

2.

God's Covenantal Relationship with Adam and Eve

In Genesis 1 we read of God's power and wisdom in the creation of the heavens and the earth. God stands at the center of this account as the One from whom all things come. The grandeur of God's creative activity had been revealed to Moses. The account is marked by God's ringing affirmation of His creation as not just good, but "very good" (Gen. 1:31). The culmination of the creation account is found in Genesis 2:1,2, where God is depicted as resting from His work. The creation is complete.

Genesis 2 then repeats the creation account, from the perspective of God's relationship to Adam. The emphasis of Genesis 2 is a relational one, or in other words, a covenantal one. This is seen first in how God is now referred to as "the Lord God." God is not just the creator, but now He is understood to be the Master, and He is the Lord or Master of Adam. But what kind of Lord is He? The writer of this chapter takes great pains to report that the Lord is a supremely gracious Master. He has provided Adam with everything he could ever need, with trees that were "pleasing to the eye and good for food" (Gen. 2:9). In fact, Adam was told by this gracious Lord that he was "free to eat from any tree in the garden," except for one (Gen. 2:16). The Lord also made Adam a lord over the earth, with the responsibility to oversee the beasts of the earth. The Master provided Adam with abundant provision from His world, but also a great responsibility to care for and oversee His world.

The Lord's generosity and provision culminated in the great blessing of a "helper," Eve, who was perfectly designed for Adam. The Lord God is revealed to be an eminently generous and gracious Master indeed. These are the privileges that God blessed Adam with. In Genesis 2, there is never a hint of there being any lack in Adam's

existence, therefore there was nothing Adam needed. In this regard, even the Tree of Life was not off limits. It is explicitly noted that there were two trees in the middle of the garden, but only one was deemed off limits, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

So, Adam's relationship with his Lord was characterized by privileges and obligations. He was obligated both positively and negatively. Positively, he was obligated to care for and oversee creation itself, he was to be lord of God's world. Negatively, Adam was obligated to *not* do something. It was the existence of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil that provided Adam's negative obligation to the Lord God. He was obligated to God to *not* eat of this tree.

Adam was living in the midst of God's blessing and he had nothing to gain in meeting this obligation, because he already had it all. He had the Lord God and His creation forever. However, he did have something to lose if he failed to fulfill his obligations. This is why God's promise to Adam had to do with what he stood to lose and not with anything he stood to gain. God never says, "Obey me in this and I will give you something more." There is no word of a promised blessing, but there is word of a promised curse. "You must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die" (Gen. 2:16). Adam needed to believe the Lord God when He spoke, and by believing, obey His command not to eat.

It was at this crucial point of faith in God's revealed Word that the serpent strikes in Genesis 3, like a precision missile used in modern warfare. Precision strikes are designed to hit a target at a key point that will bring the greatest destruction. The serpent challenges Adam's helper, Eve, at precisely the points that would undermine her faith, which would then cause her to disobey the Lord. His interrogation of Eve reveals his intent to undermine Eve's understanding of the Lord's credibility and graciousness. First, the serpent misrepresents what the Lord actually said in order to call into question His graciousness when he asked, "Did God *really* say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?" (Gen. 3:1). In fact, the Lord did *not* say they could not eat from *any* tree. Actually the reverse was true, they could eat from *every* tree, save one!

Eve corrects the serpent on this point, but like a crafty lawyer who successfully plants seeds of doubt into the minds of the jury, he planted doubt in Eve's mind and the damage was done. The serpent then explicitly attacks God's credibility by countering God's promise of a future curse by a promise of his own, "You will not surely die." The serpent then asserts his own promised blessing that they would eat and

their eyes would be opened and they would be “like God, knowing good and evil” (Gen. 3:5). The serpent, in a crafty and deceptive way, calls God a miser and a liar. The serpent depicts the Lord as misrepresenting the truth in order to deprive Adam and Eve of something that would be beneficial to them. Eve believed the serpent and by faith in his word she obeyed him and ate what had been forbidden to her. She failed to believe God’s revealed Word to her and through her unbelief she disobeyed the Lord’s command.

The tragedy is that she trusted a liar, and on the day she and Adam ate what had been forbidden, something sacred did, in fact, die. Death, defined as separation from God and loss of His creational blessing, was immediate. Pain, fear, grief and shame would enter Adam and Eve’s consciousness for the first time, and these emotional plagues would not go away. There was no turning back. The Lord God, contrary to the serpent, is infallibly true to His Word. This immediate spiritual death that the Lord God had promised would find its consummation in physical death, “for dust you are and to dust you will return” (Gen. 3:19b). Adam, who truly had nothing more to gain, believed that he did, and by believing the serpent, he lost everything for himself and mankind.

What we are able to discern in God’s relationship to Adam and Eve is a relationship characterized by privileges and obligations. Adam and Eve had the wonderful privilege of a relationship with the Lord God; with all the attendant blessings of His grace, and the enjoyment of the fullness of His creation, which was “very good.” They also had the obligation to obey God by faith in God’s Word to them. In this relationship we see the covenant.

Adam had not earned this relationship through anything he did; it was freely given to him by God. The Lord was in no way obligated to Adam as a debtor because the blessing of God and His creation was given freely. However, to remain in this blessedness, Adam had to obey the Lord. In other words, Adam’s continued experience of the life that he had was conditioned upon obeying God through faith in His Word.

Here we see the first manifestation of the covenant. *If* Adam was to disobey God by not believing God’s promised curse, then he would die. But *if he* would obey God by faith in His Word to him, *then* he would continue to live. The Lord God had demonstrated His faithfulness and was continuing to demonstrate it to Adam, and Adam was obligated to remain faithful to the Lord God in return. The relationship was covenantal. But this is just the beginning. What we find is that this covenantal relationship was the essence of God’s

relationship with Abraham as well.

