebellion against God would have been unrestrained and gone on forever.

Hard times cause us

- **To remember God**
- **To cry out to God**
- **To pray**
- **To depend on God**
- **To trust God**

B. Hard times do not come because God cannot prevent them.

God is sovereign. God is all-powerful. Nothing happens without His permission.

But every evil thing, every bad thing, can be traced back to the sin that brought the curse upon this world.

C. When God said, "Cursed is the ground," He was declaring a curse upon all of what we call matter in the universe. The Hebrew is "ha aretz," sometimes translated "the earth." But it means the stuff from which everything is made. **The ground God cursed is what we call "matter."**

D. Therefore, God's curse was the beginning of what scientists call the **Second Law of Thermodynamics, or the Law of Increasing Entropy, **which says that everything increases in disorder.****

- **Metal rusts**
- **Wood decays**
- **Machines break and quit**
- **All living things age, deteriorate, and die.** (So we get gout in our feet, clogged arteries around our heart, cancer in our bodies, and ultimately, we die.)
- **All because sin brought God's curse upon the world.**

The Apostle Paul recognized it and wrote to the Romans ...

Romans 8:22 For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.

So **when life is hard** for an hour, a day, a year, or year after year, remember that ultimately it was brought on by sin, not necessarily your personal sin, but by sin itself. Yet that should be a reminder that **the last thing that will help** when things are hard **is adding our personal sin to the mix.**

- **Cursing God drives us further from the solution rather than to it.**
- **Blasting other people spreads hard times without reducing your own.**
- **Growing bitter multiplies the hurt and damages others.**

Is there any hope? Is there any help? When hard times come?

Yes there is. First the hope.

II. BECAUSE OF CHRIST'S WORK ON THE CROSS, GOD WILL REMOVE THE CURSE IN THE ETERNAL KINGDOM.

Would you go with me to the final two chapters of the Bible? Time will not permit me to read it all to you this morning, but let me read just selected verses and then you can go back and read all of this wonderful passage this afternoon, or if you forget, the next time you ask, "Why is life so hard?"

Revelation 21–22 1 Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, ... Then I... saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them *and be* their God. 4 And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away." 5 Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." ... 10 And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, ... 3 And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. 4 They shall see His face, and His name *shall be* on their foreheads. 5 ... And they shall reign forever and ever.

6 Then he said to me, "These words *are* faithful and true... 7 "Behold, I am coming quickly!

You may be saying, but that is so far away. My friend, I suspect it is much closer than you think!

But until our hope is fulfilled, there remains help!

III. UNTIL THE CURSE IS GONE, WE HAVE HELP IN JESUS.

Hebrews 4:15–16 15 For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all *points* tempted as *we are*, yet without sin. 16 Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

When God's child is disturbed by the raging wind and thrashing sea,

- **Sometimes God halts the wind and calms the sea.**
- **Sometimes God calms His child while the wind and sea rage on.**

CONCLUSION: Life is full of hard times.

When they come, do not whimper that God does not love you or has abandoned you. Do not be afraid that God is powerless in your trouble. Instead remember the reason. Sin brought hard times to the world. Remember your hope: As Jesus conquered sin and death, one day He will remove this dreaded curse, And remember that He is your ever-present help today. He loves you. He cares about you. He is able to help you.

- Call to Him.
- Pray to Him.
- Seek His way in His Word.
- Depend on Him. He will never leave you or forsake you.
- Trust in Him. He will carry you through.