

Masculine and Feminine in God - Part 2 by Pastor Marty

A good amount can be discovered about the nature of man and woman when we look at the curse that befell them when they disobeyed the one commandment God gave to them. In order to understand what it tells us, we must realize that God is not vindictive. It is not in His nature to be vindictive. The “curse” was not God reacting out of spite, deciding to punish each of them in arbitrary ways that popped into His head. It is much more appropriate for us to view the word “curse” there as a statement of consequence. God was not changing the future lives of the man and woman; He was explaining the results of their actions. We see this clearly in Genesis 3:7 when shame instantly entered after they ate from the tree. Shame entered before God ever spoke anything related to the curse. It also says that they hid because they were afraid when they heard God coming into the garden. We can certainly understand their fear, for they had just disobeyed the Creator of the universe. However, that fear also entered their hearts before God spoke to them about a curse. We also see that Adam blamed Eve while Eve blamed the serpent; they were deflecting.

Before God had said anything about a curse, some consequences were apparent.

So far, we have identified shame, fear, and avoidance all occurring before God had ever spoken anything related to curses. What we see is that there were instantaneous consequences related to this act of disobedience. Of course, this does not mean that the curse was entirely passive. God was very active in taking away the legs from serpents and exiling both the man and woman from the garden. However, we need to look closely to see what God spoke to the serpent, to Adam, and to Eve in relation to who they were before and after the fall.

We need to clearly understand what God spoke to all recipients of the curse.

We are extremely limited in knowing much about serpents prior to this event. The fact that God said they would now go forth on their stomachs suggests that they had legs and walked before that, perhaps looking more like lizards than snakes. He also says they would be cursed more than all other beasts of the fields, which suggests they were more like beasts than birds or fish. God also said He would put enmity between the offspring of the serpent and the offspring of the woman. This seems almost superfluous until we remember that God often says things with multiple meanings. Let us put ourselves in the woman’s position for a brief moment. The serpent had just knowingly and intentionally tricked us into doing something that cost us everything perfect in life and brought death and destruction into our world. What is our attitude toward the serpent after that? Personally, it would be on the top of my hit list. I suspect the serpent recognized there was already enmity between them. However, God was highlighting what was already there, indicating He was taking it up a notch, making it somehow eternal—as we saw finished in Jesus.

The curse was primarily identifying what was already in effect due to sin.

That part of the curse was according to something that was already there. In Adam’s case, God stated that the ground would bring forth thorns and thistles and lead to toil. However, this was because of something that was already there. In Genesis 2:15, God had put Adam into the garden to “tend and cultivate” it. This was part of who Adam was. The man was made to be a ruler over creation, but this rulership involved caring for the land. The curse that

God described to Adam directly corresponded to an area of His creation that was already connected to the man. Additionally, God spoke of the man returning to dust, which related to the man's being formed from dust. We can see that the curse corresponded to specific parts of what made Adam who he was.

The curse had corresponded to part of what made Adam exactly who he was.

Before we discuss the woman's curse, we need to take a moment to discuss the concept of work. God placed Adam in the garden to cultivate and keep it. However, this was before the fall. There was no death or sickness or sin or imperfection in the world at this moment. This suggests that Adam would not have found any sorrow or misery in that activity. It has been said that if people can find jobs they love, they never work a day in their lives; this is true because they are doing something that gives them joy as they do it. If there had never been a fall, we would have seen everybody finding something to do that gives them joy as they do it. If God made the man to cultivate and keep the ground as part of his ruling over the world, then it had to be something he would enjoy. The curse section of Genesis clearly states that it only became toil and hardship after the fall when sin and evil entered the world. The curse took what was an area of joy and fulfillment and tainted it.

The curse took what was an area of joy and fulfillment and tainted it with pain.

If we are correct in ascribing the curse to aspects that corresponded with what was already true about the early players in this drama, it tells us something about woman. The woman's curse related to a biological condition and a relational condition. In the former, childbirth would become painful. Because the man and woman had not yet been fruitful and multiplied, there is no way to know what

childbirth would have been like prior to the fall. However, it is clear that it would not have been as painful as it is now. This part of the curse related to part of woman's identity—she brings forth children. This is a simple biological fact: men cannot get pregnant. The entire arena of childbirth is solely under the agency of women. Men can support and affect, and they certainly play a part in it, but only a woman can conceive and give birth. That is unique to the female of the species. The first part of the woman's curse corresponded to the most unique aspect of the woman's role in co-ruling the world.

The 1st part of Eve's curse corresponded to what was most unique about her.

This is one area feminism denigrates women more than it elevates them. Feminism often tries to eradicate all distinctions between male and female. The problem is that at the core is the unstated assumption that if anything is inherently feminine, it is therefore inherently inferior to what is inherently masculine. Of course, we are not in any way disregarding what has been said in a spirit of misogyny: a great many sins have been done to femininity in the name of masculinity for thousands of years—just as great evils have erroneously been done in the name of God; however, those evils do not define true Christianity any more than a misogynist defines true masculinity. The solution, contrary to some radicals in our current society, is not for the oppressed to become the new oppressors—a tendency that psychologists tell us is all too present in the human condition; instead, we must stop reacting and start affirming what is actually true. If feminism were as much for truth and equality as it claims, it would equally combat misandry as misogyny. Instead, it tries to level the playing field by eradicating all distinctions, leaving nothing special or unique to either gender. It is here that the Church—and every member of the Church—must decide whether

to seek perfect truth, balance, and value for every person as God intended or instead to seek as much of a pendulum swing as possible.

If we desire true equality, we must seek truth instead of just a pendulum swing.

The second part of the curse in relation to woman indicated that she would desire her husband even considering the pains of childbirth, and she would end up being ruled by him. As we have seen, this part of the curse must correspond to something related to the woman's nature. Even though she would experience labor, she would still want to "become one flesh" and have children. However, this was more than just a biological desire, for she was not just provided to the man for reproductive purposes; she was specifically intended to co-rule with him. This suggests that the woman had a significant dedication and desire for the man prior to the fall: she recognized that it was the two of them together who were meant to be servant-leaders over creation. However, nothing about the ground was said concerning the woman, which suggests that she may have had a different desire, a different role, than cultivating and keeping the ground. Again, reproduction itself could not be the answer, for she was to also rule over the beasts of the earth. In other words, it is ridiculous to assume to producing rulers was the sole extent of her ruler-ship. She had a clear part to play in ruling the created world. Yet, we do find another part of the curse: she would be ruled by her husband. This suggests that the woman already had some tendency to show deference to the man—as well as that the man may have some tendency to accept control. Again, we are looking through a mirror darkly, but it seems that there was already some type of relationship dynamic at play that was accentuated (in a negative way) by the introduction of sin and death into the world.

The curse suggests there was already some type of relationship dynamic at play

It is here that we need to make a bit of a leap from speaking about Adam and Eve to speaking about male and female and, from there, to masculine and feminine. Clearly, there is some type of correlation, for women still desire men even after going through labor, and men still toil and sweat to get results. What is necessary here is to distinguish between how man and woman are made and what belongs to the fall. If the curse applied not just to Adam and Eve but to all people, and if the man's curse seems to affect most men while the woman's curse seems to affect most women, then masculine and feminine reflect something more than just gender; in other words, the fall shows that there are aspects related to masculinity and femininity that go beyond biology. Clearly, there are biological differences between male and female, and there are roles unique to each: mother and father are not identical. As much as our current society is intentionally deceived into believing otherwise, there are biological specifics to gender that cannot change. Only a woman can give birth, which means only a woman can be a mother. It is also inherent in a child, before any ability to learn about cultural norms, to bond to the mother while she has a special nurturing bond to the child. There is a certain tendency to care that make women mothers while there is a certain assertiveness and activism for men that lead to their being fathers. These correlate to what is seen both before and after the fall.

Both men and women have certain tendencies that were affected by the fall

The man's curse was toil and sweat while working the ground, and the woman's was desire for the man even when it involved subjection. However, it is vital to recognize that the curse was not an absolute and total state of

affairs. The ground does have weeds, thorns, and thistles, but not every piece of ground is completely overrun; women experience pain in childbirth, but not every woman experiences the same level of pain. Similarly, not every man feels the same about cultivating and farming, and not every woman feels the same about taking care of children. The curse of the fall describes the consequences and tendencies of man and woman—not the way things are intended to be or how God wants them to be. However, it helps to describe something about how men and women are created. Man’s curse related to his inherent desire to accomplish things with his hands while the woman’s curse related to her inherent tendency to nurture things. These weaknesses correspond to the inherent strengths while they simultaneously reveal the complementary weaknesses.

For every strength and weakness, there is a corresponding weakness and strength

There is a politically correct statement that says, “everyone is a winner.” The obvious result is that if everyone is a winner, then nobody really wins. The truth is that some people can run faster, some people are smarter, some people are more skilled, and these differences result in strengths and weaknesses. Not everyone can have the same strengths and weaknesses because people are different. If the man was made in a way that aggressiveness was his strength, and the woman was made in a way that nurturing was her strength, then there is the obvious correlation: aggressiveness was the woman’s weakness while nurturing was the man’s weakness. If they were made to perfectly complement each other to co-rule the earth, then their strengths perfectly balanced the other’s weaknesses. Just as there is a biological complementarity that causes male and female to work together to produce life, there is also a complementarity of masculine and feminine

characteristics that work together to rule the earth. This means that both aspects are equally necessary and therefore are equally valuable. This can be seen in almost any field of society, including the Church. Denominations where men predominantly fill positions of leadership tend to elevate accomplishment at the expense of everything else, and women tend to be drawn to positions that require higher levels of sensitivity and care. This tendency is often followed, disregarding the aspect of this clearly a consequence of the fall. In other words, women may submit due to a more sensitive and caring nature when doing so leaves control in the hands of men driven to accomplishment; likewise, a group of men may find themselves better able to accomplish a goal by staying on task while disregarding the true productivity and quality that brings life and health in the process. Both men and women must recognize their strengths while simultaneously resisting the tendencies elevated by the fall that prevent them from forming the perfect combination—ruling together as they were meant to do.

Both men and women must recognize their strengths & resist their weaknesses.

Another failure we discover in our current perspectives on the creation is that we sometimes assume that masculinity is only related to men while femininity is only related to women. This is a failure due to our language. On the one hand, we know that gender is absolute: men are male while women are female; gender is no more fluid than genus and species. On the other hand, all positive aspects of personality are found in God and in Jesus: the Father is neither male nor female, and the Son is entirely male; however, both Adam and Eve, as we saw, were created in God’s image. We have a tendency to think of masculine as a word to describe male and feminine as a word to describe female. It is much more accurate that we identify male as a limited biological

reflection of the masculine and female as a limited biological reflection of the feminine than the other way around. All positive characteristics of each can be found in both men and women. As we know, God did not create Eve as entirely separate from Adam. Instead, He took part of Adam to fashion Eve. Part of the man is inherently now part of the woman. In other words, part of the man Adam was in the woman Eve. It may have only been a small part, but there was a part. In other words, the first female contained a small bit of the male. Additionally, all the next generation of men came from Eve, meaning some part of her was in them. All men contain a small bit of the female. Although we are speaking biologically, we can easily extrapolate that it also holds for the more eternal natures of the masculine and feminine. Woman may be primarily feminine, but she contains some masculine, and man may be primarily masculine, but he contains some feminine. Masculine and feminine refer to the qualities that relate to how God made us all.

Masculine and Feminine relate less to biology and more to how God made us.

Our society is currently working very hard to eradicate any differences between the sexes. Even the term “gender” is now being used in entirely fluid and relative ways. This is demonically motivated, which is not something to say lightly. However, there are still plenty of honest scientists, sociologists, anthropologists, and psychologists who explain that there are sure and undeniable tendencies and qualities that differentiate male and female. Even the brains of men and women are made differently to process things differently. There are inherent tendencies for men to have traits we associate with masculine and for women to have traits we associate with feminine, and neither of these is superior or inferior to the other. Again, one of the major weaknesses found in radical feminism is that it fights against any of these

distinctions because it unintentionally accepts the erroneous claim that masculine traits are superior to feminine traits. The answer is both working together—not both being neutralized. The solution to the obvious imbalance of the past is equality based upon valuing the strength each provides—not adopting blind anonymity.

The solution is for both genders to work together—not for either to be neutralized.

As we begin to value both masculine and feminine gifts equally, we must avoid another equally common mistake: equating generalities with specifics. In other words, we must not associate every man and woman with what is common to most men and women. People are very different—as God made us—and how we reflect masculine and feminine in the image of God is not always to the same extent or in the same way as someone else. Some men may have more traits associated with the feminine, and some women may have more traits associated with the masculine. Any cursory reading of the Bible reveals men of God who are aggressive and assertive as well as some who are sensitive and nurturing; likewise, it shows us women of God who are deferential and quiet as well as some who are forceful and influential. The main point to see in this is that all of these people, whether male or female, were being the way God made them and were doing what God called them to do. However, we also see the contrary—men who rejected the best parts of both masculine and feminine, such as Ahab and Saul, and women who also rejected the best parts of both feminine and masculine, such as Jezebel and Lot’s wife. Each person has strengths and weaknesses related to the masculine and feminine within each, as God created each of them; in every case, Jesus completes what all people need individually, the opposite sex completes them physically, and both sexes together perfectly express the full image of God in true servant leadership.