

THE SUBTLETY OF THE SERPENT

TEXT: GENESIS 3:1-20

INTRODUCTION:

1. I am going to speak this morning on the subtlety of the serpent (3:1). Of course when we speak of the subtlety of the serpent, we are referring to the subtlety of Satan.
2. Satan is referred to in Revelation 12:9 as the great dragon, and "that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world."
3. When we speak of Satan's subtlety, we speak of his shrewdness and his craftiness, and his skillfulness in deceiving people.
4. The apostle Paul wrote to the church at Corinth that "the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty" (II Cor. 11:3).
5. This same word is translated "craftiness" in Ephesians 4:14 -- "That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive."
6. For a long time, many people have asked how God could justly permit Satan to tempt men. Augustus H. Strong gave an excellent answer to that question.
7. "We see in this permission not injustice but benevolence. Since Satan fell without external temptation, it is probable that man's trial would have been substantially the same, even though there had been no Satan to tempt him" (*Systematic Theology*).

I. SATAN'S ATTACK ON THE WORD OF GOD (3:1)

1. Satan approached Eve, and said to her, "Yea, hath God said?" (3:1).
2. Eve should have simply replied, "Yes God said it and that settles it." But Eve was easily deceived by Satan.
3. Satan confuses people regarding the reliability and accuracy of God's Word. When Satan said to Eve, "Yea, hath God said?" he was implying, "Are you sure God really said that?"
4. Here in Genesis 3:1 we find the first question mark in the Bible. Skeptics love to question the veracity of God's Word, and when they do that they are following the example of Satan.
5. Behind every religious cult, and behind every false prophet, and behind every skeptic and liberal and agnostic and atheist is the voice of the serpent – "Yea, hath God said?"

6. The apostle Paul referred to Eve's transgression in I Timothy 2:14, "And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression."
7. This is not to suggest that Adam wasn't responsible. He sinned also when he disobeyed God and ate the forbidden fruit (Gen. 3:6). And in Genesis 3:17, God said to Adam, "Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife..."
8. Adam sinned with his eyes open. And by his foolish act of disobedience, "sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Rom. 5:12).
9. This is what is known as "the fall of man."
10. Satan's methods have not changed over the years. He is still attacking the Word of God. M. R. DeHaan said, "'That is what God really meant,' suggests the enemy. 'Eve,' says the old deceiver, 'you must not take things so literally,' and Eve accepted the seemingly harmless help of Satan and believed the Devil's interpretation of God's Word instead of the simple 'Thus saith the Lord.' This initial stroke of deception in the Garden, however, was but the first skirmish in the battle of the Book" (*Bible Versions and Perversions*).
11. Satan is still attacking the Word of God. Recently Bill O'Reilly has been all over the television undermining faith in the Bible. He recently said, "Mr. Robertson (of Duck Dynasty), I believe, made a mistake by (condemning homosexuality). It's not about the Bible, or believing or not believing in the Bible."
12. Actually, IT IS about believing or not believing the Bible. That is precisely what this whole controversy is about. The Bible condemns homosexuality (and adultery and many other sins), but homosexuals and their powerful allies in the liberal media hate the Bible.
13. I am not surprised that Mr. O'Reilly is attacking the Bible because he has been doing this for many years. He recently wrote a stupid book called, *Killing Jesus*. O'Reilly has the gall to say that that the Holy Spirit "inspired" him to write his book.
14. Our Lord said the Holy Spirit is "the Spirit of truth," and "He will guide us into all truth" (John 16:13). We can be certain the Holy Spirit is not guiding Bill O'Reilly.
15. I could give many examples, but one will suffice for now. According to O'Reilly, Luke 23:34 is wrong where Jesus says, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."
16. Sadly, Mr. O'Reilly (a Roman Catholic), who is pro-homosexual and pro-abortion, is a typical American. A few years ago, the Barna

- Research Group revealed that only 22 percent of the people they surveyed believed in moral absolutes, while 64 percent thought truth was relative to the situation ("situation ethics"). Among those interviewed that were identified as being "born again," just 32 percent believed in moral absolutes. This is a disturbing report!
17. When people say they do not believe in moral absolutes, they are admitting they do not believe the Bible, because the Bible is a book of absolute truth.
 18. Our Lord prayed to God the Father in John 17:17, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth."
 19. The Ten Commandments are moral absolutes. The Sermon on the Mount is a sermon full of moral absolutes. The Bible is the authoritative Word of God, and the Bible says, "Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge" (Hebrews 13:4).
 20. The Bible says homosexuality is an abomination, wicked, vile, unnatural, and unseemly. That is the absolute truth!

II. SATAN'S SUCCESS IN DECEIVING SINNERS

1. Notice that immediately the devil began his conversation by tempting Eve (3:1). Eve said to God, "The serpent beguiled (deceived) me, and I did eat" (3:13).
2. Three elements entered into the temptation -- physical desire, intellectual curiosity, and personal assertion. The devil uses "the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life" (I John 2:16) to entice sinners.
3. Satan is a master of deception. He is very good at confusing people and putting doubts in their minds. Those of us who are involved in soulwinning understand that Satan has blinded the minds of sinners.
4. The apostle Paul said, "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them" (II Cor. 4:3, 4).
5. Ephesians 6:11 says, "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." "Wiles" means, "deceit, craft, trickery."
6. Satan is referred to as "the tempter" in Matthew 4:3 and I Thessalonians 3:5. James 4:7 says, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."

7. In Revelation 12:9, Satan is identified as “the great dragon...that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world.” He is an expert in deception.
8. In John 8:44 our Lord said this about the devil, “When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.”
9. Interestingly, two of Satan’s lies are still very popular to this day: (1) “Ye shall not surely die” (3:4) – reincarnation, no hell, purgatory, etc. (2) “Ye shall be as gods” (3:5) – paganism, humanism, New Age, etc.
10. Just yesterday we met a man who believed we are all "gods."
11. Also, while the devil questioned God’s Word, and then denied God’s Word; Eve was also wrong to add to God’s Word (Gen. 3:3).
12. Proverbs 30:6 says, “Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar.”
13. Satan told Eve, “Ye shall not surely die” (3:4). That was a lie.
14. Sin and misery, broken lives, war, and billions of graves attest that God is true and Satan is a liar.
15. The LORD told Adam, "For in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Genesis 2:17) -- not only physically, but die spiritually.
16. Just as physical death is the separation of the soul from the body, so spiritual death is the separation of the soul from God.
17. In Luke 15:24, the Prodigal Son's father said, "This my son was dead (separated from me), and is alive again" (restored to me).
18. When Ephesians 2:1 says that we "were dead in trespasses and sins," it means sin had separated us from God.
19. Isaiah 59:2 says, "But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear."
20. The Bible warns of the "second death." This refers to eternal separation from God and everlasting punishment in the lake of fire.
21. The first warning is found here in the Garden of Eden. Here we have the Biblical definition of death -- separation from God, evidenced by the expulsion of man from the Garden of Eden (3:22-24).
22. Adam and Eve disobeyed God and were excluded from the Garden of Eden and the tree of life. But Romans 5:19 says, "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous."
23. Because of Christ's death on the cross, we shall eat of the fruit of that tree from which Adam was barred. Revelation 2:7 says, "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God."

III. THE CERTAIN JUDGMENT OF SATAN

1. The LORD cursed the serpent, and said the seed of the woman (Christ) shall bruise his head (Gen. 3:14, 15). This will take place at the second coming of Christ.
2. Revelation 20:10 says, "And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever."
3. Satan's head shall be bruised when he is cast into the lake of fire.
4. Genesis 3:15 also says, "And thou shalt bruise his heel." This refers to the first coming of Christ.
5. Satan is a defeated foe. Our Lord said in John 12:31, "Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out."
6. Satan first slithered into the Garden of Eden in Genesis 3:1. Then all through the Bible we see him and his demons deceiving sinners.
7. But in Revelation 20:10 we read that he will be cast into the lake of fire, and from that point on he is mentioned again no more.

CONCLUSION:

1. The devil has deceived most people into thinking that as long as they are "good" (and their definition of "good" is pretty bad!), then they need not fear spending eternity in hell.
2. R. A. Torrey said that in his first pastorate he tried to get a man to come to Christ, but the man stubbornly held to liberal theology and denied that he needed to be born again.
3. Liberal theology is Satanic. In 1923, the great Bible scholar J. Gresham Machen wrote a book entitled, *Christianity and Liberalism*, and in this book he asserted that liberal Christianity was just as anti-Christian and heathenistic as Hinduism or Islam.
4. In any event, this acquaintance of R. A. Torrey held to this liberal theology and he denied that he needed to be born again.
5. He refused to listen to Dr. Torrey, and refused to see him. But the hour came when death drew nigh. A cancer was eating its way through his scalp and skull and into his brain.
6. Then he cried out to those about his dying bed, "Send for Mr. Torrey." RA Torrey hurried to his side. The man was in despair.
7. "Oh!" he said, "My doctor tells me that I have but a short time to live, that as soon as this cancer gets a little further and eats through the thin

- film of skull and touches the brain I am a dead man. Tell me how to be saved."
8. Dr. Torrey tried to make the way of salvation as plain as he knew how, but the man had waited too long, and he could not grasp it.
 9. Torrey stayed with him. When night came on, he said to the man's family, "You have been up night after night with him, I will sit with him tonight."
 10. They instructed him what to do, how to minister to him. Later, Torrey wrote this about the man's final night on earth: "Time after time during the night I had to go to another room to get some nourishment for him, and as I would come back into the room where he lay, from his bed in the corner there would rise the constant cry, 'Oh, I wish I were a Christian. Oh, I wish I were a Christian. Oh, I wish I were a Christian.' And thus he died."