

Malcolm's Monday Musings : 7 November 2022

Greetings.

As promised last week, I set out below Part 2 of my notes on 'The Temptation of Eve'.

Here are seven '**tasters**':

1. It is very good advice to every reader and student of scripture: 'take nothing from God's word, add nothing to God's word and change nothing in God's word' ... Eve made all three mistakes:

- (i) when describing the provision, she took from what God had said;
- (ii) when describing the prohibition, she added to what God had said; and
- (iii) when describing the penalty, she significantly altered what God had said.

2. The devil, who, presumably, envied man *that which he did not possess* (namely, man's position of favour and privilege) ... had the effrontery to accuse God of jealously guarding *that which He did possess* (namely, the knowledge of 'good and evil').

3. This tree appealed not only (i) to Eve's *physical appetite* ('good for food') and (ii) to her *aesthetic sense* ('pleasant to the eyes') but also (iii) to her *intellect and ambition* ('desired to make one wise').

4. Eve was now guided by appearance rather than by what God said. *She was walking, not by faith, but by sight.*

5. The doubts about God's goodness which the devil sought to raise in the garden, the Lord Jesus laid well and truly to rest on the cross.

6. In the garden, the serpent insinuated that God was seeking *His own welfare at man's expense*. But the cross is the conclusive proof that the very opposite is true; namely, that God has sought *man's welfare at His own expense*.

7. If the devil ever accuses God to you as One who seeks less than your highest good and blessing, point him to the same person and place to which God points him when he accuses you to God; namely, to the Lord Jesus and His cross.

Additionally, I refer you to two *relevant* 'Musings' items from the past.

(i) A quotation from the 'Musings' dated 29 August 2022:

'Satan, who by a tree overcame our first parents in Eden, was himself overcome by a tree—the tree of the cross on which Jesus died'.

(R. F. Norden, '*With Jesus Every Day*', page 163.)

(ii) A document attached to the 'Musings' of two years ago (23 November 2020). That document is entitled, 'The Temptations of Christ'.

By way of stark contrast with the devil's signal victory over Eve (and Adam) '*in the garden*', that study focuses on the devil's defeat and retreat when he ventured to try his hand at tempting the Lord Jesus '*in the wilderness*'.

As noted towards the close of that study, 'Satan had exhausted all his ammunition. He had pulled out all the stops. The devil had held back nothing, and it had availed him nothing'.

(For ease of reference, the document can be viewed and/or downloaded at [Malcolm's Monday Musings - 2020-11-23 - The Temptation of Christ \(voicesforchrist.org.\)](https://www.voicesforchrist.org/2020/11/23/malcolm-musings-2020-11-23-the-temptation-of-christ)

Happy reading

Yours in our Lord Jesus,

Malcolm

The Temptation of Eve. Part 2.

SCRIPTURE

The Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed. And out of the ground the Lord God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food ...

And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, 'Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die' ...

Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, 'Has God really said, "You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?"'

And the woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, "You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die"'.

Then the serpent said to the woman, 'You shall not surely die. For God knows that in the day that you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil'.

And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate. And the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked.

Genesis 2. 8-9, 16-17; 3. 1-7.

PICKING UP THE THREADS

In Part 1, we noted that the devil's strategy was to accuse God of begrudging Adam and Eve that which was for their highest good and, necessarily, of accusing God of deceit.

To that end, the devil needed to take the woman's eyes off *the largesse which God had bestowed* upon her and her husband and to focus her mind on *the one and only thing which He had denied* them (namely, eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil).

His cunning scheme was to approach her with a very cleverly crafted question which (by the use of some outrageous words put into God's mouth) prompted Eve to answer him by drawing attention to the divine prohibition herself.

Part 1 concluded with the following words, 'His strategy decided, his plans drawn, the devil needed to wait for the right moment'. The opening of Genesis 3 takes up the story from there.

VERSE 1

Finding Eve alone (and, if I understand the verse¹ correctly, *not* then standing near the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, as is often supposed), the serpent led with his seemingly innocent question. True, his devious question made him look rather foolish, but then there was a lot at stake.

In Hebrew, the question opens with an expression of surprise, even disbelief; something like:

'Is it *really true* that God has said, "You shall not eat of any of the trees (literally, 'of all the trees') in the garden?" Surely there must be some mistake; there's nothing else in the garden for you to eat, is there?² I guess I must have misheard. I mean, He wouldn't have said that ... *would He?*'

VERSES 2 AND 3

Bull's-eye! No alarm bells rang when Eve found herself confronted by the talking snake. She took the bait, and fell for his ploy – hook, line and sinker.

And we must note carefully what she said in response.

It is very good advice to every reader and student of scripture: 'take nothing from God's word, add nothing to God's word and change nothing in God's word'.

Warnings to this effect sound throughout scripture. The words of Moses, 'You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it',³ echo through to the very last warning in the Bible, 'if anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life'.⁴

Yes, indeed, 'take nothing from God's word, add nothing to God's word, and change nothing in God's word'. But, alas for us all, Eve made all three mistakes:

- (i) when describing the **provision**, she took from what God had said;
- (ii) when describing the **prohibition**, she added to what God had said; and
- (iii) when describing the **penalty**, she significantly altered what God had said.⁵

In order:

(i) When describing the **provision** which God had made for her and Adam, she significantly understated His goodness and generosity.

'We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden', were her words. That is, she dropped the two vital words which the Lord God had used back in chapter 2 verse 16; namely, 'every' and 'freely'. 'The Lord God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat"'.⁶

And Eve did this, even though *the devil himself* had quoted accurately the expression which God had then used: 'Has God said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'. Alas, already Eve was beginning to play down God's lavish provision.

(ii) On the other hand, when describing the **prohibition** which the Lord God had placed on the tree, the woman exaggerated its terms, making God seem severe and unduly harsh. For, without any warrant, she added the words, 'nor shall you touch it'. But the Lord God had said nothing about touching either the tree or its fruit.

And I find it interesting that Eve described 'the tree of the knowledge of good and evil' as being 'in the midst of the garden'.

Now, I do not doubt that, in some sense, that was where it was; that, in all likelihood, it stood next to 'the tree of life'. Yet I cannot help noting that scripture spoke of '*the tree of life*' as being central.⁶ But, in Eve's reckoning, the tree from which she was forbidden to eat had displaced that tree and itself had become the most important tree in the whole of the garden.

How sad that the tree which stood next to *the tree of life* would soon become, to her and her husband, *the tree of death*!

(iii) Eve's third mistake came when describing the **penalty** and consequences which God had said would follow eating 'of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil'. For she now weakened the force of God's word.

I am certainly not qualified to decide whether it is true to say that the woman changed an *absolute certainty* ('you shall surely die') into a *mere possibility* ('lest you die'). But I do know that she most definitely watered-down God's warning. **He** had said, 'in the day that you eat of it you shall surely ('shall certainly') die'.⁷ But **she** mentions neither 'in the day' nor 'surely'.

I note also that she generalized God's word.

God had said, 'In the day that *thou* (singular, as in the Hebrew text) eatest thereof, *thou* shalt surely die'.⁸ But Eve substituted the *plural* 'ye' for the *singular* 'thou'; 'God hath said', she reported, 'Ye (plural, as in the Hebrew text) shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die',⁹ thereby evading to some extent the direct and personal application of God's word to herself.

To some people these may seem rather slight changes but, as I read the passage, when taken together, these changes alter the whole emphasis of what God had said. If I am right, the serpent's poison was already doing its deadly work.

VERSES 4 AND 5

I have no doubt that the serpent listened *most carefully* to every word of Eve's reply. And he must have been elated to find that everything had gone according to plan ... indeed, possibly, had gone better than he had hoped

And so, in a flash, he sprang the trap, taking full advantage of Eve's growing suspicion that perhaps God had not been as generous as He *could* have been, or, indeed, as generous as He *should* have been.

The serpent's twofold attack

1. 'Not surely die'

First, and up front, came the serpent's bold and outright denial: 'you shall not surely die'. Indeed, in Hebrew, the very first word which the devil thunders out is '*not*'. And that is where his emphasis fell; not 'you shall not surely die' or 'you shall not surely die' but 'you shall **not** surely die', thereby portraying God's solemn warning as just an idle threat.

Here, then, is a blatant denial of God's **truthfulness**.¹⁰ And what audacity this is, coming, as it does, from '*the father of lies*'!¹¹

If Eve had been on the alert, she might have spotted that the serpent let slip the fact that he had known all the time precisely what God had said:¹²

(i) his claim, 'you shall not surely die' rests foursquare on God's word to the man back in chapter 2, 'you shall surely die',¹³ and

(ii) the expression used by the serpent, 'in the day that you eat of it', was a very clear echo of the exact words which the Lord God had earlier used.¹⁴

Eve had used neither of God's actual expressions when reporting God's words to the serpent. Yet the serpent had opened the conversation by pretending that all he had picked up was a garbled version of what God had said to Adam and that this was the reason he had posed the silly question of verse 1.

Yes, for the serpent to quote God's exact words about 'surely dying' and 'the day that you eat' was certainly a little risky but then he had done very well so far and he now had nothing to lose.

And it is worth noting that *the first assault of the devil* in the Bible is directed at the doctrine of God's **judgement**. But this is hardly surprising; he has every reason not to like it!¹⁵

2. 'God knows ... you will be like God'

But if the serpent's *first* assault was aimed at both (i) God's **truthfulness** and (ii) the doctrine of God's **judgement**, his *second* assault targeted God's **goodness**.

Here *the devil*, who, presumably, envied man that which ***he did not possess*** (namely, man's position of favour and privilege¹⁶ – the devil having once forfeited his own exalted position), had the effrontery to accuse ***God*** of jealously guarding that which ***He did possess*** (namely, the knowledge of 'good and evil') and of thereby keeping back from Eve and her husband that which was for their best.

Up until now, the serpent had concentrated on what God had said and on suggesting why He had said it. Now the serpent switched track, to dangle before the woman's mind a hugely tempting bait: '***you***¹⁷ ***will be like God***'.¹⁸

In effect, the devil was attempting to persuade Eve to sing from his own hymn-sheet ... to inspire *her* with the very same ambition and pride which had once led to *his* own downfall.¹⁹

To 'be **like God**', indeed! To 'be **like the god of this world** (or 'age')',²⁰ more like! To be like himself, a fallen creature, under the judgement of God.

Truth and error mingled

As so often, the enemy mingled truth with error.

(i) Yes, it was true that, if the woman and the man ate, their eyes ***would*** be opened. Yet this would result, ***not***, as the serpent promised, in their ***knowing*** 'good and evil'²¹ ***but***, rather, in their ***knowing their own nakedness***.²²

(ii) Yes, it was true that they *would* become 'like God' ... 'to know good and evil'.²³ Yet they would *not* know good and evil *as God does*:

(a) *God* knows 'good' – and He loves good, because He *is* good and that which is good is, therefore, the expression of His nature.

(b) *God* knows 'evil' – and He hates evil, because that which is evil is contrary to His nature.

But *Adam and Eve* would know good and evil *only from the standpoint of fallen creatures*. They would, in themselves, lack the power to *do good* and lack the power to *resist evil*.²⁴

If truth were told, this is what *would* happen if the woman and man ate of the tree, but, of course, the serpent did not acquaint Eve with any of this!

VERSE 6

Exit the devil

I note that at no time did the devil *tell* the woman to eat the fruit. He didn't even *suggest* that she should. His tactics were, as one might expect, nothing short of brilliant. All he did was *to clear the way* for her to take and to eat the fruit if *she* so wished.

Having sown his vile seeds of doubt and distrust, he could now safely withdraw, leaving Eve's senses and her aroused ambition to do the rest.

After all, the tree stood next to 'the tree of life ... in the midst of the garden'.²⁵ It was inevitable that she would see it before long (which, as verse 6 informs us, she did).

In all likelihood, on that occasion she had her husband 'with her'. This is what the closing part of the verse may well mean; namely, that 'she gave also to *her husband alongside her*, and he ate'.²⁶

The devil knew that, when the woman considered the tree, what she then 'saw' would serve to reinforce his argument.

The threefold appeal of 'the tree of the knowledge of good and evil'

(i) *First*, the tree looked 'good for food'.²⁷

(ii) *Second*, it 'was pleasant to the eyes'.²⁸

This twofold description matched more-or-less exactly what was said of the other trees of the garden; namely, 'out of the ground the Lord God made to grow every tree that is *pleasant to the sight and good for food*'.²⁹

In appearance, therefore, 'the tree of the knowledge of good and evil' was as attractive as any other tree in the garden. Indeed, if 'the tree of the knowledge of good and evil' had not been as appealing as the other trees, God's prohibition would not have represented a fair probation and test by which to demonstrate Adam and Eve's loving obedience – or otherwise.

(iii) *Third*, this particular tree seemed to offer *more* than any of the other trees because, in addition to its first two qualities, it seemed to hold out the promise of wisdom: 'a tree *to be desired to make one wise*'.

That is, this tree appealed not only (i) to Eve's *physical appetite* ('good for food') and (ii) to her *aesthetic sense* ('pleasant to the eyes') but also (iii) to her *intellect and ambition* ('desired to make one wise').

By sight and not by faith

Whether or not we care to line up the description of this tree with what the apostle John says 'is in the world' (namely 'the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life'),³⁰ we know for sure that Eve was now *guided by appearance rather than by what God said*. She was *walking, not by faith, but by sight*.³¹

And the rest, as they say, is history.³²

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

God's goodness and love

'The woman being deceived was in the transgression'³³ and the present exposition traces how, as I understand it, 'the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty ('craftiness', 'cunning'³⁴)'.³⁵

And in so doing, as we have seen, he caused the woman to question whether the Lord God was good. And the devil is still in the same business ... that of tempting us to doubt God's goodness.

And we must concede that (i) as in Eve's case, *appearances* are often on his side and (ii) that *God does not explain* all His ways to us any more than He did to Eve.

But God has given the lie to all the devil's assertions. He has demonstrated His goodness, once and for all, at the cross of our Lord Jesus.

Some time back, I was struck by an account of an incident reported by Mr J. M. Davies in his exposition of the epistle to the Romans:

'Many years ago, I visited an aged saint who had lain on his bed with partial paralysis for many years. Some Seventh Day Adventists had been to see him the previous day and had suggested to him that he was suffering from paralysis because he had not kept the Sabbath!

'In the course of relating me the answer he gave them he said, "*I do not read the love of God in circumstances. God has erected one monument to His love. That was at Calvary"*'.³⁶

The doubts about God's goodness which the devil sought to raise in the garden, the Lord Jesus laid well and truly to rest on the cross.

Whose welfare and whose expense?

In the garden, the serpent insinuated that God was *seeking His own welfare at man's expense*.

But the cross is the conclusive proof that the very opposite is true; namely, that God has *sought man's welfare at His own expense*.

And what *expense*! 'He ... spared not His own Son but delivered Him up for us all'.³⁷

The 'accuser' and the 'advocate'

As is well known, the very title 'devil' means 'an accuser', 'a slanderer'.

On one occasion, the apostle John describes him specifically as '*the accuser* of our brethren'.³⁸ But the same apostle assures us that God has an answer to all Satan's accusations against His people: 'if any one sins, we have an advocate (in the context, '*a counsel for the defence*'³⁹) with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He is the propitiation for our sins'.⁴⁰

Accordingly, if the devil ever accuses **God to you** as One who seeks less than your highest good and blessing, point him to the same person and place to which God points him when he accuses **you to God**; namely, to the Lord Jesus and His cross.



Notes

¹ Gen. 3. 1.

² Compare the words of Gen. 3. 1 with the words of Gen. 2. 9 and 16.

³ Deut. 4. 2.

⁴ Rev. 22. 18-19. Cf. Deut. 12. 32; Josh. 1. 7; Prov. 30. 6.

⁵ A bunch of (not so) 'sweet P's'!

⁶ Gen. 2. 9; compare the promise of the Lord Jesus, 'To him who overcomes I will give to eat from *the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God*', Rev. 2. 7.

⁷ Gen. 2. 17; literally, 'dying you die'.

⁸ Gen. 2. 17 KJV.

⁹ Gen. 3. 3 KJV.

¹⁰ It is the devil's constant objective to make men believe that the consequence of committing sin will not be that which God has said it will be.

¹¹ 'The devil ... is a liar, and the father of it', John 8. 44.

¹² The devil knew (and was able to quote) every last word which God had said to Adam. Apart from the two examples given in the main text, I note that the devil's words, '*eat ... of every tree of the garden*', Gen. 3. 1, are a very accurate quotation of God's own words, '*of every tree of the garden ... eat*', Gen. 2. 16. It is sobering to realize that our adversary not only knows all he needs to know about *us* but that he knows *God's word* better than we ever will; cf. Matt. 4. 6.

¹³ Gen. 2. 17b.

¹⁴ Gen. 2. 17c.

¹⁵ Rev. 20. 10; cf. Matt. 25. 21.

¹⁶ Gen. 1. 26; Psa. 8. 4-8.

¹⁷ Interestingly, the devil's 'you' in verse 4 is plural. I take it that he was either (i) deliberately including Adam in the package or (ii) simply responding to the plural which the woman had used in verse 3.

¹⁸ Not, as in the King James Version, 'you shall be as *gods*'; the devil was well aware that Eve knew of *only one 'God'*.

Compare the stated ambition of the King of Babylon: 'I will be like the Most High', Isa. 14. 14.

¹⁹ Cf. 1 Tim. 3. 6 ('... puffed up with pride, leading to the condemnation received by the devil').

²⁰ 2 Cor. 4. 4.

²¹ '*Your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil*', Gen. 3. 5.

²² '*The eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked*', Gen. 3. 7.

²³ 'The Lord God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of us, *to know good and evil*"', Gen. 3. 22.

²⁴ See Rom. 7. 15, 18-20.

²⁵ Gen. 2. 9.

²⁶ The same Hebrew word ('להם') is used to describe how Joseph refused to listen to Potiphar's wife, 'to lie with her or to be *with her*', Gen. 39. 10.

²⁷ Gen. 3. 6a.

²⁸ Gen. 3. 6b.

²⁹ Gen. 2. 9.

³⁰ 1 John 2. 16.

See, for example: 'Genesis 3. 6 parallels 1 John 2. 16: "good for food"—"the lust of the flesh"; "pleasant to the eyes"—"the lust of the eyes"; "desirable for gaining wisdom" (NIV)—"the pride of life"'.
(Warren Wiersbe, *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary: Old Testament*, page 27.)

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³¹ Contrast 2 Cor. 5. 7.

³² Eve established a pattern which has since been repeated innumerable times by her many descendants; she *saw*, she *desired* and she *took*. Compare, for example, (i) the words of Achan, 'I *saw* among the spoil ... then I *coveted* them and *took* them', Josh. 7. 21, and (ii) the actions of David: 'he *saw* from the roof a woman bathing; and ... David sent and *inquired* about the woman ... and *took* her', 2 Sam. 11. 2-4.

³³ 1 Tim. 2. 14.

³⁴ The Greek word, 'πανουργία', 'signified the employment of any or all means necessary to realize an end'.

(Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*, page 1093.)

'In its half dozen New Testament appearances, *πανουργία* is used only negatively ... Paul fears that the minds of the Corinthian converts may be led astray from purity of devotion to Christ, as the serpent by his "craftiness" deceived Eve'.

(D. A. Carson, *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Volume 1, page 413.)

³⁵ 2 Cor. 11. 3.

³⁶ J. M. Davies, *The Christian's Statue of Liberty*, Ritchie, page 103.

³⁷ Rom. 8. 32.

³⁸ Rev. 12. 10 (I understand the expression, '*our brethren*', to refer to the Jewish remnant of 'Tribulation' days). Cf. Zech. 3. 1.

³⁹ 'In the present context, the word undoubtedly signifies an "advocate" or "counsel for the defence" ... It means a person who intercedes on behalf of somebody else'.

(I. Howard Marshall, *The Epistles of John (The New International Commentary on the New Testament)*, page 116.)

'The context suggests intercession in the sense of *legal advocacy*'.

(W. Hall Harris III, *An Exegetical Commentary on the Letters of John*, page 34.)

'The Holy Spirit is God's Advocate on earth with men, while Christ is man's Advocate with the Father'.

(A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures of the New Testament*, on 1 John 2. 1.)

⁴⁰ 1 John 2. 1-2.