

Amazing Truths from the Pentateuch (3)
A Wonderful Surprise for Adam
(Genesis 2:18-25)

Introduction:-

The move toward "self-isolation" has led to many social problems within the recent Covid -19 pandemic. Amongst others things, it has highlighted our need as human beings for social interaction with other people. Even if this does mean singing to each other from high-rise parapets and roof tops! To deny this, has led many people down the path of panic, mania, and in some cases self-harm. Our passage before us affirms the truth that it is "not good" for man to live his life in isolation from other human beings. He was created a spiritual as well as a "social" human being, and so God for the first time within creation pronounces the judgment of "not good" upon Adam's situation. What then is the problem with Adam's situation, and secondly, what is the solution that God provides? This becomes one of our further amazing truths from the Pentateuch. Let us now look a little closer at this passage, as this issue unfolds.

1. First, God sets up his first Experiment (verses 18-20)

After God had put Adam in the Garden of Eden, it was not enough for Adam to simply understand the basis as well as limits of true freedom. Now for the first time, God pronounced the judgment, "It is not good for the man to be alone." The issue then becomes a "suitable helper" for Adam, which actually provides a frame for the little parable provided in verses 19-20a, in which the Lord first forms from the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air, and then brings them to the man to see what he would name them, thus fulfilling the mandate at Genesis 1:28 to rule over God's created order. But in spite of this situation, no suitable helper was found. How then does this parable help us to understand the meaning of "suitable helper" at its frames? To begin with, perhaps the pairing of the animals and birds themselves as they came to Adam, reminded him of his lack of companionship, that could only be fulfilled in the Creator of all life. Also, perhaps Genesis 1:27-28 gives us a vital clue here, when it says that God created the humans as "male and female" in his image (language which would not suggest the dominance of one over the other, but rather as "equals", complementing one another - or perhaps "counterpart" would also come closest to the particular context given here). Then this is followed by Genesis 1:28 with the words: "God blessed them, and said to them (male and female together), "Be fruitful (fill the earth), and subdue it (care for the earth), and rule over the fish of the sea and birds of the air, and over every living creature that moves on the ground." And so, in the light of this verse, Adam was really missing his female companion and counterpart, in being able to properly and fully fulfil this mandate from God. In other words, the naming of all the beasts of the field and the birds of the air should have been carried out in joint names!! Further, the word "helper" in Hebrew does not imply inferiority, for God is often called the "helper" of Israel (e.g. Psalm 27:9). The sense of isolation and of alienation of so much contemporary society, where even husbands and wives and families, are often defined by their sharing the same roof and the same television set, while each pursues his or her detached and separate life, serve to underline this Genesis text: "It is not good to be alone."

2. The Deep and Wonderful Mystery of Woman (verses 21-23)

It is said that this passage is the only full account of the creation of woman in ancient Near Eastern literature. The ancient kingdom of Sumer dating to the third millennium BC records a myth about a goddess whose name carried the meaning of "Lady of the

Rib" or the "Lady who makes Live". She was created by a chief God in order to heal another rebel god's rib. It is thought that this myth was later adapted into this Genesis story of Eve's creation from Adam's rib. However, the only useful and credible parallel from this ancient myth is that the word for "rib" also means "life." Something of that concept is also intended here: The woman comes into being out of the very life of the man: Life begets life. Something of the wonder and mystery of the creation of woman is then portrayed in verse 21 when the Lord God caused the man to fall into a "deep sleep" (not necessarily suggesting the first case of controlled anesthesia in history, but more to the point that the secret things of the universe belong to God alone, as Deuteronomy 29:29 reminds us). Deep sleep can also be the occasion for divine revelation as at Genesis 15:12, and Job 4:13. But whilst Adam was sleeping, the Lord took one of the man's ribs, and closed up the place with flesh. Then the Lord made or "built" a woman from the rib or side that he had taken out of the man. The word translated "rib" by NIV can also mean "side" in other contexts, and is next used within the Pentateuch of the side of the Ark of the Covenant, and then of the side of the Tabernacle, within the Book of Exodus. And as the Father of the Bride, the Lord God then brought the woman to Adam, as an indication of his anticipatory love and joy, as well as the reversal of his "not good" judgment of verse 18, also indicating the first marriage ceremony in the Bible (v. 22). Then Adam responded with the first poem recorded in the Bible, "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman (Hebrew - Ishah), for she was taken from man (Hebrew - Ish). The imagery and language that is used here suggests the intimate relationship that exists between that of man and woman. Woman was taken from man, and by naming her here in this way, indicates an equality in nature (1:27 = "male and female"), which at Genesis 3:16 and 3:20 moves toward a headship over the woman, which is a result of the Fall. But in the meantime, Matthew Henry's comment comes closer to the spirit and meaning of the text when he says, "Not made out of his head to top him, not out of his feet to be trampled upon by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart, to be beloved" (end of quote). This is not fully realized after the Fall, until Christ makes all things new again at Ephesians 5:22-33 (where mutual love is taught), and 1 Peter 3:1-7 (where husband and wife are called "joint-heirs" in the gift of life). Tragically today, family violence both violates and desecrates this one-flesh union between husband and wife. When one partner takes the life of the other, they are really taking their own lives, as made in the image of God, for as Paul has said, what person really hates their own body? But this happens, when one partner takes the life of the other.

3. Marriage as the Happy Ending (verses 24-25)

Finally, this passage ends with an inevitable statement about marriage, that began when the Lord addressed Adam's loneliness, by finally bringing the woman to the man as the Father of the bride at verse 22. The physical creation of the woman from the man implies a natural relationship that is restored when the man and the woman become "one flesh" by physically reuniting. Further, in order to put the wife's interests above all others, the man will leave his father and mother (as indeed Moses did), and cleave to his wife. In making this commitment to each other, they become "one flesh", living in complete harmony with each other, without any barriers, as the final verse 25 tells us, which also serves a narrative function with chapter three.

Conclusion:-

What does it mean for us that Male and Female together share in the freedom and task that God has given us? How can we celebrate this amazing truth today?