

On the Prohibition in Paradise

by Thomas Reade

The sermon explores the reasonableness, holiness, and goodness of the law of paradise, and its relationship to the moral law and the Gospel.

Scripture: Genesis 2:16, Psalm 19:7, Psalm 119:97, Proverbs 3:5, Matthew 22:37, Romans 6:23, 1 Corinthians 10:6, Philippians 4:8, Colossians 3:1, 1 John 2:15

Topics: "Original Sin", "Obedience To God"

Description

Thomas Reade preaches on the prohibition in paradise, emphasizing the reasonableness, holiness, and goodness of God's law in requiring homage and obedience from man. The easy and reasonable prohibition of abstaining from one fruit served as an act of homage to God and a lesson of abstinence, self-denial, and submission to His authority. The breach of this law was seen as the highest instance of ingratitude and rebellion, yet God's grace was revealed through the promise of an Almighty Savior. Reade highlights the importance of obedience, love for God, dependence on Him, and seeking happiness in Him, as well as the inseparability of happiness from obedience.

Transcript

4. ON THE PROHIBITION IN PARADISE

Much of the beauty of Scripture is lost to us for lack of spiritual discernment. The ways of God appear dark, in proportion to the thick film which rests upon our understanding. It is awful to reflect, how weak, polluted worms of earth dare to charge the infinite wisdom of Jehovah with folly. Surely we must say with the Psalmist, "God is strong and patient"--and God is provoked every day. The following considerations show at once the reasonableness, holiness, and goodness of the law of paradise.

I. As God had made man the governor of this lower world, and crowned him with so many mercies, "it was manifestly proper that he should require some particular instance of homage and fealty, to be a memorial to man of his dependence, and an acknowledgment on his part, that he was under the dominion of a higher Lord, to whom he owed absolute subjection and obedience. 2. What instance of homage could be more proper, circumstanced as man then was, than his being obliged, in obedience to the divine command, to abstain from one or more of the fruits of paradise? 3.

It pleased God to insist only upon his abstaining from one; at the same time that he indulged him in full liberty as to the rest. 4. This easy and reasonable prohibition served both as an act of homage to the

supreme Lord from whose bountiful grant he held paradise, and all its enjoyments; and was also fitted to teach our first parents a noble and useful lesson of abstinence and self-denial; one of the most necessary lessons in a state of probation; and also of unreserved submission to the authority and will of God; and an implicit resignation to his supreme wisdom and goodness. 5.

This test of their obedience, from the nature of it, tended to habituate them to keep their sensitive appetites in subjection to the law of reason; to take them off from too close an attachment to inferior sensible good; and engage them to place their highest happiness in God alone. 6. This injunction not to eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, would also tend to keep their desires after knowledge within just bounds, so as to be content with knowing what was really proper and useful for them to know; and not presume to pry with an unwarrantable curiosity into things which belong not to them, and which God has not thought fit to reveal.

Now who can seriously meditate upon these valuable considerations, without being affected at the goodness of God in commanding, and at the baseness of man in transgressing, such a reasonable test of his obedience? This law was truly a law of love; and the breach of it was the highest instance of ingratitude and rebellion. How inconceivably great is the grace of God, that at the very time when he came down to pronounce the sentence of death upon his offending creatures, he should reveal, by promise, an Almighty Savior, even Himself, who should destroy the power of darkness, put an end to transgression, make an end of sin, bring in ever-lasting righteousness, and form a people to show forth his praise!

If we examine attentively the foregoing considerations, we shall find that nothing was imposed upon Adam, that we are not now commanded to perform, with respect to the spiritual part of the injunction. We must love; God supremely--acknowledge our dependence upon him--seek our whole happiness in him--delight in his law--be resigned to his will--keep our sensitive appetites in subjection--and check all unhallowed curiosity into the ways and wisely hidden things of God. Every deviation from this state of heart and practice is a deviation from the holy law of God; and as a necessary consequence entails guilt and misery upon us.

Thus we see, that happiness is inseparable from obedience. We learn from hence, that misery and wretchedness do not depend upon our station, but on the state of our souls. Adam in paradise was happy, while innocent. Adam in paradise was miserable, when guilty. The law delivered on Mount Sinai is a standing revelation of the holiness of God; and the various precepts of the Gospel are all in consonance with these pure and undefiled commandments. Both the injunctions of the moral law, and the precepts of the Gospel, were virtually included in the original law given to our first parents in paradise, thus forming a chain of holiness from the beginning to the end of times.

It resembles a beautiful flower, of which the bud is seen in Eden, the expanding leaves on Mount Sinai and its glowing beauties in Emmanuel's land. Heaven is its native soil. There shall all the trees of righteousness be finally transplanted; and there shall the lovely flowers of paradise expand their beauties, and spread their fragrance fed by perpetual dews of heavenly grace, and screened forever from the blasting pestilence of this sinful world. Oh blessed Redeemer, Lord divine!

With beams of mercy on me shine; Until every thought and word agree, Until every work be done for thee. What is the world but grief and care? What heaven, if you be absent there? Your glorious face illumines the sky, And sheds ecstatic joys on high Your love, with beams of heavenly grace, Gladdens our guilty, fallen race; In Sharon's lovely, blushing rose, You deign your beauties to disclose.

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