

# There Were Two Trees in the Garden - Part 1

by Art Katz

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*Art Katz's sermon discusses the profound implications of the Adamic failure and the necessity of understanding God's design for human relationships.*

**Duration:** 59:21

**Scripture:** Proverbs 14:12, Luke 24:45, Romans 5:12, 1 Corinthians 2:10-11, 2 Corinthians 4:4, Ephesians 1:9-10, 2 Timothy 3:16-17

**Topics:** "Garden Of Eden"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the compactness and significance of the scripture, particularly in relation to the failure of Adam and its implications for humanity. The failure of Adam and Eve to heed the word of God resulted in the good becoming evil. The speaker highlights the need for radical separation from distractions and things that contend against God's word, and the importance of imposing limitations. The sermon calls for a deeper understanding and recognition of the Adamic failure and its impact on humanity, and a restoration of the true proclamation of the gospel for genuine conversion.

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## Transcript

The remarkable thing is, just like virtually all the scripture, it is so compactly expressed. You would think that this deserves chapters, not just a few verses. So it's left to us to probe and to understand in the little that God tells us the meaning of this remarkable failure, because it's our failure.

We're all Adam, we're all Adamic, we're all human, there but for the grace of God. Were we in that place, we would have failed in that way. And so we want to enter this with the right attitude, and I don't know how to say it.

I'm surprised at my likeness this morning instead of an appropriate sobriety. So Lord, precious God, affect our mood and the tone of our proceeding appropriate to the subject that's before us today. We have to say, Lord, that we don't know as we ought to know, that even the Church has made hash out of this and reduced it to a few simple precepts, principles, statements.

And I don't know, Lord, that the tragic import of this Adamic failure has really registered upon our souls. It's the anatomy of sin itself, the quintessence, the constituent elements of sin. And this transgression, my God, needs to be registered upon our souls.

And we're asking for that grace this morning. We don't know how to proceed, Lord. Our Bibles are open, and we look to you.

Register, my God, something of your own grief upon our hearts that came upon you in this failure, Lord, to observe a simple admonition of all of the trees of the garden you may eat, but of this tree you are forbidden. What does it mean, my God, when we can't obey that simple prescription? What is in us, Lord, and why do we want to be like God, knowing good and evil? What does that mean, Lord? And has that been excised out of us? Or is there something in that Adamic propensity that yet remains where we choose and prefer to know and to live from our knowing rather than from your life? And so, Lord, instruct us this morning, precious God on high. I would to God I just could vacate my own responsibility here, and you would be seated in this place.

And you instruct us, you who were witness to this whole tragedy, you who in fact set it up, that we might understand deeply, Lord, beyond even our own minds, something in the deeps, my God, that there would be a permanent kind of sorrow, that this tragic failure set in motion the necessity for a lamb's flame from the foundations of the earth. There's no other remedy. You had to give us a second Adam who did not fail.

Thank you, Lord. And so, my God, we're a generation that has reduced salvation to a formula, step one, step two, step three, make a decision, accept Jesus. Lord, the whole thing has become trivialized, and we're asking that there be a latter day's restoration of something for our understanding and the proclamation of the gospel that would not be a cheapie, and that people would really be soundly converted by its proclamation because their Adamic sin would be identified that remains.

So we bless you, Lord. And without your grace, without your help, without your communication this morning, Lord, we're like blind men where we've got the thing over our eyes trying to pin the tail on the donkey. There's no way that we could succeed.

Grace, Lord, we ask grace because you've called us to these last days to bear your word before men, to understand the sinful condition of men and nations, Lord, and to address it firmly, sternly, and compassionately with an understanding. So bless us this morning, my God, and open our hearts, open our minds, open our understanding, we pray. Thank you for this now, the privilege which is ours.

Come, my God, and teach us. We thank and give you praise in Yeshua's holy name. Amen.

Well, we can't talk about the Adamic fall without looking a little bit in passing to the advent of Adam's partner, a help meet for him, appropriate for him, that it required the woman to bring in the great sin. And I'm trying to say this without any undue implication, but I think it needs to be recognized because Paul says later that the woman was the first to be tempted. And God sets limitations.

And what happened in the garden was the transgression of the limitations that God had established. It's a remarkable irony and a paradox that true freedom only comes in the willing submission to the limitations that God proscribes. And when he says you cannot and shall not, it's for our good.

And that there's a wisdom in this. Freedom is not some untrammelled do-your-own-thing. Freedom, and to be free in Christ, is to recognize the divine limitations that God himself has established in his own wisdom because he has created us male and female.

So we want to look at the comments of some of these men who have invested themselves in this tragedy and helped to illumine it for us. So just looking at the text of the creation of Eve out of Adam, isn't that a

remarkable thing in the genius of God that she was not made an independent entity like Adam himself? He could easily have as much formed her out of the dust as he formed Adam. But no, he takes her out of Adam.

So that the whole drama of male and female and marriage and the church has got to do with the bringing back again into him from whom it was taken that they might be one. The remarkable thing about being made one, that the two shall be one flesh is the whole drama that's before us in our marriage and in the church. And as we know who have struggled through with it and have passed through failed marriages and are perhaps struggling even now, it's no light thing for the two to be made one flesh.

That the God who took out in sleep requires a restoring and a coming back that they might be one in wakefulness. And I don't understand this, but there are great meanings in this that we need to hold in tension. So God brought the whole of the animals that he had created before Adam to name them.

And that naming of them is more than just packing a label on. For Adam to name them is to identify them and to have sovereignty over them. To identify them in what their task is.

An ox, an ass. By giving it that name, God gives to Adam something of a reflection of his own godly prerogative. Because to name something is to have sovereignty over it.

So God is calling Adam almost to a co-creative participation with him in naming the animals that he has created. But one of the reasons for that is that he should go through the whole of animal creation and recognize that however diverse and precious and brilliant each one is in its diversity and in its call and in its purpose, there was not one among them found appropriate to Adam as a helpmate. He himself had to come to that recognition.

And then God brings him into the sleep and gives him the helpmate out of himself. So Adam in verse 20 gave names to all cattle, to the fowls of the air and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a help fit for him.

And the Lord God caused the deep sleep to fall upon Adam and he slept. And he took one of the ribs and closed up the flesh instead thereof. And the rib which the Lord God had taken from man made he a woman and brought her unto the man.

And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. She shall be called woman, woman, because she was taken out of man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother and shall cleave unto his wife, and they shall be one flesh.

And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed. This is one of those pregnant moments where silence is appropriate because of the terseness of God and his word. How remarkable this event so described so sparingly.

One of the commentators says, When God brings Eve before Adam, it's something like a father bringing his daughter to the bridegroom to present her. Isn't that a beautiful picture? And Adam immediately recognizes the genius of what God has done. Hey, this is bone of my bones.

This is out of me. This is for me. This is from me.

And then verse 24, Adam doesn't have a mother and a father. So what does this mean that a man shall leave his father and his mother? I would have thought it more appropriate for the instruction to go to the wife rather than to the man because it's the woman that usually has very strong attachments to her mother and to her family. But this is here.

This is it for us to consider. A man shall leave his father and his mother. Of course, when God says man, I don't think he's meaning Adam exclusively because both Adam and Eve constitute man.

He made them female and male. So it's a prescription to the whole of man about being joined and cleaving to one another. And they shall be one flesh.

Lord, do you know what you're saying? Would to God it were as simple and as expedient as you say it. But what is left unsaid requires volumes. In all of the differences, though woman has come out of man, she's distinctively unique in the way that God has formed her.

And if she were not that, how could she be the supplement and the help and the completion to Adam? If she's a mere reiteration of what he is, there's no value gained. But she's a unique creation, though coming out of man, she is distinctly different from him, or she could not provide the completion and the supplement that that uniqueness alone can provide. And that's why the devil is so busy in making women masculine and robbing them of their femininity, bringing them into this fever for equality with man and to show themselves equal, if not superior to man.

I know what I'm talking about because I was in that seminary in St. Paul for two years. 65% of the students were women and virtually every one of them were not only feminists, but witches. And they were going to correct Christendom not only of its imbalance, but its error, because the scriptures were sexist and male-dominated and God has called he and him pronouns of masculine kind and that they were going to rectify this and bring again Mother Goddess that precedes Father.

I mean, oh, I can't tell you. So the spirit of this age is running wild in everything that contradicts what was God's intention from the beginning. So if the world and the devil can feminize man, homosexuality, and masculinize women, he will have destroyed the very distinction that would have revealed God's glory in the two becoming one.

So we need especially to be jealous to God those distinctions and to prize them because I think I've said on other occasions there's no way for man to understand his manhood independent of what a woman is. That somehow you define yourself by the opposite. It's like the Jew and the Gentile.

We need these distinctions in order to define ourselves and fulfill the uniqueness of those callings because the Jew and the Gentile are also called to be one. We talked about the issue of unity this morning in our prayer time. So it's the great thing that's on God's heart.

Of course, it's the unique differences that exacerbate the issues of marriage and bring the difficulties and the problems. It's the lack of our wisdom and grace in living with those differences and receiving the benefit of them and where they become oppositional. There's another better word.

Adversarial, that's the word. Honestly, my wife learned it from her mother that her mother's relationship with her father was adversarial. That the husband was looked upon somehow as the enemy and one with whom one is in natural contention.

So there was always this note in the air of defending your interests against the one who is adverse against you. A complete contradiction of what God intended in the complementary relationship between man and woman. That is the result of the fall.

This perverse twisting and playing upon the differences as calculated now to exacerbate and to compound the problems rather than to be the basis for the reverential acknowledgement of what God has wrought in male and female is exactly the kind of thing that we're fighting against. That's the result of the fall. The pity is that Christians who have come into Christ and have had the curse negated by his bearing the curse are still in some measure living under that curse and have not fully appropriated the redemptive work that God has done that would have brought them back to an original and endemic relationship that God intended at the first between Adam and Eve.

We're still fighting, we're still enemies, we're still contending and we've not fully appropriated the redemption that God has wrought. So it takes a conscious understanding of God's intention from the first and a fighting for that, contending for that faith and not giving ourselves to the temptation again to find ourselves oppositional and adversarial rather than to see ourselves as complementary and supportive. So it's over a 35-year struggle over these things that I'm speaking and a lot of you can give testimony of the same.

We'll continue to probe that yourself maybe we'll come back to it later or in these days and to dwell on that and shall cleave unto his wife and they shall be one flesh. What God leaves unsaid is awesome and what's implied is that this is not going to be accomplished without my grace. You're going to complete what began in sleep and in darkness in consciousness and awareness of the difficulties compounded all the more by the tenor of modernity of the modern world and its anti-Christ, anti-God, anti-unity, union mentality in exaggerating and playing one off against the other then it's going to take a remarkable grace.

We're not in an environment that is hospitable this is what I'm saying to the fulfillment of God's mystery. We're in an environment that is conspiring in every way against it and it comes to us in the air that we breathe through the TV through the magazine ads through the billboards everywhere that you can look. Everything is conspiring against God's design so to be a saint and to see the fulfillment of this which is intended for something more than our marital compatibility and the harmony of our homes however important that is the greater and the ultimate thing is it's intended for the glory of God and unless we're conscious of this and contend for this and are alert and watchful over everything that seeks to threaten it isn't it amazing how often how petty the issue is that brings the division between husband and wife? Absolutely petty and yet how magnified that can become.

Talk about exacerbating the differences and the frictions until more often than not the whole relationship is skewed and set apart. Probably there are more divorced couples living under one roof even in Christendom than we can know. So to become one flesh wow and unless we have a heart of intention for that and that our motive is more than the satisfaction of our sex life or our marital compatibility but it is the glory of God we'll not succeed.

The glory of God has got to be the predominant motive because whatever sacrifice is required of an ultimate kind only the glory of God can be the sufficient motive to bear it and marriage is a sacrifice and a struggle. But you know cleave is a wonderful existential word. It's an ultimate word.

It's an intense word. It's the contradiction of just being lightly regarding one another. The kind of cooperative mutuality where we share the same facility she has her career her ministry you have yours

and you recognize and acknowledge one another and live happily ever after under the same household.

That's not cleaving. That's a worldly what's the word compromise a mutuality of accommodation. Cleaving is an existential word.

This is what I love about the faith that the depth of what God is after cleaving is something that we could not perform it except by God. It's like the burning quality of love and of faith. The God who is a fire.

Cleaving is an intensity of full participation with another. But again everything in the world militates against that. Not only with our wives but in our fellowships because what are most of our fellowships but ships passing in the night.

How are you brother? Fine. How are you? Good. I'll see you in the lobby of the church.

I'll give you a back slap. I'll give you a full gospel bear hug and go on. We lack an intensity of relationship of cleaving in marriage and in the church.

And that's why we so lightly regard both institutions and cast them off or find another and try, try again if this one has not been successful. So the word cleave is really very precious. And we know that every word that's before us is divinely chosen.

God could have said this in another way. He could have said it in a lighter way. But he chooses one of the most intensive existential requirements to indicate what will be necessary if the two are to become one flesh.

Because this whole girlfriend boyfriend thing probably is one of the most demonic assaults on the genius of this that the powers of darkness have ever conceived. And has become so culturally acceptable that in fact if they don't have girlfriends, boyfriends we think they're unnatural. But where is there a Christian teenager who will keep themselves for the one for whom God has appointed them and will not give themselves in dalliances and alliances of an emotional and soul binding kind with a half a dozen other girls or boys before they're married.

Let alone the intimacy that usually accompanies that. So by the time we come to marriage we've already been so squandered so compromised so diffused that we cannot give ourselves to one. The memory of this past guy that will you know and measuring the one against the other.

Oh. A pox on dating. A pox on easy liberal boyfriend girlfriend.

And maybe one of the reasons why we allow our kids to indulge in that is that there's not a sufficient and compelling reality in the body of Christ that would keep our kids. That they're not receiving sufficient affection hugs warmth from the body that they need to find it in some exclusive relationship in the backseat of a car. So I'm just talking off the top of my head but it's a profound area of examination and that we have to resist the culture that encourages dating encourages these easy relationships and now even giving out the condoms that they can have safe sex in it.

We have a battle on our hands. Everything encourages romantic preoccupation with the other sex that our kids do not know have never been instructed to wait and to believe the Lord for the time in which he himself will give the appointed partner as a once and for all and cleave to them. So we're all victims of this.

My God I've left a trail behind me of relationships and girls and marriages and then you come into a relationship with a woman who's also had comparable backgrounds and you're going to make a match of it? It's the mercy of God that we're kept together to the degree that we have been. It sounds like a full time calling. You have to shut off the football game and the golf course and this kind of this call is not something that can be done in our spare time.

It's got to be a foremost priority. And why does it say about father and mother here shall a man leave his father and his mother? You know often when God speaks if not invariably he's speaking symbolically as well as actually. Father and mother represent the whole multitude a panoply of things of domestic values of good things of relationships of culture it's more than just literally father and mother.

In order to cleave there's got to be a radical separation not just from questionable things let alone evil things but even good things. You can't have a mixed loyalty. I think this is what God is getting after.

Father and mother are good but if this mystery is going to be completed even the good thing has got to be set aside or kept in its place and not be allowed to distract from the kind of fullness of attention that will complete this mystery. And probably that's been a factor in mitigating against this completion as it's not the evil things that have distracted us but the good things. Mother and father represent something good but cloying you know this word? Maybe I know this especially in Jewish life where the mother is so possessive and cloying and dominating the sons.

That's where we have a lot of outraged Jewish writers and revolutionaries because their vexation had its advent in being matriarchally dominated by a Jewish mother and they did not know to separate themselves from the good. The good thing became evil because they had not heeded the word of God. If you're going to cleave it's going to require a radical separation not just from mere distraction but from things that have a validity and a goodness in them but they contend against this.

And you need to know and be able to say no. You need to impose a limitation as I did on the brother this morning who was going on too long. See what I mean? And most of us would refrain from that and we would allow the thing to spill over.

We don't want to impose limitation but we can see from the very beginning in the garden that the whole genius of God that is testing man is the willingness to submit to the limitations that God in his wisdom has established. Somewhere in the Psalms I don't know where it is is that wonderful statement about the genius of which is contraction is the place of expansion. That when we submit to the limitations of God is really the door of the opening to great expansiveness.

And one of my favorite illustrations is my time in East Germany when the wall was still up and I was in relationship with Lutheran men because it's the state church. Pentecostals and Baptists were looked upon as sects and I was relating to Lutheran men who were under the supervision of Lutheran superintendents who were under the supervision of communist authorities. And the Lutheran superintendents were not even saved.

But these men operating under them were spirit filled men of apostolic stature that would have made you drool to spend five minutes with them and to sense the remarkable maturity and breadth of understanding and virtue that were in those men. And I could not put it together. I said there's no American that would have submitted to this kind of restriction of an unsaved Lutheran superintendent who is operating under the restriction of an atheistic communist overseer and you're submitting to all that? Yes, Art.

And what I realized was that it was in that submission that this apostolic character had its formation so that the place of contraction and restriction that we Americans are too spoiled ever to submit to we would have been chafed by it and we have so much opportunity to go to another place and this place or form our own place. They submitted to it because they had no alternatives and it was their making. So the place of restriction is the place of expansion by anyone who understands the way of God.

And who demonstrated that more than the Lord himself when he took upon himself the form of a man. Every time I have a bowel movement I'm reminded of that. That my God had to suffer the humiliation of that necessity when it was not required of him being spirit.

But when he compressed himself into the limitation of humanity that's about as humiliating a thing that a God could ever experience. But he did it for our sake. Talk about restriction.

So he's not giving us abstract principles and say go take a shot at it. He himself is the archetypal illustration of one who has submitted to the divine restriction and because of it salvation has come to all men. So thank you Lord.

May we kiss our limitations. May we thank the Lord for every restriction and every imposition as purest blessing. Because contrary to the wisdom of the world full freedom is bondage.

But submitting to the restriction of God and his wisdom is liberty, freedom and true expansiveness. As we can see even from the beginning. In the beginning.

How about the one woman that he's given? Surely there are others who have commendable virtues and other kinds of attractions that would be even a richer supplement. Do you know what I mean? Like a polygamist. Why be restricted to one? I mean after all did she graduate high school? Does she have this interest in art? Does she have this, that? How about this other woman who has, who is really spiritual and has a background so much more amenable to your own.

So here you're restricted to the one that God has given while all around you are the possibilities of temptations of supplement or even displacement. But to find in that limited one the full gratification for your soul and the complement of yourself and the completion of yourself is God's intention. You know I've almost come to the place where it doesn't matter to me anymore who is the bride or the bridegroom.

Like well are they compatible? Have you taken a test to see if you're compatible? Will this marriage work? I don't care who you are what your background is. If God has established that union in that union is all of the potential fullness of God's glorious design. Amen.

You know art. No, just one thing. And the same thing in fellowship.

Who is going to be part in Ben Israel? Who is going to be admitted into this fellowship? What are their credentials? What are their qualifications? What are their histories? You know what I've come to realize? More and more it doesn't matter what their background is. It doesn't matter what their condition is. If God is sending them let them come because in them is all of the Godhead all of the possibilities and it's God's intention and we'll work it out.

We'll find the realization of our fellowship in that. We don't have to be selective and look for qualification. You understand what I'm saying? Amen.

And so be content with the spouse that God has given because the enemy is going to play upon what is lacking what can be found in another and to take you away from cleaving. Cleaving is a full-hearted giving yourself to what God has given perfectly persuaded that in that one no matter what the visible limitations are all the expansive possibilities of the most glorious realization that can come in relationship because it's the one given. It saves you from marrying and remarrying and all of the kinds of things.

See the fact that Adam was there while the serpent was addressing Eve and kept his mouth shut and allowed his wife to be seduced and then he himself seduced by her that's not cleaving. That's probably more like accommodating. And so there's a true cleaving would have been the man standing for his wife and saying let me take care of this dear.

I'll answer this guy. Well we're coming into the area of our concern for today. I don't know what to say about verse 25 they were both naked the man and his wife and were not ashamed because one of the first things that takes place after their sin was the sense of shame a new experience for mankind the awareness of their nakedness and of their shame which is a crippling thing and a form of death.

Interesting in today's devotional reading it's a statement on life and death where Eugene Peterson says on the first page of the Bible read that God creates life. Two pages later men and women choose death. History narrates the antiphony between God's will to life and the human will to death.

The word life in the Bible and in all deeply imagined literature means far more than biological existence. The word death likewise means far more than determination of biological function. But what he's saying is we need to understand death as something much more than the cessation of biological function.

And what I'm saying is to experience shame and fear and to hide yourself in the garden and to be aware of your nakedness is death. Is restriction. Is new dimensions of things that atrophy the human spirit and impede human relationship and relationship with God.

Hiding in the garden from God is a form of death. See what I mean? Sin sets in death. But we need to understand death as more than just the cessation of biological life.

Even though it did mean the limitation of years progressively that men were to live. But death is shame and fear that was the fulfillment of God's will. The moment you'll eat of this you're going to experience death.

And death is this sense of shame. If we could examine the contents of mental institutions and the unnumbered multitude of those that are sitting on psychiatrist couch or seeking counseling we would find out that shame and fear self-hatred, failed relationships are the things that have shredded and made their lives wretched which is the consequence of sin which is death. So the church needs to stand for life.

Well, it's an interesting question to ask why the first expression right on the heels of that eating is the sense of nakedness and shame. Guilt, hiding, fear. The very first reaction to sin is that.

Let's roll this one over on our tongues. This is rare wine, folks. We don't want to quaff this down like Coca-Cola.

This is too precious to run over. Hold your other comments. Think of this.

The loss of Edenic innocence and the advent and introduction of self-consciousness. The recognition of your nakedness and that becomes an impediment to the relationship of the two when now the other one needs to be named as a separate identity. Wow.

Hold on. Let's not rush over this. Let that sink in.

This is the tragedy. If we could see as God has seen over the millennia the broken lives, the suffering, the shrieks, the crime, the murders, the failed things, the wretchedness of mankind that has its advent with this. Can we come back to the God we who are saved and for whom the curse has been lifted? Can we come back to an Edenic innocence, that is to say, that we can live and move and have our being without self-consciousness and relate to each other as innocent? I'm going to repeat my question.

By virtue of the blood of the Lamb and the redemption of God by the second Adam of which we are all beneficiaries, have we now access to Eden in the sense that we can come again into a pristine and original innocence, that is to say, not goo-goo-goo, but an innocence in which we can relate to each other without self-consciousness, without fear, without shame? Can you imagine how blessed that is, how paradisaical that is, to relate like that? Wow! I mean, you can't taste that. Imagine that, what fellowship would be if we were in that kind of condition. There's a wonderful perverse self-exaltation that comes to saints when at the cost of another they can exalt themselves by spotting the defects or the nakedness of another and seeing themselves as being more spiritual.

But that's eating from the wrong tree? Where do they get the knowledge of that defect that they can now play upon it and gain advantage in self-exaltation by fingering it? Who told them about that defect in that person? Did they get that from the tree of life? Or did they get that from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil? As I said to a brother on this trip in Canada, you are not at liberty to make a direct discernment of another or even of a situation. You can only receive it in purity from God and not from the thing or the person himself. So we think that we are at liberty to observe and discern.

Oh, now I see. Everybody is applauding our cats, but I can see the defect. And now I'm the one who's going to really bring this guy down to the place of humility that he really needs.

I'm God's appointed vessel. I can't tell you how much men in public places suffer that kind of abuse. But what it is, is eating from the wrong tree.

It's eating from knowledge. It's operating from knowledge by going directly to that tree rather than receiving something from the Lord. And if the Lord gives us a discernment about the condition or the need of another, it's not that we should finger them or identify them or bring correction to them, but to intercede for them over that thing.

So the whole different operation, whether you're eating from the one tree or the other. So everything goes back to the beginnings, but it's still with us, and we need to see that. Probably more damage is done in the church and in relationship through this direct discernment, which is very self-exalting, which is exactly the motive for eating from that tree.

For you shall be as God. You don't have to wait for Him to receive your discernment secondhand. You yourself can make it like Him.

But not only are we impaired in our relationship with each other for the want of innocence, but we're impaired in the relationship with God for the want of it, that He's waiting to fellowship with us in the

absence of self-consciousness about our spirituality and about Him. So we're impaired in our relationship with each other. We're impaired in our relationship with Him because the Edenic condition in which Adam walked with God in the garden was the absence of self-consciousness.

And I would say from my observation of 36 years as a believer, the deadliest form of self-consciousness is spiritual self-consciousness. Just when we think we're rid of every other form about our maleness or our intelligence or this or that, it's our spirituality that is the last thing that finds us out. We want to be recognized as spiritual, and we're so concerned for our spirituality, our spiritual reputation, but that's still self-concern and is still a major blockage and an impediment to an innocence of relationship with God.

How much does that color and affect our prayer, even our devotional times, even that compulsive necessity to read so many chapters for the day and call that our devotion? It's more a religious obligation than it is a reverential devotional time with God to touch his heart. You understand? So this is the impediment. I can't even imagine.

What would it mean to walk with God in the garden without an agenda, without a whole list of petitions that need to be fulfilled or a sense of terrible unworthiness, but just the most natural, flowing kind of a thing which he waits for and for which he designed us. So the return to the garden, the return to Eden, is so fraught with possibility, both in our relationship with each other, in the church, and our relationship with him. May God grant that may that be our prayer today, that we will be brought back to this pristine and original, ethnic condition as children of innocence who have nothing, no agenda to press, no defect to find, even in ourselves, let alone in others, and can relate to God as being the creature of the creator and be in the harmony that he intended and for which reason he created, because this is what he wanted.

And this is what he will have millennially and eternally. He will have it. I will be your God and you will be my people.

I'm going to have fellowship with you the way that I originally had with Adam, and I'll have it eternally. What else has the power to crucify the desire to know and to be as God than the cross? And I am determined not to know anything but Christ and him crucified. This is a Jewish intellectual speaking.

Listen, you guys, who have any kind of intellectual propensity, do you know how seductive knowledge is? Do you know how self-exalting it is to know? Why, of the two trees that were in the garden, they were not forbidden to eat from the tree of life, but they never touched it. Boom, they went directly to the other and sinned. What is there about a tree of knowledge that is so seductive and so powerful that it occasioned the basic transgression? And to what degree is that operative still? It's so powerful that I'm picking up on what Adam is saying that only the cross has the power to negate it.

Can you imagine being free from the necessity to know? Because what you know is your distinction. It's you. And that's how you want to be known.

But if you're stripped from it, who are you? And what are you? What's the basis for the esteem that will come to you from others? And what is the basis for your own self-esteem if you're a dum-dum who doesn't know? You understand? And the only knowledge that you'll have is what the tree of life will impart. And if it doesn't impart, you have no answer, you're not clever, you can't be charming, you can't be interesting, you're lousy company. And you're willing to suffer those deaths rather than you yourself should grasp from a tree from which you have been forbidden.

Knowing God called Abraham, follow me in the land that I will show you. And you cannot know. The Holy Spirit lists where it will.

And you cannot know. Whence it comes from, nowhere it goes. Who wants to live like that? When the whole world has framed us that we should know.

Make your own decisions on your knowledge. Go to school, get a degree, become competent. You know, you make your choices on the basis of knowledge, not on an impulse that comes to you from God.

It's not that God would have us to be bereft of knowledge. Because this has to do with our humanity and our fullness that glorifies him. But the question is, what is its source? Because he's made unto us understanding, sanctification, redemption, wisdom.

He is made unto us. Or are we going to go to another source that is not God and by appropriating it be as God? Because the knowledge of good and evil is an all-embracing thing that takes in everything. What it really is is the omniscience of God himself.

We want to be as God. But we don't want to derive that from God but independent of God. And that's the sin.

If we had been content to cleave to his tree and to receive such knowledge as he is pleased to impart that serves his purposes and not our vanity, it would have been another thing. But we want to appropriate for our own use, our own manipulation, our own self-exaltation. We want to be as God.

Which means to say we're not satisfied with the restriction and the limitation of being a creature. We want to be a creator as God instead of God. And that is the foundational transgression.

And the impulse remains still. In any operation by which we seek and find the knowledge independent of him and apply it for our self-exaltation, even spiritually, we're back again at the wrong tree and we're bringing death. And denominations that have been formed on that basis have brought death and kept us from the unity that is God's great heart's desire because of the self-exaltation and the pride that invariably accompanies knowledge obtained outside of God.

Because it's not for God although we say it's for the Lord and we employ it religiously, it's really a form of self-exaltation and the end thereof is death. So the issue of the two trees is not some antiquated issue that has passed. It's presently with us, powerfully, and needs to be recognized.

I'll put this to you as a challenge. Are you willing to be satisfied with being innocent and not knowing? Until such time as it pleases the Lord in the fulfillment of His purpose to grant you a particular knowledge. Are you willing to be without an answer? With your face sticking out? When people look to you with expectation? When your reputation is at stake? When you don't want to be looked upon as a dumb-dumb? Are you willing to say, God hasn't addressed me on that? I don't know.

For example, it's nice to have a history I'm speaking to these younger believers. I remember when the body of Christ, the phrase, came into vogue somewhere in the 1970s with the charismatic thing. And everyone was the first in his neighborhood to have one, except me.

I had nothing to say about the phenomenon or the concept of the body of Christ. What? You're a minister? You can't say? No. How come? Because it had not yet been given.

And I was not at liberty to extrapolate principles or what I would hear from a tape, make it my own, and voice it. That's from the wrong tree. And God will test you and give you a long space in which you'll not be able to give answer.

But when you will give answer, God has revealed the mystery of the body of Christ. Not in some academic way, but more likely out of the suffering and the struggle of your own marriage to find accommodation with your own wife as being made one. And then you can speak to the subject of the body of Christ.

So again, it's death. It's humiliation to be looked upon as ignorant when people have every right to expect that you have something to say on the subject and you have nothing to say because the Lord has not yet revealed it. You're waiting for the Lord when it pleases Him because you're cleaving only to that tree, the tree of His life.

It's a death. It has a willing death. Is there a difference between knowing about the body of Christ or the subject of Israel religiously or humanly and knowing revelationally? Which is not to say that the Lord will not employ the works of others, but I'm not at liberty myself to pick up any book.

The phenomenon of revelation can come not only from Scripture but from the work of others if the Lord Himself has directed you to it. But to be greedy in your own mind and to pore through books and then build up your little case and then take it in your briefcase as messages is not to bring life but death. Are we willing to wait until it pleases the Lord when the serpent was bringing God down to another level by even raising the question hath God said? He's already deprecating God, depreciating God.

There's an implication in that sinuous question that maybe God isn't all what you think Him to be and trumped up. Maybe He wants to keep you from a place of equality with Himself. Maybe He's a jealous God who wants to maintain His vain superiority.

All of those things are insinuated in the question hath God said? So the first attack is on the credibility of God by raising the issue of who He is. But when they were innocent there was no question that the Creator need not be questioned let alone by His creation as if creation can assess God and find Him to be defective which is our Jewish sin. So let me read from Bonhoeffer because he's quoted here by Jihad Van Raad if I can find it.

Now here it is. Wherever man attacks the concrete word of God with the weapon of a principle or an idea of God there he has become lord over God. To elevate our principles our thoughts and our concepts of who God is contrary to what God says is already to exalt our humanity as creature over the Creator.

So I despise when I hear the talking particularly in Judaistic circles the concept of God our concept our idea exalts the thinker over the subject when the subject himself is superior to any thought that the creature is capable of raising about him. We don't know as we ought to know and God's great condemnation of Israel is you thought that I was such a one as yourself. You projected upon me the limitation of your own humanity because you did not know me as you ought because the true knowledge of me is not something that you can rest or obtain by your exertion and your humanity.

It's only the measure that I choose to give you as revelation. And I'll only give it to you in proportion to your humiliation and not to your exalted arrogance. Any idea of God stinks and is perverse and is less than what God is except that it be given in a revelatory way for the purposes of God and not our self-exaltation.

Listen to this. How could they even know that eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is itself evil if they had not yet eaten from the tree? If they had not yet obtained the knowledge of good and evil, how should they know that the eating from the tree is evil and therefore avoid it on one basis only. God has said you shall not eat of that forbidden tree.

See what I mean? So the word of God, the primacy of God's word is over and against every other human consideration and keeps the creature in the place of definition and restriction that the creator has assessed for him. And that's the place of peace, harmony, righteousness, fulfillment. But the serpent tempts man out from the narrow place to the lustful, what's it when you're eyeballed, the voluptuous image of being like God.

This tree is good to eat, it's good to look upon, it'll make you wise. And that was it. They refused to stay in adherence to the limitation of God's word.

They even played off of the fact... You know what the irony is? God's intention is that we should be like God. But not by our self-appropriation. The difference is grasping or being given.

That's the difference between transgression and righteousness. But here's something. When she answers Satan, she goes beyond what God said to her.

He said, you shall not eat from the tree, and she says to Satan, and he said we shall not touch the tree. Now is this a feminine characteristic? To go beyond? In other words, this also is a violation of a limitation. If only God had not created women, we wouldn't have had this mess.

That's what I'm trying to say. It's good to keep it clear and clean and to consistently live from it. Imagine that all of our life is derived from that tree, and we painstakingly and consciously refuse from drawing from the other.

It's really probably the principal issue in the life of the spirit and the life of God. But I'll raise this question. We'll take a break and you can come back with an answer.

If the other tree, this tree of life, was equally as accessible in the midst of the garden as the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, why didn't they eat from it? Why wasn't that a first object of their attention and of their desire? Why would they scorn, if I can put it that way strongly, or neglect or reject that tree in order to take from the wrong, though they had been forbidden by the Word? Wasn't the tree of life equally as attractive as the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which is death? And is it equally as attractive today? Why would that tree be spurned? Why is mankind and even Christians more disposed to be attracted to the wrong tree than to the true? And with that question, we'll take a break. We'll thank the Lord for this much, okay? Lord, not bad. Not bad, Lord.

In leading us into this remarkable realm of the fall, may it crash upon our consciousness, my God, of what has been affected by it, and how universal was their sin, my God. We're all sharing it, and we're still sharing it still. And we ask, my God, that you continue with us this morning.

We don't just want knowledge about. We want, my God, a saving knowledge that will instruct us deeply to loathe what you have forbidden, to heed your word, to cleave, my God, to yourself alone for everything. And we're willing to be dead to everything else.

We're willing to be looked upon as being without reputation, without knowledge. We have no answer, no cleverness, unless you give us that. We will not grasp it.

So, Lord, continue on, we pray. We're asking that this will be an event for us, and not just an instruction, because you're the only one who can perform it, because that will be life, and mere knowledge of itself will again be death. And we opt for life for Jesus' sake, the great provider, in his precious name.

Amen.

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