

## In the cool of the evening

In the beginning there was God! God, being a Love Being (1 John 4:8 \*) and wanting to express Himself more, desired to have “like beings” whom He could relate to, fellowship with and share a personal relationship. It was this love nature in Him that created this desire for Him to have a family and in His plan this family would be planned for, cared for and would know God as their personal provider, protector and creator.

God’s plan for mankind was not looking to create an angel-like being that is a servant to be commanded or a dog-like being that loves his master with a limited connection but instead to have a relationship like a Father with His child. God therefore wanted mankind to be formed in the very image of Himself. It is not a surprise then that we look like Him, act like Him and have the same characteristic inside us that we see identified in His person. Also just like God, we have traits of the desire to have a family, make a connection with another person or to just see beauty in what is around us. Just like God we express creativity when we make plans for building, clothes or gardens and look at the details of how something could have this colour or that texture. Just like God we have emotions, have dreams and need a task to complete.

It was mankind formed in the very image of God Himself that was placed in charge of the Garden of Eden. While mankind is created with these God-like abilities it is also important to realize that while we are “God-like” we are not a God unto ourselves. Humans have been created to have a connection to a spiritual being as their master or lord. This design means that while Adam was in charge of the Garden he was not to rule and reign it alone. He instead was expected to need to be connecting with God to complete the task assigned to him. Just like Jesus worked with God for everything, Adam was also to completely rely on God and God’s wisdom in the moment by moment management of his life’s assignment. 1 John 2:6\*

While this spiritual connection was to God in the Garden, Adam was in fellowship with a Being who is Absolute Love, Goodness and Peace. While he was connected to God he was connected to a Power that cared for him, respected his desires and wished above all things that he prospered and be in health. (3 John 2 \*)

When Adam rejected his spiritual God connection he exchanged his connection to a being named satan that saw our “God-like” image as something to be hated, despised and destroyed. Satan, driven with envy, hatred and evil desires, does not care for mankind but instead looks for ways to bind, harm or to take away anything good in every life. If satan had his way all these God image examples would be ground to dust in pain under his feet so he could gloat. (John 10:10\*)

In looking how this exchange occurred we see that the moment Adam saw the tree of the knowledge of good and evil *and* blessing and calamity (Gen 2:17 \*) as something to be desired, the door to evil was opened. When he ate the fruit of the tree which he had stolen from God he exchanged God’s Blessing of provision in his life and became a self promoting thief who thought he could exalt himself into a God-like being. This corruption in Adam broke his Godly righteousness and his personal “like being” relationship with God was severed, thus giving satan the opportunity to bind Adam unto his being. Satan new position allowed him to subvert the authority God gave Adam and use this dominion on earth for his own purpose. Adam had become unrighteous just like satan was and therefore he died spiritually just like satan did when he fell. In this new spiritual death connection he became afraid for the first time because he was no longer connected to the Blessing of God that fully protected and provided for him before his fall. The sad part was Adam already was “God-like” and therefore, the whole exchange was done on a lie. Adam had been seduced by

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satan and had now allowed himself to be placed under his control. In act of submission Adam had doomed all of mankind to the same evil bondage he was now trapped in.

The repercussions of not having access to God's Blessing were serious because as a non-God-connected - spirit Adam was not able to speak life into what was around him for his protection or provision. Now all Adam could do is go to satan's curses for his source and this choice placed him in an impossible situation to live because these curses held no life. Adam had foolishly exchanged all the good he had for an evil he thought in the moment was desirable. The deal was bad and completely one sided in value as satan got everything good from man for no benefit in return.

The context of this exchange now allows me to better understand the amazing grace exchange Jesus now offers us as Christians. Jesus also offers us a completely unfair exchange for our worthless evil lives to become a Blessed child of God as promised in the Abrahamic Covenant. He has dealt with satan's death and hell so we could be made again into the righteousness of God. Jesus allowed Himself to be cruelly abused. His sacrifice gives the spoils of this victory to us IF we accept Him as our personal Lord and Saviour. This rich inheritance of Godly righteousness for all mankind is an exchange that is the exact opposite of what was stolen from man in the Garden. Jesus is just reversing what was first stolen from man and what Adam had lost in the garden, Jesus won back on the Cross, all because He so loves us. (Romans 5:12-17, John 3:16 \*)

Going back to the Garden, any connection between the newly fallen Adam and God could have only been made possible because of God's amazing Love, Mercy and Grace towards mankind but that is not all God did for us in his greatest moment of shame. God declared to our new lord, satan, that we would be released from his bondage, saying, "One will come through the seed of a woman that would crush his head and bring restoration". We know now this was Jesus and that to break satan's control over mankind He would need to be subjected to the full wrath of satan and, like fallen Adam, become dead spiritually. God had Jesus pay this price for us because of the intense Love He has for His children.

I am humbled at seeing the value God places in His fellowship with mankind. What Adam had accepted in exchange of his God given personal connection and dominion on earth for a fouled self promotion attempt was truly amazing. Now when I read what the angels said "What is man that you should pay such respect of him?" Ps 8:4\*, 144:3\*, Job 7:17 \*. I agree... what is this man or mankind? But the difference between God's and my view is that He sees all mankind as His own like being. We look like Him, act like Him and when He looks at us He is seeing something that looks like Himself. God is Absolute Love and can only express His Love for us because there is nothing else in Him to give. It is only when we, through binding ourselves to satan, become subject to any rejection or separation. In fact as a side point, there is nothing you have done that will keep you from the salvation of the Lord unless you reject the exchange of life for the death satan has bound us all with.

John 15:1-9 \* talks about our new Christian fellowship with God and it reveals some interesting pieces of information. It paints a picture of a vine and the branch that is connected to it. In fact, it states that unless the branch is connected to the vine it can do nothing. Well isn't this just like what we heard Jesus say when He said "I can do nothing of myself" (John 14:10\*) or what we saw in the Garden of Eden when Adam was connected to God in righteousness? We know when satan came into the Garden the target was to get Adam's righteousness. Satan knew that if he could take mankind's Godly righteousness he could break the fellowship between them that would place us under his control. But now our righteousness is restored

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through Jesus' act of salvation and the fellowship or connection between God and mankind is renewed. (Romans 3:24 \*) This new restoration was not the limited old covenant relationship from behind a veil that was first given in the Garden so man could survive but instead a new covenant that is full, complete and has uninhibited access to God and His Blessing so we could thrive. (Matt 27:51\*, Hebrews 7:20-25 \*) It is now Satan's connection of unrighteousness that has been severed and in John 15\* we see the pruning that needs to be accepted to completely remove the effect Satan's curse has on our lives. In fact it is only through pruning that we can ever be free from Satan's curse.

So what does this pruning mean for each of us and how do we apply it to our life to receive again the full protection and provision of God? Let's review Mark 4:14-20 \* for this insight. This is the story from Jesus called "A Sower Sows the Word". In this lesson, we see that when the Word is sown there are four soil types the seed encounters or heart types in a person.

- a. The first soil type does not even accept the Word and it is quickly gathered up by Satan to prevent it from being discovered.
- b. The second soil type sees the Word as valuable but refuses to allow it to grow deep into the heart. Refusing to change makes the Word unable to live and it withers up.

I find it amazing that this is where offense is listed as a weapon of Satan and how this weapon is used against us. Mark 4:17\* states that through trouble or persecution we become offended and when you accept this offense you are really exchanging it for the Word sown in your heart. This is another example of a bad exchange because if the Word bears fruit we have the Blessing manifested in our lives and not the offense root issues to deal with.

- c. The third soil type is the people who do keep the Word and reject the offense. They realize that it is better to keep the Word than to exchange it for a cursed life.

In response, Satan changes his tactics and now tries to make the Word sown fruitless. He must get believers to spend all their energy incorrectly. Even though the Word becomes fully grown in them, they are constantly incorrectly dealing with the issues around them and their fruit or Blessing is stolen. How does Satan do this misdirection? Well, he gets the believer to see the natural or human reaction and not the spiritual connection to the situation. This incorrect focus makes the person subject to a trap of dealing with the symptoms versus the cause of the problem and their efforts have no value.

An example of this strategy can be seen when the disciples were dealing with drowning and death due to the storm sinking their boat while Jesus slept peacefully in the bottom. The disciples were using all their energy battling the waves to stay alive but it was just energy placed in the wrong actions to correct the source of the problem. In Mark 4:37-39 \* it states that when Jesus awoke He rebuked the wind and the waves ceased to be an issue. Jesus then looked at the disciples and asked a critical question, "Why did you fear?" (Mark 4:40\*) Clearly, Jesus expected the disciples to be able to do the very same thing in the storm as He had done. They needed to stop dealing incorrectly with the waves and instead talk to the wind. So how could Jesus expect them to know what to do? Well, Jesus had already told them "I only do what I see My Father doing" (John 5:19\*) and He therefore expected them to talk to God and ask direction just like He had done. They were to simply use their fellowship with God for the wisdom to know what to do and then do it with single mindedness. (James 1:2-6 \*)

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So, how do I personalize this lesson for my own application in life? Mark 4:19\* gives us good insights to watch for. If we see our lives caught up in cares, fears, lust and distractions we find this response consuming all our energies. It is a signal that we are dealing with the symptom versus cause of the situation. So just like Jesus' example teaches, we need to be connected to the vine which is going to God or God's Word to get our solution and then walk in faith that He will do what He said. Just like the disciples we are expected, when in a storm, to not know what to do until we hear from God in fellowship.

- d. The fourth soil type is when we accept the Word sown and allow it to grow deep in our life. This obedience opens the door for the provision of God's Blessing in our lives. When we go to God to hear His wisdom how to reject troubles, cares or pressures and then submit to God's instructions, we are walking out in faith being pruned which allows us to keep the fruit of the Blessing in our lives.

It is only through our God connection or Holy Spirit empowered lives that we receive His pruning and then have the strength to apply it to our lives. Only through the full fellowship with God do we ever become qualified or know how to receive the Blessing. Looking back at the Garden of Eden this connection time was when Adam walked in the cool of the evening with God. For us, it is living a life that shows "our yoke is easy and our burden is light" and that we abide in the vine. (Matt 11:30 \*)

To end the thought, why are we Blessed by God? Well, it is not for us to be Blessed alone because the Abrahamic Covenant states we are "Blessed to be a Blessing". (Genesis 12:2\*) So when the Blessing is strong in our lives, He is able to place us on a lampstand for the entire world to see what is available for all if they also have fellowship with God (Mark 4:21\*). In this assignment, we, like Adam, have been given the task to bring this Blessing to the entire world.

So we have seen John 15\* and Mark 4\* connected to describe how a Christian is to walk in the Blessing. I bring some supporting verses for you to reflect on that will help you to apply this understanding in your life.

*1 Peter 5:6-7, 14 \*<sup>6</sup> Therefore humble yourselves [demote, lower yourselves in your own estimation] under the mighty hand of God, that in due time He may exalt you,*

*<sup>7</sup> Casting the whole of your care [all your anxieties, all your worries, all your concerns, once and for all] on Him, for He cares for you affectionately and cares about you watchfully.*

*<sup>14</sup> Salute one another with a kiss of love [the symbol of mutual affection]. To all of you that are in Christ Jesus (the Messiah), may there be peace (every kind of peace and blessing, especially peace with God, and freedom from fears, agitating passions, and moral conflicts). Amen (so be it).*

*2 Peter 1:2 \*<sup>2</sup> May grace (God's favor) and peace (which is perfect well-being, all necessary good, all spiritual prosperity, and freedom from fears and agitating passions and moral conflicts) be multiplied to you in [the full, personal, precise, and correct] knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.*

\* Amplified Bible (AMP)