



Script of The Eden Podcast Episode 5. Genesis 3:14-15, God's Words to the Serpent Tempter, by Bruce C. E. Fleming

Intro:

Welcome to The Eden Podcast where we think again about the Bible on women and men and we start with a correct understanding of what happened in the Garden of Eden back in the beginning.

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The focus of this episode is:

Genesis 3:14-15, God's Words to the Serpent Tempter

Let's get started.

Body:

My wife Joy was just three or four years old when her family moved across town to a house in south Minneapolis. She went out her front door and came across a neighbor girl playing outside. Her name was Nancy and she was just about Joy's age.

Joy was shy. She planted her feet and clasped her hands behind her back, self-consciously swiveling her upper body to the right and then to the left.

"I like your cowboy hat," Nancy said, trying to make four-year old friendly conversation. "How did *you* know I had a cowboy hat?" Joy asked, surprised that this new friend already knew about her favorite hat!

Then Joy noticed the hat string hanging around her own neck and became aware of the weight of her hat on her back. She had been wearing it all the time! Nancy had noticed. It wasn't hard to see. It was red!

Sometimes others can see something about us better than we can see ourselves. This was certainly true of the man in the Garden of Eden and his Creator. When the man rebels against God and eats the fruit from the forbidden tree, in his rebellion he follows the one who models rebellion for him. God clearly sees that!

Who is the man following? Certainly not God. Not anymore. God told him not to eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. But he does just that.

Satan in the serpent addresses *both* the woman and the man at the Tree. We know that because the Hebrew text uses plural pronouns every time Satan says "you." His words are aimed at the man too as recorded in Genesis 3:1-5.

Does Satan come right out and say "Eat that fruit"? Actually, no. But in his twisted way he certainly suggests it.

What about eating fruit from *that* tree too? Both were already practiced eaters of the good fruit in Eden. The woman is deceived into thinking in herself that getting knowledge was good and the fruit of that tree will be good too.

But the man's experience is different. He doesn't focus on the fruit. His focus is elsewhere. In his own mind he believes the tempter's words and focuses on himself.

Here is a short list of things the man does wrong.

1. He doubts God. Satan throws God's words into question. The man does too.
2. He doesn't respect the woman's defense of God's words, as reported in 3:2.
3. He doesn't fear God's wrath. He believes the serpent who lied and said "You will not certainly die" as recorded in 3:4.

Whose voice is the man listening to? It certainly isn't just an animal. The man knows all the animals. He had named them. Not one of them was found to be a fitting partner for him. Why not? He had observed that none of them could relate to him on his level. Yet somehow this talking serpent does!

Another being is talking to him, tempting him to rebel. Does he care who it is? It isn't necessary to know. The temptation is not to focus on another being, but to focus on himself, and on himself apart from his partner and apart from his Creator.

Satan is serving as his model without drawing attention to himself. Satan is rejecting God's word. Satan does not cherish and respect the life in the two humans God has made. Satan lies by masquerading as a serpent, by outrageously mocking God's simple proscription not to eat from one tree, and by baldly contradicting God's word.

In John 8:44 in the HCSB translation Satan is called the Father of Liars. Did Satan succeed in making the man the first of his lying offspring? He plainly did.

When questioned by God the man hides the fact that he has listened to the voice of the serpent. Then the man outrageously accuses God, and the woman, as being the reason for his actions. So both the serpent-tempter and the man act rebelliously.

God hears the man out then asks the woman what she has done. When she unmasks the deceiver who had hidden himself in the serpent, and then confesses her disobedience to God, God stops the interviews. God does not ask the serpent to speak.

As judge and jury, which the Creator certainly has the right to be, God addresses the serpent, the woman and the man. God's words to the serpent-tempter and to the man are strikingly different from God's words to the woman. But we don't usually see that.

The Old Testament was written out using the Hebrew language which most of us can't read. So we read what God said using translations into our modern languages. If we are fluent in Hebrew we can notice that the *way* the words and sentences of Genesis 3:14-19 are put together also conveys meaning. God speaks to the serpent-tempter and to the man using a parallel six-point pattern. That striking pattern is totally absent in God's words to the woman.

The serpent and the man share many things in common in their rebellion at the Tree. God has noticed. Here are six points in God's words that are common to both the serpent and the man:

1. God uses the Hebrew word "**curse**" in speaking with each one.
2. The word "**because**" opens each speech as God explains why He is imposing a curse.

3. The **object** God curses is related to each one. “Cursed are *you*,” God says to the serpent. And “Cursed is the *ground ...*,” God says to the man.
4. Each curse involves **eating** and **dust**. The serpent will “eat dust.” The man will eat food that will come from the cursed soil, and eventually, he will return to dust.
5. Each receives a note of lasting **duration**: “... all the days of your life.”
These two curses are unlike any other curses in the Bible. They change the way of things. Even today, the two curses of Eden are in effect.
6. **Echoing Hebrew verbs** close God’s words:
 - God tells the serpent: “... bruise (*shuph*) ... bruise (*shuph*)” (The serpent’s head will be *bruised* by his enemy.)
 - God tells the man: “return (*shuv*) ... return (*shuv*)” (The man, made out of dust, will *return* to the dust.)

God’s words to the woman are very different from His words to the serpent and the man because her case is different. She has not purposefully participated in the rebellion at the Tree. God has noticed this too.

She has been deceived, or tricked. God’s words to her reflect this. The words addressed to her are different in grammar, logic, tone and content.

The common elements that are found in God’s words to the serpent and to the man are missing in God’s words to the woman:

- The Hebrew word “**curse**” is not used.
- The word “**because**” is not used.
- The woman is not cursed, nor is anything cursed because of her.
- God does not speak to her about **eating** or **dust**.
- The words of **duration**, “all the days of your life,” are not used.
- There are **no echoing Hebrew** verbs.

Genesis 3:16 begins with an introductory phrase followed by four lines of words in which God speaks to the woman. Only a total of 11 Hebrew words are used in Lines 1-4. In places, it takes several English words to translate a single Hebrew word.

Genesis 3:16 starts with words of introduction: “God said to-the-woman....” Then in Line 1 God speaks four Hebrew words:

#1 Multiplying #2 I-will-multiply #3 your-toil #4 and-your-conception.

In Line 1 God introduces something new. In fact God does two new things. Then, in Lines 2, 3 and 4 God explains and teaches the woman what has happened but doesn’t do anything else that is new.

In Line 2 God speaks three Hebrew words:

#5 With-effort #6 you-will-bring-forth #7 children.

In Line 3 God speaks two Hebrew words:

#8 Your-affection [is] #9 for-your-husband

Then, in Line 4 God closes with two Hebrew words:

#10 But-he #11 will-rule-over-you.

It is worth going much deeper into God’s words to the woman in Genesis 3:16. But for now, let’s go back and focus on God’s words to the serpent-tempter.

God knows who has been speaking to the two humans at the Tree and how the deceptive masquerade has been accomplished. God deals with both the serpent *animal*, the tool used by Satan, and then God deals directly with *Satan*.

In Genesis 3:14, God takes what the woman has just said and acts on her words.

14 The Lord God said to the serpent,
“Because you did this,
Cursed are you more than all cattle
and more than all the animals of the field;
On your belly you will go and dust you will eat
all the days of your life.”

This is the first of God’s two curses in Eden. God curses the body of the serpent. What was its body like before? We can’t say. But we do know what serpents are like today. That’s because the two curses made in Eden are still in effect today.

The next words God speaks have both an immediate effect in Eden and one forward looking in time. These are recorded in verse 15.

15 I will put enmity between you and the woman
And between your seed and her seed;
He will bruise you [on the] head
And you will bruise him [on the] heel.”

God says I will “put enmity.” What does this mean? Here God confirms these two as combatants. God confirms the woman as the enemy combatant of Satan.

Satan has already attacked her at the tree leading to her disobedience and death. For this, Jesus labeled Satan as “a murderer in the beginning.” And the woman has already called him out before God and then repudiated him by her confession before God. If the man has moved to the side of Satan in joining him as a rebel, the woman has moved to God’s side in revealing him for what he did.

Then, God spells out the ultimate doom of her enemy which will come through her. Even though he will persist in his attacks and even though figuratively he will bruise the heel of her offspring, who we know ultimately to be Jesus, her offspring will bruise Satan on the head.

In Genesis 3:15, in God’s last words to the serpent, God prophesies that the woman’s “seed” or “offspring” (*zera*) will defeat the Tempter. Bad news for the Tempter, but good news for the woman and all humanity!

When I was starting out in my seminary studies I was told that Genesis 3:15 was a prophecy known as the *protevangelium*. That’s a nice long Latin word – sounds very theological. It means the very first mention in the Bible of the good news of salvation.

Somehow I felt right away that this was a strange way to give the Good News. How could it be given to the serpent-tempter? It just bothered me. Much later, when my wife Joy pointed out what God says to the woman in the first words in 3:16 is good news, I finally felt good. The full announcement of the Good News starts in 3:15 and spills over into verse 16.

What we should be emphasizing, I believe, are the first words God addresses to the woman along with the last words to the Tempter. These last words in 3:15 are addressed to the Tempter, but are overheard by the woman. She then receives God's promise to multiply her pregnancy, or her conception of the promised offspring.

God tells Satan that the result of his ongoing war with the woman will be his defeat. Then, as God turns to the woman God confirms to her, in Line 1, the good news that she will have ... offspring. At the start of Line 1 in words 1 and 2 God uses the Hebrew verb "to multiply" twice. It is repeated in two different tenses which can be translated Multiplying, I will multiply. Then God completes the thought with Hebrew word #4, *heron*, which means offspring or pregnancy. God makes her the promise to greatly multiply her offspring.

Has she eaten the fruit and died? Yes. But there is still to be life after that death. And there will be birth after death. That is the Good News. God gives it to *her*.

The protevangelium includes the end of verse 15 and the start of verse 16. But I wasn't taught that in seminary because the second part of that news is covered over by the mistranslation of 3:16. We need a true translation of Genesis 3:16 and a better understanding of what really happens in the Garden of Eden.

Close:

I invite you to visit our website at Tru316.com for links to our books and our YouTube Channel with more than a dozen in-depth Workshops on the 7 key Bible passages on women and men from Eden on.

You can also receive a study guide on this episode for use in small groups and more. You can find it in the blog posts on Tru316.com or write me at Bruce@Tru316.com. And thanks for listening to The Eden Podcast!