

THE TWO TREES
IN THE
GARDEN OF EDEN.

AN ADDRESS

BY THE LATE

HENRY DYER.

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The Two Trees in the Garden of Eden.

GENESIS, CHAPTER III.

GENESIS iii. is a most wonderful chapter in God's wonderful Book. I only desire for myself and everyone of us that we may in spirit be at the very edge of Eden's Garden this evening, looking in and learning the lessons of it.

Adam lived 930 years, but we may be sure he never forgot the Garden of Eden, not even when God gave him, by the promise of the woman's Seed, the beaming light in his eastern sky of a Paradise above.

"O'er Eden lost we sorrow not,
That garden marred by sin ;
God's given to us a happier lot,
A Paradise divine."—(R.C.C.)

This chapter may be divided into three parts.

- (1) THE SIN of the sinners (ver. 1-7). There were but two of human race in all the globe, and both of them were sinners.

- (2) THE MIGHTY GOSPEL spoken to them, or rather spoken for them, to the serpent in their presence (ver. 8-19). The very essence of the Gospel is, to destroy the works of the devil. "For this purpose the Son of God is manifested," not only that He might redeem lost sinners, but "that He might destroy the works of the devil."

This long passage from verses 8-19 is (all of it) God's holy and blessed good tidings. For all of it was good, even the toil and the sorrow. Rom. viii. tells us that besides delivering up for us His Own Son, God also with Him freely gives us all things; and this includes every bitter thing as well as every sweet thing.

- (3) The rich blessing of the BELIEVING ONES (verses 20-24). For no sooner had Adam and his wife believed the good news, than their redemption blessings are shown in the rest of the chapter.

Having given thus an outline of the whole chapter let us now consider the teaching of the Tree of Knowledge and the Tree of Life. But note first, God's gentle way with His precious creature man, that whereas He had said, Gen. i. 20, "Let us make man in our image and let him have dominion . . . over all the earth," God at first placed him in only a garden! as it were only a single spot of the earth, and that, too, so well furnished for all his wants,—as the woman said to the serpent, "of every tree of the garden we may freely eat." Yet in this first and smaller sphere man fell! What a lesson we have here! God teaches us our sinfulness in the small

sphere of our daily life, in the closet and in the family circle. One may say, "What! can't I command even that little garden and keep it for God?" *No, you cannot.* For when God formed a creature to have dominion over the whole of His creation, that spotless unstained creature could not even keep a garden without sinning against his Maker. Well does Augustine say—"Lord, take my heart, for I cannot give it Thee; Lord, keep my heart, for I cannot keep it for Thee."

These two trees may be regarded in the first instance as God's claim of a *footing for Himself* in the garden. They were what is called a peppercorn rent, a small and easy acknowledgment that it was God's garden, and that they were only His tenants: a voice from God that seemed to say—Own Me in the garden. Hence the serpent aimed directly at that very thing, and in substance said, "Don't let God have a single tree in the garden, claim it all as yours." What flagrant and inexcusable rebellion! Take an illustration. What would be said among men if some wealthy one should say to a pauper dependent on him, I will give you my mansion with its furniture, its horses and carriages, and servants for your own use, only pay me ten shillings a year to acknowledge that it is mine and not yours; and he were to pay it for a few years and then say to himself, I don't see why I should pay this ten shillings any longer, and should refuse to do so? Would not all people say that his grasping that ten shillings a year, in addition to all the rest, was the height of ingratitude and injustice, and deserved his instant expulsion?

I the more say this because in our public preaching we are sometimes reproached by those who say, perhaps in a coarse and wicked fashion, that God sends men to hell for eating an apple ; our answer must be—the eating of that fruit was equivalent to Psa. xiv. and Psa. liii. “The fool hath said in his heart there is *no God*.” By that act of disobedience our first parents shut out God from His own garden, and therefore also from His entire creation ! What can God do but put out the sinner from His fair creation, the aim of whose sin is to put out God from it !

The awful characteristics of all sin are : (1) That it won't acknowledge God at all ; (2) that it teaches the sinner to make himself as God ; and (3) it subjects man to that old Serpent—the Devil.

Sin banishes God from His own works, as did the prodigal in Luke xv., who gathered together all he could of his father's substance, but put himself into a “ far country ” distance from his father.

Remarkable names also were given to these two trees, whilst man was still innocent and unfallen ; and those names had teachings. Man was to be trained and taught, for God had never before fashioned a creature so precious to Him—nor ever would again—a creature in His own image ! By the names given to these two trees God seemed to say to man, there are two things which remain with Me to give you. Neither creation around nor your own creature faculties can give them to you, I must give the “ Knowledge of good and evil,” and I must give you “ Life.” And God emblemized these

two things by the names He gave to the trees. Thus they were TEACHING trees, as well as OBEDIENCE trees. Both these things were needed by man, as a creature—life to sustain him, and knowledge to make that life enjoyable and to dignify it. Neither of them could come by the mere act of eating, but the prohibition to touch the two trees bade them learn that God was the source of these two divine and moral blessings and was ready to bestow them. Adam had a marvellous knowledge before—he knew how to name the animals, and as God's unerring creature whatever names Adam gave them those names remained (see Gen. ii. 20). Such was the light of human intellect about natural things. Oh! that men would keep to these natural things in their sciences nowadays! Adam did not err in human knowledge, but when it came to *divine knowledge*, to *knowledge of good and evil*, "hold back" said his Maker—"I must give you that as *I also alone can give you life.*"

These two trees, then, are *object lessons* by which God would teach, just as afterwards He taught of Jesus as a Saviour by an *ark*, and of Himself as a Spirit by a visible *tabernacle* and by a *temple*.

A warning sounded from those trees that, "all divine knowledge must come from ME. If you snatch at it you will only be guilty and die." It is commonly thought that our first parents got the knowledge of evil by their eating, but not of good. The Scripture does not say so. The truth is it is one knowledge in two branches, and no one gets the knowledge of evil except as he also gets the knowledge of good. We cannot know

dark, save as we know light ; nor bitter, except as we have tasted sweet. It is one knowledge in two branches. Men never get the knowledge of good or evil by sinning. He who commits a crime against the laws of a good government does not learn the moral blackness of his crime. The man who has committed a murder does not thereby know what the baseness of murder is, but simply knows he is a murderer, and that he is afraid of the policeman. Moral and spiritual knowledge comes from God. The *form* in which good and evil were then to be known was, first in *God*, and then in the *Devil*. There was good and evil in that very garden, for God was good and the Serpent was evil, and the man and woman were cautioned against thinking that any power of theirs could truly teach them about one or the other. The fact is no one learns good and evil except as he loves the good and shuns the evil. Besides no knowledge comes in through a man's mouth. It comes in through his *mind*. Daily food does not give us knowledge. The truth is they learned nothing by eating the fruit, but the bare and damning fact that they had disobeyed.

Instead of knowing the serpent and his evil, they were utterly ignorant of him and his devices, for he had a flattering tongue and a religious form, and a friendly form, and had deceived them, just as now "that old Serpent the Devil" is deceiving all the nations by a civilized and religious form, and will do so more and more.

Again the tree of Knowledge was linked with the "tree of Life," the one as it were leading on to the other.

How like to the word of our Lord (John xvii. 2). "And this is *Life Eternal*, to *know* Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, Whom Thou hast sent." Ever remembering that Jesus—title of the "sent" One—points on to His death (see 1 John iv. 9), through Whose death, and through it only, can we have either the knowledge of God, or eternal life. The grasping at head knowledge in divine things can never give either the one or the other. Divine things may be made a science of, and "theology" (that sad and most delusive word) may be classed with geology, or any other intellectual pursuit, but how can God and the knowledge of Him be put amongst the sciences? As Paul says of intellectual Athens and civilized Rome (Romans i.), "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools," a word which only too well applies to our first parents in the garden. The fact of eating of the tree at all, shows the *rebelliousness* of sin. The fact of thinking they would gain anything by it, shows the blindness and foolishness of sin.

Observe next, how fatal any trespass against this command was to be. "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." Not merely "thou shalt morally die," or "spiritually die." Moral and spiritual death, of course, would follow, and *did* follow instantly as a necessity, because sin, as a state or condition, is the being cut off from HIM Who is all that is good, and all that is holy; but this word of God was something that was to be *inflicted upon* a transgressor, viz., he was that day to die. The man or the woman

that did it was that day to be a corpse ! The foot that walked to the tree, the hand that took the fruit, the mouth that ate it, were all of them not to outlive the day in which they did eat it. The morrow was to find the eater as truly lifeless as were Pharoah when drowned, Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, or Sennacherib and his host, on the day they blasphemed. So prompt, as well as terrible, was to be the punishment, for the sin deserved it, and God is not a Judge who needs any slow processes of conviction before He executes the sentence. The same is true now ; no sinner deserves a single night's rest. In point of desert he should die the very day in which he sins. Then why did not Adam die that day ? Because before the day was out death did come into the garden, by *the promise of the woman's Seed*, Whose heel should be bruised (Isa. liii. 5). Thus, before that day closed, God had provided a substitute, and in the person and promised death of that substitute, God could rest, for His word of punishment for sin was made good, and His character and moral government were upheld.

Other Scriptures sustain this teaching. When God dried this earth after the awful flood, and gave it back to man to live upon, and Noah, in acknowledgment of the mercy, built to God an altar of sacrifice for sin (see Gen. viii. 20), God declared His power to "rest" in it, and that however guilty man might be with heaped up sins, He still could give not only seed time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, but also *day and night, i.e.*, He could forbear exacting His own original sentence on the sinner and could allow him to

lie down and sleep! Hence, also, when the glorious woman's Seed Himself was dying, He could shield His very murderers from the instant punishment they deserved by His interceding word, "Father, forgive them" (not, "for they repent," but) "for they not know what they do." A forgiveness not such as saves the sinner for ever—for that is a forgiveness which the sinner must himself seek—but one which respites from instant death. Hence also Paul says (1 Tim. iv. 10) of Christ Jesus, "Who is the Saviour of *all men*," *i.e.*, from present bodily death by daily food supply—food being the subject of the context. The Apostle John also (1 John ii. 2) speaks of Jesus Christ as the "propitiation" (or mercy seat) for our (*i.e.*, believers') sins, and "not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world," *i.e.*, by His propitiatory death He keeps back God's originally pronounced doom from coming down upon all our guilty human race! The truth is, heathendom, with all its sinning millions, and Christendom, with its far guiltier millions, owe each succeeding day's *life* to Jesus' *death*.

As our aged brother, Mr. Chapman, sometimes reminds us, "All that makes this world of ours more tolerable to sinners in it, than the hell to which they are going, they owe it to the blood of Christ, though they never dream it so." Like Joseph in Egypt, to whose granaries of corn all the Egyptians owed their daily bread, as truly as his own repentant brothers also did: all which granaries were the outcome of Joseph's having been sunk into the pit of death—the pit in which there

was "no water." But turn again to Gen. iii. 8, it was in the "cool of the day;" "cool" here is the same as "breeze" or "wind," and the same also as "Spirit" of God (Gen. i. 2). This is very suggestive. It implies that God's gracious and Holy Spirit had come into the garden along with the footfall of God's *steps* and the words God had come to speak. Indeed all the Holy Three are before us in the passage, for was not the woman's Seed the subject to be spoken of, Who is the Eternal Son of God? And here let me digress a little to mention the three passages on "the Spirit" in the antediluvian records: they are Gen i. 2, "The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters, and God said, Let there be light." Gen. iii. 8, the passage already noted, and Gen. vi. 4, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man." The *first* is linked with this fair creation when all was "good," shewing it to have been as much the Spirit's work as it was that of the Father or the Son: as it says, "Let US make;" the second shews the Spirit's part in the Gospel message as in John iii., "born of the Spirit;" the third shews the solemn ending of sinner's Gospel mercy when God gives them up to believe a lie. Well may such Scripture instruct us as to the "Spirit of God!" And do we not need the Holy Spirit's moving along with us as a gentle yet mighty power—always in our hearts in private—always also in our fellowship together as believers; and always in our Gospel message to the unsaved? Surely it is not without intent that this Holy Spirit term is used in Gen. iii. 8. The word "Evening" would have been enough to express the

time of day ; but the absolute necessity of the Spirit for the blessing of the sinner is taught us here ; for is not every believer a person as truly born of the Spirit as he is one saved by the blood of the bruised woman's Seed ? Also for Church work, for is not the precious Church of God a Divine "unity" of the Spirit's forming, and therefore also of the Spirit's nurturing ? Yet another word in verse 8 must be noted. "The voice of the Lord God walking in the garden." The word "walking" here means a walking to and fro in the garden—*i.e.*, as the true owner of the garden in opposition to guilty man's refusing God any place in it. A walking to and fro in a garden, as a rule, implies ownership. As only a caller on your neighbour you may walk up his garden path to his door and return again, but to see one walking to and fro in the same garden implies something more. So with our first Parents—they had instantly to feel that God was come as the One to Whom it all belonged. No wonder they tried to hide away anywhere amongst its trees ; just as men nowadays shun the sight or sound of Bible or Gospel preaching that reproves them.

But now for the second point of the chapter. In our outline of the chapter at the commencement, verses 8 to 19 were spoken of as God's mighty Gospel to our guilty first Parents. They are equally so to this world of sinners to this day. The Gospel of God's grace is not detailed there as it is in New Testament Scriptures. "Forgiveness of sins"—"Everlasting life"—"Justified from all things," and "a righteousness unto all and upon all them that believe"—are words and terms not used

here ; indeed, the actual way of mercy and of deliverance from their doom by the bruising of the woman's Seed is not spoken to them at all, it is spoken to the serpent *in their hearing*, and it was left for them by the Spirit's power moving on their sin-darkened hearts, then and there to listen to it, and to understand it, and to believe it, and this by grace they did. Yet though so simple in outline it was the Gospel in all its fulness, for it was deliverance from the Serpent's present *power* as much as it was from the Serpent's future doom. " I will put enmity between thee (O serpent) and the woman, and between thy seed (singular) (O serpent) and her seed " were glorious promises of sanctification as well as of Redemption. Like Toplady's hymn, " Rock of Ages," they were

" Of sin the double cure,
Cleansing from its guilt and power."

The " three great R's of the Gospel," as some call them, Man's Ruin, God's Redemption by Christ, and God's Regeneration by the Spirit, were all there, and all three were summed up in this—the bruising of the Serpent's *head*—i.e., a deadly blow to him, whilst all he could do was the passing suffering of but the *heel* of the woman's Seed. Nor was the sin-stained *body* of the sinner forgotten, the good news of the *resurrection* of the believer was also implied in the words—" to dust shalt thou return," a gloomy word if taken alone, but gloomy no longer when read alongside of the provision of the bruised woman's Seed. Just as Paul in 1 Cor. xv. brings in " This I say, brethren, flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of

God." Melancholy words if read alone, but as part of a resurrection chapter that begins with "Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again," it declares the sinner's physical and bodily unfitness for the Kingdom of God, simply to shew that God means to make him fit for it in body also, by resurrection. The discipline of sorrows, also, both to the woman and to Adam—to the woman in the matter of childbirth, and to Adam as respects "sweat of the face" for daily bread, were no less *kind* words from God—as the Psalmist says, "Good for me that I have been *afflicted*," and Paul in Rom. viii. puts "tribulation, famine, peril, and sword" as God's *gifts* to His believing people alongside of His not having spared for us His Own Son.

But we must close with the third section. In verses 20-24 we see the precious results in our first Parents of their believing God's words of mercy. All the preciousness of Christ became instantly theirs (see 1 Pet. ii. 7). "Unto *you* therefore which believe, is the preciousness." The tokens of their faith were seen in both their *words* and their *ways*—with their mouth "they confessed to salvation," for Adam called his wife's name "Eve," and she, on her part, accepted it, "Eve" is a joyous, triumphant word, "the living one"—for though till then she had brought only *death* to Adam and to herself, and to all their posterity (see Rom. v.), no sooner was God's Gospel believed, than—sin-stained and shame-struck though she was—Adam saw her in a new light, and he it was, and not God, who gave her that bright and joyous name, and she accepted it. Well may Peter

say "precious faith" as well as a "precious Christ;" that which God *gives*, faith *takes*.

How it points us on to Eve's favoured daughter, Mary of Bethlehem: the sin-stained mother of God's Holy One—for Whom the woman's Seed must die or never could she be in heaven—whatever the Church of Rome may teach to the contrary. Let all saints hold fast this "great mystery of Godliness" that God Himself hath brought "a clean thing out of an unclean!" Sweet, indeed, was the word "Woman" when Adam gave it her in innocence, but how far richer and brighter is the the new creation name of "Eve" which was faith's utterance by them, when they were sinners saved! And then came the "coats of skins"—made for them, and put on them, by God Himself, the skins telling of animal death endured and pointing them back to that bruising of the woman's Seed, the word of which they had believed, whilst God's own *making* of the coat points upwards to where the slain Lamb is seen accepted in heaven on the sinner's behalf. Surely as the believing ones wore them, they were as the outward and visible *sign* to them of the inward and spiritual grace of *believing*, which God had granted them. Wonderful coats! what constant helps to faith—just as baptism and the Lord's Supper should be now. Who shall say that the same God Who did not suffer Israelites' shoes or garments to wear out in the desert, did not also make these true and real "holy coats" last them all the 930 years of Adam's life? Nor need we think that Eve wished to change with the fashions of any of their wayward children.

Would that this were truer now of the dress we sometimes see amongst us !

But the voice of the Lord God is again heard : not now to condemn the Serpent, and to tell of mercy to the self-condemned sinner, but to tell of God's own delight and joy over those who were to Him as the prey just taken from the mighty, and as lawful captives newly "*delivered*" (see Isa. xlix. 24). "Behold, the man is become *as one of Us*, to know Good and Evil." That which their sinful snatching at the tree of Knowledge could not do for them, was now done. They did know good and evil, for they now knew that God was indeed "Good" and that the serpent and their listening to him was "Evil:" and more than this—they were taught of how near and how dear to God they now were—viz., "*as one of Us*:" words that remind us of 1 John i. 3, "fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ," for surely nothing less than this is in the words, "Behold the man is become *as one of Us*." A fellowship which even in creature innocence they could not know, for only by redemption can the creature be raised to a Divine fellowship.

"None but the sinner train,
That precious blood have known ;
Redemption is our only claim
To come so near the throne."

They had been in the fellowship of the serpent—a guilty, a wretched, and a well-bound connection ; but now they were in fellowship with God and the Lamb by the Spirit. In 1 Cor. x., when Paul would awaken the saints to their

high calling, he teaches them of only two tables. "The table of the Lord," which should aim at having all the redeemed at it, and "the table of demons" to which they did belong when they were unregenerate.

There next follows the holy care to be bestowed on them as those so richly blessed. They were to be still more guarded from sin than ever before. Before they were *in* in the garden but cautioned not to eat; now, however, lest they should again sin and eat also of the tree of Life, they are kindly put out of the garden altogether. Not that eating of any tree could really make them to "live for ever." The words are to be taken as expressing what *their mind and aim* would have been had they acted thus. For alas! how much do we, even as believers, yet cling to this life as if we would fain lengthen it indefinitely, and too many of God's own children (partakers of the *heavenly* calling) only leave it when death no longer suffers them to hold it. As the Psalmist says, "My soul cleaveth to the dust." A strange cleaving for God's children and yet too true. What a kindness then it was when these precious ones, now so "beloved of God," were sent forth from the garden; yea, driven from it. How like to that prayer taught us as children of the Kingdom of the Heavens (Matt. vi. 13), "Lead us not into temptation," and again John xvii. 15, "I pray . . . that Thou shouldest keep them *from the evil*." But not their footsteps only must be kept from the tree of life; their eyes—*i.e.*, their thoughts must be also. Hence the further loving ordinance of both "cherubim and a

flaming sword which *turned* every way to keep (or guard) the way of the tree of life," and that too at the *East* of the garden, as if to help them, that at every morning's light (*i.e.*, the East) their first thoughts should be, not life here below in a sin-stained earthly Eden—but the "cherubim" of heavenly things—and the "flaming sword" of being hated here below. Abel knew that sword, so did Job in his afflictions, so did prophets and apostles (see Jas. v. 10 and 1 Cor. iv. 11-13), so also did the martyrs of Queen Mary's reign; and so have all, more or less, who have lived "godly in Christ Jesus." But it has ever been to them as it were a living and moving sword of God's holy and purging flame, and a sword that turned every way at God's bidding, and not merely at man's, to keep them from ever aiming at an Eden in this doomed creation. Many preachers use this sword as expressing God's wrath against the unregenerate, and not amiss either; but we have no proof that it was ever even seen by any but Adam and Eve as God's redeemed ones. How good to be thus banished from the trees of Eden in order to draw our daily footsteps, and also our eyes and minds the nearer to the "Tree of Life," which is in the Paradise Gog above, with its city which is The Bride, the Lamb's wife, in which is the throne of God and the Lamb, and the fellowship of all the redeemed.

May we, like John in Patmos, be thus in the Spirit !

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