



One of the many questions the secular world has, as well as many believers, is the age old one of why did God place the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil" in the midst of the Garden in the first place? By doing this, wasn't He "setting up" Adam and Eve to fail and ultimately "fall." I have heard it said that it was God who really brought the "temptation" to Adam and Eve. The serpent was just a tool used by God to test and tempt them. Of course we know that that is just as much of a lie and deception as the lie and deception that the enemy, in the guise of a serpent, gave to Adam and Eve. We are all very familiar with the account as found in Genesis 3. Therefore, we will not delve into the full account for this discussion. The question remains, "Why did God plant that "tree" in the Garden in the first place?"

I believe that it was placed there as an expression of God's perfect love to His most prized and highest form of creation. He expressly told Adam that he could eat of every tree in the Garden except the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil." God was very explicit in giving this exception. He was very clear in telling Adam that if he ate of that tree, he would "surely" die. (Genesis 2:16,17) We should pause here for a moment and put ourselves in Adam's "shoes." (Yes, I know that he was not wearing shoes but just humor me.) God told him that if he chose to eat of the fruit from this particular tree that he would "surely die."

At this point Adam had no idea or clue of what death was. Everything he knew and saw from the very moment of his existence was of the experience of total life in all of its perfection. Up to now, nothing had died because it was all made in its perfection by a perfect God in whom there is no darkness and no death, just life - not just life but the perfect expression of life in all of its fullness. Everything was bathed in God's glory, His "infinite perfection." I can just imagine Adam simply saying, "Okay, no problem. Whatever."

Notice, God expressly told this to Adam. Eve was not created as of yet. It was Adam's job as the husband to tell this to his wife, Eve. We know that he did express this to her because in her response to the serpent she did say that they were told by God that they could eat of every tree of the Garden except that of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. However, either Adam added to his explanation to her of what God told him or she added to what Adam had told her. Wherever it started, Eve in her discourse with the serpent said that God told them, "*...neither shall ye touch it...*" (Genesis 3:3) God never said that to Adam. They not only misquoted God but added to the Word of God. That was a big mistake. That is what gave the enemy the "open door" to come and bring deception and help them in making their incorrect choice. We know what happened from here.

So how does this all pertain to God placing this tree in the midst of the Garden being an expression of His perfect love to Adam and Eve. I believe that by placing the tree in the midst of the Garden, God gave them the ability to choose - life or death. Some of us may refer to this as "free will." Either way you say it, "the ability of choice" or "free will," I believe this is one of God's most precious gifts of His perfect love.

Without the ability to choose, an individual has no rights except that which is dictated to them by someone or something else. Obviously, this is what a dictator establishes. A dictator makes your choices for you. You have absolutely no say in the matter. You have one choice - the dictator's. The inability of choice also makes an individual like a puppet on a string. The puppet does what the puppeteer wants it to do by pulling on certain strings. God, in His infinite wisdom and perfect love to His creation, chooses not to be a dictator or a puppeteer. Rather, He gives us the ability and freedom to choose the direction we want to take. He gives us the ability to choose what we do and where we choose to go - even if it is not His choice for us.

However, the one thing we must not forget is that a choice is not a choice unless there is more than one choice to choose from. When God placed the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the midst of the Garden, He explicitly warned Adam not to partake of the fruit of it or else He would die. As we mentioned

previously, Adam may not have fully understood what this meant. That was not the point. God had given Adam the ability to make choices. By warning Adam not to partake of the fruit of a specific tree, He immediately gave Adam a choice. The choice really was not between eating or not eating of the fruit. The choice was not about either obeying God or not. The true choice for Adam, as well as for Eve, was to make a decision as to who they were going to "deposit their trust" in. Were they going to trust in the Word of their Creator, their God or were they going to place their trust in what they may have thought or in what someone or something else tells them? God always expresses to His people that the choices they make will always have some kind of a result. He always is very honest, up front and open with His people concerning the choices they make. He lets us know or gives us clues of the result to each of the options we have prior to making our choice. This is where His perfect love kicks into high gear. He doesn't just give us the ability to blindly make a choice. He lets us know what the results or consequences will be in whatever choice we make. He let Adam and Eve know that if they chose to partake of that tree, they would surely die.

For Adam it was to simply choose to trust in what God had told him, even if he did not fully understand the consequences of what he was told. He was to simply trust God at His Word. If Adam and Eve chose to trust in what God had told them, they would enjoy the blessings of abundant, eternal life, forever. Eternal life means to be one with God and to be in relationship with Him forever and ever. (John 17:3) However, they chose not to trust God. They chose to "deposit their trust" in what the serpent was telling them. The serpent was really telling them that it was God who was holding back on them. It was God that was deceiving them and keeping them under His bondage. They chose to trust the serpent's words instead of God. In His perfect love, God told them what would happen - they would surely die which would mean separation from Him. They made their choice because the fruit "*...was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise...*" Genesis 3:6 (KJV). They placed their trust in a lie and chose to eat of the fruit. Sure enough the consequences that God said would happen, happened. They "surely died." They experienced separation from their God.

After they ate of the fruit, God again in the Garden expresses His perfect love to Adam and Eve. He gave them another opportunity to make a choice. God immediately came to them and gave them an opportunity to "own up" to what they had done and repent. He gave them a choice to repent or not to repent. He does it in such a way that really all Adam or Eve had to say was "Yes, I did it" and God would have forgiven them and relationship would have been restored. Instead they chose to make excuses and tried to place the blame on everyone else but themselves. They even blamed God. Sound familiar? Many times we do the same thing. Hmm... That never works out to well. However, even in the midst of all this, God then expressed another action of His perfect love. God, here, makes a choice. He chooses to love His prized creation (and their future generations which is all mankind including us, today) so much that He chose to send them out of the Garden **before** they ate of the "tree of life."

You see, if they would have eaten of the "tree of life" after their "fall," mankind would have been destined to stay in that "fallen" condition forever, with no hope of being restored back into relationship with their God. (Genesis 3:22) After their "fall," God loved His creation so much that He spared them from being in that fallen state of spiritual death forever. By sending Adam and Eve out of the Garden, God immediately put into motion His plan of redemption and salvation that would come through Jesus who was the "Lamb, slain before the foundations of the earth" were even created. Thank you Father, God for your perfect love.

An interesting thought for you to ponder on that I would like to drop in at this point is that God never told Adam and Eve while they were in the Garden before their fall, that they could not partake of the "tree of life." You see they already had the God kind of abundant "life." They were created with it. They were in relationship with their God. Was it possible that they were allowed to partake of that tree because it was the "life" that was already given to them and they were living and experiencing its "fruit" to its fullest? Hmm...

As we had discussed previously, God always gives His people the ability and privilege to make choices. In Deuteronomy 28, we see that God gave the Hebrews a choice when He fulfilled His promise and brought them into the Promised Land. For the Hebrews it was the choice of choosing whether to live under God's blessings and live life the way God had intended for them to live under His umbrella of blessing. Or live in disobedience, rebellion and sin and be under the curse of sin and death. God reiterates this again through Moses in Deuteronomy 30:19, 20 - *"I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore **choose life**, that both thou and thy seed may live: That thou mayest love the LORD thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him: for he is thy life, and the length of thy days: that thou mayest dwell in the land which the LORD swore unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them."*

After the Children of Israel had entered the Promised Land and began to dwell and take their established inheritance within the Land, Joshua makes the following declaration in Joshua 24:15, *"And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, **choose you this day whom ye will serve**; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."* And again in Joshua 24:25, *"I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore **choose life**, that both thou and thy seed may live: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."*

Notice, in the above examples, the emphasis by God is to always encourage His people to **choose life** that would enable them to walk in His blessings. This speaks to us as disciples of Jesus, today. As we choose to walk in the ways of the Lord, we will be able to live under His umbrella of blessings and life more abundantly. What this also implies is that each one of us can choose the other option - death and curses.

Now, I know that through Jesus we have been set free from the "curse of the law." I also understand and believe that through the blood of Jesus we now have eternal life. Through Jesus, God the father opened the door for His prized creation to make a critical decision again. The choices are the same - choose life and be restored back into relationship with your God and be blessed. Or choose to continue to be eternally separated from your God, which is what death really is. God has given us the awesome privilege of choosing life - eternal life, which only comes through true repentance, recognizing your need for a Savior and calling upon the name of the Lord (Jesus) and be saved from eternal separation from this loving God.

It also means that we now have the ability, in and through the power of the Holy Spirit, to live the lifestyle of blessing by choosing to reject sin and darkness. Every day of our walk with the Lord we still live in the principle that God established from the beginning back in Genesis. That principle is God's perfect love expressed in giving us the power to choose life or death, blessings or curses. Now as children of God and a "joint heir" with Jesus, we have a greater responsibility to choose to walk in the ways of the Lord.

We must always keep in mind that whatever choices we make, either collectively as people or individually, their will always be either a blessing or a consequence to that choice. As a disciple of Jesus, the choices we make should always be made with the attitude of our heart that desires to bless the heart of our King. Our heart should be that which truly wants to obey and walk in the principles and precepts established and found in God's Word. Actually, being obedient to the Lord is really choosing to "deposit our trust" in a righteous, holy God. We choose to trust that His ways are the ways that will lead to blessings and allow us to enter into a deeper relationship with Him. The choices we make should be "all about blessing the heart of our God" and not just what we think will satisfy our own selfish needs and desires. This is the root of true faith in Yahweh, Adonai.

When it is all said and done, each believer is ultimately responsible before the Lord for the choices they make - just as Adam and Eve were. I pray that in our times of making any decision or choice that come our

way - either concerning us individually, our family, our ministry, our community or whatever - that our choices will be those which line up with God's Word given to His people to lead, guide and direct them. Any choice we make must be in accordance with His Word, His principles and His precepts and ***only*** His Word, principles, and precepts. Remember, in any choice, there is the possibility of bringing forth blessing or reaping the consequences of those wrong choices for the people, as well as the individual. As I mentioned previously, I believe this is one of the expressions of God's perfect love - the privilege and ability to make choices. Any choice we make should and must be grounded in and directed by the clear will of God found in the scriptures. This should be the attitude and desire of our heart. Even if it doesn't necessarily line up with what we may want. It doesn't matter. Ultimately, we should desire what God wants. As our greatest role model said in one of His most darkest moments, "*Nevertheless, not my will but your will be done.*"

There is an old secular saying that says, "You are the sum total of the choices you make." There is a lot of truth to that. The best choice for us as believers and disciples of Jesus in any situation where a choice is needed to be made, is to remember the choice that Joshua made and declared, "*...choose you this day who you will serve ...as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.*"