

Knowledge of Good and Evil

– The harm it has done

by Stella Paterson

Before we begin with this topic, allow me to give you a glimpse into the bigger picture that emerged over 12 years of in-depth study. This was not a time of study that I “decided” to do – it was a work of the Holy Spirit in answer to my prayer to be shown the meaning of Calvary. With the increased understanding that came year after year it reached a point where I felt the Lord had caused me to step back and view a span of thousands of years. What I “saw” broke my heart. The view was incredible, as it moved swiftly from Creation; through the books of the Law; the prophets; Jesus and the New Testament records of Him; Paul’s exhaustive writings pointing readers to Jesus; the warnings of error from Paul and others, and, finally, John’s Revelation of Jesus Christ. All I could see was Jesus – the need for His coming; the REAL reason He died; how He was rejected and abused and, most of all, the impact He had on all mankind for all time. He truly is the Alpha and the Omega. But what have we done with Him and to Him?

When we sit in our little space of time and read the Bible – whatever “version” we have – we are prone to tunnel vision. We see only issues, doctrines, biases of translators, denominational beliefs, traditions from parents, teachers, preachers – the list is endless; all of which often lead to error. Do any of those things point us to Jesus? We are called to make disciples – not after ourselves but after Jesus. Yet we see all around us preachers with huge followings. What is behind it all? What is the root of all error? The answer is simple – flesh, with its knowledge of good and evil.

With what I am about to say in the next paragraph, I beg your indulgence. Stay with me through the coming weeks until you get the whole picture. Please don’t filter things through previously held beliefs and doctrinal positions. Allow the Holy Spirit to reveal Truth as I endeavor to share what He has shown me. This article on the knowledge of good and evil will lay the groundwork by showing how “sin” entered the world. It’s all in the Bible – we need only to read and accept it for what it says and forsake our tunnel-vision thinking that comes with tradition.

The “sin” issue is only one of those “tunnel vision” things that have been inflicted on the Body of Christ and subsequently the world. Christians see “sin” and want to tell the “world” of their sin so they will “repent and ask forgiveness.” We will follow soon with an article on “repentance” and explore the error there that has arisen over the years. Another topic along the same line will be “revival.” When we are done, they will all point to Jesus.

When the Lord took me to the beginning of Creation in the first chapters of Genesis, He showed me something I had never heard taught or written about. The “un-heard-of” topic was “the knowledge of good and evil.” I had heard much

about sin entering because of Adam's transgression, but never had I heard anyone touch on the knowledge of good and evil; much less show its relevance in how sin entered the world. The belief seemed to be that "sin" was merely something that happened because the first man disobeyed God.

In Genesis we see that it was the knowledge of good and evil that brought about man's eviction from the Garden of Eden. It was not simple disobedience – there was something more sinister involved. God told Adam and Eve, "*Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat: but of the **tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat** of it: for in the day that you eat thereof **you shall surely die**."* (Genesis 2:16b-17) Did Adam and Eve die physically? No, we know they did not. How, then, did this "death" come? What is the death that they died? There is only one reasonable answer: they died spiritually. They were now separated from God, the life-giving Spirit. God did not take back His breath (spirit) that He breathed into man. He left man in his fleshly, sinful state; with the plan to one day reconcile man to Himself through Jesus' death and resurrection. The same Spirit who breathed life into man at creation now breathes Life into man at re-creation – the new birth.

Genesis 3:22-23 tells us, "*And the LORD God said, Behold, the **man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken.***" "Man" refers to mankind – both male and female. They had become "like God," just as the serpent said they would. That God-likeness was man's knowledge of good and evil.

What is so sinful about the knowledge of good and evil that God would forbid man to partake of it? Why was the serpent so determined to cause man to receive the knowledge of good and evil? He had heard God speak to man, telling him he would die if he were to eat the fruit (and acquire that knowledge), so that old serpent lied to Eve. He told her they would not die, but would be "as God." As mentioned earlier, God pointed out that they were now "*become as one of us, to know good and evil.*" So He evicted them from the Garden of Eden lest they eat of the Tree of Life and live forever in their fallen state. What a sin it was to become *as one of Them!* And man continues on that same path. What a price will be paid for such presumption!

We can see now that the knowledge of good and evil was best left in God's hands. He knew that trouble would come if man came to know the difference between good and evil. Until man ate the forbidden fruit, his knowledge was of God, and God alone. God and the Garden of Eden were Adam and Eve's whole world. God was their Source for everything. Acknowledging God would have been effortless for them. But when they came into the knowledge of good and evil they became resourceful and "cunning," as the Hebrew word for "naked" means. There were two words translated as "naked" in the same passage. The

first one meant “nude” and the other meant “cunning.” No wonder they were ashamed! With eyes wide open, a whole new world opened up to them. One of the first things Adam did was blame his disobedience on “that woman” God had given him.

How grieved the Father’s heart must have been! This magnificent creature He made for Himself to have fellowship with no longer relied on Him. Instead, Adam may have even told the Lord God that he now was capable of making his own choices, using his new-found knowledge of good and evil. But God is Love, and as John 3:16 tells us, “*For God so loved the world...*” And thousands of years later, Peter wrote how God “*is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*” (2 Peter 3:9)

The law of opposites

With Adam’s new-found knowledge he forsook the “full acknowledgment”¹ of God, which is the meaning of the Greek word for “knowledge.” This leads to the question, “What would be the opposite of the ‘knowledge of good and evil?’” I believe the answer would be “the knowledge of God.” The answer to one “knowledge” must be another “Knowledge” – this time the Knowledge of God Himself – not man’s knowledge of himself with his God-likeness.

Throughout the Old Testament we find numerous times where the Lord God spoke the words, “I AM THE LORD,” “I AM THE LORD GOD” or even “I AM.” Before He brought Israel out of Egypt, God said to Moses, “I AM THE LORD.” Before He gave the Ten Commandments to Moses, God said, “I AM THE LORD.” Israel’s obedience to the Law of Moses showed their acknowledgement of God. But their disobedience was SIN as we are told in 1 John 3:4. And at the time of the end when Jesus comes back, He WILL BE acknowledged as Lord. Ezekiel’s prophecy will be fulfilled, “*And now [Israel] will know that I am the Lord their God.*” (Ezekiel 39:26-29)

Do you see where this is going? The truth is exciting! It is so simple, yet “religious” man has complicated it over the years. The result is apostasy – another article topic.

The evil in good

Sin entered through the forbidden knowledge of good evil. Look at this picture – can you see the “evil” in “good?”



That is how God sees man who has the knowledge he usurped from the Creator. What man does may appear as “good” but when it is brought to the Light, the evil can be seen. Jesus said, *“But he that does the truth comes to the light, that his works may be made manifest, that they have been wrought in God.”* (John 3:21) Jesus also said, in John 15:5, that we can do nothing without Him. We must be born anew.

We live in a world full of evil but, worse than that, we have a church-world full of self-righteousness (as well as evil). The knowledge of good and evil is the “engine” that drives both. Now we see why the serpent was so determined to deceive man into that knowledge. Man could be down-right evil or, with his God-likeness, be a “saint” – in his own strength of course. As long as man was self-centered, I’m sure the devil was delighted. Do we think that he still attempts to entice man with the knowledge of good and evil? Is it any wonder that John wrote the words, “[Jesus] *must increase, but I must decrease.*”?

As Jesus increases in us through the Holy Spirit, we can grow in the knowledge of God. Knowing Him is everything. Nothing else matters. We must go the way of the Cross and die if we want to live. If we walk in the knowledge of good and evil, we walk by the flesh and we will perish. But if we walk in the knowledge of God, we walk by the Spirit and we will live. When we are born anew, we do not become puppets in the hand of God – we must make the choice each moment to walk by the Spirit. And it comes through entrusting our spiritual well-being to Christ. The Greek word for “believe” means “to entrust one’s spiritual well-being to Christ.”² If we take our spiritual well-being into our own hands we are reverting to the knowledge of good and evil, which is embedded in self and flesh.

If we look again at the picture of “good” we are reminded of Paul’s words in Romans 7, where he explains the struggle man will always have with good and evil. Paul was not speaking of a personal struggle he had with sin, as some have suggested. He was using the first person “I” to help make it clearer to the reader. He says, *“For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but to do that which is good is not. For the good which I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I practice. But if what I would not, that I do, it is no more I that do it, but sin which dwelleth in me. I find then the law, that, to me who would do good, evil is present.”* (Romans 7:18-21)

Paul then speaks of the “*law of sin and death.*” In using the word “law,” and according to the Greek word, he is more aptly saying the “principle of sin and death.” It is that “principle” of the function of good and evil, with both struggling for supremacy within man. Even with a desire to do “good,” there is inherent evil in man. It is pointless whichever wins the battle, because Paul’s next words reveal the source of both. “*O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me out of the **body of this death?***” The “death” is the one which came with the knowledge of good and evil. In the next verse Paul gives us the answer to his question: “*I thank God **through Jesus Christ our Lord.** So then I myself with the mind serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.*” Even with the mind desiring to keep the Godly principles, the flesh fails. Only through Jesus Christ is there any hope for freedom from the death that comes with the knowledge of good and evil and flesh.

Jesus told John, in Revelation 1:8, “*I am the Alpha and the Omega, saith the Lord God, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.*” Later, in verse 17, He says “*Fear not; I am the first and the last.*” One thing we can count on is that Jesus WILL increase. He is the Alpha and the Omega – He was, He is and He will be. He was in the Father at creation and everything He does works toward His increase in us. In the end, all things will be restored to Him. There will be no more flesh and no more knowledge of good and evil. Now man **will truly be like Him** for he will be changed “*in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump.*” (1 Corinthians 15:52a)

Are we willing to be decreased? Are we willing to give ourselves over to the full acknowledgement of God? That’s what faith is! It is “putting our trust in God” and “entrusting our spiritual well-being to Christ.” That is what Jesus was saying each time He said, “Believe...and live.” (See *The Gospel According to Jesus and False Gospel – Exposed.*)

1. Greek #1922
2. Greek #4100