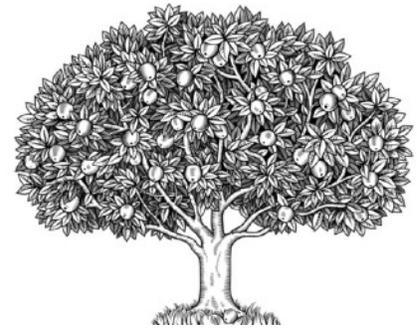


A Study of the Book of Genesis

The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil

The Lord God commanded the man, saying, *"from any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die"*. God's command is very clear in Genesis 2:17: "do not eat from this specific tree". Just as clear is the consequence: "you will die".

This tree was man's exit ramp from paradise. It was the gate by which to leave the beauty of the garden. A beautiful place could be a prison if there is no choice to leave. God put the tree there to provide man the option to love and obey God willingly or to rebel against Him by a blatant disregard of the one commandment given to him.



Neither the tree itself nor its fruit were evil. At this point, God had declared everything as 'good'. The problem didn't lie with the tree, but rather with man's choice to disobey God. Eve fell for Satan's lie that eating from this tree would fulfill her desires (2:6). One lesson we learn from the events at the tree is that seeking satisfaction apart from God only results in despair. Human desires are so strong, that only a strong God can satisfy them. Satisfaction comes from God Himself, not the earthly things He gives us. We must ask the question, do we want more *of* God or more *than* God?

Another question that confronts us at this tree is one that Christians have debated for centuries: how does man's choice (free-will) relate to God's sovereignty? To work toward a better understanding of how free will and sovereignty work in the same space, it is helpful to study the phrase *"from the foundations of the world"*, which is interchangeable with *"from eternity past"*, which occurs throughout both the Old and New Testaments.

From the Foundations of the World

In a sermon delivered by Peter, it says according to the *"predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God (Acts 2:22-23)"*, His Son Jesus was nailed to a cross. It was decreed (ordained, appointed) at some time in the past. So when exactly did God decide His Son would go to the cross? Was it a reaction to Adam's sin? Or was it a purposeful plan of redemption in eternity past by an eternally wise and powerful God who does nothing arbitrarily?

Consider the following passages:

Proverbs 8:22-23, in reference to wisdom says, *"The Lord possessed me [wisdom] at the beginning of His work, the first of His acts of old. Ages ago I was set up, at the first, before the beginning of the earth"* (ESV).

Ephesians 1:3-4 says that God blessed us with every spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus, *"just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him"*.

Revelation 13:8 speaks of the people worshipping the beast and blasphemed God: *"And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him [the beast], whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world"* (KJV).

Of the separation of the sheep and goats in Matthew 25:34, *"the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world'"* (NASB).

The prophet Isaiah quotes God directly regarding His plans established from the beginning: *"I am God, and there is no one like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things which have not been done, saying, 'My purpose will be established, and I will accomplish all My good pleasure'"* (Isaiah 46:9b-10 NASB).

The Sovereign Will of God

God is telling us in His Word that He has had a purpose from eternity past, and that His perfect plan will be executed according to His will. As the Sovereign God of the universe, He has every right and every ability to do so.

Is God's sovereign will at odds with man's free will to make his own choices? If God is truly sovereign, then man's choices must fall within His sovereignty. This is where omniscience comes into play. God is all-knowing (past, present and future), while we are exceedingly limited in our knowledge by comparison. If man's choices (based on his limited knowledge, wisdom and understanding) are the determining factor for the progression of history, then we are at risk of robbing God of His glory.

Dying You Will Die

God told Adam that upon eating from the tree of knowledge of good and evil he would surely die. This is an 'infinitive absolute' in the Hebrew language. That means, there is no question about it! "You will most assuredly die, Adam. You *must* die. This death? It is inflicted by your God as a penalty for your disobedience". The phrase "you will surely die" is literally to be rendered, "dying, you will die". Because of this one act of disobedience, the process of death will begin. Deterioration will start, eventually leading to physical death.

But "dying, you will die" is not just happening to the physical body. Our minds, our thoughts, our intellect, our understanding... are all in the process of disintegration. Is it any surprise that we don't think as clearly as we think we should? Isn't it frustrating when we don't understand something?

Is it possible that because of "dying, you will die" that we will NEVER understand entirely how God's sovereignty over His creation and man's free will can co-exist without any contradiction? Some things are not able to be unraveled by the human mind, and this could be one of them. In fact, could it be that God has darkened the human understanding on this? Are there doctrines that are so lofty, that He

would not allow sinful man to behold them in their entirety? If the most godly of theologians over the centuries have not been able to grasp this in its glorious fullness, then maybe it's possible that "dying, you will die" has destroyed our ability to understand in full.

Crushing Satan

The hope we have as Christians is found in Genesis 3:15, where the serpent's head will be crushed by none other than God's one and only Son, Jesus Christ. The victory over death is already won! And it was planned from the foundations of the world...

Praise to the Lord, who o'er all things so wondrously reigneth!

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty 10

For then shalt thou have thy delight in the Almighty. Job 22:26

JOACHIM NEANDER

TR. CATHERINE WINKWORTH

STRALSUND GESANGBUCH

1. Praise to the Lord, the Al-might-y, the King of cre-a-
 2. Praise to the Lord, who o'er all things so won-drous-ly reign-
 3. Praise to the Lord, who doth pros-per thy work and de-fend
 4. Praise to the Lord! O let all that is in me a-dore

tion! O my soul, praise Him, for He is thy health and sal-
 eth, Shel-ters thee un-der His wings, yea, so gen-tly sus-
 thee; Sure-ly His good-ness and mer-cy here dai-ly at-
 Him! All that hath life and breath, come now with prais-es be-

va-tion! All ye who hear, Now to His tem-ple draw
 tain-eth! Hast thou not seen How thy de-sires e'er have
 tend thee. Pon-der a-new What the Al-might-y can
 fore Him! Let the A-men Sound from His peo-ple a-

near; Join me in glad ad-o-ra-tion!
 been Grant-ed in what He or-dain-eth?
 do, If with His love He be-friend thee.
 gain: Glad-ly for aye we a-dore Him. A-men.

