

December 6, 2015

Salvation Comes From the Lord

"In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil...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 shall surely die." Genesis 2:9-17

"There is no one righteous, not even on; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God...there is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God..."

Romans 3:10-23

"For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Romans 6:23

In the beginning, after God had created man, he placed him in a special garden or nursery. The garden was filled with all types of fruit-bearing trees, but the most important were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God told man that he could eat the fruit from any of the trees in the garden, including the tree of life, except he could not eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. With this single command God established a law under which we still live. This law, the law of sin and death (Romans 3:23, 6:23), is still in effect today. If we sin or break God's commandments then we will die.

To fully understand why the Father created this law I think we need to consider what the knowledge of good and evil does for us and to us. When a child is born it has no intrinsic knowledge of good and evil. As we noted last week a child is driven only by its desire to survive. As children mature we, as parents and teachers, begin to give them the knowledge of good and evil. We teach them to share, not to hit, to say 'please' and 'thank you', and not to use bad words.

Before we taught them about these choices between what is good and what is bad it would have been unfair to hold them accountable for their choices. However, once we have taught them the difference between good and evil, we should and do hold them accountable for their choices.

I am convinced that this is exactly what the Father is involved in with Adam and Eve. If we do not have the power to choose then we cannot choose him, but if he gives us the power of choice then we can choose to reject him. In either case the Father, because he is a perfect Father, must hold us accountable for what we choose. And so he gives us the law of sin and death. We have the right to choose our own behaviors. We can choose to obey God and live or we can choose to reject him. If we choose to reject him who is the source of life and choose sin we will and should die.

This is our common situation. All of us are sinners and we have all earned death. There is nothing we can do about our situation. There is nothing we can do or say which will erase what we have said or done. All of us, I think, should understand this. No matter how well I treat Gloria, no matter how many flowers I buy or dinners I cook or chores I do, I cannot take back a single negative time when I have let her down.

The only hope that any of us have is to come to those we have hurt and beg for their forgiveness and our only hope is that they are merciful. The same thing is true with God. We cannot erase a single sin. We can only come to him begging for forgiveness and hoping for his mercy.

To drive this concept into our minds even more the Father establishes a system of sacrifices that represent our accountability and dependence on him. These sacrifices included the

burnt offering, the grain offering and the peace offering which were all primarily voluntary thanksgiving and praise offerings, and the sin offering and the trespass offering which were required. In establishing these sacrifices God is teaching us that our sins can and must be covered by a death. He will accept, at least in the short term, the death of an animal in place of our death, but all sin requires a death under the law of sin and death.

So, we all owe the debt of death because we have all sinned and still sin. In his mercy God has, in the past, accepted the death of an animal as a short term solution to our hopelessness. But now, in his Son Jesus, he satisfies, once and for all time, the requirement of the law of sin and death. The sacrifice of innocent Jesus on the cross paid the price for our sins. We have hope because of God's grace poured out for us in Jesus Christ.

