

The Trustworthy God

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[0 : 00] Good morning, everyone. Our theme this morning is the trustworthiness of God, and our Bible text is Genesis 3, 1 to 13, though we'll be focusing on the first six verses.

Genesis 3, 1 to 13 is easy to find. It's on page 2. It's very helpful if you have your Bible open this morning with me. Now, preacher Daryl Johnson, who's local here in Vancouver and many of you will know him, he says there is really only one command, one command in the whole Bible. All other commands are variations on the same theme. This one command is first given in Genesis 2, verses 15 to 17. Daryl paraphrases the command like this.

God says, trust me. I will be God. You be human. I will be creator. You be the creature. Live in intimate dependence on me. And here's how it reads in Genesis 2, 15 to 17. The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.

[1 : 18] And the Lord God commanded the man, you are free to eat from any tree in the garden, but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it, you will surely die.

So God gives Adam and Eve a paradise of yes and a single tree of no. A paradise of yes and a single tree of no. All he asks is that they trust him. Trust his promises. And they will experience lifelong blessing. And this brings us to our passage this morning. Have a look at verse 1 with me. Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, did God really say you must not eat from any tree in the garden? So the New Testament tells us that this serpent is Satan, the accuser.

[2 : 18] The enemy of God and of humanity, who Jesus calls a liar and the father of lies. That's who we're dealing with here. And what is the snake's strategy?

It's not direct confrontation, is it? There's no angry new atheism here. Just a subtle flattery. A subtle flattery.

Let's engage in a little theological dialogue, shall we? Did God really say... Did God really say you must not eat from any tree in the garden?

Now, of course, God did not say that, did he? God did not say that. Remember, a paradise of yes and a single no. But now, Eve, she takes the bait and the hook with it.

And doubt begins to creep into her mind. Why would my creator keep something good from me? And next, we read in verse 2 and 3.

[3 : 19] The woman said to the serpent, Do you notice here how Eve has forgotten so many of the blessings of God, and now she is fixated on one prohibition?

Not only that, but she misremembers what the Lord actually said. And she adds a new law. She adds the new law that neither may we touch this tree.

God never said that. And so Satan smells blood, and he moves in for the kill. Verse 4 and 5. And here we get to the heart of it.

Satan's strategy, his intention is to undermine the trustworthiness of God. At the heart of all human sin is a doubting of God's character.

Would a good God really let us die? Is God really for me? Does he really want what's best for me? Or is he holding me back from becoming my fulfilled self?

[4 : 43] Wouldn't I be happier if I just made up my own rules? Maybe even if I was God? And this is how temptation works, friends. It hardly ever begins with blatant evil.

We are first tempted to doubt the goodness of God. I'm reminded here of almost every Coen Brothers movie that I've ever seen.

The Coen Brothers, they seem to understand this idea very well. So, I can pretty much summarize any one of their movies. It goes like this. A bumbling fool happens upon a very large sum of money and makes a choice, a simple choice, to take it.

And then through a hundred small steps that follow, he finds himself or herself committing murder and a dozen other heinous crimes. And the movie ends in tragedy.

Eugene Peterson once wrote, Sin is ugly. It requires a full-time advertising agency to glamorize its pallor.

[5 : 52] That is Satan's full-time job. Well, the serpent here is a slick used car salesman. And so, by verse 6, Eve is ready to buy the whole car lot.

When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and she ate it. She also gave some to her husband who was with her and he ate it too.

And then verse 7 continues, And then the eyes of both of them were opened. And they realized that they were naked. So they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

Theologian David Fuller describes the effect of eating the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in this way. Quote, To know good and evil signifies the possession of that maturity, which frees one from being dependent on someone else for guidance on how to act wisely.

Adam and Eve are taking matters into their own hands and making their own decisions for their future welfare. End quote. The immediate effects of their disobedience, tragically, it's not joy, it's not wisdom, it's not even independence, but rather verse 7, shame, broken intimacy between a husband and a wife.

[7 : 24] Verse 10, it tells us fear. They were afraid. The first reference to fear in the whole Bible. They hide from God. There is tragedy instead of triumph.

You and I are living on the far side of Genesis 3.

And Genesis 3 is ground zero for the sin and broken relationships with God and with one another that we have all experienced in so many ways. But if Daryl Johnson is right, that there is really just one command at the heart of Scripture, and it is, trust me, then perhaps there is really just one question that all of us must finally ask and answer.

Is God trustworthy? Will I trust Him? And let me ask you, if I was asking you for your trust, what would I have to do to earn it?

Would seeing me in this clergy collar be enough? No, probably not. Because sadly, our experience of too many malpractice suits for doctors, criminal charges for lawyers and politicians, all of these people in authority who ask us to trust them and then break that trust, they have led us to distrust one another and ultimately to distrust God.

[9 : 03] We especially distrust those with power, don't we? And Scripture tells us that when we deal with God, we are dealing with someone with infinite power.

Someone who is our creator, who holds us in His hands. So what makes the triune God different? What makes the Lord God trustworthy?

God's character, friends, is revealed to us as perfectly, perfect in power, perfect in knowledge, but that's not enough because it must also be matched equally by His perfect love and His goodness. All those things are held together in the revelation of God's character. So let's think about this for a moment. God's trustworthiness is something to be experienced because God has spoken.

God's trustworthiness is something to be discovered because God has made promises to us by His Word. He has not left us in the dark and we're not reaching out to Him trying to figure out who He is.

[10 : 30] God's trustworthiness does not remain distant. And in Genesis 3-9, we get the first glimpse in the whole of Scripture of the gospel of grace. God's tender grace reaching out to us.

In verse 9, first, it says, they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. And then what happens? The Lord God called to the man, where are you?

The Lord God calls to us, where are you? Our trustworthy God is not distant. He pursued His rebellious children in the garden. He pursues His self-reliant sons and daughters, sending His own son to be the full revelation of His trustworthiness.

Oh, if only we had more times, friends. I would like to spend another 10 minutes on this Jesus of Nazareth, Son of the living God.

Because in His face, we see the one who faced the tempter, Satan, just as Adam and Eve did. But instead of their rebellion, instead of their doubt, He clung to the trustworthiness of God in the desert,

and He did not seek His own independence.

[11 : 51] And then this Jesus, He faced the agony of the cross, which was the death promised by God when Adam and Eve ate the fruit. He died in my place and in your place, rescuing us for restored relationship, yes, but He also rose again, vindicating forever the trustworthiness of God as the promise keeper and our beloved Father who calls us His sons and daughters.

There is so much wisdom in this room when I look out at you, at this 7.30 service. There is so much combined age, yes, and wisdom, so much shared experience of trusting in the Lord God, God. But let us not be deceived to think that so much age and wisdom means that it is not also easy for us to doubt God, that it's not easy for us to be tempted.

Each one of us knows someone who we thought was old enough that they were beyond making a silly mistake. Don't you know someone like that? Someone you thought, oh, they were far too mature to have had an affair, to have suddenly ran away from God, left the church, to have suddenly changed their theological position on something so important so quickly.

How did that happen? We ask. Well, friends, the gift of faith, the gift of trusting in God is that.

[13 : 52] It's a gift. It's not something that we take for granted. It's not something that we possess of our own ability. so whether you're 37 like me or 87, don't forget that it's always a gift and that that voice, it will come for your whole life and it will say, did God really say?

Let's have a little theological dialogue and you will see something or hear something and it will be desirable. it will seem good, good to eat, desirable to look at and that is how temptation works.

But brothers and sisters, we are not left alone. We have the gift of the Holy Spirit. we have the gift of our Savior, the Son, Jesus Christ, who experienced every temptation without sinning, who knows what we are going through.

And this triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, he says to you this morning, trust me, I will be God, you just be human. I will be your creator, you be the creature.

live in intimate dependence on me. So taste and see that the Lord is good.

[15 : 26] Amen. Amen.