

The Serpent's Lust for Our Children

Call to Worship: Psalm 5

1st Scripture: 1 John 2:15-17

2nd Scripture: Genesis 3:1-6

Hymn #772- *Deliver Me from Evil*

Hymn #580- *When Peace Like a River*

Hymn #27- *Be Thou My Vision*

Introduction

When the cunning serpent tempted Man in the garden, he leveled his attack against the natural, but good, appetites of his humanity. He knew that it was a delight for man to see, to perceive, and to enjoy the beautifully crafted environment, within which God set man. And he knew that it was fulfilling and pleasurable for man to eat and taste different foods, which would gratify the inner desires of the body. And he knew that man would find joy in the exercise of his dominion over the earth, given him by God. And yet, he knew that all of these things, while good in their proper state of usage and domain, could be abused, if the desire for man to gratify any of these appetites, superseded his desire and commitment to serve and honor his God and Creator.

And so, when the devil tempted Eve, he appealed to her normally good desire to enjoy the taste of delicious food, when he presented the fruit of the forbidden tree to her, as that which resonated with the other fruits of the garden, being tasty to the tongue and gratifying to the stomach. And that which was normally good, because it involved what God had forbidden, suddenly became a *lust of the flesh*. And then, while looking at the shape, color and design of the tree and its fruit, Eve's normally blessed ability to perceive and appreciate beauty, became an inordinate craving; a *lust of the eyes*. And finally, the naturally instilled gift and ability to lead and to take charge, transgressed the boundaries of God's good design, when Eve pondered that this fruit could make her wise like God, knowing good and evil. And once again, that which was good (in its proper, God honoring domain and order), became the *pride of life*. Having been tempted in these three ways, Eve, of course, took the fruit, ate, gave it to her husband, who also ate, and the rest is history. Mankind was plunged into a state of sin and misery.

But, what is also very noteworthy about this dark historical event, is that it contains a blueprint for the three general ways, in which, man is tempted to sin against his God. Verse 6 is paramount to our understanding the vulnerable ways, in which, our flesh is apt to be tempted.

"So that when the woman saw that the tree was good for food ("lust of the flesh"), that it was pleasant to the eyes ("lust of the eyes"), and a tree desirable to make one wise ("pride of life")..." When you examine every temptation that Israel faced in the wilderness and every sin committed in all of Scripture (and in all of life for that matter), you will be able to identify it, in one or more of these three categories. And that is why John states (in our first Scripture reading) that all that is in the world, which is not of God, can be summed up in the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life.

Indeed, Consider our Lord's temptations in the wilderness. "Satisfy your hunger by turning these stones into bread" (lust of the flesh). "Bow to me and look, I will give you power over all the nations" (lust of the eyes). Throw yourself off of this temple pinnacle and the angels will keep you from dashing your foot against a stone even (pride of life).

But brethren, in saying all of this, we must also remember one critical thing. Adam and Eve, when facing their temptation, had no natural inclination to sin. In other words, they had no corrupt nature to betray them and aid in thrusting them into the temptations of the enemy. And so, in a very real sense, their temptation was far easier to endure than those who are already fallen, naturally deceived and corrupt. Now, I say this, not to criticize our first parents, but rather, to help us appreciate the naturally, dreadful condition of fallen mankind. The enemy has the world under his deceptive sway, following the sin of Adam and Eve. We don't start off in a good or even neutral state. We are born fallen.

Now, what am I getting at in all of this? Where am I going here? Well Brethren, I could certainly, easily spend an entire sermon (or even several sermons) talking about the challenges that we, even as believers face, when dealing with temptation, because, after all, while we are regenerate and redeemed, we still have a remaining battle against remaining sin. And, in fact, we do consider that battle, quite often. But, I want to hone in, more specifically on our unregenerate, unsaved children, because, while they are blessed with the light that God gives them through us, until God opens their hearts to the gospel, they are presently ruled by their sin nature, and therefore, they are very susceptible to the attacks of the enemy. Indeed, in many ways, you can say that the enemy has a special desire for our children, if for no other reason, than to hinder and cause us great grief. Make no mistake about it, Brethren, especially as a child

of God, the enemy is after you, and he will use any means to hinder you from shining the light of Christ upon this fallen world. And he knows that one of our greatest weaknesses is our unsaved loved ones, and especially our children.

Now, I have no joy, at all, especially as a father of seven, in saying what I am about to say, Brethren. Children, please, hear me out, here. We must understand, if we presently have any unconverted children, there is no guarantee that any or all of them will make it to heaven. I can't imagine for a second, any of my children in hell. I would rather die than imagine that. The mere thought of it, is a form of hell for me. But, I know that, if I am honest, there have been many, many, many children throughout all of history (in and outside of the Scriptures), who had godly parents, and yet, found their home in hell. To be sure, the cries of David over his unsaved and dead son, Absalom, have been the cries of many dear Brethren in this world.

Now, why do I say, what I don't like imagining, let alone saying here this morning? Because "parents," moms and dads, I want all of us to be diligent in doing all that we can to lower our spiritually paralyzed children through the roof of this dark world, and into the presence of Christ. I want us to fight to bring our children to Christ, every chance we get! I want us to wrestle with God, with Jacob, until He blesses us, in the salvation of our children. I want us to bang down the door of heaven with our pleas, and I want us to grab our children by the collar, as it were, doing all that we can to thrust them through that door. Yes, I know God is sovereign. But, I also have seen the voice of man reach the ear of God, on many an occasion. And young people, listen carefully please, with all my soul, I want you to be aware of every obstacle that you face in this life, and I want you to see how utterly bankrupt you are in your own strength, so that you might flee with utter desperation to the feet of Christ, who willingly saves, delivers and strengthens all who come to Him, in truth and by faith. [Also, Satan is real, and he has a host with him]

Now, for the remainder of our time, I want to hone in on three very serious obstacles, which, in our present time, stand in the way of our children, brethren...which stand in your way children, and which have robbed many a soul from ever finding Christ. This is not an exhaustive list, but, if in some way, I can aid *you* parents, and get *you* thinking, young people, then perhaps

you can be spared much, eternal grief in the times ahead. Take hold of these three cautions, concerning the enemy's appeal to the natural lusts and desires of our children.

I. The Pride of Popularity

We ought not to be surprised that one of the fiercest ways, in which, the devil (and his minions) will go after our children is through their proneness toward pride. Pride is one of the most significant weaknesses in the chain link fence of our flesh, and it tends to be the bridge, which carries us into virtually every other form of sin. And sadly, since the fall, our proneness toward pride (our very desire to be like God...or to be God for that matter) is not protected by a locked, steel door. In fact, in many ways, it is wide open and there is a welcome mat right at the entrance. We love praise. We love exaltation. We crave attention and acceptance and acknowledgement...right from the time that we are born. And even as awakened, spiritually filled Christians, pride is a plague, which plagues us for the duration of our Christian lives, such that, we must always be on the alert, as it seeks to rear its ugly head. Well then, we would be foolish to think that pride is not powerfully at work in our children.

The desire to be popular and accepted and brought into the "in crowd," is something that is not only conveyed through every source of media that meets our children's eyes, but again, it is naturally, already installed in them, as an inherited, "Welcome to the neighborhood of this life" gift, from our first parents, who fell in the garden of Eden. And this will be with our children throughout the whole of their lives; public schooled, Christian schooled, home schooled, college schooled...no matter what the background of their upbringing. Until the gospel penetrates their hearts, they will always be susceptible to the overwhelming power of pride.

And there are so many ways, in which, this reality can manifest itself, anywhere from such seemingly small matters as having to wear the most fashionable clothing, to coveting the party life with the rest of the fun people, to drug and alcohol abuse...etc. There are many manifestations being driven by the same inner beast of pride.

Before we move on to a second major caution, let me just highlight the fact, Brethren, that there is a major, major, drug epidemic that we are facing in our own day, right here on this island. And if we, as parents, don't bring this to the forefront of our consciences, in at least,

some sense, we might find ourselves devastated to find someone close to us, or even perhaps, one of our very own children, swept away into it. And today, because of the potency and toxicity of that which is going around, that "swept away", could very well mean, into the grave.

Prescription drugs, pill combinations, laced marijuana, molly, ecstasy, very strong heroin, fentanyl and other drugs are not only dominating the younger generation today, but they are taking their very lives. "Drugs are now the leading cause of deaths in this country. Fatal overdoses surpassed shooting deaths and fatal traffic accidents years ago" (CNN). It took 50 years for heart disease to double in the early half of the 20th century. Drug deaths doubled in a fraction of that time. Heroin related deaths increased 439% from 1999 to 2014. In 2014, opioids alone were involved with almost 30,000 deaths!" (CNN). Fentanyl alone has killed 220 people on Long Island in 2016. [My friend, Jonathan]

Now friends, understand this, generally speaking, no one desires to just do drugs from their youth. Drug use comes in the line of "fitting in," "coveting the experience," and wanting to have some fun with friends. And so, in general, popularity, the pull of the world, drug abuse...etc, are things that we need to address as Christians, and as parents. We have to come head to head with biblical means of addressing and dealing with pride in our children.

II. The Lust of Promiscuity

In many ways, the modern day version of the forbidden fruit is sexual relations outside of marriage. It is so culturally acceptable to experience sexual relations outside of marriage today that you are considered totally abnormal if you remain abstinate until marriage. Every piece of media, expressly stated and implied, pours life into a culture of promiscuity, and you don't have to do a lot of convincing to your flesh, to go with the flow. Sexual sin is the epitome of the lust of the flesh, in so many regards.

I was just chatting with a brother this week, about how far the church has fallen into a culture of dating, that has been taken right out of the world's playbook. What has become normal for Christians was once considered over the top, for even unbelievers of the past. And how many of our young people are dabbling with pornography or loosening the restraints on biblical courtship, adopting an ungodly view of relating to the opposite sex. Even much of what

is considered modest dress today, provokes the silent minds and hearts of many, causing them to stumble within their imaginations, committing what the Lord considers adultery in the heart.

Parents, these are issues that we must biblically address with our children. It's no private matter, and if you allow it to be, your children will find other means, ungodly means, of instructing their souls in the world's ways of securing relationships. And again, their own naturally fallen inclinations will only serve to welcome and accommodate such ungodly inspirations. It will seem right and make sense to their unconverted hearts, and they will run headlong into destruction, with the far greater majority. Sexual lust is a plague, which the enemy uses to appeal to the lust of the eyes, as well as the lust of the flesh. And so, we must take proper precautions, to wrestle against the higher powers and principalities, which lurk behind the scenes, seeking to lure our children astray, by the very temptations that still trouble us, at times.

III. The Eradication of Any Fear of God

Even though, as Romans 1 tells us, the reality of God is engraved in the hearts of all men (His signature is indelibly pressed upon our consciences), yet, we naturally suppress the truth in unrighteousness. Our desire to embrace our lusts and feed our pride, drives us to hold down and push away the truth of God. Our only relief in sin is to deny God, and although this denial is willful, and although we are guilty in this denial, we run headlong into it; we anesthetize our consciences so that we can freely enjoy our sins. We strive to eradicate any and every inkling of a fear of God from our imaginations.

And our culture does so well, seeking to aid us in this process, so that we can collectively profit from such a denial and chase after our lusts together. And one of the greatest means of entrapping our children, is not only through every form of media, but by the crafty use of our education system. And should our children escape the clutches of the enemy in this regard, in their earlier years, because of homeschooling or Christian schooling, it will be there waiting for them in college. And again, if they are unregenerate, they will be naturally prone; indeed, perhaps welcomingly prone to believing the lie, which will allow them to freely experiment with the world, as the lusts of their fallen nature betray their immortal souls. Enter the subtle deception of Darwinian evolution.

And you know, evolution makes perfect sense to the heart that is running from God, and to the mind that has not been taught to properly examine and think through the large gaping holes that permeate the theory. Just use long words, confuse micro with macro evolution, mix a gammut of factual truth with subtle, crucial lies; indeed, begin with the presupposition that the supernatural cannot be true, speak in a condescending fashion, hijack true Science and set it in opposition to biblical ideas...and it doesn't take much to sway the heart and mind, especially when it is already running away from God and toward the lusts of the flesh. Indeed, we need to be cautious, brethren; we need to be awake and conscious of the enemie's tactics, as he would seek to eradicate any inkling of a fear of God in our children, by such crafty means as this.

And young people, know for certain, that the world doesn't want you to think. There is enough truth on the outskirts of evolution to lead you to embrace the core (to swallow the whole pill), because they mingle true Science with much connective theory. Indeed, they even borrow from the wonders and glories of creation that are meant to affirm and bring praise to the glory of the true Designer. They mix the pure water of good, observable Science with their godless, speculative assumptions and come up with a fountain of poison. And because truth is mixed with lie, it still looks like Science, and they're not ashamed to call the whole fountain, pure water. And to the untrained mind; to those who have not truly studied the issues out well, and especially to those who are already morally compromised, the pill is not that hard to swallow. For, the next generation is being trained more and more to simply embrace and parrot talking points, rather than searching things out for themselves. And so, a word of great caution is needed, Brethren.

IV. What Then do We Do?

It is one thing to say, in general terms, "Brethren, take caution. Be aware of these dangers and pitfalls, and recognize that the serpent lusts after our children. And it is another to further offer some guidelines to help combat these dangers. Yes, we must be conscious of these things, but consciousness alone doesn't protect our children, does it? In closing then, let me provide you with two summary weapons, which I believe can greatly aid our children in the battle for their own souls:

1) Brethren, talk to your children about these things. This will not necessarily make them wise unto actually contending with the throes of the enemy, but it will make them wise unto recognizing his tactics. Speak to them about the dangers of being consumed with popularity, and continually remind them of the natural disposition of our fallen humanity, toward coveting recognition, attention and favor from others. Reveal to them the contention that exists between God and Satan, and between God and fallen man, exposing the conflict that exists within their own souls to this end. Pull back the curtain of the human heart and expose its fallen desire to usurp the authority of God. Show them these realities throughout biblical history (during your daily times of getting into the Bible with them), and show them the consequences of rebelling against God and the blessings of walking with God. Exegete Cain and Abel before them, Enoch and Lamech, Jacob and Esau, and prepare them to line these biblical examples up with their own present circumstances in their present reality. Bring them up in the fear of the Lord, so that they might have a heart of wisdom. In this way, you will be preemptive in your approach, training them to think about why they desire what they desire, think how they think and do what they do.

Open up the alleged private chamber of sexual realities. Teach them from the Word of God about the beauty of sexual enjoyment within the context of a God honoring marriage. Present to them a biblical understanding of the wonderful union that God brings about between one man and one woman, and expose the perversion of this wonderful blessing, that has come about because of the fall. Show the blessing of God upon those who remain celibate and chaste and the inevitable consequences of entertaining the lusts of the flesh, by awakening sexual passions before their time. Talk to them. Teach them.

Study evolution yourself and then teach them from the very pages of a public school Science book, the gross errors and distortions that are found between the lines of evolutionary thinking. Train them to think critically and how to unravel true, identifiable, proven, Science from godless, manmade theory, which begins with the presupposition that the supernatural cannot be and reasons onward from there. Get to the roots of true Science, indeed, the founders of Science and show how Science itself was originally founded and studied on the premise that a supernatural designer made all of this, leaving us logical, identifiable patterns that we can observe and make sense of, so that we could advance in our understanding of the wonders and

marvels of this creation. Proactively inoculate them with the truth, so that they can easily discern the intermingled poison that will be spewed at them, when they sit behind desks in the presence of atheistic scholars, who have mastered the art of oration, and who stand upon the mountain of their PhDs. Train them to be humble, God trusting babes, who will confound the wise, as they enter adulthood. Help them to understand that a denial of God is not an issue of a lack of knowledge, so much as it is an issue of immorality. Exhort them to identify the battle within their own souls, recognizing the lusts of their flesh, the lusts of their eyes and the pride of life, which would gladly accommodate any teaching that could shake their souls away from a healthy fear of God.

2) Brethren, expose all of these things. Brethren, expose the reality of the sin nature of your children. Indeed, expose yours; identify with them, showing that we all share the same sin nature, and then, most of all, regularly, thoroughly, continually, saturate their ears and eyes and senses with the truth of the Gospel! You see, ultimately Brethren, our children need, more than anything else, the power of God operative in them; they need a true union with Christ, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and fellowship with the living God, if they are going to prevail against the wiles of the serpent. How do you defeat a spiritual foe, who has been here since the beginning, in the context of a world that is under his power and sway of deception, with a nature that lusts after all manner of ungodliness! They're no match! But, if Christ be in them! If Christ be in them, than "greater is He who would be in them, than he that is in the world!" Then, justifying reconciliation and peace would have been obtained with God! Then, sanctifying grace will be at work in them, continually!

Oh Brethren, our children desperately need the Savior! The serpent indeed lusts after them, but the serpent's head is crushed under the foot of a crucified and risen Christ! Give your children Christ, Brethren! Give them Christ! Never get tired of the old, old story of Jesus and His love. Never compromise! Never look for a smoother, faster way of winning them over! Rather, fight tooth and nail, all your days, in prayer, in your pleading with your children, in the life that you live and present before them...make it your utmost goal and desire in life, to deliver your children into the hands of the Savior! Let the end of your days confess some failure in their academic upbringing, in their gifts and talents and abilities with sports and musical instruments

and whatever else may be, but don't suffer the regret of having given them so much of everything else, while neglecting to daily give them Christ! Show them in your own sphere of living, that your own, personal utmost joy is found in Christ! That your relationship with Christ is not merely theological, but it is living and real; that it bears a heartbeat, which affects every other area of your life. Show them by your words and actions that Christ is more precious than all of the friends in the world, that He is more to be valued than everything in the world combined, and that you would gladly leave this world and be with Christ, were it not temporarily better for you to be here, for the sake of your children and others! Give them Christ!

[Note: the tragedy of losing the sanctity of the Lord's Day]

Amen!!!

Benediction: Ephesians 3:14-21