

Scripture Reading: Genesis 3:1-6

“1 Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which Jehovah God had made. And he said to the woman, 'Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?'' 2 And the woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; 3 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.' ” 4 Then the serpent said to the woman, 'You will not surely die. 5 For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.' 6 So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. 7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.”

"Man Falls in the Garden"

As we studied at length two weeks ago, a dragon has entered God’s Garden and now things are going to be very different. Man will fall into sin and the grand story of God’s salvation will begin: The salvation that had been planned by the persons of the Trinity from before the foundation of the world.

➤ **The fall of man was significant and tragic but it was not a surprise to God!**

Listen to Jesus as He ministered in Galilee: Matthew 13:34 “All these things Jesus spoke to the multitude in parables; and without a parable He did not speak to them, 35 that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: 'I will open My mouth in parables; I will utter things kept secret from the foundation of the world.'”

Or again as He pronounced His final judgment on the nation of Israel in Jerusalem: Matthew 25:32

“All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. 33 And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. 34 Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world...”

Or as Jesus prayed with His Disciples on the night He was betrayed:

John 17:22 “And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: 23 I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me. 24 Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.”

And finally the most famous of these passages found in Paul’s letter to the

Ephesians 1:3 “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, 4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, 5 having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, 6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.”

What we will cover this morning is very basic but very profound: The temptation of our first parents had a profound impact on the entire human race and God’s creation...

➤ **And the lessons we learn about obedience are critical for our individual lives today as well.**

Here is what John Calvin had to say, “The true rule of obedience is that we being content with a bare command, should persuade ourselves that whatever He enjoins is just and right. But whosoever desires to be wise beyond measure, him will Satan, seeing he has cast off all reverence for God, immediately precipitates into open rebellion.”

Yes, our text is simple but the lessons very profound: And as we approach this text we must once again remember that God is giving us real history:

- The actual event that brought about the fall of man from glory.

This is critical to remember for at least two reasons:

1) Without man’s fall into sin we have no real objective reason to believe that man is in need of salvation nor is there a need for a Savior. This is why the doubts raised about these early chapters of Genesis have ALWAYS over time led to liberalism.

2) It is with our understanding of this history that Christians have the ability to explain how man can at times be noble and/or cruel:

- How those made in God’s image can be capable of such evil.
- It is these truths that give us the confidence to proclaim the great salvation that God has provided to solve the problem of man.

So please, whenever anyone comes to you with a new & novel way to read this history so they can be friends with the humanistic and evolutionary thinking of our day: Whether the old gap theory or day-ages or even the ‘new’ framework theology:

Just ask them this simple question...

- Was there a historical Adam & Eve who fell in the Garden?

IF they cannot confidently affirm that historical fact it will not be long before they are also questioning the history of Jesus and His work on our behalf.

So with that in mind, let us dig into our text:

Satan is using the serpent to tempt our first parents and he begins with a simple question:

“And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?"”

We have here the two most important tools that the father of lies uses to undermine our faith: First Satan uses the generic name for God, Elohim, rather than His covenant name that we saw all throughout chapter two: Jehovah God: The great I AM who was the creator of all that man knew as well as Adam and Eve. Of course it is not wrong to use any of God’s names at the appropriate time but Satan is attempting to make Him more distant at this point...

Think about it this way: Today I can refer to Jesus by His name, I can call him my Lord, My Savior, my redeemer, I can say Jesus Christ [or Jesus the anointed one] and of course it is not improper to refer to Him as God. So if Satan wanted to plant a temptation in my mind, what name to you think he would use for Jesus?

Certainly not His personal name or formal title or redemptive names because that would be counter-productive in regard to the doubt he wants to plant in my mind. He is going to use the most distant, generic name he can get away with and with Eve here in the garden it is God.

The second important point is that Satan wants Eve to doubt God’s Word. Now Eve did not have nor need a Bible because Jehovah God walked with her and Adam in the garden as we shall see next week.

God had given them audibly all the instructions and commands they needed to fill the earth with God's righteous servants! Satan could not win unless he undermined the authority of those statements and got Eve to doubt her God and that is just what he does.

- "Has God said..." is the subtle line that has brought down countless souls in the history of mankind!

We MUST see that the premise of such a statement is that Satan wants Eve to judge the rightness or wrongness of what God has said! Once we begin to think that we can judge the wisdom of something God has said; our own personal fall will not be far behind.

The examples for today would be legion so let me give you just a few simple ones to ponder:

To our covenant children Satan might come saying, 'Has God said that you must honor your parents when they tell you to do something bad?'

To ones who have taken marriage vows Satan might come saying "Has God said you must love your wife even when she does not want you to love her?"

Or on the other side, "Has God said you must call your husband Lord even when he is such a jerk?"

Or the one which I am sure is his favorite today,

- "Has God said that He made the world in six days about six thousand years ago, when we know the earth is billions of years old?"

In each of those cases Satan takes a basic principle that God has really said and twists it just enough to where we think we need to come to His defense.

Jehovah God in His great love for Adam and Eve had told them there was one tree from which they were not to partake and Satan simply expands it into a broader command to eat of none of the trees, but he does so in an inquisitive tone like that can't really be what God intended.

Eve falls for the deception and is soon partaking of the forbidden fruit and again there are important lessons for us here...

2 "And the woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; 3 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.' "

First and foremost we must remember that Adam was present here with his wife and she should NOT have taken Satan on alone... She should have turned to her head and let Him challenge Satan for trying to tempt his wife Eve. Adam's response should have been something along the lines of the one Jesus used with Peter:

- "Get thee behind me Satan, how dare you twist God's commands and try to cause my wife to sin!"
- Adam should not have simply stood by which is why He is the one ultimately held responsible as we shall see in the coming weeks.

But Eve does engage Satan on his terms and he quickly has her right where he wanted her.

Now some look at Eve's response and think that she properly set Satan straight, even strengthening God's command a bit, and reminding him of the consequences of disobedience!

But not only is Eve going where she should not have gone in a discussion with Satan, she actually demonstrates a growing weakness in her faith in some important, but subtle ways.

First Eve does not use God's covenant name but simply parrots Satan.

Next we see that she adds to God's command as she corrects Satan which is something we are strictly forbidden to do with God's Word or commands...

The strongest warning comes at the end of God’s revelation where at Revelation 22:18 we read, “For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; 19 and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.”

But that is not the only such warning: In Deuteronomy 4:2 we read, “You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take anything from it” A command which is repeated in Deuteronomy 12:32.

Agur gives the same warning in Proverbs 30:5 “Every word of God is pure; He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him. 6 Do not add to His words, Lest He rebuke you, and you be found a liar.”

The reason for this command is easily understood when we take seriously what God reveals: As Psalm 119 says of the Scriptures at verse 160: “The entirety of Your word is truth, And every one of Your righteous judgments endures forever.”

And when Paul warned the Corinthians about holding true to God’s Word, I am sure he had Eve’s discussion from the garden in mind:

I Corinthians 4:5 “Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one's praise will come from God. 6 Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes, that you may learn in us not to think beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up on behalf of one against the other.”

I am sure that Eve thought she was helping God by adding to His command but she was in reality opening the door to the pride that would lead to her fall as we shall see in a moment.

Before moving on I think it would be good to remind ourselves that we must not fall into this satanic trap.

A few modern examples come quickly to mind: The Bible strictly forbids drunkenness, but how often do we hear people in the Church teach, “Do not be drunk nor even TOUCH the devils brew?”

We could find similar examples regarding celebrations, about sex, about food and even about having beautiful instrumental music in our worship.

In all these cases the people who add to God’s Word are trying to make it stronger and may honestly be striving to see God’s will carried out, but just as we see with Eve, they open the door to greater and greater temptation by not sticking with and finding sufficient what God has said!

The next error that Eve makes is even more fatal and shows the chink in her armor as she struggles with Satan.

God’s warning about partaking from this tree could not have been any clearer nor any stronger: ‘In the day you eat thereof you shall surely die.’

As we saw in our last lesson, this literally means dying you shall die or you shall die the death. Rather than leading with this sober warning and telling Satan she will not engage in such risky discussions...

- **She simply throws ‘lest we die’ on to the end of her statement.**

Not only does this weaken what God said, it opens her up to Satan’s next step in his deception...

4 “Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die.”

If Satan had begun by saying, you know Eve God lied to you when He said you would die, he would not have gotten very far.

- **This is such an important lesson for our young people to learn!**

Satan is not going to come to you and say, hey, God was lying when He said you would go to hell if you ignore His commands and go out and sin! No he will begin with something like, ‘has God said that all dancing is of the devil?’ Or has God said that you must NEVER look at a woman?’ Or ‘has God said that you must obey your parents even when they tell you to sin?’ Or ‘has God said that you must obey your pastor because he is the only one who knows about God’s truth?’

Now these may all seem a little silly and you think you will never fall for any of them, but please remember that it was such a statement that started Eve down the path to her fall and she was a righteous woman living in God’s Garden! So Satan did not begin with a frontal attack but once he has engaged Eve with his subtlety and had her adding to and weakening God’s Word he is ready to launch the real attack:

4 “Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. 5 For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

Why does Satan say they will not die? Because God has been holding back some of the important truths! Eve, God does not want you to know what will really happen if you eat of this tree so He had to scare you away from it with that awful warning.

Satan has successfully appealed to Eve’s pride and it will bring her down just as it did Satan as we learned last week from Ezekiel 28:15 “You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, Till iniquity was found in you. 16 "By the abundance of your trading You became filled with violence within, And you sinned; ... 17 "Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; You corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor”

This should not surprise us when we remember the sobering truth that Paul brings us at the end of Romans chapter one where we see all the sins that result from suppressing the truth of God: In verse 32 we read:

“32 who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.”

- Satan has fallen as a result of his pride, wanting to be as God, and now he desires to take the entire human race down with him!

And it appears that he has succeeded: 6 “So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.”

The Apostle John warns us against the temptations of the world and they are the same ones which Eve faced: I John 2:15 “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world--the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life--is not of the Father but is of the world.”

- Eve succumbed to the lust of the flesh thinking the tree was good for food!
- Eve succumbed to the lust of the eyes gazing at the beauty of the tree!
- And finally Eve succumbed to the pride of life desiring to be as God: Wanting to be wiser than she as a mere creature could ever be.”

We will consider the responsibility of Adam in all of this and God’s response next week, but I want to close by returning to my comment about how it appeared that Satan had succeeded.

Why would I say ‘it appears’ when we consider what happened that day: Man fell into sin corrupting his nature and the entire creation for which he was the steward.

- Sure looks like a stunning victory from a human perspective.

But remember I started by reminding us that these events came as no surprise to God... He knew that man would fall and that he would need a redeemer if the entire human race was not to be punished for their sins in the Lake of Fire created for the fallen angels. The fall of man changed the natural course of history: Satan would now have control over the nations of men and seek to ruin all of God's plans.

However, God would call out Abraham and establish a special nation that would bring forth a New Adam who would succeed where the first Adam failed. And yes, Jesus would even face the temptations of Satan just as Adam did, only Jesus would not do so in the comfort of a Garden surrounded by all of God's gracious provisions: Jesus would be tempted in a wilderness that typified the destruction of God's creation which Satan had wanted and He did so after a fast of 40 days. And it should not surprise us to see how Jesus faced and properly resisted the very same temptations: The lust of the flesh where Satan appeals to Jesus as the Son of God to turn stones into bread because of His hunger! Jesus answers with the full power of God's Word telling Satan that man does not live by bread alone.

Jesus faced the lust of the eyes when Satan showed him all the nations he had won and offered them to him, but Jesus again answered with the Word of God saying that we must worship God alone! Jesus knew that the nations of the earth were lost by the first Adam and that He had come to take them back, but in God's way not Satan's!

And finally Jesus resisted the pride of life when he refused Satan's suggestion that he cast Himself off the peak of the Temple to show how God would protect Him. And even when Satan used Scriptures to make his case, Jesus wisely says, It is ALSO written, you shall not tempt the Lord your God. Then the Gospel writers tell us that "the devil left Him, and behold, angels came and ministered to Him."

Satan was not finished with Jesus which we will consider at some length when we come to the first promise of the Gospel in verse 15, but for today I want us to not only learn the lessons we must about resisting the temptations of Satan and his minions but I want us to take great comfort in knowing that Jesus has gone before not only winning us the victory but showing us the path to life: James, who is often brutally honest tells of this in his Epistle:

James 4: "1 Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? 2 You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. 3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures. 4 Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. 5 Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, "The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously"? 6 But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble." 7 Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. 8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you... 10 Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up."

Communion Meditation: Ephesians 6 "11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. 13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. 14 Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, 15 and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; 16 above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. 17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; 18 praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints"