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INTERNATIONAL

*TEACHING THE WHOLE COUNSEL OF GOD*

# Genesis 2011 - Lesson 2B

## Chapter 2:16-17

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- Continuing in Chapter 2 examining God’s work to create man and woman
  - We left off watching Adam in the Garden, assigned the work of serving God by tending the garden
    - We learned that man’s original purpose in life was to serve God
      - And once we come to faith and return to relationship with God, we are supposed to resume this mission
    - No matter what our station in life, we seek to serve God, as Paul said:

**Eph. 6:7 With good will render service, as to the Lord, and not to men,**

**Eph. 6:8 knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free.**

- Having been assigned his responsibilities, Adam now receives God’s instructions – God’s word

**Gen. 2:16 The LORD God commanded the man, saying, “From any tree of the garden you may eat freely;**

**Gen. 2:17 but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.”**

- God says the garden is filled with trees that will provide Adam with food
  - But there is also one tree in the garden that has edible fruit, but this tree is off limits
    - This tree is not available for Adam to eat
    - It is called the tree of the knowledge of good and evil
  - What does its name mean?
    - First, notice that it is the tree of knowledge
    - The tree is not a tree of good and evil
      - It is likely just another ordinary tree
      - The tree does not possess either good nor evil
      - But the tree holds the knowledge of those things
  - Therefore, what does it mean to know good and evil?
    - First, only by contrast can you know them
      - If you lived in a world where there was only good, then you can’t know what evil is
      - Conversely, if all you know is evil, then you have no understanding of good
      - One is defined by the other in the same way that light defines dark and sound defines silence
        - If you only have one, you can’t understand the other
  - Adam and Woman were good, because God created them that way

- And now they have been given a commandment which explains that they have an option to know evil if they choose
  - By His word, God forbids a behavior (eating from the tree)
  - And now by their disobedience, they can come to know evil should they choose to disobey God's word
- It wasn't the tree that provided them with the knowledge of evil
  - It would be their own disobedience to God's word that would lead them to experience (and thus know) evil
- This possibility was a part of a covenant God has made with Adam
  - Hosea mentions this covenant in passing when discussing the plight of Israel

**Hos. 6:6 For I delight in loyalty rather than sacrifice,  
And in the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.**

**Hos. 6:7 But like Adam they have transgressed the covenant;  
There they have dealt treacherously against Me.**

- We call Adam's first covenant the Edenic covenant, after the name of the Garden
  - Like all Bible covenants, it was a binding agreement based on a word from God
  - The first part of the covenant was actually provided in Chapter 1
    - In 1:28 God blesses Adam, which is the beginning of the covenant making process
    - Then God told Adam to be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth
    - Then Adam is told to exercise dominion over the Earth and all living things
  - Now in Chapter 2 God continues the instructions of the covenant
    - Man is to keep the garden
      - The Hebrew word for "keep" implies obey God in service
    - Next, God instructs Adam to eat from the trees of the Garden
      - God gives Adam tremendous freedom in the Garden
      - Though we focus on the one restriction, the truth is Adam had tremendous freedom and only one restriction as far as we know
- Why put such a tree in the garden as part of this covenant?
  - First, consider that God has created man with both the ability to choose sin and the opportunity to choose sin
    - This is more than God Himself can do
    - God's character and nature are such that He cannot choose sin, even when it is available to Him
  - The Father is without sin and without the capacity to lie or sin, the Bible tells us in multiple places
    - So God's creation of man included an ability to choose sin
    - In fact, it required the Son to take the form of man so that He would be able to

experience temptation to sin, though He never gave in to temptation

- This is why the Bible says that Christ was the second Adam
  - He was God in the flesh, which means for the first time God was able to choose sin yet didn't follow after Adam's lead
- Men born today are not like the original Adam nor like Christ
  - As we come into this world, we are born in a state of sin, already fallen and unable to obey God
  - We are slaves to the state of disobedience that Adam established by his sinful choice
- So the first point to understand in answering the question of why was this tree in the garden, is that men were given an ability to choose sin
- Secondly, consider that our eternal state is one in which we can no longer choose to sin
  - The body we are given after resurrection is "incorruptible" according to Paul in 1 Corinthians 15
  - Meaning it cannot rebel against God
    - This is similar to the process God followed with the angels
    - Initially after the angels were created, Satan and a third of the angels sinned by rebelling against God
    - Now the remaining two thirds of the angels, the chosen or elect angels as Paul calls them in 1 Timothy 5:21, are no longer able to rebel
  - And while God made no provision to redeem the fallen angels, He has made provision to rescue some of the fallen men

**Heb. 2:16 For assuredly He does not give help to angels, but He gives help to the descendant of Abraham.**

- So God created men with the power to choose to rebel against His authority
  - But later He will remove that ability to assure perfect obedience
  - Therefore, we must conclude that the purpose for the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is to ensure that man would have the opportunity to fall by his own choice
    - Obviously, God could have left the tree out of the garden, no?
      - He could have made it so tall, Adam could never reach it's branches
    - So the very fact that there was a tree and it was available to Adam is evidence that God was placing a test before Adam that would result in Adam's failure
  - This reminds us of the parable of the Prodigal Son
    - The father in that story had a choice when the young son demanded his inheritance early
      - The father could have denied the son's request and demanded he remain in the household or suffer a penalty of death

- And had the son remained under those circumstances though, it wouldn't have been a relationship of love
  - Furthermore, without the opportunity to run away and then eventually return, the son would never have known the father's mercy and grace and forgiveness and love
    - If the son was to fully know the father, the father had to be willing to let the son sin, and leave and return
    - And then upon the return, the father and his son had a true, abiding relationship
- Thus it was for God and man in the garden
  - God intended that man experience sin
    - Remember the creation pattern we saw in Chapter 1?
      - There was dark and light (because God knew there would be sin)
        - But only light in the new Heaven and Earth
        - Dark is a picture of sin
      - There is sea (because God knew there would be judgment for sin)
        - But no sea in the new Heaven and Earth
        - Sea is a picture of the abyss, hell
      - There is a sun and moon now to provide light (because God knew He would not be able to fellowship in the presence of sin on the earth)
        - But not in the new Heaven and Earth because God will be present and we will be without the ability to sin
    - Clearly, God created the world knowing that sin would come
      - And then in Chapter 3, He was the One Who made it possible for Adam to choose sin
- Why does God permit, even invite, Adam's sin?
  - God's purpose in the creation was to express His nature and character to a creation that can know Him and worship Him fully
    - But before the creation can fully know and worship Him, we must have opportunity to see God's full personality
      - We must know God's love, compassion, provision and wisdom
        - These attributes are knowable in a world without sin
      - But to know God fully, we must also know His wrath, judgment, mercy, and grace
        - And these attributes are only knowable in a world of sin
  - Without the possibility of Adam knowing evil, mankind couldn't hope to understand God's full nature
    - And the very purpose of the creation could not be fulfilled
    - And without Adam's choice to fall, mankind would never have known the depths of God's love when He sent His son to death, to save us from that sin

**Eph. 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, Eph. 1:4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love Eph. 1:5 He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, Eph. 1:6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.**

- God the father chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world
  - Before this creation story started, He had a plan to redeem men through the death of His Son
    - Why did He do this? Verse 4 says because of God's love
    - God predetermined that He would adopt sons to Himself...
    - Notice that God's plan required that from before the world began, our adoption would be made through His Son
      - Implying that we were chosen to believe in the sacrificial death of His Son
      - Again, why? Verse 6 says to elicit praise to the glory of His grace
  - What Paul is saying is that God created the world and man and the garden and the tree knowing that it would lead to His Son's death on the cross
    - And when you remember that the Son was the One creating everything, it stuns us to consider that the Son made all things come into being knowing it would require Him to go to the cross
- Am I suggesting that this tree is somehow a big trap for Adam?
  - Far from it. Look at vs.16-17...God warns Adam in no uncertain terms – don't eat
    - There is no subterfuge here, no attempt to bait Adam
    - Adam fell because he chose to sin
  - And even if Adam had not fallen, then perhaps Cain or Abel would have fallen
    - Or perhaps Abraham, or perhaps you or I
    - Sooner or later a man with the choice to sin will fall
    - Better that it happened to the first man
- Lastly, in examining vs.16-17 we need to consider that this tree came with a promise
  - Adam received God's word
    - In God's word, Adam received a promise
      - The promise was that should Adam choose to eat from this tree, Adam would surely die
    - When God says to Adam that Adam will surely die, what does God mean?
      - We know that the Bible talks of two kinds of death
        - First, there is a physical death
        - Our physical body will cease to exist at some point, and when it stops

functioning, we call that death

- But the Bible also talks about a spiritual death, which is a state of existence in which our physical body is alive but our spirit is corrupted by sin

**Eph. 2:1** And you were dead in your trespasses and sins,

**Eph. 2:2** in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.

**Eph. 2:3** Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.

**Eph. 2:4** But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us,

**Eph. 2:5** even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ ( by grace you have been saved),

**Eph. 2:6** and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,

- Paul reminds believers of who they were prior to having faith in Christ
  - We were dead in our sin
    - This state of deadness is characterized by a separation from God, an inability to know God or to fellowship with God
    - And a complete inability to seek God truly
      - This is why the Bible says that no man will seek for God unless it is granted by the Father
      - Spiritual deadness has no cure except that God Himself cures us
  - This is what Paul means when he says that even while we were dead, God made us alive in Christ
    - God did the work to bring us back into a state of spiritual life where we were capable of knowing and following God
      - And He did this on the basis of our faith in Christ
- Notice that our two states of being – being dead in sin and then alive in Christ – both happened while our physical body remained unchanged
  - So a dead spirit living in a state of sin can coexist with an otherwise normal physical body
- God promised Adam that in the day he ate of the tree, he would surely die
  - But Adam lived 930 years after he fell into sin
  - So then we know that the death God is promising in v.17 is not physical death
    - It must refer to spiritual death
    - The very same day of Adam’s disobedience was the day of his spiritual death

- Finally, let's consider the relationship between Adam's spiritual death and our spiritual renewal by faith in Jesus Christ
  - In vs.16-17 God's word gave Adam a promise
  - Adam had to believe in God's word, in God's promise concerning the tree, or else it would result in spiritual death
    - The promise was that spiritual death was the consequence for eating the fruit
      - There was nothing to prove that God's word was trustworthy
      - Adam had no understanding of evil prior to eating from the tree
        - And therefore he had no way to appreciate what God meant when He said that Adam would "die"
        - What did die mean, Adam must have thought
    - Still, Adam didn't have to understand all that God meant
      - He only had to believe in God's word and Adam would have stayed away from the tree and lived
  - Instead, Adam failed to believe in God's promise, and so Adam died
    - And by his sinful choice, Adam brought the rest of mankind with him

**Rom. 5:12 Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned —**

- So how does God choose to offer redemption to mankind in light of Adam's sin
  - The Bible says that salvation is made possible for the descendants of Adam by grace through faith in Jesus Christ
    - Have you ever wondered why God chose this method to save men?
  - Well, consider how it mirrors Adam's own choice?
    - Adam was given God's word in which God made a promise
      - The promise offered blessing and a path to life
      - But it also required faith in that promise
        - Adam couldn't have known what was at stake
        - He could only believe in what he was told
    - Adam had to show faith in God's promise to have a relationship with God and avoid spiritual death
  - Now today, men are fallen in the likeness of Adam
    - And today God makes a new promise
      - The promise is that Christ's death on the cross is payment for our sin, and if we accept that payment, we will receive eternal life
        - And we can avoid the penalty of eternal death for our sin
      - But this promise also requires faith
        - And without faith to believe in God's promise, we cannot have a



## relationship with God

- But unlike Adam, we are not expected to hold to this promise by our own power
  - God does all the work of our salvation
    - He provides a sacrifice for our sin
    - He gives us the gift of faith to believe in the promise
    - And He gives us His Spirit so that we can never retreat from that faith nor suffer loss again
  - And in our new relationship, we can fully know this God of love, and mercy and grace