

Read also Romans 5:12-17(use The Message)

We just sang, “Come Thou fount of every blessing, tune my heart to sing Thy grace . . .” meaning God pours forth blessings. We are not the source of them; God is. “Streams of mercy never ceasing,” God blesses us continually and that “calls for songs of loudest praise.”¹

How many of you are already in a state of doubt?

As I was sitting in my office preparing my message I became hungry so I reached into my lunch bag and pulled out an apple. Then I picked up my phone, which has a logo on the back of an apple with a bite out of it.

The story of the Fall of humanity permeates us, our culture, and life as we know it. This story includes a struggle – the struggle about God’s good intentions.

Even if your faith is strong, do you still sometimes question God’s motives?

For Adam and Eve, the doubt came after one page. Chapter Two – God gives the lavish pleasure of the garden, of marriage. God set a boundary and gave the people a call to tend the garden. Then, Genesis three inverts all of that in one fell swoop, through a talking snake.

Have you talked to a snake recently? Maybe you have.

But we know there is no such thing as a talking snake, although talking animals are lovely – Peter Rabbit, Aslan the Lion, Simba, Minnie Mouse, Winnie the Pooh. The list goes on.

Talking animals are frequent players in dramatic presentations, so that tells you something about the kind of literature we read here. Remember, we must look for deep meaning, and that requires looking below the surface. The serpent symbolizes an element found in God’s good world, for God created the world VERY GOOD.

The serpent did not possess occult powers, nor was he represented as a demonic being, nor described as evil, but merely as extraordinarily shrewd.

This animal is the means of expression of a voice that says, “avoid the claims of God.”

Have you ever heard that voice?

The serpent calls God’s prohibition “an option.” This snake takes the boundary God set and makes it a threat; something that is not good. This reptile urges the humans to circumvent God’s safe rule. He twists the meaning of the command.

Hear the story: Genesis 3:1-13

What voice prevents you from seeing God as good and as the source of blessing?

¹“Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing” by Robert Robinson, c. 1758

Let's make up our own conversation; something we might hear.

Snake: God knows not only what is, but what might be. He wants you to know both, too. You can find that for yourself, in your own way.

Me: But, I'm not supposed to do that. I need to trust. I'll ask God about it. God might share that knowledge with me Himself.

Snake: But God has never forbidden you to *think* about it. Might be why you are forbidden; perhaps God doesn't really have all that much wisdom and you better think for yourself.

Me: God made us; He gives us a new day every day. God should be trustworthy.

Snake: Perhaps God wants to let go of your hand a little; let you have some say in your life. Maybe God wants you to learn some things not straight from Him but from others instead, and from your own thoughts. You can decide for yourself. How else do you think you are going to grow up?

Me: It is tempting to stand on my own two feet.

Snake: If you shrink back, are you not drawing back from the fruit that is offered you? Would God really have you sit still and wait on Him to do it all? Are you certain that He wishes to be always obeyed?

Me: How can we not obey who we love and who knows what is best?

Snake: But maybe God just *seemed* to forbid it. Maybe He really wants you to break the command so you can fully become yourself.

Me: If God really wants me to break it, why is He not putting this in my mind? Why am I only hearing it from you?²

Have you had such a conversation? Temptation happens – the challenge that says can God's way be trusted? Do I need to take matters into my own hands?

When you have such a conversation in your head, whose voice do you listen to?

In this story, the humans fell for the serpent's devious words. Shame came over them. Anxiety separated them from God. They tried to escape God.

This is not uncommon. When I was a young adult, and began a discipleship small group, I remember people talking about giving yourself fully to God. I used to think, *but what will happen to me? I will lose my identity. I will become nothing.* I didn't want to hear verses like:

²Conversation influenced by the space adventure, *Perelandra*, by C. S. Lewis.

- If you refuse to take up your cross and follow me, you are not worthy of being mine. If you cling to your life, you will lose it; but if you give up your life for me, you will find it” (Mt 10:38-39)
- "No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God" (Lk 9:62).

In “The Golden Key,” a fairy tale by George MacDonald, the author tells of a search for a golden key which will unlock the door to a land that is filled with beautiful shadows, like a golden rainbow. A man and woman search until they come upon a cave, and find an old man who knows where the key is. He stooped over the floor of the cave, raised a huge stone from it, and left it leaning. It disclosed a great hole that went straight down.

"That is the way," he said. "But there are no stairs," they replied.
"You must throw yourself in. There is no other way."

Giving your all to God is like that. You must throw yourself in.

Well, Adam and Eve did not give their all to God, they fell for the lie, and we often do, too. But God was not undone. And we can learn some things from this story:

1. God did not leave them alone; God went searching for them. We learn we are accountable. You will have to give an account one day. God will ask you, “What have you done?” Are you prepared for that conversation?
2. Judging the serpent, God said, “I will cause hostility between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring. He will strike your head, and you will strike his heel" (3:15). That is God’s redemptive grace, from the very beginning His Christ will come. Jesus will stand with you when you have that conversation with God.
3. Then he said to the woman, "I will sharpen the pain of your pregnancy, and in pain you will give birth. And you will desire to control your husband, but he will rule over you" (3:16). Men and women suffer difficulties in our relationships with one another. Men try to dominate women and women try to control men. This is the natural consequence; not a God-caused consequence.
4. To the man God said, “All your life you will struggle to scratch a living from the ground” (3:17) Work became hard as sin and death affects the entire world.
5. But God in His mercy made clothes to cover the nakedness of Adam and Eve (3:21) and God has been covering our sin and our shame ever since. This was God’s first sacrifice, and it points to His ultimate sacrifice of His Son, Jesus Christ. God’s blessing still flows, even through the fall.

Are you seeking that mercy today?

“Prone to wander Lord I feel it, prone to leave the God I love;
Let Thy goodness, like a fetter, bind my wandering heart to Thee.”

AMEN