

## **The True You: The Fall and Redemption Promised (Gen. 3:6-7, 15)**

Chris Altrock - 5/13/18

### Take

Every time I see a bag of nacho cheese flavored Doritos I'm reminded of a central event in my life. That Doritos bag doesn't just represent a food item. It represents a time when things suddenly went south in my relationship with my parents.

I was about six years old. My brother Craig and I and our best friend Robert were hanging in the hood in Sunspot, NM. The few other kids in Sunspot were still in school in Cloudcroft. They had taken the school bus or had been driven by their parents to the school in Cloudcroft.

It was the afternoon. And we three were hungry. I'd been casing a joint just down from my house. The Dickson's house. It's where Dee Dee lived. She was an older woman. Elementary school. Not long ago I'd seen her mom pull out to go pick up Dee Dee at school in Cloudcroft. I knew the house was empty. So, the three of us walked over to the Dickson's (Sunspot was a very small town, hence the reason a trio of six year olds could walk around unsupervised). We pulled open their screen door. It was open. We tried their front door. It was unlocked. Hardly anyone locked their doors in this tiny town.

Craig and Robert went inside. I stood guard outside. Inside, Craig and Robert struck gold. Nacho cheese Dorito gold. They brought the bag outside and feasted right there on the tiny front porch.

Unfortunately, we were so busy feasting that we failed to notice that the Dicksons were pulling into their driveway. We'd been caught red-handed--that is, orange-handed. We fled the scene, front door ajar, red Dorito bag flying through the air, scampering into the woods like three fat raccoons.

Seconds later, I heard my mom's voice ringing through the forest: "Christopher Raymond Altrock! Craig Edward Altrock!" It was the Altrock Warning System. Mrs. Dickson had called my mom. She didn't need a lineup. She knew who we were by our blond bowl cuts the moment she spotted us. And she'd called my mom. And boy, were we in trouble. Kindergarten convicts. Breaking and entering. All for a bag of Doritos. We were grounded until high school!

Every time I see a Doritos bag I'm reminded of all of that. The abuse of freedom. The rupture of my relationship with my parents. That bag of chips represents all of that.

And in Genesis, a tree represents something similar. As we continue to survey 16 texts that summarize the story of the Bible we come this morning to texts #3 and #4, both of which are found in Genesis chapter 3. These texts revolve around a tree. And from this point on in the Bible's story, this tree is always going to remind us of how things suddenly went south in our walk with God:

*6 So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. 7 Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths. (Gen. 3:6-7 ESV)*

Text #3 begins in the same way my story began. I saw a Dorito bag was good for food. This woman, Eve, saw this tree, and it was good for food. But, as with the Dorito bag, there's a lot more going on here with this tree.

The tree is the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Back in chapter 2 God said, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, 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." (Gen. 2:16 ESV). It's not that God didn't want Adam and Eve, or us, to know good and evil. The ability to discern between good and evil is a key issue for followers of God. Notice these texts:

- *Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good.* (Rom. 12:9 ESV)
- *Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.* (Rom. 12:21 ESV)
- *But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.* (Heb. 5:14 ESV)

It's not that God didn't want Adam and Eve not to have this critical ability.

It's that God wanted them, and us, to have this ability *in relationship with him*.

The real issue here is Will Adam and Eve seek to know good and evil independent of God, or will they seek it in relationship with God? Will they seek to control and determine what is good and evil on their own? Or will they surrender and trust in God and in relationship with God discern what is good and evil? By taking the fruit, Adam and Eve were seeking to have and control this knowledge independent of God.

In the book *The Shack* Mack's daughter Missy is abducted by a serial killer.<sup>1</sup> Through a fantastic series of events Mack winds up in a shack with the Trinity, trying to make sense of Missy's death. At one point, The Holy Spirit, named Sarayu (an Indian word meaning "surprising wind"), engages Mack in a discussion about the tree of the knowledge of good and evil:

Sarayu: *"When something happens to you, how do you determine whether it is good or evil?"*

Mack: *"I'm not really sure I have any logical ground for deciding what is good or evil, except how something or someone affects me...And my track record isn't very encouraging either. Some things I initially thought were good turned out to be horribly destructive, and some things that I thought were evil, well, they turned out..."*

Sarayu: *"Then it is you who determines good and evil. You become the judge. And to make things more confusing, that which you determine to be good will change over time*

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<sup>1</sup> William Paul Young *The Shack*, 136-138.

*and circumstance. And then, beyond that and even worse, there are billions of you, each determining what is good and what is evil. So when your good and evil clash with your neighbor's, fights and arguments ensue and even wars break out."*

*Mack: "I can see now that I spend most of my time and energy trying to acquire what I have determined to be good, whether it's financial security or health or retirement or whatever. And I spend a huge amount of energy and worry fearing what I've determined to be evil."*

*Sarayu: "It allows you to play God in your independence...You must give up your right to decide what is good and evil on your own terms...To do that, you must know me enough to trust me and learn to rest in my inherent goodness."*

The question is this: Will we trust in God's goodness and submit to God and allow him to set the bar of good and evil. Or will play God and in our independence set that standard on our own?

What's ripping the world apart is the fact that as we flip through social media posts, as we gather around conference tables, as we sit around kitchen counters, as we huddle with friends, we make decisions about right and wrong without cracking a Bible, lifting a plea for guidance toward heaven, or sitting in silence trusting that the Spirit might speak. Ever since the Garden, we've joined Adam and Eve in being self-reliant deciders of good and evil rather than prayerful discerners of good and evil.

## Take 2

But this is really just a symptom of a much larger problem which this tree and its fruit represent. The larger question was this--and this becomes the one question that we humans wrestle with for the rest of our existence: *will we take or will we trust?* Will Adam and Eve take this knowledge of good and evil quickly and self-sufficiently? Or will they trust God to grant it in his time and on his terms? It's a question about knowledge about good and evil. But it grows into a question about everything in life. Will we take or will we trust?

And the truth is this: *We often take rather than trust.* We're constantly trying to assume control of a whole host of things in our lives that we could instead be entrusting to God.

Notice the posture of Eve's hands: she took.

*6 So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she **took** of its fruit and ate... (Gen. 3:6 ESV)*

She grabbed. The picture is of her hand reaching out and closing around this fruit. Grabbing this fruit and closing around it. Clutching it.

This is the posture of our hands when it comes to so much of the stuff of our life. We hold tightly to so many things. We take. Just as Eve did. We grab. We clutch. We close our hands around people and projects and possessions. Sometimes out of malicious intent. But often out of good will. We feel that if we don't call the shots, if we don't take charge, if we don't hold on to our kids, grandkids, parents, grandparents, deadlines, to-do's, churches, neighborhoods, cities or countries, no one else will.

Not long ago Amazon released statistics on electronic books. Many people purchase electronic copies of books. These copies can be highlighted. Amazon keeps track of these highlights. They can tell you which parts of which books are the most highlighted--including electronic copies of the Bible. You may or may not be surprised to learn that this is the most highlighted text in electronic versions of the Bible<sup>2</sup>:

*Do not be **anxious** about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Phil. 4:6-7)*

We are anxious people. We go to bed, we go to work, we get up in the morning and we're holding on to things. We're clutching things. We're grasping things. Our kids. Our projects. Our deadlines. Our emails. Our mistakes. Our addictions. Our goals. They are keeping us up at night. They are giving us ulcers. They are causing us nervous tics. They are making us distracted. They are forcing us to make power plays. They are causing us to lash out at others.

This anxiety is a symptom of our tendency to what Eve and Adam did. We often take rather than trust. We assume we have to be in control of the things and people in our lives.

### Snake

And the tough thing is, we're not alone in this tendency:

*He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?" 2 And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, 3 but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" 4 But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. 5 For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." (Gen. 3:1-5 ESV)*

There's a snake in the garden. And he's there to muddy the perspective. The serpent, we know from places like Rev. 20:2, is the devil. There's spiritual warfare taking place. We live

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<sup>2</sup> Robert J. Morgan, *Worry Less, Live More* (Thomas Nelson, 2017), page xiii

in an enchanted world. As much as we'd like to think that we're masters of our own world, that we're captains of our own ship, the truth is that there are malevolent spiritual forces at work.

And notice what the snake does here. His primary role is to distort our image of God. Listen to what he says: "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?'" This serpent twists God's words and distorts our perspective. We take rather than trust. *God, the snake proposes, is interested in prohibition not provision.* The devil wants to take our eyes away from everything good God does and all the abundance God provides. Instead, he wants to paint God as stingy, greedy and unwilling and uncaring. God will not take care of our kids, our projects, our deadlines, our health issues, our churches, our governments, our addictions or our futures. He's way too stingy for that. So, you've got to grab. You've got to take matters into your own hands. You can't count on God. This is what the snake is constantly doing. This is what the devil is constantly doing.

### Trust

Our tendency in life is to take, to grab, to control. And the snake, the serpent, Satan is there to ensure we will. He loves to see the results of a life spent doing just that.

But what we're called to do is to trust. *We called called to trust rather than to take.* Adam and Eve were to trust that God would grant them knowledge of good and evil through their unfolding relationship, when God chose and how God chose. It's not that he didn't wish them to be able to discern good versus evil. It's that he wished them to do this in relationship to him and in submission to him. Instead, they chose to take it, to seek it independently of him. They were called to trust this issue of knowing good and evil to God, entrusting it into his hands, having faith that he would provide this knowledge when and how it was best.

This same posture of trust is called for in every area of life for all of life. There's still work and responsibilities that are ours in this life. But in it all, we trust first rather than take. We refuse to accept that everything is ultimately up to us and instead gratefully accept that it's ultimately up to God.

We adopt the posture of Jesus on the cross: "*Into your hands I commit my spirit*" (Lk. 23:44-46). We are constantly committing things into God's hands rather than grabbing things into our hands.

Henri Nowen writes of attending a circus performance in Germany.<sup>3</sup> He particularly enjoyed the trapeze artists called the Flying Rodleighs. After the performance, Nowen asked the leader of the troop about their craft. Rodleigh said this:

*"As a flyer, I must have complete trust in my catcher. The public might think I am the star, but the real star is my catcher...The secret is that the flyer does nothing and the catcher does everything. When I fly I have simply to stretch out my arms and hands and wait for him to catch me. The worst thing I can do is to try to catch the catcher. A flyer*

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<sup>3</sup> Henri Nowen, *Our Greatest Gift* (HarperSanFrancisco, 1994), 66-67.

*must fly and a catcher must catch and the flyer must trust, with outstretched arms, that the catcher will be there for him."*

This is the secret Adam and Eve did not learn in the Garden which Jesus demonstrated on the cross. We are to have total trust in our catcher. In life we are not the ultimate catcher. We are simply the flyer.

### Crush

And to ensure that we have the freedom to choose to trust, God promises to intervene. He promises to free us from the interference of this serpent, this devil, this Satan. We hear this in text #4:

*15 "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel." (Gen. 3:15 ESV)*

God is speaking to the snake. The offspring of Eve, referring ultimately to Jesus, will "bruise" the head of the serpent, of Satan. Meanwhile, the snake will "bruise" the heel of the offspring of Eve. The snake will continue to attack us. He will continue to bother us. And he will even attack Jesus. But, in the end, Jesus will be victorious. He will free us from this snake. So that we are truly free to trust. And to fly.

We were never meant to be the catcher. We were built to be the flyer. God's at work in our story so that we have the true freedom to choose. And this week, he's hoping we will choose wisely. He's hoping we won't choose to trying to hold on to everything and cling to everything and assume that it's all up to us and we have to live our life independent from his love and his resources and his presence. Instead, he's hoping we'll choose to let go. He's hoping we'll choose to trust. He's hoping we'll choose to fly.