

Two Trees, One Line

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There grew two trees in the Garden of Eden, two trees which possessed extraordinary power. One tree provided to its consumer the knowledge of good and evil. The other provided everlasting life. Two trees grew in the Garden, but the Lord only gave one prohibition, "...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 you eat from it you will surely die" (Genesis 2:16-17). Two trees grew in the Garden, and God's law drew a thick black line between them.

Two trees grew in the Garden, but if you read Genesis 3 you'll find that Satan fails to even mention one of them. His discussion with Eve centers only on the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He spends all his time convincing Eve that the best tree in the Garden is the tree she can't have. Satan never touches the subject of the tree of life. At the climax of Satan's persuasion, Eve snatches fruit from the prohibited tree and eats, gaining the knowledge of good and evil and wrecking her relationship with God. Two trees grew in the Garden, but Eve chose to eat from the one that was forbidden.

Even though we all know Satan is a liar, I think some of us still believe one of the lies he told about those two trees. To be specific, this lie; the knowledge of good and evil was valuable. Of course, we maintain that Eve should have kept her distance and followed God's law, but we believe that thick black line separating Eve from the forbidden fruit kept her from something good. Mankind even coined the term "forbidden fruit" to describe what is simultaneously taboo and extremely desirable. Two trees grew in the Garden, but God's law kept Adam and Eve from the good benefits provided by one of them... At least, that was Satan's pitch. Is that true?

When God drew that one line between those two trees was He separating Adam and Eve from something good and precious? Did God create a tree with extraordinary power that would bless and help the person who ate its fruit and then arbitrarily declare that men should never be blessed by that tree? What kind of petty megalomaniac would demand something like that? That's how Satan wants you to think. Was the fruit really good, though?

Have you ever noticed that Satan was the only one who ever called that tree good? Have you ever noticed how much Adam and Eve enjoyed the knowledge of good and evil once they had it? Not much (Genesis 3:7, 10-11). Have you taken into account the fact that their transgression cost them access to both extraordinary trees (Genesis 3:22-23)? Two trees grew in the Garden. To one tree God granted man full and unfettered access and to the other man received a strict prohibition, only because He knew that

tree would do harm to His creation. This story of two trees ultimately explains the dichotomy between sin and righteousness. It shows us why God chooses to draw thick black lines.

Two trees grew in the Garden and God drew a line of law between the two in order to separate the harmful from the helpful. God never desires to separate us from what is good for us. That's what the Devil would like us to believe. That's how he coaxes us across God's thick black lines, but it's not true. God makes laws for one reason, with one motivation. To separate you and me from things that hurt.

God's laws about lust were given to separate us from things that would harm us. God's laws about anger were given to separate us from things that would harm us. God's laws about alcohol separate us from drunkenness. God's laws about forgiveness separate us from the poison of bitterness. God's laws about marriage separate us from the searing pain of divorce. The lines that God draws do not merely illumine some path that arbitrarily pleases Him, they show us which steps are safe and healthy, which steps are helpful.

Two trees grew in the Garden, and God's law roped off the tree that hurt and pushed Adam and Eve toward the tree that helped. That's what God's law is all about. I'd do well to remember that during my next temptation.

God never drew a line separating mankind from the Tree of Life. He's always wanted us to enjoy that tree, to "eat, and live forever" (Genesis 3:22). Which is why, as Revelation reveals, the Tree of Life grows again in heaven producing fruit of eternal life for God's children (Revelation 22:1-2). Two trees grew in the Garden, but only one grows in heaven, the tree of true blessing which God always intended for us to enjoy.