

Come Follow Me
Elo Viz production
Week 37
1 Corinthians 14-16

Paul teaches some very important doctrines in these chapters. I'd like to focus on one that will expand our faith and open our understanding of God's work. I'm sure we have all heard someone say at one time or another that "death is natural". Though this statement may be true scientifically it is not correct doctrinally. In the scriptures we are taught that death is the result of sin. Even Paul taught this in his writings.

"22 For as in **Adam** all **die**, even so in **Christ** shall all be made **alive**."
(1 Corinthians 15:22)

I'm sure you are all aware that I love it when we get to talk about Adam and Eve. We learn so much from them. There is a reason that temple ceremonies use them as an illustration as we make those sacred covenants. And if we go back a little farther in history we can truly start to understand the role of sin in our lives. For God said:

"3 Wherefore, because that **Satan rebelled** against me, and sought to destroy the **agency** of man, which I, the Lord God, had given him, and also, that I should give unto him mine own power; by the power of mine Only Begotten, I caused that he should be **cast down**;

4 And he became **Satan**, yea, even the **devil**, the father of all **lies**, to **deceive** and to blind men, and to lead them **captive** at his will, even as many as would not **hearken** unto my voice." (Moses 4:3-4)

Where do we start? These verses are loaded! If we look carefully this describes why Satan was cursed and also why all mankind was cursed. It was because he rebelled against God, and sought to destroy the agency of man which God had given us. Not "has" given us, present tense but "had" given us past tense. Meaning that the agency we have to choose was a gift bestowed on us before we came to his mortal realm. A gift so precious that when our brother sought to take it away from us, he was cast out and cursed to become that father of lies. And his role or his desire is to deceive and to blind men, and to get them to not hearken unto the voice of God. How accurately does that describe our world today?

But it is not new news. Satan has been doing his deceiving and lying from the beginning, when he sought to beguile Eve. Listen carefully at the words he uses in his process of deceit:

"7 And he said unto the woman: Yea, hath God said—Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?

8 And the woman said unto the serpent: We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden;

9 But of the fruit of the tree which thou beholdest in the midst of the garden, God hath said—Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.

10 And the serpent said unto the woman: Ye shall not surely die;

11 For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. (Moses 4:7-11)

His plan kind of backfired on him. He is so addicted to lying and manipulating that he didn't realize that by giving Adam and Eve the forbidden fruit, they would then be able to see who Satan is and what he is trying to do. This is huge for us. And when Adam and Eve were cast out it was a blessing and a curse and these blessings and cursings are passed onto us as their posterity. Lets look closely at both aspects.

First the cursing:

“cursed shall be the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life. Thorns, and thistles shall it bring forth to thee, and thou shalt eat the herb of the field. By the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, until thou shalt return unto the ground—for thou shalt surely die—for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou wast, and unto dust shalt thou return.

(Moses 4: 23-25)

This is where the curse of death for sin originated. It is because of Adam's sin that we have all become mortal and subject to physical death. It's the reason that weed killer was invented and why it is so much work to grow a garden.

The blessings that came from this event are so much greater than the cursings. First off: because Eve partook, we now have the ability to see the adversary and recognize his work. We can choose not to be blinded by his deceit and by his lies. In fact there is a way to avoid all the influences of the adversary. This is something that I learned many years ago. Think for a moment how we learn as God children and how we teach as parents. There usually exists some sort and reward for good behavior and a punishment for bad behavior. For example: My 16 year old son has had his license for a couple of months now. About a week ago I received a call from a highway patrolman stating that he had pulled over my son and he was clocked going way too fast on the freeway. Now, it is obvious that this is not something that would ever be allowed in society or in our home. Now of course my son knew that speeding was illegal and dangerous, but knowing and KNOWING are two very different things. So despite his punishment from law enforcement, he also lost his driving privileges for a month as a punishment in our home. My children know that we have consequences in our home simply because we love them. That is really the only way we can learn as human beings. There are a few special souls that have the ability to learn from other people's mistakes but as a whole it is the most painful punishments that really teach us the most. But did you know that this can also be used on the adversary? Did you know that you can teach the adversary not to tempt you and to leave you alone? There are two ways to do this. I will share both with you. You may be more comfortable with one or the other, or you may choose to use them both.

The first, is using this same method of punishment: But it starts with recognizing the temptations of the adversary in yourself or in someone you love. For example: If you or a loved one has a substance abuse problem, pills or drugs, alcohol or food. When those cravings come over you it is so important to remember where those feelings are coming from, and why they are happening. It is imperative to remember that Satan's work is to blind and deceive you. Those cravings or additions you are experiencing are coming from none other than the father of lies. And in that moment you can tell that serpent that if he doesn't leave you alone and stop tempting you to give up your agency, that you will do something that will hurt his work or threaten his kingdom. It is important to be specific and vocal (remember he can not read your thoughts). I'll give you an example: I'm one of those guys that gets very irritable when I'm hungry or if there is a lot of noise. I know it is a weakness of mine and it is easy for me to lash out irrationally when I'm in those situations. And I can feel it raising as those situations take place. Thanks to Eve I can choose to see where the source of these feelings come from. So in that moment I will find a quiet place and I will say out loud "Satan, I know these feelings are coming from your angels of darkness, and if you don't choose to leave me alone I promise you that I will walk back into that room and bare my testimony of Christ to everyone in that house. Or I will give a book of Mormon to someone I've never met, or I'm going to share the gospel of Jesus with the next person I see. You may think this is scary. Why would you threaten a being so powerful as Satan? But, I can tell you from personal experience that If you have the spirit with you and you are striving to keep God's commandments that there is nothing that the Devil could do to hurt or injure you. He is a coward, and will shrink in the presents of God or His servants. Satan loves to live in the darkness and stay hidden from any that would threaten his kingdom. Captain Moroni was a man that scared Satan to death. Mormon said:

11 And Moroni was a **strong** and a mighty man; he was a man of a perfect **understanding**; yea, a man that did not delight in bloodshed; a man whose soul did joy in the liberty and the freedom of his country.

12 Yea, a man whose heart did swell with thanksgiving to his God, for the many privileges and blessings which he bestowed upon his people; a man who did labor exceedingly for the **welfare** and safety of his people.

13 Yea, and he was a man who was firm in the faith of Christ, and he had **sworn** with an oath to defend his people, his rights, and his country, and his religion, even to the loss of his [own] blood.

17 Yea, verily, verily I say unto you, if all men had been, and were, and ever would be, like unto **Moroni**, behold, the very powers of hell would have been shaken forever; yea, the **devil** would never have power over the hearts of the children of men."

(Alma: 48:11-17)

Now, If Moroni can do it, then so can you. Live in a way that will allow the Spirit to be with you always and stand up to the works of the adversary in your life and in the lives of the ones you love.

The second method I use is the adjustment of our mindset and the opening of our eyes. Consider for a moment the purpose of trials. Why do we have them? What do they teach us? In most cases a trial or a test is to turn our hearts to God. To teach us to rely on Him and His grace. I have noticed in my life that if I take a break from God for a bit, that is usually when something bad will happen. There is a true saying that goes: "There are never any atheists in a crisis". Even someone that doesn't believe in God will pray during a disaster. It is a natural reaction to turn to God in a tragic event. Now, I am not saying that God causes those things to happen, but I am saying that God can use bad things to further His work. Do you recall what His work and His glory is? It is to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of men and women. The Immortality part was the sacrifice of His only begotten son Jesus Christ. And the miracle of His resurrection. The eternal life part is not a life lived forever but eternal life literally means a life like God's. The only way we can have a life like His is to experience all the things that He did. Hence the reason for this mortal experience. But here is the secret. If trials and troubles are meant to get us to turn towards God and rely on Him. What if....What if: We were already doing that? What if we work up in the morning and study the scriptures? What if we listened to His word on the way to work? What if we looked for opportunities to help God's children throughout our days, we spoke kindly to others, and we used our agency to build up His kingdom? What then would be the need for trials? There would really only be one reason for a trial to manifest in our lives and that would be to teach us something. So if they did occur we see them as an adventure or an opportunity to learn something new, not as some disaster or an opportunity to question everything we have ever known. Life would be exciting and wonderful at that point. A turning of our faith to the true miracles of God in our lives. Could you imagine living out your life not having to worry about something bad happening every day? I know people that live like that. People that believe that if something bad can happen to them, it will. I used to believe that. But, not any more. I have learned the power of this principle and I choose to live it every day of my life. And I can testify to you that it really works. That God will block the work of the adversary in your life if you can simply focus on Jesus Christ and His life changing gospel. Keep Him present in your life every day and you will not only be protected from the Devil but you will also experience so much joy and so many blessings.

You might be asking why did God put that tree in the Garden of Eden in the first place. Why wouldn't God just leave it out during the creation and that way there would be no way the fall would have happened and Adam and Eve would have never been cast out. If that were true then God would have done the same thing He cast out Satan for in the premortal life. God will always give you a choice. There will always be a fork in the road. Every minute of every day a decision to be made, to be a servant of God or of the Devil. And once we stop the back and forth and commit wholly to the side of Christ to the work of His glory. All at once our footing becomes sure, our direction is clear, and our journey is full of Joy.

Of this great truth I testify. In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.