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NEEDED: A DOSE OF THE TREE OF KNOWLEDGE

By Eddy Gilpin

Oftentimes when one reads an item or hears a lesson on Genesis chapter 3, it regards the sin of Adam and Eve and the pitfalls thereunto pertaining that should be avoided by all. Paul stated that "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope" (Rom. 15:4). Thus, the example of the aforementioned passage is justifiably applicable to man today. The hard-learned lessons of Adam and Eve stand as warnings to defiant men of modern society. However, most of these Eden-instilled admonitions have fallen by the wayside as the seeds of modernism, immorality, and numerous other godless institutions have inherited the fertile soil of impressionable minds. One such Edenic example is the thrust of this article.

The Bible reveals that Adam and Eve were given the task of caring for the garden which God had created for their enjoyment (Gen. 2:15). Theirs was the freedom to partake of any tree in the garden, save that of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:16,17). Death awaited them should they infringe upon this injunction of God (Gen. 2:17). Thus, the stage was set for the ever-scheming and subtle serpent Satan (Gen. 3:1). His doubting demeanor and polished pretension set before them, Adam and Eve indulged in the prohibited produce to their own downfall and demise (Gen. 3:6). Thus incurred, the justice of God could do nothing but carry out the promised penalty. Notice, however, one lesson from this scene that is often overlooked.

Genesis 3:7 reveals the immediate result of their having partaken of the forbidden fruit. It states, "The eyes of them both were opened." The innocence of Eden thus shed, their eyes were enlight-

ened as right and wrong embarked on opposite extremes and the knowledge of divine displeasure became apparent to the pair of paradise. The first item encountered by this new knowledge is next revealed: "And they knew that they were naked." Oh that modern man and woman were discerning enough to learn from this lesson of old! The first observation of impurity upon the initial arrival of sin was their nakedness, which had then become wrong. Yet, the populace of modern society has yet to realize its nakedness. Yearly, as the arrival of summer hastens, both genders of humanity seem compelled by some outward force to exhibit more and more of their anatomical appendages. The lure of "sex appeal" applied to everything from perfume, to pants, to Peugeots has enveloped mankind in a canopy of thinking that "less is more." If only the lessons of that once-applied dosage of the tree of knowledge would perpetuate as purposed, this annual unveiling might not be so obvious.

Why is it that one who would not dare think of appearing in public clad only in undergarments would thoughtlessly parade about in that which leaves virtually nothing to the imagination? Is justification thought obtained by veiling such attempts under the guise of "swimwear," "beach attire," or "warm weather casuals?" Immodesty is an item of significant importance addressed by the Scriptures. Romans 12:1 commands the followers of Christ to present their bodies as "living sacrifices" to God. How can one consistently claim to be such while arraying that same body in impure attire? I Timothy 2:9 states: "In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety." How is it that "shamefacedness and sobriety" can dwell in a torso tantalizingly attired in the

clothing of carnality and the skimpy suit of sensuality; or, "what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial?" (II Cor. 6: 14, 15)? Oh for the example in Esther of the vesture of Vashti and her refusal to disrobe at the command of the king (Esther 1:10-12). Yet today, far less than a royal request is required for most people to luringly present themselves to the lusty leanings of the unguarded opposite sex. The lesson of the garden has been entombed in the pretense of societal acceptance.

Genesis 3:7 also reveals the actions of the two unclad occupants of Eden: "They sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons." There can be little doubt that these "aprons" by far exceeded many of the modern day attempts to array oneself for the activities of the summer season. Yet, this arrangement was not at all suitable to the Almighty who had created them. He made them "coats of skins, and CLOTHED them" (Gen. 3:21). They were not even considered "clothed" until covered with vestments given them by God. How then must He view this naked society of modern America during "Spring Break" and "Summer Solstice?" When will this nation revive the lessons of old and see the destruction of disobedience? When will members of the body of Christ see such actions as sinful and not only refrain from participation in them, but also reprove their very existence (Eph. 5:11)? When will we learn the lessons of the tree of knowledge?

Every man has more right to hear the gospel once than any man has to hear it twice.

Do not become broadminded from shallow thinking.

A reputation once broken may possibly be repaired, but the world will always keep its eyes on the spot where the crack was.

FULTON COUNTY GOSPEL NEWS

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A "Heart" of Giving

(II Cor. 8:1-9)

By Wade Lee Webster

When we think of a heart of giving, we immediately think of God. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son..." (Jno. 3-16). God is the greatest giver that the world has ever known. He was willing to give His only begotten Son for us. As children of God, we also should excel in the area of giving. Yet, only a few throughout the history of man have excelled in this important area. Among those are the Macedonian brethren (II Cor. 8:1-9). What made these brethren excel in the area of giving? The answer to this question has to be found in their hearts. The Macedonian brethren display seven things in their hearts that made them great givers. Let's look at their hearts:

They had liberal hearts (vs. 1-2). "How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality." Macedonia had suffered in three civil wars, and their poverty was so great that Tiberius Ceasar had lightened their taxes. The Christians had suffered even more, due to added persecution (II Thess. 1:4). Yet, in spite of persecution, they gave liberally. This attitude reminds us of the attitude of the poor widow that "she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living" (Mk. 12:44). In our giving, we

also need to develop liberal hearts.

They had willing hearts (v. 3). "For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves." They gave willingly, not grudgingly. Their giving seems to have surprised Paul because it was above what their extreme poverty indicated as possible. This reminds us of the Israelites as they gave of their possessions to furnish the tabernacle. Moses said, "Take ye from among you an offering of the Lord: whosoever is of a willing heart..." (Ex. 35:5). The craftsman reported to Moses that "the people bring much more than enough for the service of the Lord" (Ex. 36:5). Moses then gave commandment that no more was to be brought, and "the people were restrained from bringing" (Ex. 36:6). In order for our giving to be acceptable, we must also give from a willing heart (II Cor. 9:7).

They gave from pleading hearts (vs. 4). "Praying us with much entreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints." They begged Paul to receive the gift that they had given. We need more givers today with this type of heart.

They gave from properly arranged hearts (vs. 5). "And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their ownelves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God." They first gave their lives to God and then they gave of their possessions. Their hearts were properly arranged. If a person is willing first to give himself to the service of God, then it's not hard for him to give of his possessions. We must realize the importance of placing God first in our lives (Mt. 6:33). Then, and only then, will our hearts be properly arranged for giving.

They gave from abounding hearts (vs. 6[7]). "Therefore, as ye abound in every thing, in faith, in utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also" (II Cor. 8:7; 8:1). Here, Paul refers to giving as a grace, that is, an undeserved or unmerited favor of God. It was a blessing for them to be able to give, a blessing that they appreciated. The Macedonian brethren gave from abounding hearts. We also need to abound in giving, as in all other areas of the Lord's work (I Cor. 15:58).

They gave from sincere hearts (vs. 8).

"I speak not by commandment, but by the occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love." They showed their sincerity by their giving. Not everyone that gives is sincere, but all that are sincere give. We need to give not out of necessity, but out of sincerity (II Cor. 9:7).

They gave from Christ-centered hearts (vs. 9). "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich." Their minds were centered on what the Lord had done for them. David spoke of Christ as having left the "ivory palaces" of heaven for us (Psa. 45:8). When we have our minds centered on what Christ gave for us, we cannot help but give from a Christ-centered heart.

Paul used the Macedonians as an example to show the Corinthians how they should give. In chapter nine, Paul tells the Corinthians that he knows of their readiness to give and that he has even boasted of that readiness to the Macedonians (II Cor. 9:1-2). He wrote to encourage them to be ready, "Lest haply if they of Macedonia come with me, and find ye unprepared, we (that we say not, ye) should be ashamed in this same confident boasting" (II Cor. 9:4). Paul did not want to be ashamed, nor did he want the Corinthians to be ashamed if the Macedonian brethren were to come with him to take up the offering. What would be our reaction, if on any given Sunday, the Macedonian brethren were to take up our offering? Would we be ashamed? Let's learn from their example and develop hearts of giving.

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What Kind Of Friend Should I Be?

By Allen Webster

You are a normal teenager. Therefore you want friends. You are a social creature and must have companionship in order to be happy. Further, you need friends. The wise man said, "Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up" (Ecc.

4:9, 10). In order to have friends you must be a friend. Solomon also wrote, "A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly..." (Prov. 18:24). The best Old Testament example of friendship is the bond that Jonathan had with David. Notice three points about their friendship.

I. "THE SOUL OF JONATHAN WAS KNIT WITH THE SOUL OF DAVID" (I Sam. 18:1). These two men had kindred likes, goals and hopes. For one to be the kind of friend that he should be, he must be willing to open up and "knit" his soul with another person. This is not easy because opening up means that one can be hurt, but it is absolutely necessary. And the rewards are worth the danger (Prov. 27:6).

II. "AND JONATHAN LOVED HIM AS HIS OWN SOUL" (I Sam. 18:1). To love someone according to the Bible definition is to look out for their best interests (I Cor. 13:5). Jonathan did that for David. Jonathan protected David from Saul even though he understood that David would be anointed king instead of him. For one to have friends today he must be willing to sacrifice and put the interests of others ahead of his own (Phil. 2:3).

III. "AND STRENGTHENED HIS HAND IN GOD" (I Sam. 23:16). A true friend is one that will lead a person closer to Christ and not further from Him (cf. Acts 18:26). Each friend should be encouraging those around him to be more Christ-like (I Pet. 2:21-22). This can be done by inviting others to worship services and spiritual activities (Jn. 1:41-42), encouraging non-Christians to obey the Gospel (Acts 24:25), and strengthening the hands of fellow Christians who are feeling the pull of the world (Acts. 11:23). A Christian should invite his friends to study the Bible with him (II Tim. 2:15). He should sit down and pray with his Christian friends (Acts 20:36).

Friendship is one of the great blessings of life (Prov. 18:24). But in order to have friends one must be a friend - which means one must be willing to "knit his soul" with another; love others; and strengthen others in Christ. "A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly; and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother" (Prov. 18:24).

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NO RIVAL

By Bill Graddy

Since there is only one body (Eph. 4:4), and this one body is the church (Col. 1:18), it is an exclusive entity and must not have any rivals. As there is not another gospel (Gal. 1:6-7), so there is not another church. Jesus promised to build His church (Matt. 16:18), and He purchased it with His own blood (Acts 20:28). With all this in mind, why would any organization or institution attempt to emulate the church and be in competition with her? Some may need to examine their motives here!

Relative to this lone body, there should not be any co-rivals or competitors such as: the home, the school or the state.

The home is a divine institution and should be a great aid to the church, but even the home must not try to intimidate or invalidate the church, but be in subjection to her (Matt. 10:35-37). Salvation is in the church not the home.

The school is an adjunct to the home, not the church. The school can support the church, but, like the home, should be equally careful not to match, equal, or become parallel in its endeavors to help.

The state must be kept separate from the church. Since the church is a spiritual entity and not a physical one, there should not be a rivalry here at all on the part of either the state or the church. Let our priority be to keep these three entities separate!

In II Cor. 11:2, Paul said, "For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: For I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." This jealousy of which Paul speaks was not a base or blind rage, but an intense interest in keeping the church as pure as God wanted Mary to be in the virgin birth of Christ (Matt. 1:19, 20). All fathers want to present their daughters as virgins on their wedding day. We must keep the church pure, so "That He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:27). To do this we must make sure that this one, lone, sole, singular, and exclusive church of Christ has no shades of likeness of any other organisms physical or divine.

Have we crossed the dividing line by allowing the home, the school, and the state to infiltrate Her Royal Lineage? Our homes must not become the center of attention relative to Christianity. The school must not become the rave and review of coming attractions so as to exploit the church in her singularity. The state, hopefully, will never present the church a problem in this area. We need to keep these three institutions as separate in our minds as we would keep Christ, the church, and the gospel in ONE ACCORD! Let us keep all fraternization in its proper and scriptural place. In our functions in each of these, let us seek first the kingdom of God (Matt. 6:33). "Unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages without end. Amen" (Eph. 3:21).

Continued on page 4

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The Bible and The Baptist Manual is the title of a new book written by this editor. It is a comparison of the two works mentioned in the title. It has been well received by those who have obtained it. The cost is \$3.00 per copy plus \$1.00 postage. Send your request to: P.O. Box 251, Mammoth Spring, AR 72554.

In some areas, the church may not be able to have some of the "extras" to allure young people to her as the home and school. Here, as parents, administrators and teachers, we should be exceedingly careful not to use our liberty as an occasion to the flesh, but let us love one another to the glory of God in the church (Gal. 5:13; I Peter 2:16). Even though the ties are close (Matt. 10:37), let us not mingle and intermingle the blessings of Christ with the entities where no rivalry should exist! We must not lose ourselves in the home and school. We should lose ourselves in the church (Mark 8:35), and our aspirations should never be equalled or surpassed except by the church which cost Christ His blood (Acts 20:28). There must not be any second institutions vying for our time, talent, and money. We are to seek **FIRST** the church, and if we would all do this, the church would be number one in our thinking and working. Then, the church will grow because there is nothing else sapping our energies save the church of our Lord Jesus Christ. "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him" (Col. 3:17). We need to be extremely careful that we do not let jealousy enter into our thinking in working in these institutions because "jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame" (Song of Solomon 8:6). Let us not exalt the home, the school, or our allegiance to the state (Acts 5:29), above the church. Since there is only one church wherein is salvation, and we have only one life to give to it, let us lay aside everything that would attempt to equal, match, overshadow, and out-shine the church of the Lord and our allegiance to her! The church at Ephesus left their first love, and Christ told them to repent or He would remove the candlestick (Rev. 2:5). When, and if, our first love becomes the home, the school, or the state, Christ will remove our candlestick. Therefore, if our light has become darkness, how great is that darkness (Matt. 6:23).

Beloved, let everything we say and do become secondary to the church! Let us fix our eyes on the bride as she came down out of heaven from God adorned for husband (Rev. 21:2), and let us realize that the bride is the Lamb's wife, the church, (Rev. 21:9), without rival.

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THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

1. The Bible is its only guide (Romans 1:16; I Thess. 2:13).
2. Wears a Biblical Name (Romans 16:16).
3. Established at the right place (Isaiah 2:2,3; Acts 2).
4. Established at the right time (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2).
5. Established on the right person (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:36).
6. Saved are in it (Ephesians 5:23; Acts 2:47).
7. Its members are enrolled in heaven (Hebrews 12:23).
8. Membership in it is obtained by obedience to God's commands including baptism (Acts 2:41-47; I Corinthians 12:13).

GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION

1. Hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17; Acts 16:32).
2. Believing what is taught (Mark 16:16; Hebrews 11:6).
3. Repentance (Acts 2:38; Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30).
4. Confession (Romans 10:9, 10; Acts 8:37).
5. Baptism (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16; I Peter 3:21; Romans 6:3, 4).
6. After the above five steps, faithful Christian Living (I Peter 2:11, 12; Revelations 2:10).

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