

The Apple

How many of you figured that, based on its title, this article was going to be about the Garden of Eden? I'm sure it never crossed your mind but to those less acquainted with God's Word it would most likely be their first thought. Doubtless for centuries the apple has been maligned in story and song as that fruit which Eve plucked, ate and fed to Adam, even though the Bible does not tell us which fruit was borne by the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 3:17).

Actually, the apple is employed in eloquent imagery in a number of places in God's Word, the most frequent being the phrase, "apple of his eye" (or "thine eye" or "the eye"). The phrase has been defined in various ways. "Originally meaning the central aperture of the eye. Figuratively it is something, or more usually someone, cherished above others." "Apple of the eye' is an old English term (derived from Anglo-Saxon and Teutonic/German) for the pupil of the eye, that is, the clear center part where light, and therefore sight, enters. As an expression, it generally refers to something precious." Both of these definitions as well as the definition of the Hebrew words used in the phrase denote something or someone very special to another, the focus of one's attention. Hence, to be the "apple of one's eye" is to be a favorite.

Consider now how the apple is used in this phrase in the following Bible verses. Speaking of God's protection of Israel, Moses said, "He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye." (Deuteronomy 32:10). Pleading for God's watch care over him, the Psalmist asked, "Keep me as the apple of the eye, hide me under the shadow of thy wings, From the wicked that oppress me, from my deadly enemies, who compass me about." (Psalm 17:8,9). Urging his son to heed his words of wisdom, Solomon said, "Keep my commandments and live; and my law as the apple of thine eye." (Proverbs 7:2). Reflecting Judah's sorrowful condition after their destruction at the hand of the Babylonians, Jeremiah wrote, "Their heart cried unto the Lord, O wall of the daughter of Zion, let tears run down like a river day and night: give thyself no rest; let not the apple of thine eye cease." (Lamentations 2:18). Again speaking to Judah following their calamitous downfall, the Lord said through Zechariah, "For thus saith the Lord of hosts; After the glory hath he sent me unto the nations which spoiled you: for he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye." (Zechariah 2:8). The apple of one's eye suggesting that something is one's favorite, it also suggests that upon which one is focused. God focused on Israel as He protected them in the wilderness. David wanted to be sure God was focusing on Him in the presence of his enemies. Judah wished for God's focus to be on them as it had been in the prior to their rebellion. Solomon exhorted his son to focus on the truth.

The other time the word "apple" is used figuratively in God's Word is in Proverbs 25:11 where the wise man wrote, "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver." Comments regarding the meaning of this can be found in abundance. Most agree that the writer's purpose here is simply to portray something that is beautiful and precious. Some go a little overboard and try to make this into a prophecy. It seems that the writer is indeed painting a picture in our mind's eye of something that is beautiful and wondrous to behold. Various translators have rendered the Hebrew word for "pictures" as "baskets." Whether Solomon is talking about a painting or an actual silver basket containing golden apples, it's evident that he meant to impress upon us the idea of something breathtaking and extremely valuable. Lest we get too caught up in the imagery, let's remember the leading thought of the verse. It is the "word fitly spoken" that is like this glorious figure of apples of gold in pictures of silver. The bottom line here is that this verse extols the virtues of well spoken words. Just as the apostle Paul would write centuries later, "How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things," (Romans 10:15), Solomon here tells us that the carefully chosen word is just as beautiful.

The faithful child of God is the favorite of his or her heavenly Father (I Timothy 4:10) and to use our words in a way that honors our God is truly beautiful. To be the apple of God's eye and to speak in a way that is like golden apples in pictures of silver is to bring honor and glory to the Lord.

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