

Why Such Suffering?

- **Paradise created (2:7-9,15-17)**
- **Paradise lost...saved (3:1-7)**

In the name of Jesus, our Champion Savior, dearly redeemed sons and daughters of Adam and Eve:

Imagine a world where there are no storms or viruses or disease, no death among people, plants or animals. How awesome would it be for men and women to truly love and honor each other? What if a husband and wife could fall in love and stay together in that ecstasy that everyone promises? And what if deep in every soul was pure light and joy, no guilt, no guile – just pure kindness toward nature and everyone around? What if you could walk and talk with God like a dear friend who was always there, ever ready with a smile and more encouragement in a place where there was no heartache or headache?

Have you noticed that not even our fantasy movies can hold onto joy? There's always someone or something lurking in the shadows to spoil everything. The sappy love stories some of us like are 95% trouble with at least one big problem in the middle before the last five minutes when things go right. Too much happiness and the audience gets bored. Everything was so right, but now, **Why Such Suffering?**

- **Paradise created (2:7-9,15-17)**

At least we know where we came from: ***“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.”*** (2:7 EHV¹) More than for any of the animals God took special care in creating humans to be holy like Him in their emotions, intellect and will. ***God created the man in his own image. In the image of God he created him. Male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it. Have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”*** In the perfect **Paradise created** by God there was no death for animals either. Having **dominion** did not mean painful domination, but playful enjoyment. Plenty of food was all around in plants so filled with nutrients that nothing else was needed – no supplements, no medicine. ***God said, “Look, I have given you every plant that produces seed on the face of the whole earth, and every tree that bears fruit that produces seed. It will be your food.”*** (Genesis 1:27-29 EHV)

In Genesis 2 the spotlight shifts from God's creative power to His nurturing love as the Holy Spirit calls Him the **LORD God** of faithful grace. For God's special creation a special home, **Paradise created** just for him and the gorgeous woman God created from his side. ***“The LORD God planted a garden in Eden in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed. Out of the ground the LORD God made every kind of tree grow – trees that are pleasant to look at and good for food, including the Tree of Life in the middle of the garden and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.”*** (2:8f)

The heartfelt desire of the **LORD God** was to have a personal relationship with the crown of His creation. ***The LORD God took the man and settled him in the Garden of Eden to work it and to take care of it.*** (2:15) Nestled in the original Hebrew word for *taking care* of the Garden **Paradise** is the concept of guarding and treasuring it (גָּרַם). All this is still the loving care and eternal kindness of the **LORD God** for Adam. Meaningful work was a gift. With no storms or insect threats to his harvest, it was like “pay day” every day. What a job! What investments with non-stop profits! Everything was growing and

¹ Passages from Evangelical Heritage Version (EHV) © 2019. www.wartburgproject.org. NPH (800-662-6022).

flourishing by God's design. And then such a generous open invitation to enjoy this **Paradise**.

The LORD God gave a command to the man. He said, "You may freely eat from every tree in the garden, but you shall not eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, for on the day that you eat from it, you will certainly die." (2:16f)

Some folks want to criticize: "If only God did not say that!" But let's not forget that all of Genesis 2 is about God's gifts for man's happiness. These verses are no exception.. God was granting His first children tremendous freedom as His greatest gift to them. By using his freedom correctly man could gain personal experiential knowledge of good and evil. Good was everywhere to see and feel in complete, loving harmony with God. His *mind* could know of evil's existence; his *emotions* and *will* could gladly reject evil as God rejects it. When Mom says, "If you touch the stove, you'll get burned," it's not a test or permission. In **Paradise** the LORD God gave His children opportunity to exercise their freedom – by choosing the good and by taking a stand against the evil. **Paradise** included the opportunity to grow from created innocence to conscious holiness in loving, trusting harmony with God and each other.

□ **Paradise lost...saved (3:1-7)**

Sometime during the six days of creation week, God created all the angels good. The Bible tells us that Satan was not satisfied and led a rebellion that got him and the demons thrown out of heaven. Misery loves company, so Satan used the body of a serpent to cast doubt on God's word: "**Did God really say...?**" Already Satan is not talking about the kind and loving "**LORD God,**" but focusing on God's power to make Him seem like a bully. Many theologians even calling themselves "Christian" make that charge today or fall for that same skewed focus that misses God's loving kindness and tender mercy.

And look what trouble comes when we doubt God's Word. The woman talks to the tempter instead of running away. She leaves out the saving Name and echoes Satan by referring to only "**God,**" not the **LORD God**. We don't know if Adam did this earlier or if it's Eve's idea, but she's adding to God's Word about not touching the fruit. She subtracts from it by not correcting the concept of God's generosity. The **LORD God** actually told Adam, "**You may freely eat from every tree in the garden....**"

Gladly obeying God's Word is **Paradise**. Unbelief means **Paradise...lost**. God's loving kindness reveals **Paradise...saved**. God restores man's blessed freedom by renewing the perfect bond of trust toward God and the love flowing out of that trust. The Holy Scriptures of the Bible reveal how we regain this freedom as we are brought to faith in Christ as our Savior. Jesus says, "**If you remain in my word, you are really my disciples. You will also know the truth, and the truth will set you free....So if the Son sets you free, you really will be free.**" (John 8:31f, 36) We were designed for greatness, not for mediocrity. "**I run the way of your commandments, for you have strengthened my heart.**" (Psalm 119:32 EHV)

God strengthened Adam and Eve by speaking directly to our worst enemy Satan in the serpent: "**I will put hostility between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed. He will crush your head, and you will crush his heel.**" (Genesis 3:15 EHV) The LORD God promised a Savior-Champion whose exploits against sin, death and hell command our eager attention this Lenten season in the series: *The Son of God Goes Forth to War*. **Paradise...saved** is presented every Wednesday and then Holy Week.

How secure is **Paradise...saved**? We close with three promises from Revelation about unending **Paradise...saved**: "**Whoever has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who is victorious I will give the privilege to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.**" (Revelation 2:7 EHV) "**They will never be hungry or thirsty ever again. The sun will never beat upon them, nor will any scorching heat, for the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd. He will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.**" (Revelation

7:16f EHV) *And from the throne I heard a loud voice that said, “Look! God’s dwelling is with people. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them, and he will be their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain, because the former things have passed away.”* (Revelation 21:3f EHV) **Paradise** with Jesus! Amen.

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