

THE SEEDS OF FORBIDDEN FRUIT:

Paradise Lost and Regained



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CHAPTER 1

PARADISE LOST

Genesis is the book of beginnings. In it we discover the beginning of the universe and life on earth—plant life, animal life, and human life. Chapter two records the creation of man and the beauty of his environment:

And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being. The LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed. And out of the ground the LORD God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2:7-9).

As human beings made in the image of the Creator, Adam and Eve were created to enjoy a love relationship with Almighty God. Yet, since love is voluntarily given, Adam and Eve had free will and the potential of rejecting God's way. The test was a very simple one. Adam was clearly warned by God concerning the devastating consequences that would follow the violation of the LORD's one prohibition:

And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, 'Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die' (Genesis 2:17).

What was the nature of this forbidden Fruit? We are not told what it looked like. (The popular notion of its being an apple is conjecture.) One thing is clear: it was designated as being of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. By understanding the nature of Adam and Eve's sin in eating this fruit, we will perceive the cause of human misery and gain insights about how we appropriate God's salvation.

Consider four *seeds* that were involved in Original Sin: the *seeds* of pride, unbelief, independence, and self-will.

PRIDE

Genesis records,

Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, 'Has God indeed said, "You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?"' And the woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, "You shall not

eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.” Then the serpent said to the woman, ‘You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil’ (Genesis 3:1-4).

The bait that the Enemy used for Eve was the alluring prospect of being *like God*. (Notice the deception involved: Adam and Eve were already like God and living in uninterrupted communion with Him!) It shouldn't surprise us that Satan would use PRIDE to entice our first parents. He, himself, succumbed to pride in his pre-historic rebellion, claiming

I will be like the Most High
(Isaiah 14:14).

UNBELIEF

Although God directly communed with Adam, the nature of this fellowship was spiritual. Since Spirit cannot be seen with physical eyes, the spiritual life requires faith. (John 1:18; 4:24; Hebrews 11:6).

Faith in God was challenged by Satan when he questioned God's character, then denied His warning. By suggesting that Adam and Eve could NOT eat from ANY tree in the Garden of Eden, the Tempter insinuated that God was unkind. (Eve started to slip when she replied that they could eat of the other trees but neglected to say *freely*.) Satan's suggestion of doubt

mushroomed into full-blown denial of God's Word: "You will not surely die". By eating the forbidden fruit, our first parents chose UNBELIEF instead of faith. The forbidden fruit appealed to Eve's body and soul; Eve's invitation appealed to Adam's body and soul. Faith, however, requires continual acceptance of God's Word through the human spirit.

INDEPENDENCE

God gave the animals instinct to guide their behavior. The animals were given special wisdom through instinct for adapting to the environment, acquiring food, finding protection, etc. But man was not created to be guided by instinct; God made humans to be guided by spiritual communion with their Creator! Dependence on God was not a disadvantage but a glorious privilege and opportunity. Such trust was the basis of delightful fellowship with the LORD.

Man's knowledge was to be discerned through his spirit's intuition; his conscience was to guide moral choices. Both of these faculties were to be under the guidance of spiritual fellowship with God. However, the forbidden fruit represented the attempt of man in getting his ultimate needs met INDEPENDENTLY of God.

SELF-WILL

Since God created Adam and Eve innocent, their will naturally cooper-

ated with God's governance. In avoiding the forbidden fruit they could take dominion of the earth, delight in one another and benefit from all of God's gifts. This was a life of freedom!

However, the Tempter enticed Eve to exercise SELF-WILL:

'For God knows that in the day you eat of it [the forbidden fruit] your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.' So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.

God's warning was instantly fulfilled. They ate the forbidden fruit and—that day—they died spiritually. (Death involves separation; they became separated from the life of God in their human spirit. This triggered the beginning of physical mortality.)

The results of guilt, shame, and alienation were immediately evident:

Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked.

Self-styled religion was their natural reaction:

and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.

However, after God pronounced judgment He provided atonement for Adam and Eve:

Also for Adam and his wife the LORD God made tunics of skin, and clothed them. [implying the shedding of blood in substitutionary sacrifice] (Genesis 3:7,21).

So, original sin forfeited the benefits of eternal life as represented by access to the Tree of Life.

How grateful we are for our Redeemer—the Lord Jesus Christ! His saving work established Him as the new spiritual Head of those who receive Him:

For since by man came death, by Man [Christ] also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive (1 Corinthians 15:21,22; Cf. 47-49).

The contrast of Adam and Christ, the second “Adam”, is profound. Romans expounds this further:

For if by the one man's offense death [Adam's] reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be

made righteous (Romans 5:17-19).

Praise God for the blessings of being IN CHRIST through saving faith! (2 Corinthians 5:17-21). The next chapter examines how the way of salvation involves the OPPOSITES of these *seeds* of forbidden fruit.

NOTE: This article refers to man as spirit, soul, and body (1 Thessalonians 5:23). Books that support this view include Watchman Nee—*The Spiritual Man*; T. Austin Sparks—*What is Man?*; F. Delitzsch—*Biblical Psychology*; et.al.

CHAPTER 2

THE CONDITIONS FOR SALVATION

Pride, independence, unbelief, and self-will—the *seeds of forbidden fruit* find their counterpart in the conditions for salvation.

FROM PRIDE TO HUMILITY

God designed the gospel to require humility on the part of the sinner. To the natural mind, the idea of redemption through the substitutionary sacrifice by a crucified Messiah is foolish. Therefore, Paul declared,

For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written: 'I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, And bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.' Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; but we

preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God (1 Corinthians 1:18-24).

Jessie Penn-Lewis observed,

He [Paul] beholds it [the Cross] as the master-stroke of Jehovah against one cause of the Fall in Eden. 'The woman saw the tree...was to be desired to make one wise'. The desire of knowledge beyond the limit set by the Lord was one of the causes of the Fall, the effect thereof continuing unto this day, for pride of intellect is still a barrier between men and the knowledge of their Creator. Salvation through the Cross, was a master-stroke of the all-wise Creator against the pride of knowledge in His fallen creatures, for the 'word of the cross' is the power of God to 'destroy', or bring to naught 'the wisdom of the wise'. The Cross as the power of God is so wholly beyond the comprehension of the natural man, that he must submit his intellect to his Creator, and accept the message on the word of Jehovah alone [Cf. 1 Corinthians 2:14].¹

The Lord Jesus used the attitude of childlike faith to illustrate humility:

Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it (Mark 10:14,15).

FROM INDEPENDENCE TO DEPENDENCE

I once saw an advertisement for a TV series titled, *Inventing Your Own Religion*. This is what unregenerate people desire. Like going down a buffet line at a restaurant, they pick and chose the doctrines and disciplines that appeal to them. This is nothing less than a carry over of Adam's choice to live by his own independent source of spiritual knowledge. However, Proverbs warns us,

There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death (Proverbs 14:12).

It is significant that the first beatitude describes the necessity of total dependence on God:

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 5:3).

One is *poor in spirit* when he confesses that he has nothing of his own to commend himself to God (Cf. Isaiah 64:6).

The natural bent of fallen people is to rely on their own merit to earn ac-

ceptance with God. This was the major hindrance to self righteous Jews in the first century. Paul explained that,

...Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness. Why? Because they did not seek it by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law...For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes (Romans 9:30-32, 10:2-4).

Man typically tries to bind himself back to God by RELIGION—works of merit; salvation, however, is based on grace and a personal RELATIONSHIP with God (Cf. John 17:3; 1 John 5:10-13). The former is a matter of opinion; the latter is a matter of revelation.³

Saving faith requires that a lost person fully depend on God's grace in Christ for forgiveness and eternal life:

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast (Ephesians 2:8,9).

FROM UNBELIEF TO BELIEF

The condition of faith is the essence man's positive response to the Gospel. The Gospel of John has as its purpose:

These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name (John 20:31).

Although the unsaved person is oriented to live by physical senses only, God—who is spirit—requires faith as a condition for reconciliation of sinners to Himself.

But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him (Hebrews 11:6; John 4:24).

At the Fall, Adam and Eve disregarded God's Word (regarding the forbidden fruit); in salvation we repent and accept God's Word (the incorruptible seed ¹ 1 Peter 1:23).

A. T. Pierson wrote of the necessity of faith in Christ as Savior:

God foresaw that sin was going to be a heavier burden than any man could bear, and so He laid it on One who is mighty to save, and who, upon the broad shoulders of omnipotence, could sustain that burden... 'The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold!

The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" [John 1:29] That sacrifice of Jesus must be appropriated by faith to be of any benefit in the salvation of a human soul. ²

FROM SELF-WILL TO SUBMISSION TO GOD'S WILL

Receiving Christ as Savior involves more than intellectual assent to the work of Christ (*even demons believe and tremble*—James 2:19). Rather, conversion requires a response of the will:

But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name (John 1:12).

Thus, man's will is directed to CALL upon Christ as Lord:

If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For 'whoever CALLS on the name of the LORD shall be saved' (Romans 10:9,10,13).

We usually think that an unbeliever's lack of faith is solely due to a lack of evidence for God's existence and will. Instead, we should recognize

that the mind usually rationalizes data to accommodate the desires and affections of the heart. NEGATIVELY, this is seen in the sin of unbelief. Romans declares,

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened (Romans 1:18-21).

The pivotal role of man's will is seen POSITIVELY in Christ's promise,

If anyone wants to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority (John 7:17).

The last chapter of the Bible includes a symbolic vision of the things God has prepared for those who love Him [1 Corinthians 2:9].

And he showed me a pure river

of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the TREE OF LIFE. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations (Rev 22:1,2).

Here we see a glimpse of the glory of the future new heaven and new earth in the imagery of a renewed Garden of Eden. As the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil depicted man's fatal choice in the Fall, the Tree of Life pictures the blessings of God's salvation. Although sinners were barred from Eden's Tree of Life, God offers this new life in the person of His Son [Genesis 3:24; 1 John 5:12].

A miracle of grace has turned the Cross of Calvary into a Tree of Life! So all who have been made alive in Christ herald God's gracious invitation:

And the Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!' And let him who hears say, 'Come!' And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely (Revelation 22:17).

NOTES:

Chapter 3 will focus on the counterparts to the “seeds of forbidden fruit” as seen in the conditions for abundant life in Christ.

¹ Jessie Penn-Lewis, *The Cross of Calvary*, 11th edition, (C.L.C.), pp. 20-21.

² Arthur T. Pierson, *The Hopes of the Gospel*, (London: Pickering & Inglis, 1966), pp. 65,66,74.

³ See the online booklet *From Religion to Relationship* at www.GraceNotebook.com under “Gospel Terms”:

unregenerate: the condition of being spiritually dead—cut off from the life of God (Ephesians 2:1; Titus 3:5).

substitutionary sacrifice: the payment for our sins by the death of Christ in our place (1 John 2:2; Isaiah 53:6).

reconciliation: the act of reestablishing a personal relationship with God; the change from being His enemy to being His child (Romans 5:8-10; 2 Corinthians 5:19-21).

CHAPTER 3

CHRIST'S VICTORY OVER TEMPTATION

We have been studying how pride, independence, unbelief, and self-will were the *seeds of forbidden fruit* that comprised Adam and Eve's fall from innocence in Eden. By way of contrast, humility, dependence, belief, and submission to God are essential in Christian discipleship. ¹

Christ's mission of redemption required His virgin birth and sinless life so that He could be qualified as our substitute at Calvary. As the writer of Hebrews reasoned,

We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death...that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone...Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage (Hebrews 2:9-15; Cf. 2 Corinthians 5:21).

What a wonderful champion we have!

What the first Adam lost in the Fall, Christ regained through His redemptive work. Paul's epistles emphasize

the profound contrast of Adam and Christ.

Adam...is a type of Him who was to come [Christ]. But the free gift is not like the offense. For if by the one man's offense many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many (Romans 5:14b,15).

For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. The first man Adam became a living being. The last Adam became a life-giving spirit...The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man is the Lord from heaven...And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man (1 Corinthians 15:21,45,47,49).²

Oh the wonders of the Incarnation!
An ancient hymn declared,

*King of kings, yet born of Mary,
As of old on earth He stood,
Lord of lords, in human vesture,
In the body and the blood,
He will give to all the faithful
His own self for heavenly food.³*

Now, if Christ came as the Last Adam/the Second Man, it was necessary for Him to live a perfect HUMAN

life. This He accomplished. Not only was He sinless, He was our perfect example of HOW to live. We might suppose He would accomplish His earthly ministry by virtue of His deity, since He is the Son of God. Yet, in order to be the Last Adam, He needed to accomplish what the first Adam failed to accomplish. Instead of living by His own intrinsic power, He lived a perfect human life in dependence on the Father. This being the case, we can learn from how Christ overcame Adam's failures.

Jesus did not succumb to the *seeds of forbidden fruit*. A study of the three temptations of Christ in the wilderness demonstrates the wisdom of living in humility, dependence, belief, and submission. We find the temptation narratives in Matthew and Luke, the fourth chapters. It should not surprise us to find the "Old Serpent" using the same tactics he did back in Genesis with Eve.⁴

THE TEMPTATION TO PRIDE

Satan approached Jesus repeatedly with the words,

If You are the SON OF GOD...
(Matthew 4:3,5).

Notice that Jesus did not usually use this title for Himself. He called Himself *the Son of Man*. This title emphasized His HUMANITY.⁵ Satan, on the other hand, appealed to Jesus to assert His divinity. When the Tempter offered the kingdoms of the world to

Jesus, it was an appeal to the pride of position and attainment.

Christ's perfection as the Son of Man is seen in His consistent HUMILITY. He was born in a stable in Bethlehem; He was raised in Nazareth—a city that had a bad reputation; He rode into Jerusalem on a donkey, not in a chariot pulled by white stallions! In one of His rare self-descriptions, Christ said,

I am meek and lowly of heart...
(Matthew 11:29; Cf. Philippians 2:5-11).

Friend, if you want the power of God in your life, don't succumb to selfish ambition and pride. Instead,

... be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for 'God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble'. Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time (1 Peter 5:5-6).

THE TEMPTATION TO INDEPENDENCE

In each case Satan was tempting Jesus to act INDEPENDENTLY of the Father. Instead of Christ waiting for food why not create His own bread? Instead of waiting to receive the Kingdom, why not take a shortcut to glory and worship the devil? Instead of waiting to be recognized as Messiah, why not jump off the pinnacle of the

temple and force a dramatic angelic rescue before thousands of people? Why not? Because THE SON OF MAN DID NOTHING INDEPENDENTLY OF THE FATHER. ⁶

Notice these testimonies:

Then Jesus answered and said to them, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner. I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me' (John 5:19,30).

Likewise, each of us as believers are called to live in complete dependence upon our indwelling Lord (John 15:5).

THE TEMPTATION TO UNBELIEF

Although Christ had unhindered access to divine revelation, He still lived a life of faith.⁷ However, Satan tried to undermine this too. The Tempter kept saying, 'IF you are the Son of God'. He tried to plant doubts: Could He REALLY survive much longer without food? Would those angels REALLY rescue Jesus if He jumped off that temple? Who REALLY had authority to rule the nations?

Then the devil, taking Him up on a high mountain, showed

Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said to Him, 'All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for this has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish' (Luke 4:5,6).

However, God the Father had promised the Messiah,

Ask of Me, and I will give You The nations for Your inheritance, And the ends of the earth for Your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel (Psalm 2:8,9).

And one of these days this prophecy will be fulfilled:

Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, 'The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!' (Revelation 11:15).

Throughout Christ's earthly life He trusted the Father. In His role as the Son of Man, Christ BELIEVED the Father's promises and said "no" to Satan's deceptions; so should we!

THE TEMPTATION TO SELF-WILL

In each temptation, Satan tried to get Jesus to be self-centered. Yet, each response by our Lord was: "It is written". Christ appealed to Biblical authority; He lived contentedly in the Father's will.

In anticipation of His earthly life, Christ declared:

Behold, I have come—In the volume of the book it is written of Me—To do Your will, O God (Hebrews 10:7).

He always submitted to the Father's will:

Then Jesus said to them, 'When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and that I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father taught Me, I speak these things...And He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him' (John 8:28,29 Cf. Romans 15:3).

After Christ's victory over these temptations,

the devil...departed from Him until an opportune time (Luke 4:13).

The most critical test of Christ's loyalty to the Father's will came in the hours before His arrest in the Garden

of Gethsemane. Imagine the intensity of this temptation:

And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground (Luke 22:44).

Hallelujah, Christ remained faithful! He prayed those famous words,

Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done (Luke 22:42).

As those redeemed by Christ, let us also delight in submission to God's good, acceptable, and perfect will. Since the Lord Jesus—the Last Adam—lived His earthly life in perfect humility, dependence, belief, and submission, may we abide in Him.

NOTES:

¹ For part 1-2 of "Seeds of Forbidden Fruit" see <http://www.GraceNotebook.com> "alphabetical index"

² Cf. Charles Spurgeon, "The Last Adam" <http://www.GraceNotebook.com> "Classics"

³ "Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence" Liturgy of St. James, 5th century. Adapted by Gerald Moultrie, 1864 (Contains an allusion to John 6:50-58)

⁴ Gen 3:1-5; Cf. Rev 12:9.

⁵ "Son of Man" is an allusion to the messianic prophecy in Daniel 7:13; Cf. Matthew 8:20; 9:6; 10:23; 11:19; 12:8.

⁶ For further study on this theme, see Grace Notes: "How Did Jesus Do What He Did?" Cf. Ian Thomas, *The Saving Life of Christ*.

⁷ Psalm 22:9-10; Hebrews 12:2

CHAPTER 4

THE WAY TO ABUNDANT LIFE

Now we consider the question, if the “seeds of forbidden fruit” comprised the original sin of Adam, could their opposites point the way for Christians to experience life more abundant? In other words, do humility, dependence, faith, and submission relate to the Abiding Life? Yes indeed!

ABUNDANT LIFE REQUIRES HUMILITY

If the main problem for the lost person is spiritual death, then the main obstacle for the struggling Christian is the SELF-LIFE. When we repented of sin, we humbled ourselves, but what about now? Could pride be preventing us from experiencing the fullness of life in Christ?

The tricky thing about pride is that we don't recognize it unless it is full-blown arrogance (and, even then, western culture applauds it as “assertiveness”!). Notice, however, how Scripture admonishes believers to grow in HUMILITY:

I...beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness... (Ephesians 4:1,2).

Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up (James 4:10).

What are indications of pride in the Christian Life? Pride shows itself by a lack of prayer (“I can handle things”); self-righteousness (“I can perform”); accepting praise (instead of acknowledging the contributions of others and the enablement of God); and measuring the value of change by how it affects ME (instead of considering what is best for everyone and what would advance God’s kingdom). The list goes on.

Andrew Murray counsels us to humble ourselves as we look to Christ for all we need:

Be sure that at the root of all real experience of more grace, of all true advance in consecration, of all actually increasing conformity to the likeness of Jesus, there must be a deadness to self that proves itself to God and men in our dispositions and habits. It is sadly possible to speak of the death-life and the Spirit-walk, while even the tenderest love cannot see how much there is of self. The death to self has no surer death-mark than a humility which makes itself of no reputation, which empties out itself, and takes the form of a servant...The Lamb of God means two things—meekness and death. Let us receive Him in both forms. In Him

they are inseparable; they must be in us too.”¹

Exchanged Life counselors see a paradox: those who have credentials and effective coping skills are LESS likely to experience the brokenness that leads to full identification with Christ.

Remember, fellow believer,

Blessed are the meek... (Matthew 5:5).

ABUNDANT LIFE REQUIRES FULL DEPENDENCE ON GOD

In John 15:1-8, the Lord Jesus illustrates spiritual union by the metaphor of the vine and branches. Notice how this illustrates the need for the disciple to totally depend on the indwelling Christ. The Lord testified,

I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser... Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing (John 15:1,4,5).

In *The True Vine*, Andrew Murray addresses the issue of dependence:

The vine has its stores of life and sap and strength, not for

itself, but for the branches. The branches have nothing but what the vine provides and imparts. The believer is called to, and it is his highest blessedness to enter upon, a life of entire and unceasing dependence upon Christ. Day and night, every moment, Christ is to work in him all he needs. ²

This explains the Lord's answer to Paul. When his *thorn in the flesh* was not removed, Paul was told,

*My grace is sufficient for you,
for My strength is made perfect
in weakness.*

And how did the apostle respond? He said,

Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong (2 Corinthians 12:9,10).

Paul accepted his weakness and thereby discovered the wisdom of God's arrangement: abundant life comes only through total dependence!

Full dependence does not cause passivity, but confident cooperation. Notice this balance:

Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling [our activity]; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure [God's enablement] (Philippians 2:12,13).

Friend, who are you depending on to live the Christian life? Only one person can do it—Christ! Therefore, rely on Him to live His life through you (Galatians 2:20).

ABUNDANT LIFE REQUIRES FAITH

Faith is not only the agent for salvation from sin; it is also the agent for salvation from SELF.

Faith spans the whole realm of discipleship.

For in it [the gospel] the righteousness of God is revealed from FAITH to FAITH; as it is written, 'The just shall live by FAITH' (Romans 1:17).

As you believed the gospel for salvation, believe the good news of the saving LIFE of Christ:

For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the DEATH of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved [from the self-life] by His LIFE [within the believer] (Romans 5:10).

You began your Christian life through believing, so go on to fullness of life through believing:

As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him (Colossians 2:6).

Abundant life through abiding is a mystery we can never fully comprehend; it must be accepted by faith.

To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is CHRIST IN YOU, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27; Cf. Hebrews 11:6).

As the Lord Jesus encouraged Martha before raising her brother from the dead, so He encourages you, his doubting child:

Did I not say to you that if you would BELIEVE you would see the glory of God? (John 11:40).

What is *the glory of God*? God's glory is the impressive manifestation of His attributes. When you let go and let God, He will glorify His name in and through your life!

ABUNDANT LIFE REQUIRES SURRENDER TO GOD'S WILL

The abundant life is nothing less than Christ's life in and through the believer. But, we cannot enjoy CHRIST'S

life on OUR terms. Christ's life beats with the passion to the will of God the Father always and exclusively.

Remember, when the disciples came to Him after getting some groceries, He announced,

I have food to eat of which you do not know". And they wondered, "Has anyone brought Him anything to eat?" And Christ replied, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work (John 4:32-34).

God's will was Christ's food—it nourished Him. And if we are abiding in Christ, our independent will must continually yield to His will. This is a vital aspect of the Cross in discipleship (Luke 9:23).

Since we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit and live under grace, God's commands are not burdensome (1 John 5:3). Instead, as we discover how loving God really is, we find His will to be life-affirming. Why not? God's will is *good, acceptable, and perfect!* (Romans 12:2)

Dr. Harry Guinness told of a time when all the water supply in his college in Derbyshire, England had been blocked. They searched the cisterns and the plumbing, but could not discover the blockage. Finally, they explored the main reservoir pipe's connection to the house pipe. There they discovered the problem. In the orifice squatted a huge toad! Evidently swimming in as a tadpole, it had grown to the size where it had clogged the water

supply. Once the toad was removed, the water flowed freely again.³ Similarly the *seeds of forbidden fruit* can subtly grow in the self-life, turning the disciple from whole-hearted devotion to Christ.

Fellow believer, in light of how Adam's rebellion contrasts with the wisdom of Christ and His salvation, will you fully turn from the self-life? With a heart of humility, dependence, faith, and surrender, continually look unto Jesus for abundant life.

*He who calls you is faithful,
who also will do it (1 Thessa-
lonians 5:24).*

NOTES:

¹ Andrew Murray, *Humility: the Beauty of Holiness*, (NY: Fleming H. Revell), p. 77.

² Andrew Murray, *The True Vine*, (Chicago: Moody Press), p. 17.

³ F. B. Meyer, *The Christ-Life for the Self-Life*, (Chicago: Moody Press), p. 19.

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