

Genesis 2:16-17 The Tree, Part 1

- The LORD God made man of the dust of the ground
- He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life
- And man became a living soul
- God placed man in a Garden eastward in Eden to dress it and keep it
 - Giving man a place to live and positive purpose in this life
- But God placed something else in the garden which will become of tremendous significance to our narrative in CHAPTER 3 *Two trees in fact*
- God placed a tree
 - Called the “tree of the knowledge of good and evil”
 - And today we are going to talk about this tree
 - But more specifically
 - We are going to talk about what the presence of this tree meant about God
 - About mankind
 - And about their relationship one to another
- So we are only considering two verses in our time together today, and in fact next time as well
- GENESIS 2:16-17 tell us →

Understand Genesis 2:16-17

Genesis 2:16-17

(16) And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: (17) 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.

- READ
- Now within the context, as we would be reading through the text, things begin without incident
- God has placed mankind in a garden
- God has given mankind positive and fulfilling purpose in life
- And then in VERSE 16 we would see that God has given mankind food, and the liberty to enjoy that food at his pleasure
- But then we come to something very different
 - We come to a prohibition
- We find that there was placed in the garden a tree which the text tells us is called the “tree of the knowledge of good and evil”
- And that God specifically tells man that
 - Though he is free to eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden
 - He shall not eat of the fruit of this tree
- And this instruction comes with a warning, that in the day in which he eats of the fruit of that tree
 - He would surely die
- Now remember what we talked about last time we were together regarding the nature of life that God breathed into man
 - And we stressed the connection between this idea of God’s breath and God’s spirit
 - For the Hebrew and Greek word translated “spirit” is the word for wind
 - Something which breathing creates →

Understand Genesis 2:16-17

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- So that we inferred from the text not only that man became “alive” in the material sense
- But that God infused into mankind an eternal spirit
 - Making him not just a physical being but also a spiritual being
 - And as a spiritual being able thus to commune with the spiritual
 - To relate himself to God
- And this spirit made him a “living soul”
- And this concept is very significant to the warning which God gives to Adam here
 - That in the day in which he eats of the fruit, he would go from being a living soul to dead
 - Thus we are introduced in CHAPTER 2 to life and death, and this will become significant in CHAPTER 3
- Now at its face there is not much else to talk about as it relates to the narrative of the text itself
 - But for we who know the Bible
 - We know what is going to happen next
 - Adam is going to disobey God
 - He is going to eat of the fruit of that tree
 - His eyes will be open to know good and evil
 - His spirit will die – it will be separated from the life of God
 - And mankind will be cursed and doomed to a world of pain and suffering
- And if we walk the consequences of Adam’s choice back to these verses, some important thoughts come to mind →

Understand Genesis 2:16-17

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- First a question
 - Why would God even put the tree there to begin with?
 - Why give man the opportunity to fail?
 - Did God intend for man to fail?
 - Did God WANT man to fail?
 - After all, God made man, and knew what his tendencies and propensities would be
 - Even more so, going all the way back to GENESIS 1:1-2 we explored how a God who is beyond time is thus a God who is omniscient – all knowing
 - Which means God knew exactly the choice Adam would make
 - So why put the tree there at all?
- And these are the questions I would like to explore ~~today~~
- And as we do so, it really comes down to two concepts
 - The first is liberty
 - The second is love
- Remember back in GENESIS 1, on the very 1st day of creation, God said “let there be light, and there was light”
- And I connected that to JOHN 1, where the Bible presents the Word of God as the light of life
 - To emphasize that what God did on the first day of creation was not so much centered around the visible light spectrum
 - But more so centered around the distinction between moral light and moral darkness
- And through this I asserted that what God was doing on the first day was binding creation to the moral order of God →

Understand Genesis 2:16-17

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- Now if that is in fact the case, and really even if I am way off on my understanding of the first day of creation
 - We would expect God's dealings with man to operating in complete consistency with His character and person
- And what do we know about God's person?
 - Well Paul says in 2 CORINTHIANS 3:17 →

Understand Genesis 2:16-17

2 Corinthians 3:17

Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

- READ
- Where the Spirit of the LORD is, there is liberty
- Inbuilt into the character of God and the image of God in man is the concept of liberty
 - Now we can extrapolate this to the concept that God has given us free will
 - The right to choose our own path and to assume upon ourselves thus the consequences of that choice
 - But there is something far more profound to this concept of liberty than simply free will
- When the Bible presents the concept of liberty, it does not present it in the context of man's free will
 - But rather in the context of man's spiritual condition
- Notice what 2 Corinthians 3:17 says here
 - That where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty
 - So mankind, in their lost condition when they are separated from the life of God through their own sin
 - Even though they certainly have free will
 - Do not have liberty
- Because liberty in the Bible is directly connected to spiritual life
 - Spiritual life is liberty
 - Since outside of spiritual life the spirit is dead in its sins
 - And so in absolute bondage to the lusts and impulses of the flesh
 - Without any capacity to do anything but manipulate and cajole the flesh into some measure of compliance →

Understand Genesis 2:16-17

2 Corinthians 3:17

Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

- And I feel like I'm getting a little bit ahead of myself here
 - Because I can only show you the contrast of liberty and bondage through the results of bondage that we will see beginning in CHAPTER 3
- But bear with me here and let me run ahead for a moment
 - In CHAPTER 3 we will see Adam exercise his liberty as an occasion to the flesh
 - He will use liberty licentiously, meaning he uses his liberty to take license to do that which is outside of liberty, namely to sin
 - And in doing so will forfeit that liberty and put himself into the bondage of death
- So that, whereas Adam was a living soul, able to commune with God and interact with the material world as an extension of his spiritual blessing
- Once Adam sinned, his spirit died – it was separated from the life of God – and he went from operating in a manner of liberty to live before God in righteousness and was instead bound to the impulses of his material body → *Bondage*
- And this is what Jesus Christ came to undo
 - So that, when one accepts Jesus Christ as Savior
 - Their spirit is then made alive again
 - It is ushered back into liberty
 - And thus able to commune with God and again interact with the material world as an extension of spiritual blessing
- But all has not been fully restored, because we still have the sin nature

Understand Genesis 2:16-17

2 Corinthians 3:17

Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

- But like Christ solved the first problem through his death, Christ will solve this problem at his 2nd coming
- Until that day, those who are in Christ have been given the Spirit of God
 - And where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty
 - So that those who are in Christ have been restored to liberty
- And Paul explains this whole thing in ROMANS 8 as he exhorts the believer to live in the liberty which has been purchased for him by walking in the Spirit
 - By abiding in Christ
 - Because, since we are still in a fallen world, but are born-again into a regenerated spirit
 - We have both the capacity to live in the bondage of death and in the liberty of life
- So I'm going to read a pretty sizeable chunk of ROMANS 8
 - And as I do this is what you are looking for
 - See if you can follow Paul's argument regarding the relationship of the Spirit of God to liberty →

Understand Genesis 2:16-17

Romans 8:1-23

(1) There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. (2) For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. (3) For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God

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Understand Genesis 2:16-17

Romans 8:1-23

sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: (4) That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. (5) For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit

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Understand Genesis 2:16-17

Romans 8:1-23

the things of the Spirit. (6) For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. (7) Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. (8) So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. (9) But ye are

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Understand Genesis 2:16-17

Romans 8:1-23

not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. (10) And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. (11) But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the

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Understand Genesis 2:16-17

Romans 8:1-23

dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. (12) Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. (13) For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do

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Understand Genesis 2:16-17

Romans 8:1-23

mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.
(14) For as many as are led by the Spirit of
God, they are the sons of God. (15) For ye
have not received the spirit of bondage
again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit
of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.
(16) The Spirit itself beareth witness with

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Understand Genesis 2:16-17

Romans 8:1-23

our spirit, that we are the children of God:
(17) And if children, then heirs; heirs of God,
and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we
suffer with him, that we may be also
glorified together. (18) For I reckon that the
sufferings of this present time are not
worthy to be compared with the glory which

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- CONTINUE →

Understand Genesis 2:16-17

Romans 8:1-23

shall be revealed in us. (19) For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. (20) For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, (21) Because the creature itself also shall be delivered

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Understand Genesis 2:16-17

Romans 8:1-23

from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. (22) For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. (23) And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of

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- CONTINUE →

Understand Genesis 2:16-17

Romans 8:1-23

the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.

- READ
- What is this liberty?
 - Liberty from the law of sin and death and unto God
 - Liberty to mind the things of the Spirit of God
 - Liberty to mortify the deeds of the body and thus to please God in my body
- And while this liberty is not total
 - For the body still suffers under the sorrows of this life
 - But those are not worthy to be compared with the glory that will be revealed
 - And creation has not yet followed man into liberty as it once followed man into bondage
 - So creation groans with us in our mortal bodies awaiting the full redemption of our bodies
 - And on that day the creation will follow man from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God
- But for the child of God
 - This liberty is ours today
- And as I've said all of this maybe you are confused
 - Pastor, when I got saved there were things I needed to STOP doing
 - I became constrained from my sin...how is that liberty
- And while these thoughts are very natural, they are also very incorrect
 - The moment you accepted Christ you were not constrained in any way
 - You still have every ability in your flesh to do all the things you once did →

Understand Genesis 2:16-17

Romans 8:1-23

the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.

- So whereas accepting Christ as your Savior did not “take away” anything you had before
 - Much to the contrary it opened up a whole new world to you
 - Your faith unlocked the door to be freed from the bondage of your sinful choices and into a realm of obedience and joy that no man can enter in any other way
 - But when a man passed through the door of faith in Christ, he passes into a whole new context for living
 - He is given the liberty to live with a conscience purged from guilt and sin
 - He is given the liberty to live in a manner which is right before His creator
- And yes, with this liberty comes responsibility and consequences
 - There is no liberty – in any context – that is not accompanied by responsibility
 - Liberty does not mean that there aren’t walls
 - Liberty means that those walls exist for a different purpose
 - The walls of bondage exist to keep people in
 - Because bondage is a life of sorrow and a life of hardship
 - And if men could leave that life of bondage they surely would
 - So walls are built to keep men in, lest everyone leave the bondage
 - And these are the walls of our sin nature
 - Sure in your sin you are free to live your life as you choose
 - To discipline your flesh to conform to some moral standard
 - To live licentious and utterly apart from any moral standards whatsoever →

Understand Genesis 2:16-17

Romans 8:1-23

the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.

- But the walls of bondage hold men captive to the impulses of the flesh
- But when at once a man walks through the door of Christ out beyond the walls of bondage and into the liberty of the Spirit of God
 - There are still walls, certainly *-still expectations & standards*
 - But those walls exist, not to keep you in, but to keep the enemy out
 - Those boundaries are there specifically to allow you to thrive in the joy and peace into which your liberty had ushered you
 - Those walls preserve that liberty for you from the sins which would seek to strip it all from you
- So that Paul would say in GALATIANS 5:1, 13 →

Understand Genesis 2:16-17

Galatians 5:1, 13

(1) Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage...(13) For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.

- READ →

Understand Genesis 2:16-17

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- So as man was given this prohibition on this day
 - That he shall not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil
 - Let us be clear about what was happening
 - And by the way – the woman will acknowledge what I am about to say in GENESIS 3
- The man was placed into a garden in which he had complete liberty to choose as he would
 - And in that liberty he had access to nearly everything that the garden had to offer
 - Every tree
 - Meaningful labor and purpose
 - And as we'll see later in GENESIS 2, an help meet for him
- But that liberty came with a wall of protection
 - That he must not eat of a single tree, the tree of the knowledge of Good and evil
 - Because if he exercised his liberty unto this fleshly end
 - It would result in his death – his spiritual separation from the life that is in God, with its joy and its liberty
 - And he would be ushered, through a misuse of his liberty, into the bondage of sin
- And in this we find our own warning this morning
- Where I come back to the exhortation of GALATIANS 5:1 →

} A picture of fullness of life where all is theirs in righteousness

Understand Genesis 2:16-17

Galatians 5:1

Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage

- READ
- It is not uncommon for we who are in Christ to get confused about the structure of the world around us
 - We get frustrated at the struggle against the impulses of our flesh
 - And we can get selfish
 - And begin in frustration to feel like the Christ life consists of being deprived of the good things of life
 - Like the nation of Israel wandering in the desert on their way to the land flowing with milk and honey
 - All the while murmuring and complaining
 - And thinking back to how good it was in Egypt... *where there were fish!*
 - ...where they were enslaved...
 - ...and their children were murdered...
 - ...and there was nothing they could do about it
- And this is, in a sense, natural when we turn our eyes off of Christ and on to ourselves
 - But when at once we reorient our thinking upon the world as it truly exists
 - And we remember the day of our salvation, when we stepped into the glorious liberty of Christ
 - And the joy that we experienced, and the peace that ensued
- We are reminded that the temporal satisfactions of earthly indulgence cannot compare in any way to the true joy and liberty of submission to Christ →

Understand Genesis 2:16-17

Galatians 5:1

Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage

- We are reminded that the walls of Christ's character are not walls of bondage, but walls of protection
 - Not meant to withhold from us any good
 - But to withhold from us those things which are harmful for us
- The baby gate at the top of the steps is not there to keep the baby from having fun
 - It is there to keep the baby from falling down the steps
- God told the man that he may eat of every tree in the garden but one
 - God had not withheld from the man ANYTHING of value
 - ANYTHING that would truly nourish or satisfy him
- The only thing that God withheld was the thing which would do harm
 - And it was there, because the liberty of the Spirit of God is not just a liberty to do right
 - But also the liberty to do wrong
- But liberty comes with responsibility as well
 - And my choices have consequences
- And your choices do as well
- Now I don't know what is in your heart
 - I don't know how you view your liberty in Christ
 - Have you been fooled by this world into viewing the liberty of submission as bondage
 - And to view the bondage of sin as liberty? →

*and open to
(us much
better*

Understand Genesis 2:16-17

Galatians 5:1

Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage

- Or maybe you are a believer who is living in the bondage of sin
 - And you are indulging your flesh
 - And the things of Christ have no joy to you, and you are wondering why the Christian life is so lifeless
 - Is this really the blessedness of Christ?
 - Is this really life more abundantly?
 - Is this really fullness of joy?
 - And so when people see you, and you speak of the joy of Christ, they see no difference from the world
 - The same emotional rollercoaster of happy and sad
 - The same despondency
 - The same confusion
 - The same selfishness
 - And today perhaps the Spirit of God has reminded you that the reason why you aren't experiencing the things that the Bible says you should is because you are not standing in your liberty
 - And you need to repent, and get right
- Or perhaps you have never stepped into this liberty to begin with
 - GIVE THE GOSPEL →

Genesis 2:16-17 The Tree, Part 1

- Now we aren't finished with the tree yet
 - We ask the question
 - Why did God put that tree there to begin with
 - And the first part of our answer is because where the Spirit of the LORD is, there is liberty
 - And liberty for the man was to eat of every tree
 - But liberty for the man was also boundaries
- But there is one more reason, which is perhaps even more clear
 - And that reason is love
 - And it is this love that we'll explore the next time we're together