

THE

FORBIDDEN

FRUIT

Gen. 2:8-9 & 15-17. And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul. And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.

Gen. 3:1-6. Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, yea, hath God said, ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, we may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden; But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.

Perhaps you have never had the opportunity to read a book or a lesson on the subject of "THE FORBIDDEN FRUIT". A good reason for that is that they may not be available. I have never seen one. That suggests that it just might be a complex undertaking to write such a lesson. Nevertheless, that is the purpose of this lesson.

The lesson makes us begin with some questions. Exactly what is the "forbidden fruit" that Adam and Eve partook of and in so doing brought such woe and trouble upon themselves and the entire human family? Can we truly know what this forbidden fruit is? Does it even matter what it is? What was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and what was the tree of life, both of them in the midst of the garden?

The answer to the first question we will delay so that it may unfold in the course of the entire lesson. The answer to the second question, "can we truly know (or learn) what it is", is a positive yes. As to the third question, "does it even matter what it is", we reply with a resounding yes it does matter. As we discover the answer through the process of this study, this will abundantly show that it does matter. I may be raising an issue that many would say is outdated, frivolous and of no value to the body of Christian truth and practice. It will be our objective, not only to identify what the forbidden fruit is, but also in so doing to substantiate its current relevance and importance in Christian theology and the subsequent influence this should have upon our lives.

The subject of "forbidden fruit" is raised from the fact that God told Adam and Eve not eat of the "fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil", which was in the midst of the garden. Also in the midst of the garden, was the "tree of life". It seems that this would strike us as very unusual for these two trees, total opposites of each other, are both described as being in the "midst of the garden"; in the same place together. It should also be rather obvious that when the Bible mentions a "tree of the knowledge of good and evil", that we are talking about something other than a natural tree in a natural forest like a pine tree, oak tree or pear tree, etc. Think about the tree of life; no one is going to interpret this as some natural tree growing in the forest. We know that there is no such thing as a literal, natural tree of life. The Bible mentions this tree of life again and it sure does not have the connotation of a literal tree. Therefore, and notwithstanding the fact that God did make a literal garden and forest for the world, the very wording of these two trees should lead us to some place else.

The general concept of what the forbidden fruit is, makes you wonder if anyone has really given it serious thought. If you ask the average person, preachers included, what it is, the vast majority will say that it is an "apple". Think about that! The forbidden fruit in the garden, which if Adam and Eve ate of it they would die, is an apple. A beautiful, red, delicious apple that is very good for your health and has no element of sin anywhere about it is the forbidden fruit? There is no scripture remotely suggesting this. There is nothing inherent in the nature of an apple that in the most radical imagination would suggest it as the one thing God did not want Adam and Eve to eat or even touch, lest they die for doing so.

Some may argue that the sin was not in the fruit but in the act of disobedience to God's prohibition toward it, and therefore an apple works as well as anything. And it is true that

the act of disobedience was the sin. However, God didn't prohibit the fruit just to see if Adam would obey him. That would be like saying that God put a magnificent buffet of the most delicious food before Adam and Eve and showed them how beautiful it was and then said don't you dare touch it. God could do that but God doesn't do that. He does not play games with life. Whatever God said not to partake of, you may rest assured that there was a very grave, inherent danger in the fruit itself. Remember that God gave Adam the freedom to choose what he would do with life. God taught him what was good and what was bad, and it was up to Adam to make the choice. It still is today.

Some commentaries on the subject have even presumed that the forbidden fruit was a persimmon or an orange. Why not? That is as logical and as scriptural (or rather, as unscriptural) as an apple. And just who might it have been to first condemn a beautiful, healthy apple as being the cause of all the sin, misery and death in the world today? Why isn't it still wrong to eat any apple today? If it ever was, it certainly still is; God does not change his mind about the cause of sin. The more questions you raise about the idea of an apple being the culprit, the more ludicrous the idea becomes. Nothing in the context or results of Adam's transgression bears any resemblance to an apple or for that matter any other natural fruit tree such as orange, lemon, pear, grapes, etc. But traditions, especially fanciful and vain ones, have deep roots and almost endless lives.

If the idea of an apple, etc., strikes you, as it does me, as being completely unrealistic and unscriptural as the identity of the forbidden fruit, then you need to read further into the extreme and bizarre interpretations as to who or what the serpent was that deceived Eve. Indeed, the conclusion drawn by no less a scholar and commentator than Dr. Adam Clarke, is more baffling than the idea of the apple. He wanders through a long and strenuous trail of words and versions and application and presumptions and possibilities, in his endeavor to come up with, as he said, a satisfactory interpretation. He compared several original Hebrew words and their possible meanings. Among other entities for the serpent, he considered – (catch your breath) – a sea horse, hippopotamus, crocodile, and alligator. Finally, brushing all of these aside as unfit for all the cunning, deceptive and iniquitous ways of the serpent that beguiled Eve, he came to the conclusion that, to him, was the end of all research and revelation into this mystery. The serpent, writes Dr. Clarke, was an orangutan; an ape. So we are supposed to conclude, based upon Dr. Clarke's research, that this subtle creature that seduced Eve into eating the forbidden fruit, was an orangutan, which, by the way, could not have talked with Eve? If the subject was not so serious to life, this conclusion would be preposterous and laughable. Shall we accuse God of such frivolous, and illogical devices and leave us to mere guess work to understand it? I think not.

Is there not a better answer to this question that, since the dawn of creation, has been tossed from the apple tree to the jungle where the orangutan lives? This fruit that has severed man's relationship with his God; driven him from the paradise of Eden; brought upon him and his posterity a life of hardship and suffering; and, finally condemned him to death and returning to the dust from which he was created. This "mystery of iniquity", growing on a "tree", if you will; taunting and teasing the appetites of man and woman; presuming to be

the tree of something that is good for man, yet destined to destroy everything good that man had been given.

It cannot be an “apple”, neither literally or allegorically. Its purveyor cannot be an orangutan. Its power over Adam and Eve cannot derive from such improbable sources. The “forbidden fruit” must be far more cunning, subtle, appealing, desirable, tempting and far more capable of ruin to man’s life; destroying his spiritual relationship; setting death in process in his very being and reducing him from a favored son of God to an outcast sinner.

Let us now examine the “trees” of the garden where God placed man. You can read about these trees in Genesis 2:9-17; 3:1-6, 11 & 24. There is a thought that is very impressive about these trees of the garden. We usually focus on the one tree with the negative command concerning its fruit. However, in Gen. 2:16, is a “command” of God concerning “every tree” in the garden except one. Though all of our attention is drawn to the one tree on God’s prohibited list, yet Adam was given total liberty, even commanded to eat of every tree of the garden. God did not create man as a prisoner or slave with a fear to leave his house lest he unwittingly violate the will of God. Instead God placed Adam in the midst of a great paradise, and set him free to partake of the whole garden. God was saying to Adam, I set before you a life of paradise in the midst of total freedom; magnificent provisions; glorious power and unlimited beauty and resources. What a golden opportunity God gave to Adam. In fact, if you reflect on it you are forced to conclude that there is no way the garden where Adam was placed could have possibly been improved upon in any area. God did not withhold any of his vast mind and power in creating it. We may think of it sometimes as just a primitive jungle with Adam lost in its darkness, emptiness and vast unknown. Why not think of it instead as a place designed by the architect of eternity, from whose mind comes beauty of the highest degree. Why not think of it as it was ---- paradise. What pictures you can imagine of good, enjoyable, beautiful and of the very highest purpose and usefulness, the garden must have been and very much more. Neither should Adam himself be thought of as some primitive, ignorant, purposeless and non-communicable low life. Someone without intellect, thought, speech, enthusiasm, not having the “foggiest” notion who he was, what he was, and why he was. Adam was created in the image and likeness of God. He was God’s highest order of creation, not some homeless, vagabond outcast that didn’t have a clue about the world he was in. Just because Adam and the whole of creation is a deep mystery to us does not mean that it was to him. God did not create Adam as a fallen, corrupt, bland wretch. He created him to have communication, relationship and purpose of the very highest kind. Adam talked with God and God talked with him. Adam was given dominion over all the creation; the garden to dress and animals, fish and fowl to name and control.

God created man with a great reality of freedom, and told him that he could freely eat of every tree of the garden. Notice carefully: he was free to eat of every tree in the garden, including the one that would have fatal consequences if he ate of it. Therein is one of the greatest marvels of the whole creation. Adam was not restrained in anyway from partaking of anything that was set before him. Even if it could man death, he was free to choose to eat it still. Out of this fact comes the great truth that Adam was created as a free moral agent with the privilege of making his own choices, good or bad, about life. In reality, God set

before Adam life and death, and the choice was his as to which one he would choose. And so it is for us today. Through Christ we have been given the choice of life or death. If we fail to choose the way of life, we have thereby, chosen the way of death.

We do not have information as to how many different “trees” are intended in the reference in Gen. 2:16, to “every tree in the garden”. What we do know from 2:9, is that there were: (1) trees pleasant to the sight; (2) trees good for food; (3) the tree of life “in the midst of the garden”; (4) and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, also in the midst of the garden. It is intriguing to note again what Dr. Clarke has to say about these “trees”. (1) The tree that is pleasant to the eyes he likens to all sorts of colorful, flowering trees and plants; (2) the tree good for food he likens to all fruit bearing trees and vegetables; (3) the tree of life he likens to life giving or medicinal trees and herbs; (4) the tree of the knowledge of good and evil he likens to trees or plants that stimulate knowledge and increase wisdom. No doubt there are trees, shrubs, plants and vegetables in the world that possess qualities and potentials that are good for human faculties and benefits. I seriously doubt, however, that the “trees” as mentioned in these scriptures, etc., are intended to convey a message of natural qualities and fruit. All of the text and related results of these trees goes far deeper than apples, orangutan and human vitamins, etc. Too many serious questions arise both from the text and context to interpret these trees in such a natural or carnal way. As a guide in these matters, it would be beneficial to search the Bible on the thought of the “tree of life”. You will find that there is a tree of life, the purpose of which is to impart “spiritual life” qualities. It’s very name tells you that it does not refer to a natural tree growing in the forest. This is also true with the “tree of the knowledge of good and evil”. You can’t buy one of these at the nursery. Often times the Bible uses a “tree” in a figurative or allegorical manner. In Judges 9:10-11, different trees are described as talking to each other. In Proverbs 11:30, the fruit of the righteous is a tree of life. In Proverbs 15:4, a wholesome tongue is a tree of life. Ecc. 12:5, “the almond tree shall flourish”, is a reference to grey hair. In Ps. 1:3, the godly are like a tree. So when Gen. 3:24, describes cherubims and a flaming sword keeping the way of the tree of life, you know that a deep truth is being conveyed allegorically. In addition, in Rev. 2:7 and 22:2, 14, the tree of life is seen and the opportunity to eat of its fruit is described. Notice in these scriptures that this tree is seen in the midst of the river of life and on each side of this river. Only a symbolic application will fit this terminology.

The more you entertain the thought about the trees in the garden, the more fascinated you become by the prospect of just what they might truly be portraying for us. Along with this, you cannot help but be intrigued by the freedom, beauty, magnitude and complete fulfillment God designed into the awesome glory of Eden’s paradise. Furthermore, I am completely convinced that God spared nothing in creating a garden of spectacular benefits and awesome beauty; a garden that left nothing to be desired in meeting every need of man’s life. We hear so much today of streets of gold, gates of pearl, mansions, jewels and the like. Unless your senses are totally carnally motivated, such man made visions of our eternal paradise pale in comparison to what God created for man in the beginning. We just can’t see this beauty because we are blinded by the fall of Adam and the results of his sin. We are

“driven out” of this garden and cannot behold it’s beauty or enter into its benefits on our own abilities.

Before we leave these beautiful trees in the garden and go to the tree bearing the forbidden fruit, let us look further at the tree of life in the midst of the garden. In all the forests of the world, there is no natural tree designated as the tree of life. Nothing in the plant or vegetable kingdom has anything that offers “life”, specifically eternal life. To be sure, we depend on the fruit of plants and vegetables to daily sustain the few years of this earthly life. But they have no power to reverse the procession of all mankind to the grave.

In Disney world’s vast complex in Orlando, Fla., they have created a gigantic tree and they call it the tree of life. But it is not even alive itself but exists purely from man made products. It presumably is intended to represent the multi-cultural world and suggests a kind of co-existence of every culture and way of life on the earth, along with all of the philosophies, religions, morals etc., and the approval thereof. This is their idea of a tree of life. But it is a poor representation of lifelessness created from man’s imaginary thoughts of life. They consider it global freedom for mankind to embrace as the grand object and impetus for living, this tree that will cease to exist as soon as it fails to be a “cash cow” for Disney coffers. This tree, they would have us believe, symbolizes the world wide union of every culture and craft; every passion and lust; every imagination and desire of the human ego and will which are only glorified labels of freedom that is stretched to be called “life”.

On the other hand, God created a tree of life right within the frame work of the paradise of Eden. Not a tree about life or a tree that is merely called life. But a tree of which a man might eat thereof and live forever. The very name of this tree compels you to acknowledge that it isn’t some natural tree with bark on it like the pine tree, etc. As a natural tree bears fruit valuable to our natural, carnal life, so also does the “tree of life” bear fruit unto the life that God intended, which brings eternal existence. Stated plainly, God provided for Adam a plan by which he might live forever. Indeed, God’s intent with Adam was for him to obtain eternal life by the exercise of his own free choice to do so. God did not create a robot that had to live forever, with no choice in the matter. He created a living being, with the precious opportunity and free and responsible choice to live forever. This opportunity was based upon man choosing God’s will and purposes above his own desires and will, and his obedience to God’s will. Thus, the tree of life concept was embedded in God’s provision of life on a probationary status, allowing Adam to freely choose life or death; God’s will or his own.

When God pronounced judgment upon Adam and Eve, upon the cattle, creeping things, beasts of the field, and even the ground Adam was to care for, he included a rather mystifying thing. After “driving” man from the garden, he barricaded it so that Adam could not get to the “tree of life” and eat of it and live forever. He placed “cherubims” and a “flaming sword” at the east of the garden, turning every way, to keep the way of the tree of life, so that no one had access to it without reconciliation from their sins.

Surely this action reveals the positive use of highly allegorical language and events to vividly portray the unfolding drama of man's disobedience and fall. Hardly could anyone successfully argue that a literal flaming sword was erected in some geographic location as a guard to some literal tree known as the "tree of life". If such a literal sword and tree existed, then what happened to it? References to the "tree of life" are few. They are found in Genesis 2 & 3; Eze. 47; and Rev. 2 and 22. But the "imagery" the tree of life conveys to our minds is that of an object that provides the opportunity of life evermore. If that is its message, as I believe it is, then a great spiritual truth is embodied in it. Adam breached the law (word) of God by his disobedience to it. It follows that this same (broken) law stands between Adam and (the tree of) life. Until that disobedience and its subsequent results (death) are rescinded, then Adam and his posterity are completely barred from life eternal. The flaming sword of God's broken law stands between Adam and God. Under these conditions, there is absolutely no access to life eternal. This leaves Adam to his only possible fate: death.

In the N.T., Rev. 2:7, it is revealed that access to the tree of life has been restored. This would mean that somehow the flaming sword has or can be, taken down. This is an obvious reference to the restoration which man has access to through the atoning work of Christ. As we would all joyously proclaim, the grand scheme of God through Christ is to afford man forgiveness for his original sin and deliver him from its guilt and condemnation of death. This great deliverance is everywhere in the Bible portrayed as salvation, reconciliation, atonement or liberation. Through Christ we regain exactly what we had lost in Adam ---- access to the tree of (eternal) life. In the O.T., man is barred from the tree of life because of his sin, while in the N.T., through Christ, the second Adam, access to its power, fruit and blessing are restored. At this point, since the real purpose of this lesson is on the "forbidden fruit", we will leave off our comments about the tree of life until another time when more focus can be given to it, and now return to the subject at hand.

We have previously made reference to some of the prevailing thoughts about the forbidden fruit and what it is generally explained to be. If you ask the general church member what it is, likely their answer will be "I don't know", or an "apple", etc. Not knowing where this improbable idea originated, you are almost inclined to suggest that the "serpent" with all his deceitfulness has foisted this upon us to minimize the sinfulness of it. In other words, "the devil made me do it", type of answer. To call it an apple or any such natural fruit is to avoid or reject all that is said about it, its nature and its consequences, none of which fits any natural fruit that we regularly eat without guilt or condemnation.

We intend to reserve any thoughts we have about the serpent until later, but one thing needs to be clarified here about him. That is, the serpent did not bring, create or control the forbidden fruit. The role of the serpent was to tempt and beguile Eve regarding the tree God had warned her against. So we will turn our attention to this tree that Adam was admonished not to eat of or it would bring him death.

If you review Genesis 2:9, you might conclude that it refers to 4 different kinds of trees: (1) a tree that is pleasant to the sight; (2) a tree good for food; (3) the tree of life; (4) the tree of

the knowledge of good and evil. (This was the description offered by Dr. Clarke). Whether you conclude that this distinguishes 4 types of trees is not the object before us. It is, however, certain that there are two "trees" that should command our attention, which are: (1) the tree of life; and (2) the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. They are two very distinct and different trees. As we have said, we are focusing on the tree of knowledge of good and evil for it is this one of which God had advised that if they ate of it they would die. Even though the sad consequence of eating of this tree was death, they still had the liberty to choose to eat of it if they desired to do so. One of the great features of Christianity is illustrated in this freedom of choice. God sets before us the tree of life and the tree of death. The choice is ours.

What the serpent was is not our focus, even though it is an almost inescapable question. I believe that when you thoroughly understand what the forbidden fruit is, that the questions surrounding the serpent have a clearer answer. Suffice it to say for now that we do not believe it was an orangutan or a snake, in the literal sense. What we do want to emphasize about the serpent at this point is the preposterous lie the serpent proposed.

God had clearly told Adam and Eve that the day they ate of the tree of which he warned them not to, they would die. The message of the serpent was exactly opposite. In effect the serpent said: God is lying to you. You won't really die as God has said. Instead, his lie continues, you will be as gods, and you will be enlightened by this tree. In other words his message was that they would keep on living, forever, and they would have knowledge just as God has. The lie of the serpent to Eve and her posterity was that life was immortal and what God had told her was a deceptive lie. Six thousand years later not much has changed. The Psalmist said that man's inward thought is that he shall continue forever (Ps. 49:11). Today, the serpents lie is basic theology, assumed without question, that man is an immortal being and cannot and will not die in spite of all the evidence of death throughout history.

Our position is that the serpent was lying and that God had told Adam and Eve the truth: "you eat of that tree and ye shall (totally and completely) die. Also, immortality, literally deathlessness and eternal duration, is a hope promised through Christ and will be conferred upon those who belong to Christ at his coming and the resurrection. Without this, man is a corruptible, dying creature who returns to the dust from whence he came. Deceit against the truth of God has always been the pattern of sin in all ages. Amazingly, the human heart and mind by virtue of a corrupt, sinful nature, is more inclined to listen to the lie of the serpent than to listen to the truth of God. Adam and Eve soon found out just how ludicrous the influence and lies of the serpent really were.

In Gen. 2:9, 17, the tree is referred to as the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil". A tree by which Adam could know both good and evil. Heretofore, he had known only good. Knowledge, or to know, carries with it far more than mere mental comprehension of something. "To Know" also embraces experimentation, and intimacy. Adam already knew "intellectually" that this tree was forbidden and that to eat of it meant death. God had told him so. But he had not experimented with it by way of partaking of its fruit and intimately "knowing" by way of personal, practical application. To know in this sense, would void

Adam's faith in God and his implicit trust in what God had said. Adam and Eve wanted to know for themselves without simply trusting what God had said. Perhaps Eve reasoned: I'm free; I'm independent; God has given us dominion; there is no one here but us. Why not exercise our freedom?

This forbidden tree was in the midst of the garden, just as the "tree of life" was also in the midst of the garden. I do not think that this refers to a geographic location. I think it shows a pervasiveness; a presence; a prominence. It is like saying that these two trees were the most obvious, outstanding and predominant trees of the garden. Interestingly, each reference to these trees is spoken of in the singular; that is not several of each species, but one.

Why not just cut down the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and eliminate its threat? If it were a natural tree, this might have been a practical option; cut it down and get rid of the problem. But God had simply instructed: don't eat of it; don't even touch it. Leave it alone. God had given them free, unfettered access to every tree of the garden. Surely there was enough to satisfy and fulfill life without totally disobeying the wisdom and counsel of God. What was so compelling about the forbidden tree that Adam and Eve simply could not resist, no matter what God had said about it.

There is one final, absolute, unbending rule for identifying a tree. In Mt. 7:15-20, Jesus taught the disciples to use this rule in identifying false prophets. He said, by their fruits ye shall know them. No matter what tree you are talking about, nor whether it is a natural or spiritual tree, the fruit test removes all questions. You simply do not gather oranges from apple trees; or righteousness from a corrupt tree. This is a rule that never changes. We shall find it to be indispensable in our identification of the tree of forbidden fruit. When we clearly identify its fruit, we will have identified what it is; why it is forbidden and its consequences.

Consider some more about the fruit of a tree. If you eat it green, before maturity, it will have an awful taste. There is a seed in fruit that will reproduce after its kind. We have a peach tree in our yard that came from a peach kernel (seed) we threw out some years ago. When we first noticed, the tree was grown and had peaches on it. Ripened fruit looks good, tastes good and usually smells good. From its outward appearance, you have a strong indication as to what kind of fruit tree it is. But with all of its looks, the proof is in the tasting and in the seed. That is how you "know" what fruit it is. God warned Adam that he should not "partake" of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He knew that it was there; he saw it; and regardless as to what you think this forbidden fruit was, Adam knew enough about it not to "know" it by way of partaking of it.

We have all wrestled with the question: "exactly what is the forbidden fruit? I am thoroughly convinced that it was not an apple. For years, I thought I had a general idea as to what it was, but nagging questions persisted. I examined the fruit of this tree for a long time, and also its seed, and I believe that I can say that I know what it is.

The serpent proposed to Eve that eating of this fruit would not be harmful to her. On the contrary, he proposed that it would be enlightening and elevating to her. Further, he said it would not mean death as God had said, but instead it would mean life more fully. And the

serpent enticed Eve to consider, question, explore, collaborate about the benefits of this fruit. This is always fatal when god has said, don't touch it.

The key to the question of what the forbidden fruit is, will be found in Genesis 3:6, and is verified time after time throughout the Bible. This verse reads: *“And when the woman --- saw--- that the tree was --- good for food ---, and that it was pleasant to the eyes ---, and a tree to --- make one wise ---, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband, and he did eat”.*

Three things are the focus of this fruit that will help us identify it.

1. The tree was good for food;
2. It was pleasant to the eyes;
3. It was a tree to make one wise.

At first consideration, nothing in these 3 expressions seems to be objectionable or contains any element of poisonous substance, or otherwise has a basis for producing death. After all, didn't God create a world with “good food”, “beautiful scenes”, and a “thirst and a need for wisdom”. The answer is, yes, he did. In fact God created the “tree” of which he also warned man not to eat of it. We must remember that God created fire, lightning, rattle snakes, water, the sun, cold, etc., all of which can be detrimental under certain circumstances. If you handle fire wrong it is destructive, but properly controlled it is an amazing servant to man. We may well find this principal true in this forbidden tree.

Now let us return our focus to the three items about the fruit of this tree, there is so much to observe there. First, Eve saw that the tree was good for food. There was something about it that offered great satisfaction to the human or fleshly craving for food. Mind you, food does not (at least in this case) always refer to something you eat and digest in your stomach. We talk of food for thought, and food for the soul. Literally, what Eve saw in this tree was something appealing to her carnal appetite, desire or lust. The most common description for this “appetite” is: “the lusts of the flesh”. And every lust of the flesh certainly is not wrong. It is not wrong to desire food when you have not eaten anything in several days. It is not wrong to desire to make money to meet your needs. It is not wrong for a husband to desire his wife, or vs. vs. It is not wrong to desire a new house. However, in all of these areas and more, wrong can be caused by them. You can be a glutton over food; selfish and greedy over money; and your lust for companionship and intimacy can reach into realms beyond your own spouse to any other “tree” that you might see that excites this passion. The great principal that I believe God was teaching Adam and Eve, by giving them total liberty and freedom of all the trees of the garden, was this: they must take the blessed gift of this freedom and by their own voluntary will and desire, they must use it in that manner that would glorify God and not just satisfy their own lusts of their flesh and carnal appetite, even though they were free to make that choice. Is that not exactly what God in Christ is trying to accomplish in our lives today? Through Christ, God teaches us that we have total and complete freedom, and yet he wants us to use that freedom to his honor and glory. There is

therefore a freedom, even in fleshly lusts, until or unless that freedom is not used for the glory of God.

Let us illustrate this point with a present day circumstance we might find ourselves in. It is Sunday morning and you have worked hard all week. You are off from work all day and you just feel like you want to sleep late and rest today, and maybe watch some TV, and not go to church today. You are free to partake of the “lusts” of that tree, but it is not putting God’s will first. To further extend the simplicity of this illustration, if you allow this freedom to be used in this manner over and over, you become apathetic and you lose your interest in church altogether. Think of the story of the good Samaritan. He was free to pass on by the wounded man as the priest or Levite did. But it was wrong to follow the easier impulses of his flesh. Instead, he did that which glorified God and did not yield to what might have been the lusts of his flesh to do otherwise. Therefore, we believe the first evidence of what is forbidden fruit, is the lusts of the flesh, wrongfully indulged. (see James 1:14-15).

The second item that Eve observed about the fruit of this tree was: “it was pleasant to the eyes”. There is much real beauty in God’s vast creation. The majesty, beauty and endless variety of all the universe is proof enough of its creation being by an all powerful and all wise God. It is not remotely possible that this beauty and variety could have just happened and the results be as it is. And the tree --- of the knowledge of good and evil --- had an attraction through the eyes that was so appealing and pleasant.

It is doubtful that we fully realize just how much we are influenced and controlled by what we see. Thank God for the marvel and freedom of sight. God did not create our eyes to automatically shut down when the power of sight begins to influence us toward something wrong. Probably nothing about the human senses stimulates our desires, passions and lust as much as what we see. Food, clothing, pleasures, things and even flesh itself, all become objects of our desires because of how we see them. TV commercials bombard our optical vision with new cars we can’t resist; body products that will make us better looking; and scenes of sensual passion and lust that are stamped upon our minds and hearts through our eyes.

In II Sam. 11:2, David walking on the roof of his house, “saw” Bathsheba bathing and the woman was “beautiful to look upon”. And the rest is history. He saw! He desired! He took! And he killed! It was his freedom to walk on his house top. The view was not obstructed by walls or trees. It is possible that David could have inadvertently glanced at the woman, and discreetly, respectfully and intentionally turned away and refused to (lustfully), (wantonly) and (unlawfully) look upon a woman that was not his to sensually crave and desire. His eyes opened the door for an ocean of trouble and his heart and mind approved of it.

Amid the ruins of the walls of Jericho, Achan fell through a similar temptation. He said: “ I saw” among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment; a wedge of gold; and 200 shekels of silver, and I coveted them. He saw and he coveted them. That is the same thing that Eve did. She saw that it was pleasant to the eyes, and she coveted it. That statement, “she coveted

it", is included in the statement that she saw that it was pleasant to the eyes. Here again, we find the permissive and the forbidden arena of the eyes and that which is pleasant to them.

There is the beauty of the sunset; a delicious meal; floral gardens and even human flesh. There is also David seeing Bathsheba with lustful eyes; or Ahab seeing Naboth's vineyard and coveting it. It is reasonably certain that if children are raised by a diet of violent, vulgar, vain television many hours a day, what they see shapes their values, morals, passions and practically every other phase of their lives. Are we at liberty to view what and how much of such gross perversion material? Surprisingly, the answer is yes! Does our freedom to do so justify, sanctify and validate such inordinate use of our eyes: absolutely not. So we have to choose what our eyes, and through them our flesh, will partake of.

Eve's choice was to partake of it, God's warning notwithstanding. This choice was influenced by the fact that she understood that it was good for food to satisfy her flesh. Also her choice is influenced by the fact it was pleasant to the eyes, "the lust of the eyes".

A present day illustration of this point might be found in many areas of our daily lives. For example: a young man might "see" great opportunities to provide for his family a life of comfort, wealth and education. (Who wouldn't want this for his family?) But the path he envisioned that could lead him to this dream land, would keep him from his family for days; it would crowd out his life with God; and it would keep him surrounded by every ungodly influence possible. Most people today would rationalize away all of the potential dangers and would "see" only the vast material opportunities. Only too often at the end of that "view" is a wrecked home; a dissipated life and ruined dreams. Oh, this freedom God has given us is so cunning and treacherous when exposed to the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes.

The third characteristic that Eve observed about the fruit of this "tree of the knowledge of good and evil", was that it was: "a tree to be desired to make one wise". Since it is the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, this third characteristic is quiet natural. It tells me that I can "know" something by partaking of it. It will boost my mentality, and therefore elevate me. My own person and life will be enhanced.

Now there is absolutely nothing wrong with boosting your knowledge or enhancing your life. Neither is there anything wrong with knowing good and evil. Except that, "knowing" in this sense also includes intimate experimentation. Further when the boosting of knowledge crosses the thin line into boasting of knowledge, it is altogether something else. Did not the serpent say to Eve: "ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil". So we are not dealing with the mere acquisition of mental information. We are dealing with an experimentation that elevates our own self-ego, or self importance factor. In other words, Eve was not drawn to this just because it would increase her intellectual I.Q. There is nothing wrong with that. She was drawn to it because she was tempted by the prospect of being elevated up to a level with God. In other words, this tree to make one wise like God reveals the "the pride of life".

The pride of life is probably the most difficult of the three evidences of forbidden fruit, mentioned in Gen. 3:6, to identify and deal with. Yet it is the most pervasive and most

cunning and corrupt. In addition, it is usually cloaked in garments of piety, goodness and even self deprecation. Nevertheless, the pride of life, when presented in a façade like the Pharisees of Jesus' day, is the very personification of evil. They knew more than others religiously, and they knew that they knew more. In their eyes, it made them far more righteous than all others. The pride of life ruled in their hearts and they felt exalted far above others. But Jesus saw them for what they really were: "whited sepulchers, full of dead men's bones. Jesus had more contempt and rebuke for this group than for the woman taken in the very act of adultery.

The once great Nebuchadnezzar said: "Is not this Babylon which I have built by the power of my might". What a sense of self importance and power. Pharaoh said to Moses: "who is the Lord that I should hearken unto him?" After all, I am Pharaoh, ruler of all Egypt. The rich fool "thought within himself" I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones and say to my soul (self), take thine ease. These are examples of pride and self centeredness at its height, or should we say, depth.

The pride of life rules today. In every field of life's endeavor and enterprise, man, through the pride of life, exalts himself. The rise of humanism in recent years is a bold exclamation point to the focus on the "superiority" of man. Pride at its highest is seen in all areas of self adulation and expression. In the American society especially, we have so much, know so much, have accomplished so much and our resources are so massive that we have an invincible, independent feeling. And it is an undeniable fact that the American society represents all of this greatness. The problem with it is that Americans do not humbly recognize God as the source of her greatness. Instead, like Nebuchadnezzar of old, we chant: is not this the greatness we have built by the power of our own might. And in this self exalting mania, is the same characteristic that Eve saw in "the tree": the pride of life.

I am not referring to or condemning honorable national pride in the great principals of our nation, nor of individuals, that rallied our country after the 9-11-01, terrorist attack. This was a pride of principal, unity, compassion, bolstered by a courageous spirit of liberty and self preservation. This is to be commended in this or any country.

Far different from this however, is that self pride that exudes arrogance; projects a holier than thou bigotry; couched in a condescending attitude toward others, and is in general a know-it-all spirit always in a self elevated feeling of superiority. Perhaps one way to illustrate this is by looking at the very wealthy person who doesn't always brag about it, show it, or try to put others down by it. Contrast that with all the ten cent millionaires you know. Especially nauseous in this area is all of the religious pompousness; bombast; exaggerated claims and an air of "knowing something from God exclusive to others. Christ did not teach or manifest this kind of attitude. See Phillipians 2:5-7 and II Cor. 8:9. No one has a greater esteem for life than Christ did. Yet no one approaches it with as much humility and lack of self pride as he did.

When Eve saw that it was a tree to make one wise; a tree by which she perceived that she would be as gods; a tree that would give her a self exalted feeling, it was irresistible. And she

ate of it and gave unto Adam, and he did eat. They were in control of their own destiny and it must have been very exalting to be in this big world alone and feel that they were in command; and that what they did was the product of their own desires, lusts and interests.

These three: (1) the lusts of the flesh; (2) the lust of the eyes; and, (3) the pride of life, each in their individual capacity to corrupt and all three collectively are, **“THE FORBIDDEN**

FRUIT”. It is these three that are capable of completely destroying man’s relationship with God. These three are focused only on self. It was the allure of these three that pulled Eve away from God. These three are what God warned and forbade Adam and Eve about at the risk of life itself. They are still the forbidden fruit today. It is still the lust of our flesh, the lust of our eyes and the pride of life that tempts man to pursue a path that, in its very act, separates man from God. And that is why they are the “forbidden fruit”; they come between man and his creator. It is the question of does God rule in our life or do these three? As we have previously stated, “these three” are not in every instance wrong. It is from the lust of the flesh that we eat necessary food. It is also from the lust of the flesh that we ingest life-destroying drugs into our bodies. It is by the desire of our eyes that we gaze upon the beauty of the universe. It is also by the desire of our eyes that we gaze upon, contemplate and execute gross sexual promiscuity. It is by the pride of life that we highly esteem our families. It is also by the pride of our lives that we enter into inordinate boasting about them, at the expense of others. How necessary it is that we live under the inspiration and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, that our consciences, through the enlightenment of the word of God, are able to discern God’s will for our lives in all things.

If, as I have stated, these three are the forbidden fruit which Adam and Eve partook of and in doing so, sin and death were brought into the world, then we should be able to find their presence and consequence in every sin in the Bible or known to man. If they were forbidden then, they would still be so today. God has never altered his standard. As we study further we will find that these three are the root of every sin and further, that there is no sin in the world that does not spring from this source. Exploring some examples of man’s sins will establish this fact. Before we do, we will look at other times in the Bible when these three are specifically identified.

The life of Christ will be our first example. We know that Christ committed no sin. We also know that he who knew no sin, became sin for us. But he was tempted “in every point where we are tempted” yet without sin. In I Cor. 15:45, Christ is described as the second Adam. What the first Adam in the garden failed to achieve, Christ, as the second Adam, came to do. If this is true, it follows that Christ must be confronted with the same “forbidden fruit” that Adam was, but not partake of. In such case it could be said of him that he overcame sin in the flesh.

In Mt. 4:1-11, we have the account of the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness where he was led away by the Spirit to be tempted. He first fasted forty days and nights, and afterwards was hungry. In this hungry and weakened condition (in the flesh), he is tempted as follows.

(1) If you are the Son of God, command these stones to be turned to bread. He was the Son of God and certainly could have turned the stones to bread and ate of it. It was not wrong for him to eat, as he later did. But it would have been surrendering to his exclusive power as the Son of God to create bread from stones to eat. That would have been beyond what you or I could have done and would not have conformed to our temptations and power to react to it. He could have said, I am the Son of God and not subject to hunger as the rest of humanity is. But he was also the Son of man. His mission was to withstand, overcome and be victorious over sin's temptations to please the flesh. (Note that as Christians we too are supposed to overcome sin in our flesh).

The temptation Christ had to eat by turning stones to bread, was a temptation resulting from his 40 days fasting and the natural need for food. He was hungry and he could get bread by a method that would have been exalting to the flesh, or by the same honest methods that other men have to. Jesus answered; man does not live by bread alone, but by every word of God. In other words, it would have been obeying the impulse of the flesh for Christ to have created bread to eat in a manner that exalted his flesh and in a manner no one else could. We can be grateful that Jesus did not yield to this temptation. It would have been a failure in his mission to live under the same fleshly lusts which we do, yet not yield to them. We can be sure that this was not the last time that Jesus experienced temptation by the lust of the flesh. Gethsemane certainly would have been another.

(2) What about the other two elements of forbidden fruit. Jesus is led to a pinnacle of the temple and is told: jump off and prove that you won't get hurt. After all you are the Son of God. In other words, display yourself for your glory. Make a demonstration for all to "see". But Jesus never engaged in a manifestation of his power just to be seen. Often when he healed someone, he would charge them to tell no man. To do otherwise would have been yielding to the lust of the eyes. Jesus overcame this temptation by relying on the written word of God. And that is what a Christian must do when tempted through the lust of the eyes. Christianity certainly has its share of "grandstanding", "horn tooting" and other methods of "calling attention" to ourselves. It amounts to a subtle, unwitting employment of tactics that appeal to the hearts and minds through the medium of the eyes. After all, not many people in our western culture are going to be very influenced if it does not look "successful", "grand", "entertaining" and "demonstrative".

This thing of the lust of the eyes is certainly not exclusive to religious "showmanship". Come and see is the clamor of the world. Jesus resisted this temptation to make a showy display of himself. He obeyed the word of God that Adam disobeyed which qualified him to be the lamb without a (sinful) blemish as an offering for our sins.

(3) Finally, (Mt. 4:8-9), Jesus is taken up an exceeding high mountain and is shown all the kingdoms of the world. He was offered all these kingdoms in exchange for devil worship. Just think of it! To be ruler over every world kingdom! Power! Pomp! Pride! Fame! Everybody honoring him as the "one world ruler". What a powerfully elevated position to be put in. No one in world history had achieved such an elevated throne. Even Nebuchadnezzar, Pharaoh or Alexander The Great, would all be eclipsed if Jesus would just

yield to the awesome influence of the “pride of life”. But Jesus did not yield. Jesus affirmed that worship belonged to God only. To be the ruler over all the world required that Jesus bow to the pride of self. This is the altar where so many sacrifice their lives. There is no element in our lives that brings greater human, carnal, self centered satisfaction than to be the best, the greatest, the MVP, the most beautiful, the most powerful. Very few men in history have had vested in them the power of Joseph without flaunting it and using it for self advantage and personal gain. The pride of life does not thrive very well in a humble, selfless heart.

Thus Jesus had been confronted with the same forbidden fruit as Adam and Eve. But he did not eat of that fruit. He resisted and overcame it and that is why he is our savior. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life was inherent in the freedom God gave Adam. It was also freely set before Christ. Both were tempted by its inward influence and yearning. Adam and Eve “ate” of this temptation and lost their lives. Christ refused it and became the savior of the world.

“Worldliness”! At some time we have all heard preaching against “worldliness”. Even though it has many interpretations, ranging from some imaginary power in the world bent on our seduction, to the control of every facet of our life under some religious mantle. Sometimes you hear someone say that the Bible is not a list of does and don’ts, or that it does not give us a list of things we ought not to do. It is true that there is not a specific list of every possible sin as we usually define the act. For example, it does not say anything specifically about the use of cocaine, but somehow we know that it clearly is not of God, but of this world.

Notwithstanding this, I believe that the Bible does, indeed, have a complete list of sins. For this list, turn to I Jn. 2:15-17. Here you will find an exhaustive list of all that is of this world and is not of God, but of the flesh. It is a list that embraces every sin known to man; and every sin yet to be discovered and committed. It is a list with only 3 items on it.

I Jn. 2: 16, says: “For all that is in the world, (1) the lust of the flesh; (2) the lust of the eyes; and (3) the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. These three, as they are embraced in this scripture present a convincing argument as being the “forbidden fruit”. First, set before Adam and Eve; secondly presented to Christ in such glowing and tempting terms and while he, humanly, was weak from hunger; and thirdly described by John as “all that is in the world”.

These three make up that “fruit” of that tree that was forbidden. Far from being an apple, persimmon or even an orangutan, they are lusts, passions, desires, deeply seated in the human make up that we have the choice of resisting by God’s grace, or partaking of. As we previously indicated, every known sin has its basis in one or more of these characteristics. David through the lust of his eyes and his flesh committed sin with Bathsheba. Nebuchadnezzar through the pride of life, thought that he had built great Babylon “by the power of his might”.

If you rob a bank, the lust of the flesh has motivated you to do so. To commit rape, the lust of the eyes and the lust of the flesh are in control. To lie, cheat or steal is to be in the

clutches of lust. Gossiping, an unforgiving spirit, stubbornness etc. each have their roots in these lusts. Why do people break every principal of virtue in high political office? It is because the fruit of the pride of life, etc., is so tempting. Why do we have wars, terror, hate, jealousy, envy, wrath and every other evil work? It is because man, motivated by his own lusts, passion, pride, is capable of any evil.

Why are so many people so disinterested in God, salvation and truth? Because other interests, formed through basic lusts, have interfered with their relationship with God, and the “flaming sword” keeps them from the tree of life.

In James 1:13-15, there is another clear indictment of human lust as the basis of sin and death. James clearly states that man is not tempted of God. Then he identifies the culprit of our temptation: we are drawn away by our own lusts and enticed. Then, he continues, when lust is conceived it brings forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, brings forth death. Look again at David’s sin with Bathsheba to illustrate the work of lust. First David relaxed on the roof of his house while his army was away at war. Then he saw a beautiful woman bathing. The downfall of many great people has been chronicled by way of their position or circumstance, thrusting or allowing them to be found in a compromising situation. When people fail to take precautions against the very appearance of evil, their human flesh is not able to withstand the power of the temptation that follows. Whether king, president, business man, preacher or just John Doe, temptation becomes far more “convenient”, “alluring”, “justifiable” and overpowering when you help create an opportunity for it. You don’t need a “devil” or “Satan” to send some temptation your way, you have it built into your own passions, lusts and pride. These lusts, when contemplated through your mind, become the only motivation necessary to commit wrong.

Thus David, as the king, with Bathsheba’s husband off to war, saw her, and the genes of his own human nature, heart and mind, first imagined the “scenario”. His thoughts could have been something like: “There is a beautiful woman; her husband is off to war; nobody will know; after all, I am the king. So lust conceived in his own heart and brought forth sin. David later spent hours of agony, repentance and remorse over his sin. That is how lust and pride works. It needs no external support. Just a heart and mind to perceive, conceive and deceive until sin is done. That is why it is the forbidden fruit.

Take another look at the garden. You may freely eat of every tree of the garden, God had said. Then he spoke of the tree that was in the midst of the garden. In fact, there were two special trees in the midst of the garden: the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

The tree of life obviously is not a literal tree with some fruit on it that you can eat and thereby live forever. Therefore it symbolically represents that which God has provided that a man may eat thereof and live. This comes down to the word of God; the plan of eternal life; the way of life. The entire scope of the Bible, and the Christian experience is that God has a plan for our lives. If we partake of it, eternal life will come from it.

In the creation man was not endowed with fixed, unchangeable duration of life. He was given a choice between life and death. Adam was classified as being on probation. Probation implies contingent life. If you obey the probationary status you are ultimately freed. If not you are under judgment, which in this case is death. Without trying to go into the details of the plan of salvation, suffice it to say that it is placing your life and trust in what God has said to you and putting him ahead of all your desires, ambitions and will. We can be sure that, through this plan, Adam would have ultimately been changed from a probationary status to an eternal, immortal status. We lost this opportunity in Adam, but now have regained it by faith in Christ. Now we are on probation. Our judgment has been lifted in Christ, pending our obedience to his will. While we live by faith we are under that great word "if". If we believe; if we obey the Lord; if the Spirit of him who resurrected up Christ dwells in you, etc. But we look forward to the day of his return, when our faith will be made reality and eternal life will be ours permanently and unconditionally. By faith we are eating from the tree of life and as long as we eat thereof, we shall live. By faith, also, the judgment of death has been suspended and our life is hid with Christ in God.

To eat of the tree of life, that is, to surrender your own will to God's will and follow wherever he leads, involves some serious commitments on our part. The fruit of this tree (eternal life), when eaten, brings about the process of dying to all the lusts of human nature that works sin and death in us. In the seed of this fruit is the transforming power of Christ to make a new creature of us and other things such as Christian graces, dedication, service, church, and in every area applying the whole will of God to our lives. As Revelation 22:14 says, blessed are they that do his commandments that they may have right to the tree of life.

The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was also. This midst of the garden does not refer to a geographic location, but instead it represents the idea that they were in the midst or center of life's activities. They were the center of attention. And we should never forget that both of these trees were appealing and attractive. It is a mistake to think that the "forbidden fruit" is unattractive. While all sin is ugly to God and has bad consequences, yet it is "packaged" in very attractive forms. In fact nothing is made as attractive and enticing as sin. And there are pleasures in sin, even though they may last for only a short time and in the end have terrible results. The scriptures even describe for us the appealing desirability of the fruit of this tree. In Gen. 3:6, the woman saw that the tree was: good for food; pleasant to the eyes; and a tree to be desired. She went for it since all of her natural, fleshly senses suggested that this was good, pretty and desirable.

The alcoholic finds something which is exciting, stimulating and even inspiring about drugs and alcohol. The person pursuing an adulterous affair (like David) can't see anything bad or ugly about it, especially compared to the fleshly satisfaction it offers. In our hearts and minds we have beautified, glorified, justified and even sanctified every inordinate lust, passion and pride there is. And conversely, we have demeaned, belittled, criticized and scoffed at every pure, divinely acceptable and holy attribute. Even churches and preachers, in their rush to appear successful, have condemned as "works" those who seek to follow a humble, pure and dedicated life of the holiness of God.

These two trees before Adam and Eve, gave them two choices that carried awesome responsibilities. Their very lives depended entirely on the choice they made. It still does today. God has set before us life and death and asks us to choose which we will serve.

There is an important question that needs to be asked at this point: “Why it was forbidden fruit to begin with”? It surely was not an arbitrary God just tagging one tree indiscriminately and calling it forbidden. God wanted Adam to love him voluntarily, from the free exercise of his heart and mind, and live for him and serve him gladly, freely, completely. God did not want a “robot” that served him mechanically or out of fear. That is why he gave him complete liberty to make the choice himself. This choice carried with it the inherent possibility that Adam would not choose to love and serve God supremely. The alternative to this was that Adam could choose to please, enjoy and elevate himself instead of God. And that is still the same today. Through Christ we can choose to submit ourselves to his total will, out of pure love, or we can choose to have our own way. And our own will is expressed through the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life.

In the process of the act of disobedience to God and the partaking of the forbidden fruit, the chemistry of Adam’s body and blood was altered. He was not created with sinful, deteriorating blood, but afterwards that is what he had. And it is through the blood stream, and specifically through the father, that the sinful nature and human deterioration is passed on to succeeding generations. When we are born, the process of decay sets in until we weaken, get sick and then die. Sin is not a paste that God painted Adam with, but a biological altering of the living cells of our being, that directly resulted from Adam’s act of sin. It is in these biologically altered human cells that gradual deterioration of the human body began, and it progresses until death occurs. That is why you and I, when we are born, we begin the process of decline to the grave. Our human existence now comes from the procreative process of human seed of reproduction. Inherent in this seed is death, that is, a biologically altered seed that cannot produce life, and can only produce death. All of this is obvious concerning the life and death of man. From this we can conclude that Adam’s act of sin against God, indeed, violated a principal of life that resulted in death. In reality, Adam killed himself by his own choice. To illustrate this, look at the awful disease of Aids, 80% of which is caused either by promiscuous sexual activity or dirty drug needles. People know this fact, but they continue this life threatening life style. The result is death that could have been predicted, and also prevented.

Adam actually and specifically chose to die. By virtue of electing the fruit of the tree of self satisfaction and self exaltation, he was saying to God: I don’t want you to rule over me. The important thing to realize about this choice of Adam is, God did not “zap” him with sin and death. Adam’s desires, choice, action caused sin and this led to his death. Adam had not obtained eternal life. He was not an eternal, unchangeable creature. The serpent was lying when he said: “ye shall not surely die”. Death was not a fact of Adam’s originally created condition. Adam brought death upon himself by rejecting the offer of life and by choosing his own pleasure, lust and pride. It is like desiring and following a life of drugs, alcohol, promiscuity, etc. You know there is harm to your life in them. You know they can destroy

your health and your life. You know they have the power of awful addiction. To know this and still satisfy your lusts and passion for them simply means that you have chosen to die.

Look again at David's sin with Bathsheba. We have already seen that through the lust of his eyes and the lust of his flesh, David committed a terrible sin. Pure and simply it was the sin of adultery; the unlawful act of sexual intercourse with another man's wife. It was a time in David's life when he gave way to his sensual passions when it was forbidden of God for him to do so. His act destroyed his own clear conscience before God; destroyed a good home; caused him to lie and ultimately have Bathsheba's husband killed to try to cover his sin. But the prophet came to him and disclosed the terrible thing he had done.

At the same time that all of this took place, David had a wife that was his own and he could have freely gone in unto her, indulged the same lust and passion in his own home with his own wife, without guilt or sin. Thus there is a manner in which this lust was forbidden and a manner in which it was allowable. Conjugal relations are still perfectly acceptable in the marriage partnership, even though so much of the world no longer pays any attention to this timeless truth and essential boundary for the preservation of a social order of peace, decency and intended pleasure.

Let us echo once more that the forbidden fruit is not only in the arena of the "big sins". It is in that arena of the lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes and the pride of life, where our will is against God's. It encompasses every sin, known and unknown, great and small. We do not need a catalog of sins to avoid, we simply need to keep our will and our desires crucified in the flesh and alive unto God. The test of sin vs. righteousness is not tradition, how we feel, church by laws, codes of ethics or the like. The test of whether something is a sin is not by comparing to any earthly standard, or person, however noble or good. The test is to compare every desire, every lust, every act and thought and attitude with what the Lord would approve of. And we all fail in this comparison, totally. There is none righteous, no not one. We are totally, completely sinners, and opposed to all God is, and we are under the condemnation of sin and death. And we cannot change it within our own strength.

God, who is rich in mercy and love for his creation, saw our plight even before the creation of the world. God desires that man would be like him; pure, holy, just and good. By the forbidden fruit, man utterly failed to reach God's intended standard. Then Jesus came! Through him we have an opportunity to be restored back to what we lost in Adam; the place of probation from which he fell. We have restored access to the tree of life, if we keep his commandments. (Rev. 2:7) This is a spiritual restoration based upon our faith in Christ and obedience to his word. We are born in sin, with sin's nature, lust and pride ruling us which means that we only partake of the forbidden fruit, from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. When we come to Christ, repent of our sins and turn from them, they are forgiven and we are transformed by the power of God. The things we once loved, as Paul said, we now hate. Set before us is the tree of life. The "flaming sword" blocking our access has been taken down and we may enter the garden and freely eat of the tree of life.

Being thus restored to the same estate that Adam originally held, we now are free to eat of “every tree of the garden” (of God’s creation). And in the “midst” of the garden (the midst of life) there are two trees: the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The instructions from God are the same as to Adam: we may freely eat of every tree of the garden. But, if we eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, i. e. , the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, we will die.

The sin problem is the same it has always been. If we yield our lives through our own will to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, death is the final results of that. (Rom. 5:12-21). If man is not willing to completely, lovingly, trustingly and continually subject his own heart and mind to God, then he cannot reach the plateau God created him for. By his grace, through obedient faith in Christ, we must yield all that we are and all we have unto him. This is what it means to eat of the tree of life. We have his promise that if we do eat of that tree, we will have everlasting life and he will raise us up at the last day. And his grace is sufficient to sustain us in the face of all the temptation of the lusts and pride of our flesh, so that we need not fall as Adam did. The command to Adam still holds true for us today: Do not eat of the forbidden tree, or even touch it, lest you die for doing so.

SUMMARY

1. God created man and gave him a paradise to live in with total freedom.
2. This freedom gave him the choice to lovingly serve God, or to selfishly serve himself.
3. The thing God would not accept or tolerate was for man to serve himself above God.
4. This forbidden area of Adam’s life is what we call the “forbidden fruit”.
5. This forbidden fruit is the lust of our flesh, the lust of our eyes and the pride of life.
6. Every conceivable sin, big or small, comes from one or all of these self-centered passions.
7. Their final result is death.
8. Out of love and mercy, God has provided deliverance from our fallen state.
9. Through faith in Christ and obedience to all of his will, we can be delivered from sin that rules our lives.
10. This deliverance or salvation, restores us to the status of probation Adam had before his fall.
11. God has set before man, the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.
12. The choice is ours as to which we will have.

FOR THE WAGES OF SIN IS DEATH, BUT THE GIFT OF GOD IS ETERNAL LIFE THROUGH JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD. ROM. 6:23.

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