

daring, but they are as criminals discovered, trembling, pale, and anxious to escape: they would not be subjects, and so they are prisoners.

– Matthew Henry

[Satan] promised them they should be safe, but now they cannot so much as think themselves so; he said they should not die, and yet now they are forced to fly for their lives; he promised them they should be advanced, but they see themselves abased - never did they seem so little as now; he promised them they should be knowing, but they see themselves at a loss, and know not so much as where to hide themselves; he promised them they should be as gods, great, and bold, and

The fact of the matter is that the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil was never an obstacle to man's obedience until man made it one. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil—created for *our* good—became a hindrance to us because of our disobedience. Our deeds can have no moral character unless they are voluntary—of our own choosing. Thus, God placed us in a creation in which we could choose and in so doing freely and fully enjoy a relationship with Him. However, this was lost almost as soon as it was given. Just as man cut himself off from God by exceeding the command that was given, so we too can cut ourselves from God by going beyond what is written (1 Cor. 4:6; 2 John 9). The only hope anyone has of returning to and once again enjoying a relationship with God is through Christ (Jn. 14:6). Only in Christ can one be made a new creation again (2 Cor. 5:17). Still more, those in Christ can look forward to paradise once again (Rev. 21:1).



Faithful Sayings Issue 13.13 March 27, 2011

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## Welcome Visitors

We are so glad that you joined us today.  
Please come again.

● Let us know if you have any questions.

ISSUE

13.13

BULLETIN OF  
THE OLSEN  
PARK CHURCH  
OF CHRIST

# Faithful Sayings

March 27  
2011

## Services

Sunday: 9:30 AM  
10:20 AM  
6:00 PM

Wednesday: 7:00 PM

## Elders:

Pat Ledbetter  
Jeff Nunn  
Kyle Pope

## Deacons:

Dean Bowers  
Eddie Cook  
Bill Davis  
Steve Dixon  
Pat Goguen  
Jack Langley  
Neil Ledbetter  
Brady McAlister  
Walker McAnear  
Lance Purcell  
Rusty Scott

## Evangelists:

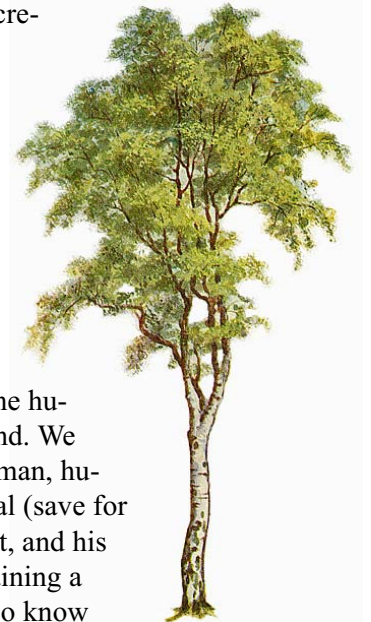
Kyle Pope  
Jason Garcia



## The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil

By Jason Garcia

Why did God put the tree of knowledge of good and evil in the middle of His garden paradise that He created for man? Surely this tree was only an obstacle to God's intentions for man, and if God desired only the best for His new creation why would He put man where it would be so easy for him to sin? These kinds of questions lurk at the back of the minds of many skeptics and perhaps serve their need to justify (in their minds) living a life without God. Nevertheless, God has given us the answer to this question, if we will only take the time to search His Word.



Reflect with me for a moment on the human condition before the fall of mankind. We know that God openly conversed with man, humans had all of creation at their disposal (save for one fruit), and all of his needs were met, and his work consisted of cultivating or maintaining a garden (Gen. 1:28-29; 2:15-16). We also know

that along with the tree of life which granted immortality, another tree was planted—the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Immediately the question of “why?” pops into our minds. First, consider that in all of Scripture a basic principle occurs over and over again—*choose* good over evil. I offer three of perhaps countless examples. Peter writes, “**Let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it**” (1 Pet. 3:11 ESV). Paul teaches us, “**So then, as we have**

**opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith**” (Gal. 6:10). He told the brethren in Thessalonica, “**See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone**” (1 Thess. 5:15). This is what we were created to do from the very beginning, and it is only possible to regain this ability by having a relationship with Christ (cf. Ecc. 12:13; Is. 64:6; Jn. 15:5; Eph. 2:10). Again, not only are we expected to do good, but voluntarily *choose* to do good of our own freewill. Some in the religious world would immediately object and speak of predestination, determinism (i.e. no freewill), and the totally depraved nature of man etc. While there are numerous arguments that could be made to answer all these objections, I will draw our attention to one verse and ask a follow-up question. David wrote, “**With a freewill offering I will sacrifice to you; I will give thanks to your name, O LORD, for it is good**” (Ps. 54:6). Why would a divinely inspired writer claim his offering was of his own *freewill* if there was no such thing as freewill? So then human freewill is assumed in Scripture because God has empowered us to choose. This suggests that our ability to choose relates to the meaning and purpose of our existence. If we did not choose to follow God, to obey Him, and to love Him, we would be no different than the cars we drive, or a computer, or a washing machine. The cynic may ask, “Well, what’s wrong with that? So long as I’m happy.” The cynic asks for contradiction. He wishes to have his cake and eat it too. If human life was reduced to a level of existence without freewill, then we are no longer made in the image of God as free, intelligent, rational, self-aware beings. We could take no joy in life for the same reason our cars are not literally “happy”, and our computers are not “enjoying their life”, and no clear-thinking individual speaks of those objects in such a way. If one were to speak in such terms and genuinely believe what he said, we would think him a luna-

tic. If God has given us freewill, then it is for our good, our benefit, and our enjoyment (cf. Jas. 1:17).

Will you consider with me what Bible writers have to say about obeying God’s commands? The Psalmist declares, “**My soul is consumed with longing for your rules at all times...Your testimonies are my delight; they are my counselors**” (Ps. 119:20, 24). David said, “**More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb. Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward**” (Ps. 19:10-11). The books of poetry, and especially the Psalms are replete with this kind of language—praise and adoration for the Law of God. The question arises now, in light of our study, if this is the result of keeping God’s Law, why would Adam and Eve yield to temptation? Why would they want to violate God’s Command? The answer lies within the account left to us in Genesis. Do you remember what Eve found so alluring about the fruit of the forbidden tree? She had been promised by the tempter “**You will not surely die**” and “**your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil**” (Gen. 3:4-5). The record tells us she saw the fruit was desirable to make one wise, even like God. Man was created with innate desire for knowledge, and this of course is not evil in and of itself. However, what does the Scripture teach with regard to acquiring knowledge? The Wise Man taught, “**The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge**” and “**Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths**” (Prov. 1:7; 3:5-6). Eve ex-

changed the truth of God for a lie (cf. Rom 1:24-25). What would have happened had she not eaten of the forbidden fruit, could she still have gained the knowledge she so desired? Absolutely, but through God’s instruction. Notice what the Hebrew writer has to teach us: “**But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil**” (Heb. 5:14). Could Eve have exercised her “powers of discernment” by not yielding to temptation? Certainly, for that is what she was expected to do (cf. Gen3:2-3). What would have been the end result according to the Hebrews passage? Her powers of discernment would have been trained to distinguish *good from evil*. The truth is that Adam and Eve already knew all they needed to know—the fear of the Lord. Sadly, they chose to go beyond what was commanded and it *truly* cost them *everything*.

