

***Last time we finished up with God placing man in the newly created Garden of Eden.***

- ◆ It must have been an ideal existence living in a beautifully landscaped garden created by God Himself.
- ◆ But in the middle of the garden two trees were different.
- ◆ They did not have botanical names, but rather moral names.
- ◆ They were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.
- ◆ We spoke about a moral universe that God has engineered where free agents have been given self-determining freedom and the power to make morally responsible choices.
- ◆ Consequences, either good or bad, have been carefully engineered into the process.
- ◆ God's placement of these two trees in the garden creates the possibility of choice.
- ◆ But with that choice there comes both a prohibition and a warning from God.
- ◆ Genesis 2:15 The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. 16 And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; 17 but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die."
- ◆ There are two important principles at work here we need to understand about this situation before we proceed any further.
- ◆ The first is God has the right to make two comprehensive claims on His created beings.
- ◆ In an earlier session we saw God criticizing ancient Israel for being unfaithful to Him, their Father and Creator
- ◆ ***Deuteronomy 32:5-6 They are corrupt and not his children; to their shame they are a warped and crooked generation. 6 Is this the way you repay the Lord, you foolish and unwise people? Is he not your Father, your Creator, who made you and formed you?*** (See also Deuteronomy 32:20; Malachi 1:6)
- ◆ When we create or make something, whether it is one of my wife's world famous desserts or this series of sermons, the creator is credited with ownership; they are Susan's desserts or Gary's sermons.
- ◆ The creator of something has an exclusive and comprehensive claim on that product.
- ◆ God by creating Adam and Eve exercised an exclusive and comprehensive claim on them as their Maker or Creator.
- ◆ Second, as the one who brought them into existence, He also had the additional claim of being their Father or parent.
- ◆ ***Ephesians 3:14-15 For this reason I kneel before the Father, 15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name.***
- ◆ As mentioned, we were created to be in relationship with our heavenly Father as His special children.
- ◆ We of all the earthly creation have been given the capacity to understand this special relationship of "fatherhood" in both a physical and spiritual sense.
- ◆ Paul by kneeling to the Father is acknowledging God's claim on his life.
- ◆ On a side note, it is only this aspect of fatherhood, that is, as our Creator, who is the only true Father, after whom all earthly fatherhood is named (Ephesians 3:15) that we should ascribe to God.
- ◆ We should not ascribe biological, male, patriarchal or sexist characteristics to God the Father. These are characteristics used to describe humans while God is divine.
- ◆ The only characteristics we should ascribe to God are those divine characteristics demonstrated by Jesus Christ who came to reveal the Father (Luke 10:22, John 14:7).
- ◆ So God as both Creator and Father exercises two exclusive and comprehensive claims on His newly created children in much the same way we as parents exercise these claims when we decide to have children.
- ◆ Society recognizes and expects parents to take responsibility for the children they bring into the world.
- ◆ The second important principle we need to understand is, "Will His created beings accept these claims?"
- ◆ Despite having these two legitimate claims on their lives, as God's purpose was to create "man in His image" (humans who would think and act only as God would by their own volition), He created them with the ability to reason, to question and to choose.
- ◆ In addition to offering the possibility of them saying "yes" to God, it opened the possibility of them disagreeing with, or worse, saying "no" to their Creator and Father.
- ◆ Faithfulness or trust in Him is a big deal to God and we will see one's allegiance being put to the test throughout the biblical narrative.
- ◆ This is an assumption, but we can speculate Satan's allegiance was put to the test when God decided to create man that would have placed humans above angels (Hebrews 2:6-8).

- ◆ The patriarch Noah was asked to build an ark on a plain nowhere near the ocean and then wait 120 years for the flood to happen (Genesis 6:9-22).
- ◆ Job suffered terribly, but refused to curse God although he thought he was being unfairly singled out (Job 2:9).
- ◆ The father of the faithful, Abraham was asked to sacrifice his son to test his allegiance (Genesis 22:2).
- ◆ The children of Israel were tested 40 years in the desert (Deuteronomy 8:2).
- ◆ Jesus subjected Himself to 40 days and 40 nights of temptation by the devil to demonstrate His allegiance to His Father (Matthew 4:1-2).
- ◆ And when we get to the end of this series we will see the theme of the book of Revelation is one of allegiance.

***So when we look at the context of what transpired with Adam and Eve, we have to view it from this perspective, a test of their allegiance.***

- ◆ Last chapter we saw God placing Adam and Eve into the special garden designated by God as holy ground where humanity could come and commune with their God.
- ◆ By placing Adam and Eve in this holy location with the instruction and responsibility ***“to work it and take care of it”*** they were the forerunners of those who would later become representatives of God's people in their interaction with God, i.e. “priests of God”.
- ◆ Priests had the responsibility to act as representatives on behalf of the people (Leviticus 16).
- ◆ The responsibility then of how the newly created human beings would respond to their Creator and Father fell on Adam and Eve's shoulders.
- ◆ Their response to this test of their allegiance would determine the fate of their descendants (1 Corinthians 15:22).
- ◆ So this scenario involving the two trees was much more than just a moral issue about fruit; it was a test of humanity's allegiance.
- ◆ Would they put their trust and dependence in the One who was their Father and Creator and God by acknowledge Him in determining how they would think and act as His children by partaking of the tree of life?
- ◆ Or would they ignore their Creator and Father and instead determine for themselves to be their own gods, “knowing good and evil” represented by the tree of the knowledge of good and evil?
- ◆ In other words, by trusting in their own selves rather than God, they were effectively saying, “We will be our own gods”.
- ◆ This display of independence also opened the door to the possibility of them introducing “evil”.
- ◆ This scenario is nothing new to those of us who are parents. We want the best for our children and do our best to raise them to be responsible adults, but things don't always turn out how we would like.
- ◆ God knows what it's like to be a wounded parent, after all, He has suffered a long history of His overtures being rejected - Satan, Adam and Eve, children of Israel.
- ◆ It would seem we wouldn't say “yes” to God before we first satisfy our curiosity with evil and perhaps this is the point.

***Returning to our story. Drawing attention to something is a surefire way of piquing someone's curiosity and by God singling out these two trees this is exactly what happened.***

- ◆ Most of us have raised children and gone through the exercise of giving prohibitions to our children.
- ◆ “Don't touch the remote control.” Then one day you come in and you see your child standing there with his quivering hand poised over the remote.
- ◆ But this is not just a child's problem.
- ◆ Suppose you walk to work every day in the city. On the way you walk past a construction site which is surrounded by a metal fence which prevents you from seeing what is going on inside.
- ◆ Half way along the fence is a small hole with a sign that reads, “Whatever you do, don't look through this hole?”
- ◆ Every day you walk past that hole with that dumb sign posted there. What do you think is going to happen?
- ◆ Every day, Adam and Eve walked past this intriguing tree with beautiful fruit dropping to the ground uneaten – you get the drift!
- ◆ So we have this curiosity problem playing on Adam and Eve's mind.

But in addition to this intriguing tree messing with their minds there's another potential menace lurking in the bushes.

- ◆ Genesis 3:1 (NLT) Now the serpent was the shrewdest of all the creatures the Lord God had made.
- ◆ In an earlier sermon we learned who this serpent is, and to where he and his rebellious angels were banished!

- ◆ Now, he suddenly appears in God's beautiful garden and starts talking to the woman.
- ◆ And again the question has to be asked, is there a reason God allows this evil menace access to the woman unless there is a part for him to play in this great drama of creating man in God's image?
- ◆ We have to assume God as their Creator and parent warned Adam and Eve about the potential danger of listening to any voice with a different message to His.
- ◆ Plus He had given them the command "to subdue the earth" (Genesis 1:28) and second, to "keep" or "guard" the garden (Genesis 2:15).
- ◆ These commands would seem strange unless there is something ominous lurking in the bushes.
- ◆ We also know from the book of Job that Satan is allowed to play a part in these tests of faithfulness, but is restricted by God in just how far he is allowed to go.
- ◆ Circumstances are always under God's control.
- ◆ Job 1:8-12 Then the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil."<sup>9</sup> "Does Job fear God for nothing?" Satan replied.<sup>10</sup> "Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land."<sup>11</sup> But now stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face."<sup>12</sup> The LORD said to Satan, "Very well, then, everything he has is in your power, but on the man himself do not lay a finger."
- ◆ There are a number of things we can learn from this exchange.
- ◆ First, Job's faith in God is being tested as mentioned earlier so there is a higher purpose in what transpires.
- ◆ Like love, faith in God are virtues God is not going to compromise with and He is unwavering in His commitment that both will prevail despite the heavy cost of evil.
- ◆ God will even persevere with His goal even if it means tolerating this creaturely induced evil for a time and even subjecting Himself to its horror so as to obtain His desired goal.
- ◆ Second, Satan is allowed by God to play a role in these tests.
- ◆ Third, God restricts him in how far he is allowed to go.
- ◆ Fourth, because of His decision to grant freedom to His creatures, God has to remain at arm's length in order for Job to be free to exercise his freewill.

***The same scenario is being played out here in the Garden***

- ◆ The devil is shrewd enough to exploit the vulnerability of Eve while also recognizing the influence a woman has over a man.
- ◆ Genesis 3:1-4 (NLT) Really?" he asked the woman. "Did God really say you must not eat any of the fruit in the garden?"<sup>2</sup> "Of course we may eat it," the woman told him. <sup>3</sup> "It's only the fruit from the tree at the center of the garden that we are not allowed to eat. God says we must not eat it or even touch it, or we will die."<sup>4</sup> "You won't die!" the serpent hissed.
- ◆ The serpent sows the seed of doubt (distrust) and questions God's credibility. In other words, it goes back to this question of "trust" or "faith".
- ◆ "You don't have to trust God to determine what is right or wrong, you have the smarts to work it out for yourself", in other words, you can be your own gods.
- ◆ Then the serpent goes on to make it appear as though God is withholding something from them and keeping it all for Himself.
- ◆ V.5 "God knows that your eyes will be opened when you eat it. You will become just like God, knowing everything, both good and evil."
- ◆ Satan is using the same perverted thinking that motivated him to rebel against God, thinking he too could ascend, replace God, and be his own god (Isaiah 14:12-15).
- ◆ Well, we know what happened. Instead of putting their faith and trust in their Creator and Father, they exercised their God-given prerogative, exercised their independence and chose instead to trust themselves.
- ◆ V.6 The woman was convinced. The fruit looked so fresh and delicious, and it would make her so wise!
- ◆ Even before Eve tasted the fruit, we see her exerting her independence, making her own judgment about the fruit and the prospect of gaining wisdom through her own efforts.
- ◆ She took the bait, and allowed the ***lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life*** (1 John 2:16) to get the better of her and she succumbed to the serpent's temptation.

- ◆ This is the dark side of our nature. We begin to dwell in those things that we know are wrong but seem unable to stop ourselves from flirting with those evils.
- ◆ When we find ourselves dwelling on something prohibited, we need to remember this story (James 4:7).
- ◆ **V.6 ...So she ate some of the fruit. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her. Then he ate it, too.**
- ◆ Now we see another ominous development, solidarity in their rebellion as Adam joins his wife in exerting their independence. This rebellious attitude of solidarity against God would manifest itself later as a political movement in the story of the Tower of Babel when the whole community rose up in defiance of God's will.
- ◆ **V.7 At that moment, their eyes were opened, and they suddenly felt shame at their nakedness.**
- ◆ In this one respect Satan was right. By the very act of disobedience, Adam and Eve discovered the difference between good and evil.
- ◆ However, instead of becoming like God, they became "sinners," and as history would determine, learning what is right or wrong apart from God is a painful and confusing path and would eventually lead to death.
- ◆ Right away their sin began to pervert their thinking and whereas before they were unconscious of this nakedness, now suddenly they were ashamed and vulnerable.
- ◆ They had moved from a position of other-consciousness to self-consciousness a situation which would open them up to others taking advantage of their perceived vulnerabilities.
- ◆ It's hard for us to imagine what it would be like to live in a world where our thoughts, words and actions were other-centered and not self-obsessed by how they would reflect back on us.
- ◆ Yet it would seem this was the nature of Adam and Eve before sin was introduced.
- ◆ Now this self-conscious vulnerability introduced a new weapon to be used against others, the ability to inflict harm on others by pointing out their vulnerabilities.
- ◆ And mankind has adopted this weapon with great gusto to the detriment of many relationships.
- ◆ Instead of attaining the mastery they hoped they would achieve by choosing to be their own gods, instead they found themselves in servitude to spiritual, emotional, and physical forces way beyond their control.

**But back to the garden.**

- ◆ Not sure if you remember the feeling as a kid of being found out after disobeying your parents.
- ◆ You might say Adam and Eve's true nature was "exposed"!
- ◆ And this seems to be the direction human nature takes from this point forward.
- ◆ The gift of freewill seems to default and be dominated by self-will with the resulting consequences (Romans 7:14-25).
- ◆ V.7 ...So they strung fig leaves together around their hips to cover themselves. 8 Toward evening they heard the Lord God walking about in the garden, so they hid themselves among the trees.
- ◆ Notice who it was who first hid from God?
- ◆ Yet man is quick to blame God when calamity strikes – "Where was God? Why didn't He stop it if He is a God of love?"
- ◆ We will look at that question shortly.
- ◆ V.9 The Lord God called to Adam, "Where are you?" 10 He replied, "I heard you, so I hid. I was afraid because I was naked."
- ◆ When my brothers and kids were kids, about six or seven, we broke a glass door and we thought we would avoid punishment if we went to bed early, even though it was about 5:00 o'clock in the afternoon.
- ◆ Little did we realize that by our actions we were signaling our guilt – "What are you kids doing in bed at this hour? What have you done?"
- ◆ V.11 "Who told you that you were naked?" the Lord God asked. "Have you eaten the fruit I commanded you not to eat?" 12 "Yes," Adam admitted, "but it was the woman you gave me who brought me the fruit, and I ate it." 13 Then the Lord God asked the woman, "How could you do such a thing?" "The serpent tricked me," she replied. "That's why I ate it."
- ◆ So the blame game starts. Self-will wants to protect self, and human beings have been playing this game ever since.
- ◆ Not only was there a rupture in the relationship between God and man, but now by their improvised clothing, they show they are not only hiding from God but also from each other.
- ◆ This is further demonstrated by their haste to blame the other for their sin.
- ◆ Once a rupture with God occurs all other relationships suffer irreparable damage.

- ◆ Instead of conformity and altruism towards others, individualism and self-interest dominate man's thinking. What was the consequence of their decision?
- ◆ Genesis 3:22-24 (NLT) 22 Then the Lord God said, "The people have become as we are, knowing everything, both good and evil. What if they eat the fruit of the tree of life? Then they will live forever!"
- ◆ Sitting there in the garden all this time is the tree of life with no prohibition or warning associated with it.
- ◆ If they had eaten of this tree instead of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Adam and Eve would have acknowledged God's claims on their lives and in effect submitted their lives to His direction and will.
- ◆ It is the height of arrogance to think we, as the created, can rise to be in the image of God without the help of our Creator.
- ◆ It would be left to the second Adam, Jesus Christ, to humbly submit His life to God's will on behalf of humanity and undo the debacle of the first Adam (Romans 5:12-21, 1 Corinthians 15:22).
- ◆ V.23 So the Lord God banished Adam and his wife from the Garden of Eden, and he sent Adam out to cultivate the ground from which he had been made. 24 After banishing them from the garden, the Lord God stationed mighty angelic beings to the east of Eden. And a flaming sword flashed back and forth, guarding the way to the tree of life.
- ◆ Adam and Eve were escorted out of the Garden that effectively severed the unique relationship mankind enjoyed with God up to this point.
- ◆ By turning away from and denying their Creator and Father, the very source of their being, they forfeited the unique connection that lies at the heart for which they were created, intimate relationship.
- ◆ Instead of "rest" and "holiness", it is "work" and "sin."
- ◆ It will be up to the saving "work" of Christ to restore this unique characteristic of relatedness that is essential to being in the image of God.

However, before they left notice what God does for them that is very important to the story of restoration.

- ◆ Genesis 3:21 (NLT) And the Lord God made clothing from animal skins for Adam and his wife.
- ◆ The coverings Adam and Eve had made for themselves (fig leaves) were totally inadequate to cover their shame along with their sorry excuses.
- ◆ So God made coverings for them from animal skins indicating that something was going to happen in the future where blood would be shed and a life given to adequately cover their sins.
- ◆ God does not stop loving his creation when they mess up any more than we stop loving our kids when they mess up and His intention all along remains the same - to bring them into that unique relationship enjoyed by the Godhead (Romans 8:38-39).
- ◆ It also foreshadowed things were going to get a whole lot more complicated, messy and painful before the ultimate goal was achieved.

***Before we leave this section, we need to ask the question, "Who was responsible for evil? Was it God?"***

- ◆ No, the blame for evil lies entirely with the exercise of free will on the part of both Satan and Adam and Eve.
- ◆ It was their desire "to become like God" to know for themselves "good and evil" which led them down the path of sin.
- ◆ They were effectively usurping a position that is God's alone, as He alone knows what is good and evil for His creation.
- ◆ And sadly this devastating trait has plagued mankind ever since.
- ◆ Instead of trusting God for guidance and help, we become our own moral instructors and judges setting our own standards of "righteousness".
- ◆ Romans 10:3 Since they did not know the righteousness of God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness.
- ◆ As a consequence, we now live in a world where rulers, politicians, bureaucrats, journalists, businessmen, clergy, actors all compete to impose their assessment of what is good and evil on the rest of society.
- ◆ And there is no one more dangerous than those who are sure they know both for themselves and for everyone else what is best for society.
- ◆ They too have usurped a position reserved for God alone, believing they have been especially ordained with superior wisdom and virtue to judge and correct those they regard as less brilliant than themselves and to mold them into their image.

## [IN GOD'S IMAGE 8 – THE FALL OF MAN]

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- ◆ In their arrogance and self-deception, they become immune to advice from others and pursue their own policies, which eventually become self-destructive.
- ◆ Rather than trusting and relying on the One who alone knows good from evil, they reap the confusing and painful consequences we witness in today's world.
- ◆ This is the unfortunate consequence when people take on this desire to be their own gods "knowing good and evil"
- ◆ It is only when we learn that regardless of how morally upright, law abiding and even religious we are, we are still regarded by God as miserable sinners (Isaiah 64:6).
- ◆ Adam and Eve follow in the footsteps of the "Adversary" the devil by rebelling against their Creator and Father and chose the path of self-reliance and independence apart from God.