

THE PARADISE

Genesis 2:4b-25
Key Verses 2:16, 17

"And the Lord God commanded the man, "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 will surely die."

Thanks be to the Lord for the Bible study of Genesis, through which we may lay the firm foundation of faith in the faith of creation. In chapter 1, we learn that this world and our life is not a product of chance, but that God created all things with His absolute plan.

We learned here about God, who is referred to throughout as "Elohim," as the omnipotent and sovereign Creator God to whom no thing is impossible and who holds all things in His hand.

In chapter 2 we find a detailed description of how God created and blessed man. God is referred to in this chapter as "Yahweh," which is translated as "Lord God." Here we encounter God as a personal and loving God who created all things for man's happiness. God, who revealed Himself to Moses as "the Lord God" (Exodus 3:15), wants to establish a personal relationship with us. He wants to bless our lives and be our personal God, our Shepherd. Today, let us experience the love of God who prepared the best environment for man's happy life in the Garden of Eden. Let us learn about the great blessing of starting a family, namely a God-centered and mission-centered house church. First of all, let us reflect on the significance of the order of creation in the Garden of Eden, without which there can be no true happiness for man.

1. God created man as a living being (4-7)

Let's look at verses 4b and 5: "When the Lord God made the earth and the heavens and no shrub of the field had yet appeared on the earth and no plant of the field had yet sprung up, for the Lord God had not sent rain on the earth and there was no man to work the ground." God had actually created the plants on the third day of creation. However, the seeds were still slumber-

ing in the earth until now. The writer comments that God had not yet made them grow because there was no man to till the land. This teaches us that the whole creation was made with man in mind. Without man, the earth was like a stage without a leading actor, empty and meaningless. Then God created man as the main character.

Let us read verse 7: "the Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being." How and with what did God create man? Man is made of earth from the field or literally dust from the ground. Earth is everywhere. Our physical body is very ordinary and easily broken. We may acknowledge our nothingness and be humble before God.

Only when God breathed His spirit into this dead body it became a living being or soul. Our body turns back to dust after we die. But what becomes of our spirit? Ecclesiastes 12:7 says, "and the dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit returns to God who gave it." God created us for eternity. But because God is holy, the sinful spirit cannot easily return to the holy God. The Bible points to another place for the sinful soul. Matthew 25:41 says, "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.'" What does it help a man if he gains the whole world but suffers damage to his soul? If he loses his eternal life, then all that remains for him is eternal damnation, a place of torment where their worm does not die and the fire does not go out.

Human beings are both physical and spiritual beings. We have a physical body. Therefore, we have physical needs, such as eating, drinking, breathing, sleeping or moving. How many days

can you go without eating? Two or three days at the most. If we don't take good care of our physical body, we become weak and sluggish and sick. But man is not only a physical being, but also a spiritual being. Our spiritual body has spiritual needs. The spiritual food is the Word of God, without which we spiritually emaciate and starve. Matthew 4:4 says, "Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" Prayer is often referred to as spiritual breathing. We may always breathe out well by confessing all our sins to God and also breathe in well by accepting God's forgiving love for us. In addition, we also need spiritual exercise, namely practical obedience to God's mission.

At present, there are many offers for our physical well-being. Fitness centers and wellness studios are mushrooming everywhere, even though our physical body is perishable. Many people neglect the spiritual body, even though it remains eternal. That is why it is much more urgent that we take care of our spiritual body than that we take care of the physical body, so that we can remain spiritually healthy and live a blessed and fulfilled life. It is much more important than planning and carrying out a vacation every year. Let us take good care of our spiritual body with priority by faithfully keeping the early morning prayer meeting and deeply studying God's word. It is very encouraging to see that our next generation leaders are not only growing well physically, but also growing spiritually through the self-discipline by starting to deeply research the Word of God according to the inductive Bible study method, sharing the Factual Study with the Core Message, and even developing the questionnaires. May God help the young people to take more care of their spiritual body through Bible study and live a blessed and fulfilled life.

2. God planted a garden in Eden (8-17)

Let's read verse 8: "Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. " Eden means "delight," in Greek it means "paradise." When we look at this garden, we realize the great love of God for us human beings. As we walk through the garden, we find that it is beautiful. Verse 9a says, "And the Lord God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground-trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food." There are cherry trees, apple trees, plum trees, orange trees, lemon trees, kiwi trees, mango

trees, and persimmon trees. All their fruits are tempting to look at and good to eat. One fruit tasted more delicious than the other and people could eat everything without allergy. Besides, there were countless beautiful flowers in the garden such as tulips, asters, roses, violets, chrysanthemums, orchids and snowdrops. From these, Adam was able to pick a beautiful bouquet for Eve. Everywhere you see animals living together in peace. A lion carries a lamb for a walk and a hare plays soccer with a fox. In the treetops you hear birds praising God with the most beautiful melodies. A quartet of frogs croaks by the pond. An elephant trumpets a fanfare and a monkey beats the beat with a coconut. The first mustard seed orchestra was born.

Let's look at verse 10: "A river watering the garden flowed from Eden; from there it was separated into four headwaters." Through Eden flowed a majestic stream, even more beautiful and romantic than the Rhine. Here one could bathe or take a beautiful walk. The stream divided from there into four main branches. In this way, God's blessings flowed from Eden to the whole world. How beautiful the Garden of Eden must have been! Moreover, the Garden of Eden is a place where man has enough physical goods. In our daily life, the problem of goods is very serious, so we must study and work diligently. However, the greed for materials has brought about countless crimes and wars. In the Garden of Eden, there is no problem of goods. Everything that man needs to live is available in sufficient quantity. Not only can one eat from all the trees there and taste a different fruit every day, but at the river Pischon one can find gold, Bedolach resin and the precious stone Shoham. There is no scarcity in the Garden of Eden.

In the Garden of Eden, there is also no death. In the middle of the garden there is the tree of life. You can eat from the tree of life and live forever. That is why in the Garden of Eden there are no shadows of death and no sad funerals, but only joyful wedding and birthday celebrations. The Garden of Eden was a perfect place for man's happiness.

Let's look at verse 15: "The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it." God gave man the beautiful Garden of Paradise and gave him the task of managing it well. The specific task or mission is an important part of God's blessing. If man does not have a task, he feels unhappy and superfluous, even if he were to live in the best environ-

ment. Man is created for the mission of God. Nowadays, many Christians think that mission would be just an additional task and burden, and try to avoid it as much as possible. But in this way they cannot keep the blessing of God well either. Mission is the wonderful blessing of God for man, without which he can neither be happy nor manage well what God has given him. The word "preserve" in verse 15 indicates that there were enemies as well. Not only was man to enjoy the good, ideal environment, but God gave man the mission to keep himself and God's blessings well from enemies.

Above all, God gave man in the Garden of Eden the word of God: it was the commandment of God. Man cannot be satisfied with eating delicious food three times a day. A person needs a personal relationship with God. That is why God gave man a commandment. Let's look at verses 16 and 17: "And the Lord God commanded the man, "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 will surely die." These verses are called "Adam's Bible." It consisted of only two verses. The first verse describes the freedom and happiness of man, whom God allowed to eat freely from all the trees in the garden. It was all there for man and for man's happiness. The second verse set up the order of creation as the key of a blessed life. God helped man remain in his position as the crown of creation by drawing a line at the tree of knowledge from which man was not to eat.

Sometimes we wonder why God gave this commandment in the first place, creating the possibility of disobedience. The reason is that God did not create man as a robot that is hard programmed once and then always functions according to that program. No, God created man as an independent and free being and gave him the freedom of choice. The commandment of God is given out of His love and represents the best gift of God for man, because it shows him the way of life.

1 The commandment enables man to live in the right relationship with God.

God created a clear three-dimensional order: God in the first place, then man in the second place, and in the third place everything else. If a person stays in this order, he can live happily; if he leaves God's order, he must perish. But how can man live in the order of creation? Man has

no orientation in himself, therefore he needs God's word, which gives him the clear orientation of life. The commandment of God establishes the order of creation in man's heart and gives him the clear orientation of life. By obeying God's commandment, he could acknowledge God as his Creator and as his Lord, honor Him, thank Him and live in the right relationship with Him. That is why "Adam's Bible" is the best gift from God to Adam.

2 God's commandment gives man true freedom and the key to enjoy God's blessings.

God created man with a free will and gave him the freedom of choice. He was allowed to choose for himself whether to obey God or not. Of course, this freedom to choose also means that man must bear responsibility for his choice. It is not like a choice, like in the canteen between meal I and meal II, between schnitzel and spaghetti. It is a choice between the way of life and the way of perdition. That is why God warned man of the dire consequences of disobeying God's command: "...when you eat of it you will surely die." (17b)

Nowadays, many people think that true freedom would be to have no more commandments. They want to live free and independent of everything. But this is not freedom at all. Rather, those who rebel against all commandments and rules become very unfree and experience unhappiness. Many people believe in communism, that the equal distribution of goods would make everyone happy. Many others believe in capitalism, that people will be happy if they can realize their potential unhindered in a free market economy. The thoughts of "utopias" and the thought of capitalism have proven to be a great mistake in human history. Only when we accept God's words and administer God's blessings can we truly live a blessed, fulfilled life in the paradise God gave to human beings in the right relationship with God. With the Bible's word, we can confess our love for God and practically enjoy God's paradise.

How could Adam have kept his happiness? He could have held on to Adam's Bible and obeyed it. In the same way, our happiness also depends on holding the word of God that God gives us in our hearts and obeying it in our practical lives. When M. Peter came to Germany, he was just a foreign student who could hardly do anything for the Disciple Making Ministry. He could hardly speak German. But he obeyed

Mark 11:22 "Have faith in God." With this word, he challenged the Bible study with the local students and the Disciple Making Ministry despite all the impossibilities and setbacks. When he obeyed the word of God, he did not perish in the foreign land, but God made his life influential and fruitful, so that he is used today by God as a leader for the German and European mission. A young man was very disoriented and was about to fail in his studies. But he accepted God's direction through Philippians 3:10, namely to know Jesus. When he obeyed this word and sought to know Jesus and share in His suffering, God made his life victorious and used him preciously as one of the influential house church leaders. A selfish young man came to Bonn to advance his career and fulfill his worldly dream. But when he heard a word of God Genesis 12:1, "The Lord had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you." And obeying this word, God led him on the best way to spiritual life community and life as a shepherd and Bible teacher for students. Without Jesus, he had only to hurt many people and eventually mold meaninglessly behind a computer screen. But holding fast to a word of God made his life blissful and influential.

Man's true happiness does not come from good, ideal conditions. Nor does true happiness come from living one's life unattached and unrelated. True happiness comes only in the garden in Eden that God has prepared for us. Life in Jesus is our paradise. We may enjoy this paradise only in the right life relationship with our Creator God. If we take a word of God as "my Bible" and follow it, no matter what the cost, we can not only remain in the order of creation, but truly live happily in the paradise of God. Let us take hold of a word of God that He gives us and obey it, and live in the paradise of God as stewards. This life is truly an eternal, fulfilled, happy life.

3. God created a family (18-25)

Eight verses are about the creation of the first family in the Garden of Eden. The family is God's blessing from His love for mankind. Let's think about what God created the family for. Let's look at verse 18: "The Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him." Here we learn that God is the founder of the family. It was not man who felt lonely. No, Adam was fully occupied with the mission of God. He had to give all the animals their names, which is an extremely creative and

demanding activity. God, however, thought that it was not good for man to be alone. God is the founder of marriage and family. Adam did not look for a wife, but God brought the wife to him.

Man needed a helpmate who would cooperate with him for the mission of God. In this sense, a house church is created neither for man's happiness nor for woman's happiness, but primarily for the glory of God and for God's mission. The woman's role here is that of a helper. There are many women who dream of perfect conditions. However, because there is no perfect man, they often become disappointed and unhappy after marriage. But God created the family precisely because human beings are simply imperfect. The woman's task is to help the imperfect man entrusted to her well so that he can fulfill God's mission diligently and successfully. There is a proverb that says, "Behind every great man there is a great woman." Where there are women of faith, there are also men of faith.

In verses 23 to 25, we see the happiness of the family in the Garden of Eden. After God created the woman from the man's rib, Adam made a hot profession of love by accepting the woman as a part of his own flesh and bone. Verse 25 goes on to say, "The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame." In Paradise there was no shame and nothing separating, but only perfect love and harmony.

When we see the happiness of the first family in the Garden of Eden, we wonder where their happiness, love and harmony came from. Today's text teaches us that it did not come from emotion, but from the fact that they had accepted God's sovereignty as the Creator and Founder of the family. They had also accepted God's creation order and purpose of glorifying God and fulfilling His mission through their family. Nowadays, we see many marriages that have been established on the basis of a transient feeling of affection or on terms. But so many families are unhappy or broken. The result of a broken family is the broken hearts of the children. With a divorce rate of more than 50%, many young people already lack the courage to start a family at all.

In contrast, in our house churches, which have been established on the sovereignty of God and for the mission of God, we can see a very low divorce rate. In this sense, a house church that has been established on the sovereignty of God and for the mission of God is a great blessing,

not only for the spouses, but also for the children and for the whole society. God, who created us, knows best what we need, much better than we do. Therefore, we may hold fast to the Word of God first and take care of the mission of God first (Matt. 6:33), then God will also give us the blessing of starting a family in due time.

In today's text, we have learned that man is both a physical and a spiritual being. We have also learned that God gave paradise out of His love. The key to happiness is to accept a word of God as our personal Bible and obey it. Then we can enjoy a blessed life in Jesus. We have also learned about the biblical view of marriage, that God established the family as a missionary unit. Let us hold on to the word of God so that we can manage and keep God's blessings well in the deep love relationship with God and in the order of creation.