

# Choose Free

## Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-3

### Pierre Cannings

#### I. Free Reign v.15

##### a. Lord God

###### i. Put- to place somewhere, set

1. “Put” in v. 15 translates the causative form of the verb *nûah*, “rest,” and so could be rendered literally “caused to rest.” In v. 8, however, the term is *šîm* (“put, place”). Here the language of v. 15 is essentially equivalent to v. 8 in context, but “rest” bears a special significance for depicting deliverance from Noah’s waters (see 5:29 discussion) in Genesis 1–11 and for speaking of the safety that Israel would experience as found in the Pentateuch. God promised to give Israel safety (“rest”) in the land from its enemies

###### ii. Garden of Eden

1. Within the garden, which can be adequately described as a fertile oasis, two trees existed:
2. Ezekiel 31:8–9 also equates Eden with the “Garden of God,” describing a luscious, peaceful place with flowing springs and abundant fertility
- 3.
4. [in Isa 51:3; Ezek 28:13; 31:9, 16, 18; 36:35; Joel 2:3. Isaiah 51:3 is in relation to גן־יהוה \(\*gan-yhwh\*\), the “Garden of the Lord,” and Ezek 28:13 has](#)

##### b. Free to Work

- i. Work - It should be noted that even before the fall man was expected to work; paradise was not a life of leisured unemployment. God placed the man in the garden for the stated purpose of supervising it
  1. Work what He Provides. Don’t Create
  2. [In the garden God gives the man a purposeful existence that includes overseeing his environment. Work is a God-given assignment and not a cursed condition. It was sin that spoiled the pristine relationship between the man and his environment, making work a toilsome chore that became a requirement for mere existence \(3:17–19, 23](#)
  3. ,
  4. Cultivate - to till the ground

- a. “to serve, till” is a very common verb and is often used of cultivating the soil (2:5; 3:23; 4:2, 12, etc.). The word is commonly used in a religious sense of serving God (e.g., Deut 4:19), and in priestly texts, especially of the tabernacle duties of the Levites (Num 3:7–8; 4:23–24, 26, etc.). Similarly, שָׁמַר “to
- 5. Keep - watching over
  - a. guard, to keep” has the simple profane sense of “guard” (4:9; 30:31), but it is even more commonly used in legal texts of observing religious commands and duties (17:9; Lev 18:5) and particularly of the Levitical responsibility for guarding the tabernacle from intruders (Num 1:53; 3:7–8). It is striking that here and in the priestly law these two terms are juxtaposed (Num 3:7–8; 8:26; 18:5–6),
  - b. The man’s principal commission is to “work” and “take care” of his pristine garden home (v. 15). The word translated “work” (*‘ābad*) is the common one for tilling the soil (e.g., 3:23; 4:2, 12) or for other labor (e.g., Isa 19:9); it also speaks of “service” to another (e.g., 29:15; 31:6) and is often used of worship (e.g., Exod 3:12). The verb and its noun derivative “service” (*‘ăbōdâ*) frequently describe Levitical duties in tabernacle and temple worship. It also speaks of the completed “work” on the tabernacle (Exod 39:32, 42). “Take care” (*šāmar*) probably specifies the nature of Adam’s labor. It describes the occupation of Abel (4:9), attending property and flocks (e.g., 30:31)

## II. Free to Choose v.16

- a. Command - to **give an order** As God had given the natural world and all life-forms boundaries, human life too is instructed to live within prescribed boundaries. The verb “commanded” (v. 16) occurs twenty-five times in Genesis, but this first occurrence is the only place in Genesis where the narrative introduces a divine command by this formula:
- b.
  - i. Any Tree
    1. Eat Freely - eat, enjoy life in an unassuming way
    2. It was said that the garden contained trees good to eat; now explicit permission is given to eat of them all save the tree of knowledge. This “again reveals the abundance of [God’s] fatherly care”
    3. The instruction of the Lord is given as a positive expression of God’s goodness rather than a harsh restriction (v. 16b). The

Hebrew clause is headed by “from any/every tree [*mikkōl* ‘ēṣ] of the garden,” evidencing God’s broad provision. This generosity is heightened by the following Hebrew construction translated “you are free to eat

4. This strong affirmation indicates that the provision of God for the first couple is plentiful and to be enjoyed liberally by them.

ii. But From

1. **Tree of good and evil** The use of the “knowledge of good and evil” in the wider biblical text lends support to interpreting this knowledge as a moral discernment of good and evil (Gen 3:22; Gen 24:50; It is often thought that sin caused humans to achieve God’s wisdom or to “become” like God, but a close reading of the Masoretic Text and an accurate translation of the perfect verb הָיָה (*hayah*) in Gen 3:22 may indicate the opposite. The verb הָיָה (*hayah*) “describes a lasting condition and not a becoming as it has often been translated under the influence of the Septuagint” This discernment of good and evil was only possible when “Adam *was* like God, from the perspective of pure good, that he was still capable of distinguishing between good and evil”

2. You Shall Not Eat

- a. But freedom has no meaning without prohibition; the boundary for Adam is but one tree. This prohibition, however, is stated in the strongest terms, as was the provision. The adversative beginning the clause (“but”) establishes the contrast between provision and prohibition
- b. The restriction is blunt and firm. “Never eat,” literally, “you shall not eat,” resembles in its form the ten commandments: אֵל “not” followed by the imperfect is used for long-standing prohibitions
- c. You will surely Die
  - i. The causal clause (“for,” *kî*) that follows explains the severity of the prohibition; the consequence of such an action is stated emphatically
  - ii. The death sentence demonstrates God’s seriousness in prohibiting access to the tree

### III. Are You Free 3:2-3

- a. Has God Said?
  - i. Any Tree
- b. From
  - i. The woman corrects the snake, but not quite accurately. Whereas the LORD had said, “You may freely eat of every garden tree,” she omits “every,” saying simply, “We may eat of the fruit ...” She also adopts the

snake's description of the LORD God, describing him simply as "God," and most significantly, she adds to the ban on eating of the tree of knowledge a prohibition on even touching it "lest you die."

- ii. However, she compounded her mistake by misrepresenting God's command as the serpent had done, although definitely without the malicious intent of the snake.
- iii. First, she omits those elements in the command, "any" and "freely," which placed the prohibition in a context of liberality

c. But

- i. Second, Eve identifies the tree according to its location rather than its significance; and third, she refers to "God" as the serpent had done, rather than "the LORD" (v. 3). Fourth, she also adds the phrase "you must not touch it" (v. 3),