

The Knowledge of Good and Evil
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"The tree of life was in the midst of the Garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." Genesis 2:9b

Here we get the two famous trees from the Garden of Eden - the Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. There's some wonderful nuance here that we often miss, maybe because we are familiar with this or learned about this so young. Let's spend just a few moments here pondering.

First, consider the Tree of Life. God created life, and He provided for its preservation and continuation. It's a Tree that gives life from God - all we were to do was receive. And in reality, this is still the depiction of what faith looks like (life and faith always have gone hand in hand). We receive from God the blessings of both body and soul, now and eternally, that He gives to us because of who He is.

But then there's the other tree, the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. We lose something in the translation here. That word for "knowledge" is from the Hebrew "yada," which does mean to know, not with a head knowledge, but rather an experiential knowledge, a participatory knowledge. So while I might have heard of people eating chocolate-covered crickets, I don't "know" what that's like, and I don't intend to. Ever. The point is that this tree isn't just knowing about good and evil, it is a tree designed to let you experience both good and evil.

All Adam and Eve had known, had experienced, was good. So the tree was the opportunity to experience evil. A chance to tell God, "You lied when You said, 'It was good,'" and to do their own thing instead.

And unsurprisingly, it goes catastrophically poorly for Adam and Eve.

Ponder for a moment therefore how sin now works in us children of Adam and Eve. Think on how often we are not content to simply receive good things from God, but rather we want something else. We will call the blessings we have trash and pine for what our neighbor has, whether it's stuff, or job, or relationships.

Sin brings about discontentment, and it leaves us unfulfilled no matter what we receive. It means we have no "peace" - no Shalom in the Hebrew. That's what sin is, what it does.

And yet, what does God do right after Adam and Eve eat of that tree? Jesus comes up to them and promises them salvation. He is determined to give them good things. Period. And by the power of His Word and the Holy Spirit, Jesus makes us to receive His good gifts. He grants us peace and contentment, life and faith, forgiveness and salvation.

In this life, we always see the mix. Our sinful nature still clings to us, driving us with stupid discontent, but Jesus remains a giver. By faith we know this now, and come the resurrection of the dead, we will know it in full, face-to-face with Jesus. Until then, remember that God continues to give you good in Christ Jesus.