**GOD PLANTED A GARDEN FOR MAN’S DELIGHT**

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Genesis 2:4-25

Key verse 2:8 “Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed.”

In Chapter 1, the author of Genesis proclaims God the Almighty, Creator of the heavens and the earth. He created all things for his own pleasure and glory. On the 6th day, he created man in his own image. Man is the crown of his creation. So in chapter 2, the author looks again at the 6th day of creation and gives us deeper insight into the mind and heart of God the Creator. He not only created all things for his own pleasure and glory, but he also created a world in which man could be happy. Eden means “delight.” God who planted the Garden of Eden is God who wants mankind to be happy. Many people don’t know how to be happy. As we study this chapter, we can discover what we really need in order to be happy.

In verses 4-6, we see that heaven and earth had been created, but the world was still sleeping, waiting for God to make a man to take care of it (2:4-7). Look at verse 7. “And the Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.” God made man out of the dust of the ground. In Hebrew, the word “Adam” means “man”, but its original meaning was “dirt” or “soil.” Men are indeed dust. They are weak. Man’s body came from the dust and it will return to dust. We have nothing of which to be proud. We must stand humbly before our God. Once Abraham stood before God and prayed, “I have been so bold as to speak to the Lord, though I am nothing but dust and ashes” (18:27b). We have nothing valuable in ourselves to boast about. Some chemists calculated the value of human body from a chemical point of view. Our body has some minerals such as calcium, magnesium. The value was $4.50. But verse 7 also teaches us that we are valuable. God himself formed us out of the dust of the ground; God breathed his breath into the man he had formed out of clay and man became a living soul. God breathed his own breath, his Spirit into us, so we are living souls. We have physical life and we have God’s life, spiritual life. He made us a little lower than God and crowned us with glory and honor (Ps 8:5). We must live our lives on a higher level, on a spiritual level, in fellowship with God.

Look at verse 8. “Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed.” The important point of this verse is that God made paradise for man. He put man there because he wanted man to live there and be happy. In planting paradise on earth, God made very clear his second purpose in creation: He wants man to be happy. Look at verse 9. “And the Lord God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground---trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” There were three kinds of trees: it shows that man has three natures. There were trees good for food. This means that man has physical nature. Man has to eat. There were also trees that were pleasing to the eye. This means that man has aesthetic nature. Man wants to look at beautiful things. This is especially true for women. The tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil have to do with man’s spiritual nature. Man is a spiritual being. Man’s spiritual life is essential to his happiness. All three natures must be met in order to be happy. Today many people think that if they have money and beautiful wife, they would be happy. They completely ignore their spiritual nature. You can see that it is not true when you look at Hollywood movie stars. The actor Jim Carrey said, “I think everybody should get rich and famous and do everything they ever dreamed of so they can see that it’s not the answer.” Man can never be satisfied with only those things which satisfy his physical desires. His spiritual life must be nurtured and satisfied. He must know God and have fellowship with him in order to be really living.

Look at verse 9b again. “In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” The tree of life was in Eden. There are many sorrowful and tragic things. This is because all men despair before the enemy death. Death leaves no room for hope. In Eden, namely, in paradise, there were no tears, no death, no suffering, no pain (Rev.21: 4). Why? Because the tree of life was there. When Jesus comes again, there will be a new heaven and new earth, the paradise. The tree of life will be there, waiting for redeemed mankind to come and eat and live forever.

Look at verse 15. “The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.” Here we can see that God is the owner and master of his world and that men are stewards whom he has set over his world. God created man for mission, now he entrusted his mission to man. Man needs mission to be happy. A man without any mission is miserable, for his life is meaningless. God gives to every person his own small garden to take care of. It is the garden of his own life. It is the garden of his home and his working place. God wants mankind whom he created to live as responsible stewards of the garden he made for them.

God also gave us his word of command. Look at verses 16,17. “And the Lord God commanded the man, ‘You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will certainly die.’” Here we learn two things: First, God wants us to be thankful for his provision. The Lord God commanded, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden;” This seems to be an unnecessary command, but it is not. It reminds us that the garden belongs to God. The beautiful and delicious fruit are a gift of his grace. He wants us to know this so that we can be thankful. He does not want us to take his blessings for granted; he wants us to be thankful. It is God’s will for us that we rejoice in all things, and that we be thankful in all circumstances (1Th 5:16-18). Children who know how to be thankful for what they have, are happy. But children who take it for granted are always grumpy, thinking about what they don’t have. Have we ever been thankful for the air, or good health? We usually take them for granted. When things get rough, we should be even more thankful for what God has given us.

Second, he wanted to establish the order of love. Look at verse 17 again. “But you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will certainly die.” We can think about this command in two ways: first, the order of love; second, real freedom.

Firstly, this command establishes the spiritual order. It is like parents setting limits in children. Every parenting experts will tell you that children need limits, i.e., certain rules. Setting limits tells a child, “I care about you; I want you to be safe. I want you to be considerate.” For example, imagine approaching a bridge over a wide river or canyon. As you near the bridge, you realize there are no guard rails, just a flat surface suspended over the abyss. How would you feel? Would you walk over this bridge? Probably not. Limits are like the guard rails on a bridge; they provide security. Children feel protected by limits. Limits help children discriminate between what is safe and what is dangerous. By having boundaries, children are free to explore the world around them without fear of harming themselves or others. Children without limits are insecure and afraid. For these children, the world is a bridge without guard rails. Frightened children may withdraw. Others will deliberately misbehave to force authority figures to step in and provide limits. Another example is setting limit in a beach. If you go to a beach, you see the line. We are not supposed to cross the line. Within the boundary, we feel safe and move around freely. So “Do not go beyond the boundary” is the order of love, because outside the boundary, we don’t know what lies ahead. What if there is no line? We would be very fearful even in going out to the sea.

Therefore, God’s commandment, “Do not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil,” is the order of love. Without this order, it is like living in a jungle. Many people romanticize living in a jungle like Tarzan. However, living in a jungle is very terrifying. We don’t know what lies ahead. There may be a snake who will eat you. There may be a trap, like swamp. There is no freedom without order. Many people have a mistaken notion that freedom is doing whatever we want. Suppose we can go out and shoot or kill anyone we want. Then we cannot go out at all because of fear. It restricts our freedom. So this command makes real freedom possible. Only when there is order, there is real freedom, freedom to grow.

God made this order very concrete. In the army, when a private meets a general, he or she should salute, so that we know who is superior. The order is very concrete. The army puts the order so that there will be no ambiguity about the order. Likewise, God made the order very concrete so that this world would be harmonious. Many people debate what kind of tree was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Some think it is an apple tree. They say that Adam was feeling guilty for eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and the apple core was stuck in the throat. That’s why we have Adam’s apple in our throat. It is very silly. The point is not what kind of tree it was. The point is that God made the order very concrete. We call this commandment Adam’s Bible. Adam did not have the Bible like we do. For Adam, this one commandment was his Bible. He had to keep only this commandment. Likewise, any of God’s commandments can be thought of as the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. When we break it, we are not keeping the spiritual order, and the chaos comes in. When people break God’s command, “Do not commit adultery,” you see the chaos in their lives. Freedom has consequences. If people ignore God’s command, they have to pay the consequences. The consequence was, “You will certainly die.”

Look at verse 18. “The Lord God said, ‘It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.’” Eden was beautiful; it seemed to be a perfect paradise. But God looked and saw one thing that was not good. Man was lonely. So God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.” So after Adam had worked hard all day, doing God’s work, he fell into a deep sleep (19,20). God took one of his ribs and from it he made woman, and he brought her to Adam. The man was not so concerned about his lack of a suitable helper. God was concerned. It is amazing that God was the one who saw man’s need and understood it and filled that need in his own way at the right time. God knows us better than we know ourselves, and he is ready to give us the best co-worker, and lead us into the most fruitful life.

God created a woman to help the man fulfill the mission God had given him. She was to be his companion, his friend. She, too, was created in God’s image, out of Adam’s rib. So she was a part of him, a continuation of God’s creation of man. No suitable helper could be found for Adam among animals because the animals could not share man’s spiritual life or his mission. Some people say that their dog is their best friend. But the dog cannot think or reason or communicate with him on his level, and the dog cannot help him produce children in his image. Woman was not taken from Adam’s head to dominate him, nor from his feet to be trampled down, but from under his arm to be protected, and from near his heart to be loved.

The man welcomed the woman God brought to him. God himself united them into one flesh and thus created the first family. Adam was very happy as he worked with his coworker to till the soil and take care of the Garden of Eden. He was so happy that he made this confession of love: “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called ‘woman’, for she was taken out of man” (23). We can see from this confession that man and woman are not separate entities. They are united into one body. A home is built on this confession of love and on this union of personalities. There is a Chinese saying, “A man and a woman lie in the same bed, but dream different dreams.” We cannot say that they are one. “Becoming one flesh” means that they have the same goal and purpose. Also they should have the same bank account. Jesus commented on this first marriage by saying, “What God has joined together, let not man separate” (Mk 10:9). Verse 25 says, “Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.” It means that they were free and innocent in their relationship with one another. There were no artificial barriers and no competition between them. They joyfully served God and loved each other and were happy.

Today in order to be happy, many men work hard to make money and try to find beautiful wife diligently here and there. But they end up being miserable. On the other hand, Adam worked hard to take care of the garden, and obeyed God’s command. Then God provided everything: food and beautiful wife, and Adam was happy. This is the secret of happiness. May God help you to find happiness in God.