

Two Gardens – The Deadly Fruit of Discontentment and Betrayal

by Joel Francis, Th.M. © 2008

There were two gardens: Eden and Gethsemane. There were two elements of evil at work in both gardens: Discontentment and betrayal. The first garden was Eden – a picture of perfection.

Eve and Adam's sin in Eden destroyed the perfect fellowship of God and what He had masterfully created. Why did they sin? Many scholars say it was pride. True. Yet the context of Genesis 3 shows more specific elements at work. First, what was the lure the Serpent used with Eve? Was it his intellect? Was she merely tempted by the beautiful but forbidden fruit? A closer look reveals that key lure was that Eve believed the Serpent's lie that God had shortchanged Adam and Eve and that God's ways were insufficient. He first planted seeds of doubt about God's expectations for them by asking, "Did God really say...?" (Gen. 3:1). Then, he went on to give her another lie that God had failed to inform Eve of the "beneficial" aspects of the forbidden fruit...that were anything but beneficial (Gen. 3:4-5). In sales/marketing, "benefit selling" is effective. Willing customers to his well-schemed presentation, Adam and Eve bought the Serpent's lie of the forbidden fruit's "benefits" resulting in sin, pain, and death coming to our world.

The Serpent knew that if Eve came to a point of being discontented with God and His ways, she would soften to his lies. And she did. She not only became discontent, but betrayed the very God that created her. Instead of being a leader, Adam became like a little boy toddling after a lie. Adam chose to fall prey to discontentment, betrayed his loving Creator, and his sin separated us from God. We still suffer from Adam's sin from his discontentment and betrayal of God. Now we move to Gethsemane.

In Gethsemane, Judas' discontentment and betrayal came to their pinnacle. Jesus wasn't enough for Judas. He had to have more...so he thought. Similar to Adam, Judas went after the approval of those perceived to have knowledge and power. Just as Adam and Eve believed the lie that the Serpent had the "inside story" on how things should be (Gen. 3:5), Judas fell in line with those who held the greatest earthly power at the time. He went after the short-term gain of money instead of the long-term gain of the Master. He was discontent...and as a result, he betrayed the One who loved him the most...the One who was and is the truly most powerful. It was Judas' sin of betrayal, nurtured by the choice to be discontent that resulted in his betrayal of Jesus in Gethsemane. But Judas' sin didn't start in the garden. Judas was allowing Satan to continue planting the evil seeds of discontentment in his heart long before his public betrayal of Jesus in the dark night of Gethsemane's garden.

Likewise, in our day, adultery and other forms of sin can be traced to the result of seeds of discontentment and betrayal being welcomed, planted, and grown in the dark places of the heart. Just like Adam and Eve, a man can chose to be discontented with God and betray Him and his wife in his heart long before he takes the first bite of the forbidden fruit of adultery. A man cannot excuse adultery on external factors. This is one reason Jesus teaches that lust is adultery, which is betrayal in the heart (Mt. 5:28).

Life on earth is a matter of both heart and body. Both our hearts and bodies are to be content with Christ and to never betray Him with our thoughts and actions (Rom 12:1-2). Although it has been a centuries-long trend to blame our cultural environment or our family for sinful thoughts and actions, the Holy Spirit inspired James to write that it

is "...our own evil desire..." that drags us into the enticement of sin (James 1:13-15). Adam and Eve didn't have a sinful environment as their excuse for being discontented and betrayers of their Creator. They did not have a sin nature. Judas had years of in-person discipleship by Jesus and had no legitimate excuse for his desire for a quick infusion of money and acceptance by the power brokers of his day. There's nothing wrong with money. There's nothing wrong with having power. It's a matter of finding in your heart and body that the Person of Jesus is enough.

Are you content in Christ? Do you believe God has somehow shortchanged you? Do you have any dark places in your heart that need exposure to the warm light of Christ's grace and healing? Do you have any "gardens" in your soul that are overgrown with the life-taking fruit of discontentment and betrayal of the One who died for you? Are you being true to your identity as a believer in Christ by making decisions throughout your day that are based on His Word and the Holy Spirit?

It's a challenge for all of us to be real, to be genuinely content in Christ and His Lordship. Do you embrace His authority in your life or pull back and secretly betray Him?

It's because of our sin we need a Savior. It's only because of our Savior we can find contentment. 1 Tim. 6:6 says, "But godliness with contentment is great gain." Some might think that contentment is negative because it can lead to laziness. Rather, contentment in Christ is a result of being productive in doing what matters. Contentment is a result of fellowship with Christ, which comes from choosing to live by His Word and Spirit. This is why some of the "poor" I've been with overseas can have contentment.

Further, in verse 7, Paul reminds Timothy that we brought nothing into this world and we cannot carry anything out of it. Yet, godliness and contentment are not merely "things" that will stay on earth when we die, but are eternal virtues that should be real in our lives forever.

The word "contentment" in Biblical Greek contains the idea of sufficiency. In contrast, Adam and Eve did not find God's instructions sufficient. Judas did not find a being a disciple of Jesus as sufficient. Yet, what Jesus did for us on the cross is sufficient to pay the eternal death penalty that we deserve if we place our personal belief in Him. Not only is Christ's death on the cross sufficient to pay for sin, the resurrection of Christ provides sufficient hope for giving us eternal life with Him. What about you? Is walking with Christ and choosing to honor Him "enough" for you?

This Easter, may we remember what Jesus did for us on the cross and the hope that His resurrection provides. May we choose to joyfully submit to Christ and allow Him to clear out any dark areas of our soul that are depriving us of the deep, real, and genuine contentment that is only found in walking with our all-sufficient Savior.