

## A tale of two trees

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**Purpose:** Examine the truth that from the beginning of time mankind has chosen to sin and rebel against God when given the choice. To understand that God gave the first man and the first woman the same choice He is giving you and I today: salvation and life, or damnation and death. By studying the fall of mankind through the first sin we can discover a truth every Christian must understand: we are sinners, in need of saving, and in Christ alone we can find forgiveness and salvation.

### Focal Scripture:

Genesis 2:9

Genesis 2:16-17

Genesis 3:1-6

Genesis 3:22

Romans 5:12, 15

So many people have asked the question through the ages: "if there is a God who loves me, why is the world full of evil?" In order for us to answer this question we must examine both Scripture and our own hearts. As we examine Scripture we see one of the most precious truths of Scripture: God doesn't make us love Him, God doesn't force Himself upon us, He has given us free will since the very first man and woman were created, and that same free will belongs to you and I today. In the story of creation we see that God caused two different trees to spring up in Eden, the garden in which the first man, Adam, and the first woman, Eve would reside together in the presence of God. **And out of the ground the LORD God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. (Genesis 2:9 ESV)** – though often overlooked in our study of the Old Testament, we see God's desire to love us, fellowship with us, and give us life in the tree of life He created in Eden. We also see the other option God gave, knowledge of good and evil, and death.

Why is life full of pain, shame, and regret? Sin. Daily we chose the path of death and destruction as we disregard God's Word and make our own choices, fulfill our own desires, and ignore the guiding hand of our loving Father. Every man, woman, and child ever born is a descendant of Adam and Eve and thus we are all living in a fallen world, with a sin nature where we naturally walk in disobedience and destruction. In the beginning we see God giving just one command to mankind: **And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."** (Genesis 2:16-17 ESV) – a simple command, don't eat from this one tree or you will die. As we look at the simplicity of this command our minds can't fully comprehend what God is doing here, He has given Adam everything, He has provided for every need, He has given Adam rule over everything in the garden, His only command is not to eat of one tree.

God's simplest command could not have been misunderstood by Adam and later Eve, they fully understood what God had said and though they could never have understood the consequences of their actions to all future generations they made their choice. **Now the serpent was more crafty than**

any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?" And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. **(Genesis 3:1-6 ESV)** – the relentless enemy of mankind has been at work since Adam and Eve chose to sin against God. We see the enemy pose a simple question to Eve, the same lie he poses to you and I today, "why obey God? He just doesn't want you to have what you need." In the choice Adam and Eve made we see the choice we make naturally: death, rebellion, and sin.

We see that Adam and Eve were given everything, God's love, presence, and fellowship. God provided everything either of them could ever need, physically, spiritually, emotionally, they were not lacking any good thing. Curiously in the beginning we do not see God preventing our ancient ancestors from eating from the tree of life, they could have chosen life but as so many countless souls do: they chose death. After sin entered in to the world we see Adam and Eve separated from God, driven from the garden of Eden, out of the presence of God and their lives would become like the lives we see today: a hard struggle. The death that God promised would come was not immediate, and yet it comes to every man or woman who has ever lived all the same.

After Adam and Eve sinned we begin to see God's love, mercy, and grace immediately. He clothed them, promised redemption would come, and drove them from the garden so that they could not eat from the tree of life. **Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever—" (Genesis 3:22 ESV)** – at first glance this verse can quickly be misunderstood, doesn't God want us to live? Without a doubt. Why then did God drive Adam and Eve from Eden so they couldn't eat from the tree of life? Had they ate from the tree of life not only would they have known a continual growth of sin, separation, and rebellion, but there would never have been a chance of redemption. In God's sovereignty and His infinite wisdom He knew that mankind would sin, He was not surprised nor caught off guard by the choice of Adam and Eve. Just as He was not caught of guard by their choice, our rebellion and sin don't take Him by surprise either.

There are two trees set before you: the tree of life, eternal life with God through the salvation found only in Jesus Christ. Or the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, death will surely come and without Christ you will spend eternity separated from God in a place of eternal suffering and destruction. Will you continue to eat from the tree of death? Will you continue to deny Christ? Will you continue to think you are "good" enough? Or will you lift your eyes to the cross, look upon God's only Son Jesus, and cry out for forgiveness and mercy? Though it may have seemed hopeless to Adam and Eve then, we now understand only by God's grace that He had a plan to redeem us all along. Scripture reminds us: **Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned— (Romans 5:12 ESV)** – but praise be to God for His infinite mercy and grace, we also find the most precious promise: **But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many. (Romans 5:15**

**ESV).**

God is giving you the choice. If you've surrendered your life to Christ then you have freely drank of the living water and ate of the living bread of Christ and you will live, forgiven and free, forever and ever. If you would deny Christ, death will surely find you. You cannot escape it by your good deeds, by your hard work, or by any other person, "god", or religion. In Christ alone our hope is found, all other ground is sinking sand. Eat of the tree of life, see it is good, and by the blood of Jesus we are forgiven and free.