

Genesis 3:1-6

Genesis 3 Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, “Indeed, has God said, ‘You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?’” ² The woman said to the serpent, “From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; ³ but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.’” ⁴ The serpent said to the woman, “You surely will not die! ⁵ For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” ⁶ 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 desirable to make *one* wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.

Lessons from the Anatomy of The Fall

Steven Cole on Genesis 3...

“Because of Adam and Eve’s yielding to Satan’s original temptation, the human race was plunged into sin. Since then every person has struggled with temptation. Becoming a Christian and even walking with God for many years does not eliminate or even minimize the dangers of temptation. “Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall” (1 Cor. 10:12). There is within us all a strong desire for the forbidden fruit. Someone astutely observed, “Most people want to be delivered from temptation, but they would like it to keep in touch.”

As Christians who want to please God, we must understand how temptation works so that we can learn how to resist it. Genesis is a classic case study of the process of temptation.

By understanding how temptation works we can devise a strategy for victory over it

To be forewarned of Satan’s strategy is to be forearmed. His pattern for tempting Eve is essentially the same approach he uses today. By studying and learning to recognize that pattern, we will not be ignorant of his schemes (2 Cor. 2:11), and thus can resist them.”

Introduction...

“In Genesis 2, we peer into a paradise world where all is good. By Genesis 4, we encounter the malice and deceit we know so well. The bridge between paradise and our moral wilderness is the Bible’s account of the fall of man in Genesis 3. The rest of the Bible, especially the gospel message of Jesus, is God’s answer to our great need.

Genesis 3 begins by correctly identifying the problem...man's rebellion against God through sin.

A. W. Pink summarizes the stirring way in which this essential chapter advances from that terrible event:

Here we find the divine explanation of the present fallen and ruined condition of our race. Here we learn of the subtle devices of our enemy, the Devil. . . . Here we discover the spiritual effects of sin—man seeking to flee from God. Here we discern the attitude of God toward the guilty sinner. . . . Here we are taught of the gracious provision which God has made to meet our great need. Here begins that marvelous stream of prophecy which runs all through the Holy Scriptures. Here we learn that man cannot approach God except through a mediator.”

Source: Richard Phillips, Genesis

The Setting...

“As we come to the third chapter of Genesis, Adam and Eve are living in unparalleled splendor amidst the crystal waters and green forests of Eden in delightful concert with each other and with the animals God had placed in the garden. The magnificent couple shared the same bones and same flesh in naked majesty. She came out of him...she had the same Creator-Father, and she was his “one flesh” wife. **Their one-flesh relationship reflected the eternal intimacy and order of the Holy Trinity and foreshadowed the intimacy and order of Christ and his bride, the church (cf. Ephesians 5:31, 32).** Their intimacy was a substantial glory to God as a reflection of what always was and a glimpse of what was to come.

Adam's authority in the order of the husband-and-wife relationship was part of creation before sin and the fall entered the picture. This is evident because...

- 1) **Adam was created first, a fact that Paul makes central in his argument for maintaining creation order in 1 Timothy 2:13—“For Adam was formed first, then Eve.”**
- 2) **Eve was taken out of man**, which Paul likewise notes in a similar argument in 1 Corinthians 11:8, 9—“For man was not made from woman, but woman from man. Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man.”

- 3) **Eve was designated Adam’s “helper” (2:18)**, whereas this could not be said of Adam.
- 4) **The authority structure of Genesis 2—3 rests on the careful order of God, the man, the woman, and the animal (serpent).**

This, of course, was tragically reversed by the fall, as Kenneth Mathews points out:

“The woman listens to the serpent, the man listens to the woman, and no one listens to God.”

This usurping of authority will be addressed immediately after the fall in God’s successive judgment speeches to the serpent, to the woman, and to the man.

Before the fall, Adam and Eve have listened only to God. The sinless pair ride the pinnacle of innocence and openness. “And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed” (2:25). They were spiritually naked before God.

There was no need for disciplined devotion. All of life was devotion. Loving God was as natural as breathing, and as effortless!

Domestically, they were naked with one another. Clothing had never occurred to them. **There was nothing to hide or protect. The gravitational pull of self did not exist. Neither one was the center of his or her own life.** God and each other were their centers. They were, in today’s parlance, “other-directed.” All that they were was simply there for the other to see and love.

Whereas 2:25 pictures Adam and Eve at the pinnacle of innocence and intimacy, 3:7 describes them in the pit of guilt and estrangement. This section describes the first couple’s descent from innocence to guilt.

As primal history, it describes what has happened countless times down through the ages. It is universal.

The Dialogue of Descent (vv. 1-5)

Verses 1-5 describe the dialogue that leads to the descent of Adam and Eve, and verses 6, 7 describe the couple’s actual descent into the pit.

Source: Kent Hughes, Genesis

Enter the Serpent

The account of man's fall begins with the serpent's entry into the garden: "Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made" (Gen. 3:1)...The intruder appears without warning to threaten the harmony of paradise...**The serpent's arrival shows that sin is a historical disruption, deep in the history of mankind's experience of God's good world. Sin is not normal, but an anomaly.** It is a gate crasher, an intruder.

Questions are immediately raised about the nature and identity of the serpent. Was this an ordinary snake, and if so, how could it speak? **From Genesis's own description, this animal was cunning and probably attractive. It was only after the fall that God cursed the serpent to crawl on its belly (Gen. 3:14). There is no reason to think that before the fall other animals could speak, so the serpent's arrival must have been remarkable. The Bible later makes clear that behind the serpent (or rather, inside it) was the evil spiritual power known as the devil, or Satan. Jesus identified him as "a murderer from the beginning, . . . a liar and "the father of lies" (John 8:44). The devil is a fallen archangel, a created being of vast, though not infinite, spiritual power, who sometime prior to Genesis 3 fell into rebellion against God (about all that we know of this fall is told in Jude 6).**

Because of its crafty nature, Satan infiltrated and possessed the snake so as to beguile the woman. His appearance at the start of Genesis 3 confirms, as John Murray states, "the reality and activity of Satan and of the demonic order. Back of all that is visible and tangible in the sin of this world there are unseen spiritual powers."

The struggle that begins in Genesis 3 is between not man and snake but man and devil.

How did this fit into God's plan?

One unavoidable question asks whether the serpent came unawares not only to Adam and Eve but also to God. Given our knowledge of God's attributes, including omniscience and omnipresence, the only possible answer is no. If the devil appeared to tempt the man and his wife, it was God's will for Adam to stand this test in keeping his covenant obligation, not eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:17).

As H. C. Leupold points out, the devil's temptation shows God's desire for a true and positive morality and obedience: "To do what God desires merely because one cannot do otherwise, has

no moral worth. . . . To do the right where there has never been an opportunity of doing wrong is not moral behavior. The opportunity to do otherwise must present itself.”

It is this chosen obedience that God desires and that required Adam’s temptation.

Source: Richard Phillips, Genesis

“Did the snake suddenly drop from a tree?...Did it hiss or lisp its words or speak with a voice like Eve’s husband? We do not know. But we do know that **through the serpent’s voice Satan attacked God’s word.**

Here we must remember that God’s word was responsible for everything Eve enjoyed—day and night, the sun and the moon, the dappled blue of the sky, the exotica of the garden, the flowers, the singing rainbows of birds, the adoring creatures, her Adam—all came from God’s good word, which Satan now attacked. It would seem that Satan’s attack would not have a chance. But appearances are sometimes deceiving.”

Source: Kent Hughes, Genesis

The dialogue between the serpent and the woman is of great value to believers today, since we face the same opponent. Paul wrote that Christians should “not be outwitted by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his designs” (2 Cor. 2:11). **The devil’s strategy varies little in time or place, nor need it, since in his cunning hands it poses a deadly threat to us all. Indeed, Genesis 3:1–5 records a masterpiece of deception and temptation.**

Satan’s method reflected his purpose. In the guise of a creature, he approached the woman rather than the man. Adam had been charged to “keep” or “guard” the garden, and the prohibition not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil had been given to him by God (Gen. 2:15). Adam and Eve together were to rule over the lesser creatures, bearing testimony to them of God’s sovereign glory. **In seeking to upend the entire cosmos, then, Satan reversed God’s covenant order. As a subtle creature, he approached the woman, so that in the end Adam, the lord of the garden, would listen to his wife as she was under the influence of a snake. Satan’s target was man’s relationship with God, so his method was to contradict God’s covenant order in a way that made Satan the god of Adam and Eve’s new and corrupted world.**

Source: Richard Phillips, Genesis

The serpent's question...

And he said to the woman, “Indeed, has God said, ‘You shall not eat from any tree of the garden’?”

The serpent opened the dialogue with a surprised, incredulous tone. “He said to the woman, ‘Did God actually say, “You shall not eat of any tree in the garden”?’” (v. 1b). Satan was so subtle. He did not directly deny God’s word, but he introduced the assumption that God’s word is subject to our judgment. Such a thought had never been verbalized before. It was enticing.

The serpent also carefully avoided the use of God’s covenant name, “the Lord” (Yahweh). Satan was careful not to mention God’s personal covenant name but stuck to Elohim, the more remote designation. Ominously, Eve followed his lead as she too only used Elohim in their dialogue.

In chapter 1, Elohim (signifying God as Creator) was used in every instance to refer to God, but in chapters 2–4 the title Yahweh-Elohim is everywhere employed (combining his Creator and Covenant-Redeemer names)...everywhere except here in the deadly dialogue of 3:1-5.

Source: J G Vos

Satan’s incredulous tone and conscious disuse of God’s personal name set up his studied distortion of God’s word. Whereas in 2:16 the Lord God had generously commanded, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden,” Satan now asks, “Did God [Elohim] actually say, ‘You shall not eat of *any tree in the garden*’?”. That was a complete distortion and travesty of God’s word. **God’s generosity was perverted by Satan’s question to suggest divine stinginess!**

Satan’s approach was so subtle that Eve did not suspect that God’s word was being attacked. It was just an “innocent question.” But a seed of doubt about God’s word had been planted in Eve’s heart that would bear immediate fruit.

God’s word attacked...

Insinuating himself as the woman’s worldview counselor, the devil had two great aims, the first of which was...to deceive the woman into doubting God and mistrusting his word.

Satan began with a subtly crafted question: “He said to the woman, ‘Did God actually say, “You shall not eat of any tree in the garden”?’ ” (Gen. 3:1). **In saying this, the devil was not seeking information, but rather seeking to upend the woman’s thinking about God.**

Notice how he deceitfully miscast God’s word by exaggerating his prohibition. Whereas God had actually stated, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden,” excepting one tree only (2:16), Satan asked the woman why God had forbidden them to “eat of any tree in the garden” (3:1).

Iain Provan explains...“The vocabulary of God in Genesis 3 indicates freedom and blessing. The vocabulary of the serpent in Genesis 3 indicates prohibition and restriction. God had given his image-bearers a glorious world in which to live, with only one restriction to mark their covenant fidelity. Satan’s question suggested against all this evidence that God is essentially prohibitive and does not want his creatures to enjoy their lives. The very suggestion struck Eve like a thunderbolt.”

Clyde Francisco writes: “It was the first time she had ever heard anyone doubt God. She did not know that it was a live option.”

Never had it occurred to the woman that God’s word is subject to human assessment. The effect on her is seen in the wavering answer she gave to the serpent.

Source: Richard Phillips, Genesis

Eve’s revisions...

Every detail in this pivotal interaction is significant. Take careful note of the several ways in which Eve’s answer distorted God and his word...

The snake’s distorted question provided Eve with a memorable chance to set the serpent straight. But our mother failed. Instead, as Moses carefully records, she descended to her own revisions of God’s word in three sad instances in which she (1) diminished God’s word, then (2) added to his word, and then (3) softened his word.

- God had said in 2:16, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden” (italics added), but now Eve leaves out the “every,” simply saying, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden” (3:2).

Note that first, Eve minimized the provision of the Lord. Her inexact, unenthusiastic rendition of God’s word discounted his generosity. She was in tacit agreement with the serpent. Something bad was happening in her heart.

- **Eve’s subtle shift in heart was further revealed in her telltale addition to God’s word: “But God [Elohim] said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, *neither shall you touch it*’” (v. 3a, *italics added*). God never said, “neither shall you touch it”! Eve magnified God’s strictness—“Just touch the tree, and zap!—you’re dead!” Her comment suggested that God is so harsh that an inadvertent slip would bring death.**

This is so typical of us sons and daughters of Eve...When we don’t like a prohibition or a warning, we magnify its strictness. The suggestion that our superior is unjust mitigates our culpability. And if we do not perform, we may imagine that we have a morally superior way out.

We must beware, lest we begin to think that God’s word is unreasonable or too requiring. **Do we find ourselves overstating Scripture’s call to purity as “unrealistic”?**

Source: Kent Hughes, Genesis

- **Eve softened the threat of God’s judgment**

What God had actually said was that by eating from that tree, “you shall surely die” (2:17), using the strongest grammar of affirmation. Now Eve substitutes a weak “lest you die,” bringing the subject into doubt.

Source: Richard Phillips, Genesis

Kent Hughes...

“Eve paradoxically softened God’s word by merely saying, ‘lest you die.’ She left out the word ‘surely’ (2:17). The certitude of death was removed. So in the extended sentence that makes up verses 2, 3, Eve, in a breath, at once diminished, added to, and softened God’s word. Her revisionist approach to the holy word of God put her in harm’s way. And it likewise does so today.

To recap...

Consider what the devil has accomplished. By asserting doubt in God's word, a change of attitude has occurred in the woman's heart. Instead of carefully reciting what God had said, in the way that God said it, she allowed the serpent to reframe the situation. The result was a seed of distrust that served the devil's purpose.

Leupold comments: "Already the attitude of the heart to God is clearly seen no longer to be one of perfect trust. The suspicion which Satan so cleverly suggested was allowed to take root."

With her doubt of God's word in place, the serpent will be able to launch his main attack of temptation to rebel against God's rule.

Attack by Assertion...

Satan's first purpose is to undermine our trust in the authority of the Bible. "Did God really say . . . ?" is ever his question.

Martyn Lloyd-Jones points out that Satan produced this doubt merely by raising suggestive questions. He offered no proof, but only insinuation. In fact, all the evidence was opposed to what he said. But in listening to his claim, Eve became deceived. **This same tactic continues today.** Lloyd-Jones asks: "If you are not a Christian, if you do not believe the Bible, and if you do not believe in God, on what grounds are you not believing? What are your reasons? What is your argument? Where is your proof? Can you prove to me that there is no God? . . . Do you have anything beyond a dogmatic assertion?"

Consider the assertion of evolution by which we are urged to be sensible and reject the literal reading of Genesis. Yet evolution is a mere claim, a theory, without conclusive proof. To be sure, evolution has all the authority of government, academia, and media behind it, so that great pressure is exerted on Christians to accept it. But none of these offers conclusive proof; indeed, after several generations of study, the theory of evolution is widely considered to be on shakier ground than ever before. The case for evolution rests, therefore, not on evidence but on assertion backed up by cultural intimidation....

Satan likewise cast false aspersions against God's word to Adam and Eve. The lesson of her poor reply is that instead of wandering a path of reasoning laid down by those who wish to deny the Bible, Christians should instead stand firmly on the rock of God's Word. Jesus declared, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away" (Matt. 24:35).

Source: Richard Phillips, Genesis

Satan's Contradiction...

“But the serpent said to the woman, ‘You will not surely die’” (v. 4). This is an in-your-face to God. The Hebrew places the word *lo* (“not”) in front of God’s declaration: “not—you shall surely die.” “Take that, God!” It is the serpent’s word versus God’s word—an absurd juxtaposition.

Divine Judgement Denied...

Note, too, that the doctrine of divine judgment is the very first doctrine to be denied. Satan attacked it from the beginning. Modern culture’s loathing for the doctrine comes from the fact that this is the devil’s world, the *cosmos diabolicus*. Satan is “the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience” (Ephesians 2:2).”

Nevertheless, divine judgment has fallen and will fall as surely as it did for Adam and Eve.

The pathology of this dialogue of descent is so clear: Satan offers a question based on the perversion of God’s word. Eve then begins to question it herself, as is evidenced by her revisions of God’s word. And then Satan is free to declare God’s word as wrong. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!

Eve should have recoiled in horror and run screaming through the garden to Adam. And Adam should have stepped forth to uphold the good word of God. But Eve was “buying it.” She remained entranced before the serpent, flushed with excitement. Anticipation consumed her.

God’s goodness attacked...

Encouraged by Eve’s revisions, Satan went after God himself, attacking his goodness: “For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil” (v. 5).

God was cast in an ugly light. According to the serpent, the threat of death was nothing more than a scare tactic to keep Adam and Eve in their place. God was repressive, and obviously jealous that they might ascend too high.

What an incredible attack in light of the fact that the thousand “goods” of creation, not to mention the gift of each other and their rulership of the earth as well, came from God. Such a blatant slur on God’s character! But Eve was believing it. If you are going to lie, it might as well be a big one, big enough to totally reinterpret life. This was big. It would alter life forever.

The lie bore the lure of divinity for Eve—“you will be like God.” Sin has an intrinsic spiritual lure. It holds a seemingly golden promise. I remember as a young high school boy sitting in front of my locker tying my shoes slowly as I listened to the older boys describe their backseat exploits. Its lure was the gnostic promise of elevation to the elite realms of another world, which God’s word withheld, I thought. But it was actually the lure of Hell. **If you are in the thrall of sin, you will see God’s prohibitions as “barriers for the strong to climb”. If Eve would just stretch forth her lovely hand and resolutely take the fruit, divinity would be hers.**

The lie also held out the lure of moral autonomy—“you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” By taking the fruit she would become wise. Equal with God, she would autonomously decide what was right and wrong. How intoxicating! She would make the rules. She would do it her way. That promise still intoxicates. A funeral director told me that among the unbelieving population Frank Sinatra’s “My Way” is in first place as a funeral favorite...But the truth is, “My Way” is the dirge of death, marking the implosion of the autonomous self. But what deadly magnetism it carries.

Source: Kent Hughes, Genesis

Closing Application...Foiling the Schemes of the Devil

Recall that the apostle Paul urged believers not to be outwitted through ignorance of Satan’s designs (2 Cor. 2:11). Eve is found here listening to the beguiling words of a serpent, when God had appointed Adam not only as her covenant head but also as the lord over all the lower creatures.

- **The serpent’s manner of attack remains suggestive of his tactics today. Satan desires to isolate us from the supports and structures that God has ordained for our benefit. He insists that we answer his questions, on the terms he has given, in a dialogue that he controls. Our first protection, then, lies in refusing to stand alone in a debate that is designed to deceive us into doubting God’s Word.**

- **Genesis 2 records God’s institution of marriage, in which a man and a woman are to be one.** The woman was given as a helper to the man (Gen. 2:18), and his charge was to “work” and “keep” everything within the garden (Gen. 2:15). This means that Eve was under the guardian care of her husband. **Yet where is Adam in this crucial dialogue?** When Genesis 3:6 records Eve as eating the forbidden fruit, it says that she “gave some to her husband who was with her.” **This does not necessarily mean that Adam was standing by idly while his wife spoke with the serpent. But it is clear that Adam was near, which means that he had the duty of guarding his wife not only from physical attack but also from the moral and spiritual assault she received. For her part, Eve undoubtedly should have responded to the serpent’s question about God by pointing him to Adam, his proper ruler in the creation garden.**
- **Eve exposed herself to spiritual danger by not following the order given by God for the garden.** Later, after children were born, God would institute the family, in which parents are given authority to guide and direct their children. Subsequently, when God instituted the church, He provides faithful pastor/teachers to guard his people from moral and doctrinal error.

Indeed, it is with the events of the garden directly in mind that Paul ordered that only men serve in the teaching office of the church: “I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor” (1 Tim. 2:12–14). Wherever this command is violated under the wisdom of the world—which says that gender does not matter—the corruption of biblical teaching is sure to follow.

- **Of course, Satan was not going to alert Eve to her vulnerability. The fact that the serpent is described as “crafty” should disabuse us from any idea that a confrontation with Satan will be easy. The devil does not assail our strengths, but finds our weaknesses, approaching not directly with open denials of truth but isolating us and striking from an unforeseen angle.** For instance, when a liberal college professor makes assertions that assail a Christian student’s faith, he will mock the idea that the youth should consult his parents or pastor. “Why can’t you stand on your own two feet?” he will demand. “You’re eighteen years old,” he will mock; “do you still need your parents’ coattails or your childhood preacher?” Following Satan in the garden, such a serpent does not aim at the student’s well-being but seeks only to co-opt an impressionable youth into unbelief and sin. **The wise student will not resolve to face a deceiver on his or her own, but will humbly remember God’s provisions of godly counsel and spiritual guidance.**

- **Likewise, a Christian woman should marry a sound Christian man and then benefit from his counsel, just as Christian men should marry godly women and consult them for their spiritual advice. Christian fathers should place themselves and their families under sound spiritual leadership and faithful Bible teaching.**
- **Church leaders must ensure that no false teaching arises in their ministries, seeing in Genesis 3 how much damage is caused especially by those who undermine confidence in God’s Word.**
- **In addition to relying on God’s provided order, Christians must defend themselves from Satan by knowing well the truth about God. Satan’s assaults will most profoundly be theological, causing us to doubt the wisdom, power, or goodness of the Lord.**

Alasdair Paine observes that “the serpent’s tactic is to create a false impression of God himself. . . . Genesis teaches us that temptation can work by means of lies distorting the truth about God, which thus make sin seem sensible and attractive.”

How vital, then, is the need for Christians to be clear about the attributes of God, so that we will not be led astray by the deceits of the devil.

Jesus set us an example when he resisted Satan in three great temptations under tremendous duress. Satan’s first assault on Jesus was similar to his temptation of Eve in that he implicitly questioned God’s goodness. Jesus had fasted forty days and nights in a desert, when “the tempter came and said to him, ‘If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread’ ” (Matt. 4:3). The idea was that God’s Son shouldn’t be made to subject himself to such hardship. Jesus responded, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God’ ” (Matt. 4:4).

- **Here is our final lesson in thwarting the designs of the devil... the vital importance not merely of faithful teachers and sound theology, as important as they are, but of God’s Word itself. Here, Eve’s example provides a vital lesson on the particular value of the very words of Scripture...it was through her paraphrased version of God’s word that false ideas exposed her to the devil’s attack.**
- **In Scripture we gain not merely truths about God, but God himself speaking to us: words of goodness and grace, wisdom and warning, salvation and peace. God’s Word shines as a light into cracks of doubt or unbelief, so that the Christian who lives close to an open Bible is fortified against spiritual assault.**

Source: Richard Phillips, Genesis