



Sunday, May 18, 2025

Genesis 2:8-17

If you have your Bibles with you this morning, we're going to be reading from Genesis 2:8-17 where we learn about God's specific instructions to humanity. If you are able to, I invited you to stand for the reading of God's word.

Genesis 2:8-17

'8 The Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed. 9 And out of the ground the Lord God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

10 Now a river went out of Eden to water the garden, and from there it parted and became four river-heads. 11 The name of the first is Pishon; it is the one which skirts the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. 12 And the gold of that land is good. Bdellium and the onyx stone are there. 13 The name of the second river is Gihon; it is the one which goes around the whole land of Cush. 14 The name of the third river is Hiddekel; it is the one which goes toward the east of Assyria. The fourth river is the Euphrates.

15 Then the Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it. 16 And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; 17 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.'

Over the next few weeks, we're going to look at the fall of Adam and Eve, but before we do, we need to understand the heart of God and the intent behind His specific instruction here, before we try to comprehend the nature of the serpent's deception and the ultimate fall of humanity.

You see, when asked what God's first commandment to humanity is, we often think that it is a restrictive commandment saying to not eat from the tree of the knowledge of Good and Evil. However, it's important to note that this is not in fact the case. The first commandment from God is

actually to freely eat. To enjoy everything. To embrace everything that was in the garden for it was there for them:

Genesis 2:15-17

'Then the Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it. 16 And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat..."'

What this tells us about the nature of God in creation is twofold:

First - this is an expression of God's great love for us. God created this universe and us to inhabit it because of His great love! You and I are created to be the objects of that great love!

Second - God is a lavish God, not a stingy one. His first words to us are words of great freedom, not limitation. He wants to bless us, not to harm us - and when we step back and actually look at the incredible details of creation that exist so that you and I can have life and thrive, it's impossible not to see this!

You see, God commanded Adam and Eve to freely eat abundantly in the garden - first. And then, came the exception: there's just one tree that was forbidden. Hundreds upon hundreds of plants, trees, fruits, berries, herbs, and roots - as vast and colourful and delicious as the mind could imagine. And yet, after the commandment to eat of everything, there was only one exception!

Why is this important?

Because it really should reframe how we see the nature of God. Too often, we associate His commandments with restriction instead of permission. It's easy to get stuck in that mindset, especially when we read the Ten Commandments for example. But these were written to a wayward people bent on self-destruction that needed to be reshaped and reformed. Thou shalt not, thou shalt not.... But that's not the way it always was. And yet, even there - buried in these ten commandments - is a nod back to creation with the commandment to honour the Sabbath day. A reminder that God's intent has always been freedom, not control. That His laws are not meant to bind us, but to bless us because they form the structure in which we are to flourish.

Exodus 20:8-10

'Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. 9 Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 10 but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work...'

Notice - we see the same rhythm here - permission first then restriction. Honour the Sabbath day -

- enjoy it and rest in it - first. It's not just an instruction not to work. First and foremost, it's an instruction to rest to enjoy. As we learned last week, the emphasis isn't on what we stop, but on what we receive. Sabbath was made to bless us, not to confine us.

And so even before getting to the biting of the 'apple' we must understand this - God is for us, not against us! That's what this whole introduction to the fall is teaching us. This was such a powerful theme that came out of the book of the Revelation when we studied it last year. God is actually not standing in Heaven on a cloud with a lightning bolt in His hand, waiting to strike down judgement upon us. No, a better picture is that He is a loving father or a good, good Shepherd, standing right at our level with His hands outstretched, waiting to embrace us. This is a far more accurate view of God, our creator - for He is a God of great love.

And that love will always include boundaries - because ultimately real love doesn't necessarily give us everything we want, but everything we need.

When my late father-in-law was with us and the grandchildren started popping out, he would often use the line 'Why say no when you can say yes.' This always baffled Jordan, because that was definitely not align that he used growing up. However, I like the line, and I still like it, and on occasion, I will break it out. Until my kids start to use it against me. Recently, my daughter and I were bantering and forth about something that she wanted and she laughingly threw that line back on me and so I responded that my heart is to always say yes as often as I possibly can but that will never mean every time, all the time. You see, as a parent, I don't delight in withholding good things from my kids. My instinct is to say yes, to bless them, to give them what will bring them joy. But there are necessary times when I have to say no - not to ruin their fun, but to protect their future. Because without boundaries, freedom quickly turns into chaos.

A great example of this is the book/movie, 'Lord of the Flies,' in which a group of elementary school boys are stranded on an island without any sort of parental authority. They had complete freedom - which ultimately unraveled into chaos, because there were no boundaries, no guidance, no love expressed through structure.

Freedom without boundaries isn't freedom at all - it will always unravel into chaos.

This is why the forbidden tree was placed in the garden because even in a world untouched by sin, love still required structure. And that structure served as a reminder that while they were free to enjoy all that God had made, they were still the created, not the Creator.

So perhaps, this now helps us to better understand the beautiful nature of God in placing the forbidden tree in the middle of the garden and giving the instruction to stay away from it. Through this boundary, God was giving Adam and Eve choice - because true love will always require choice. Otherwise it's not love is it. Love isn't forced. Love is freely chosen.

Ex - marriage: When Jordan and I were first married, like most other married couples, we were absolutely infatuated with each other and couldn't be out of each other's presence for more than a few hours! I remember one day early on in our marriage where Jordan had just come back from lunch with her mom and I could tell she was unsettled. They were talking about marriage and her mom told her that there would likely be a day where she would wake up and would roll over and look at her husband and have to consciously make the choice to love him that day. Lol. Jordan and I both scoffed at that and felt sorry for her marriage...lol. Ultimately though, what her mom was teaching her and us in that moment was the maturity of love in marriage.

The power of love is not in its ability to feel a feeling. Rather it is in the ability to choose beyond what the feelings dictate.

Show Image: 'I Choo, Choo, choose you, Valentines card.'

(Feelings vs. Truth) We live in a generation that is obsessed and ruled by feelings. One that teaches how you feel is truth but that's not reality at all. Feelings fade, fluctuate, can be based on the what if, can be determined by adverse experiences....ultimately feelings have not basis and are subjective to the tune of the day. So if we rule ourselves by our feelings, we will always be up, down and all around. Truth is our basis. The Truth of God goes beyond our feelings and makes decisions based on that truth instead of the mood of the day...

I digress, but notice now that there was also another tree in the garden? In fact, there are two specific trees. One called the tree of life and the other the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

And so we have it - two trees. One that represents life and one that represents the knowledge of good and evil. One tree to sustain them and one to test them. Which, if you're paying attention, should raise a question:

Why was it prohibited for Adam and Eve to have the knowledge of good and evil? Wouldn't that be a good thing?

Well, the first thing I want you to see is that it's not that they did not have the knowledge of good

and evil. Think about it: when God told them not to eat from that tree, He created a scenario where right and wrong existed. Adam and Eve knew that to disobey would bring grave consequences. So clearly, the concept of good and evil had already been introduced.

But there is a big difference between knowing something in theory and then knowing it in practice.

Example: when my kids were small - like many other kids - Jordan and I would tell them not to touch the glass on the wood stove up at the family cottage when it was on - not because we wanted to withhold a great experience from them but because if they did they would sizzle and burn.

Some of the kids listened. Some did not. And those that did not, got burned. All the kids had the knowledge of right and wrong, but only a few experienced the pain that comes from embracing the wrong.

One had theoretical knowledge; the other had experiential knowledge.

And this right there is why God told Adam and Eve that they could not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. It was for their good. It wasn't Him withholding anything from them. It was Him protecting them. Because in His ultimate grace, mercy, and love, God knew that choice would be necessary for love to be real.

Do you see how by establishing this parameter it was an exercise of trust and faith that God was calling them to? This is really what faith and trust are all about. Knowing that even if we don't have the experience of what it is God is restricting us from, that our knowledge of His great love for us in placing this parameter in our lives is enough. We can trust him without having that experiential knowledge. We don't have to touch the stove to know that it will harm us, God has told us so and we have trust and faith in Him that He is doing this to bless us, not to harm us.

But He also knew that in creating real choice, He was taking a real risk. That there would be those who would choose otherwise. That some would step outside His boundaries and that love would be rejected.

And still, He gave the choice.

Because that's what love does.

I Corinthians 13:4-8

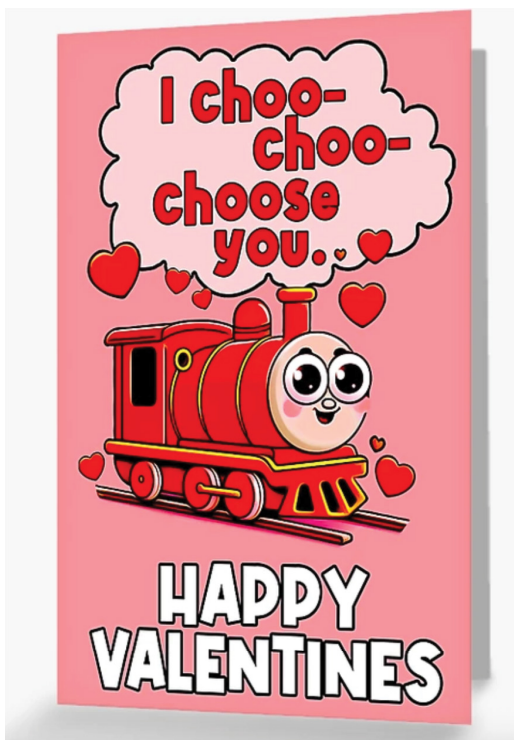
'Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; 5 does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; 6 does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; 7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. 8 Love never fails.'

Love doesn't force itself. Nor does it manipulate or control.

Love simply opens its hands and gives the invitation to come.

So no - God wasn't being cruel at all. He was being incredibly courageous. He took the risk. Because He wanted real love. Because He wanted you.

And that's the tension we're left with at the close of Genesis 2. Will they trust the God who defines good and evil? Or will they decide to define it for themselves?



Pastor Josh Hageman

Lead Pastor

Kingsview Community Church

Stoney Creek, ON

www.kingsviewchurch.com

<https://www.facebook.com/KingsviewCommunityChurch/>