

**Genesis 3: 1-7; “The Subtlety of the Serpent”, Sermon # 8 in the series –
“Beginnings”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on June 23rd, 2013,
in the Morning Worship Service.**

Last week we left the first couple in the garden in a state of perfect earthly happiness. They were given, as we have seen, 3 holy institutions for their blessing and instruction, that they might glorify God in their state of innocence. God Himself would lead them into the understanding of the sanctity of the Sabbath, the sanctity of work, and the sanctity of marriage in order that man’s happiness would be an everlasting happiness. The first couple were naked and unashamed. They had nothing to be ashamed about. They had been given the privilege of eating of the fruit of all the trees of the garden, except one.

Even the tree of life was there, and Adam and Eve could have chosen life; the continuance of physical and spiritual life, which would be sustained and nurtured forever had they had chosen to partake of that fruit. God had given them freedom of will to choose the good things which He had given to them, and to avoid and pass by that which would ruin and destroy them, both soul and body. This freedom of will, God thought best, to be put to a test; and to be put to such a test that every person who would ever live, every person descended from Adam and Eve, would be represented by the choice that they made.

Theologians call this Federal Headship. The first couple would represent the whole human race, in this test of obedience, as to whether they would eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If they stood in their original righteousness, and heeded God’s one commandment to them, they would live. If they were satisfied that God’s Word was right, and that He had given them all things necessary for life and godliness, then they would choose of their own free will, life and eternal life. This choice would affect their whole future and the future of all of their descendants.

But we also see, from the verses that I have read to you this morning, that there was another being that came into the garden that day, and he is called here in verse 1, “the serpent”. What he said to Eve that day did more to affect the outcome of this trial of their obedience, than anything else. And so I would also like to show you that what he attempts to say to you now, and convince you of now, may also affect the outcome of your entire life negatively if you listen to his false reasoning. The description of this creature shows that he was different from an ordinary snake or serpent. It says that he was more cunning or subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. He could reason and think and speak like a man, but he had a reptilian body.

In his words he was able to deceive Eve and through her, to bring down Adam from his high and privileged position of being the sinless created son of God Satan was, and he is, to this very day, a great deceiver. Now, the question we want to ask this morning is this: How did Satan succeed in deceiving Eve and thus bring about the Fall of Man? The answer that I lay before you is that he succeeded by using the following 3 strategies: 1st of all – He questioned God’s Word to them. (verses 1-3) 2nd – He boldly lied to Eve. (verse 4) And 3rd – He misrepresented to Eve the truth of the consequences of sinning against God’s Word. (verses 5-7) Let us think of these strategies as being the same strategies which he will use with us when he comes to tempt us.

1st of all – He questioned God’s Word to them. (verses 1-3)

We see here a description given to us, of the serpent, which is not a description of an ordinary earthly serpent. Satan may have been subtle, but here we find that he was also beautiful. Many times today, we find that women are afraid of snakes, but here we find that Eve was not only not afraid of him, she was rather allured by his beauty and his reasoning. Turn over to Ezekiel Chapter 28, verse 11. “Moreover the word of the Lord came to me, saying, ‘Son of man, take up a lamentation for the king of Tyre, and say to him, “Thus says the Lord God: “You

were the seal of wisdom and perfect in beauty.” “You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering: the sardius, topaz, and diamond, beryl, onyx, and jasper, sapphire, turquoise, and emerald with gold.” “The workmanship of your timbrels and pipes was prepared for you on the day you were created.”

“You were the anointed cherub who covers; I established you; you were on the holy mountain of God; you walked back and forth in the midst of the fiery stones.” “You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, till iniquity was found in you.” “By the abundance of your trading you became filled with violence within, and you sinned; therefore I cast you as a profane thing out of the mountain of God; and I destroyed you, O covering cherub, from the midst of the fiery stones.” “Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor.”

Now, I hope that you understand that the king of Tyre, to whom the prophecy is written, was never in Eden, the garden of God. No, this prophecy in large measure gives us a description of what took place in the garden of Eden, but it also has application to the earthly king of Tyre in relation to the satanic wisdom that he was filled with, and corrupted by, which greatly affected the way that he ruled over men. (The man being referred to here may be the prince of Tyre in the days of Ezekiel, or he may be the Antichrist in the New Testament times, but God wants us to see who was working in both. It was Satan, the prince of darkness.

While these verses tell us of what destroyed a corrupt prince, they also tell us what it was that destroyed Satan himself. He who originally was a beautiful, holy and wise angelic being, who was the seal of perfection in the day that he was created by God, was corrupted by his own wisdom and splendor. Satan’s assigned position as an angel was that he was the anointed cherub, or angel who covers, we are told here. What would start out small in the creation of Adam and Eve and their being placed in the garden, would grow to become a large mountain in God’s purposes for mankind.

A mountain represents a kingdom, and this kingdom would be the kingdom of God from the start, in the garden. Satan’s important assigned position would be that he would cover; that is, he would protect and watch over Eden, the garden of God, and he would back and forth walk in the midst of the fiery stones of God’s holy and wise purposes in regard to all of God’s creation; but especially in relation to man who was created in God’s own image and likeness. But in verse 17 we see that Satan’s heart was lifted up because of his beauty; because of his pride, “he corrupted his wisdom”.

Thus Satan fell from his perfection, and God cast him as a profane thing out of the mountain of God, and destroyed him from the midst of the fiery stones. Now he would strike back at God and at His holy purposes in relation to the first man and woman. He would attempt to create rebellion against God’s very word to them. He comes to Eve slowly, but deliberately with the question of questions – “Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?’” Here is a being who has a mind of his own, thinks Eve, a being who is able to evaluate and to verify for me, the word concerning God’s will. He must therefore be an interpreter, and a helper.

But this analysis, although it shows the goodwill of Eve, it also shows her naiveté. Not every voice is true as it is smooth. Not every line of reasoning will establish what is right. In this case it was merely convenient to establish the purpose of this serpent which was to undermine the absolute truth of God’s word. So it is to you today, all who listen to me. Satan is a serpent who uses his cunning, and his questions, to question the authority of God to define all things for us in relation to how we should think and what we should do.

If you will turn over with me to Revelation 12: 9 you will find a further description given of this serpent which shows us just what kind of a being he is. It says, “So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.” We now know, from this further

revelation of scripture, what Eve did not know; that the Devil took the form of a serpent, here in the garden, and he did so in order to deceive Eve, so that she would actually disobey God's word, and speak the very words to her husband which would bring about his fall as well. Satan is the one who is currently deceiving the whole world except for God's chosen people.

We see the Apostle Paul relating this sad truth in 2nd Corinthians 11: 3, if you will turn over there with me. "But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." The Apostle is telling us that even the minds of Christians may be tempted away from the simplicity of the truth that is found in Jesus Christ. Evil personified had entered the garden. And that fact also should tell us that the fall of some of the angels had already taken place by this time.

Some of the angels "did not keep their first estate" it says in Jude verse 6. They did not keep their own abode in the heavens but came into the realm of men to create rebellion in the first pair, Satan himself taking the lead in their temptation. He would disguise himself, he would portray himself as a beautifully wise and reasonable creature, to see if he could trick Eve. There is a wisdom which is from above, and then there is a wisdom which is demonic.

Let's think for a few moments about the nature of the deception that Satan perpetrated with Eve. It says that he said to Eve, in a subtle and doubting fashion, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?'" Now, let us take notice of his method of approach. When the Devil is trying his hardest to deceive us, he will always start by casting doubt on what God has said. God had given Adam great breadth of variety in the choice of the fruits of the trees in this garden, and yet the first thing that comes out of the serpent's mouth is, "Has God indeed said, that you shall not eat of every tree of the garden?"

It is as if he is insinuating that God had been very stingy with them in not letting them eat from this one tree. There is something very special and very wonderful in eating of the fruit of this tree, Eve, and would God really hold it back from you? Satan knows well how to turn God's own gracious words to us, back against God Himself, in order to make it appear that there is something wrong with the wisdom and character of God. He said this in such a way as to make an appeal to her, to act according to her own wisdom, independently of what she had been told by God through her husband.

Eve begins well; she responds to this by telling the serpent what she, no doubt, had been told by Adam, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden, 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.'" She did well to tell the serpent what God had said. I think that she even did well to tell the serpent that she should not touch it, even though God never commanded that specifically, that they should not touch it.

Why should she get so close to sin by toying with it, or feeling it without biting into it? It sounds like that perhaps Adam, in relating God's words to her, may have just summed it up at the end by saying, "We don't even need to touch that fruit." And yet she did not stay away from the tree itself. She must have been standing fairly close to the tree when the serpent decided to engage her in conversation. And she must have been far enough away from Adam that the serpent knew that if he could persuade her to eat, that she might also get Adam to eat.

This is exactly what happened. In times of temptation, when someone begins to cast doubt on the word of God, it is not good to think that we shall receive anything good or profitable from the false reasonings and conclusions that will follow. To hold tenaciously to God's word, by faith in Jesus Christ, in the midst of every circumstance where Satan would question it, we now know is our highest duty.

2nd – The serpent's strategy is to boldly lie to Eve. (verse 4)

This certainly is a master strategy, not only to cast doubt on the Word of God and the character of God Himself, but then to directly contradict God's express Word with a lie. But this

is what the Devil did. He will murder them if he can, body and soul, and all of us as well, if he can just get us to believe a lie. "You will not surely die." "Certainly it cannot be, that in eating a little piece of fruit, that death can come from that!" Let us always remember that death comes through the littlest of sins. In the littlest of sins, there is plenty enough of rebellion, unbelief, pride, and self-sufficiency to ruin us forever.

There is no such thing as a venial sin. All sin seems like a small thing at first. That is its nature, but it soon grows quickly in its implications, and it brings forth death as its consequence. Turn with me to John chapter 8, and we will look at verses 37-47. Jesus is showing the self-righteous Pharisees that although they claim to be Abraham's children, that they do not act like it. They are seeking to kill Him because Christ's word has no place in them. Jesus does righteousness because He is from the Father, but they would seek to kill Him because He tells them the truth about their sinful hearts.

Ask yourself this question: What is your response when the Bible, or the preacher, or your parents tell you that you are a sinner? What are your thoughts when you are told that being religious and going to church are not enough to save you, that you must be born again, you must be converted, you must repent of your sins, you must believe in Jesus Christ? If your Father is really God then you will not have this angry resentment always welling up in your heart when someone tells you that your Father is the Devil, if you will not hear the words of Christ and abide in them.

"He who is of God, hears God's words; therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God." You are of your Father, the Devil, when you want to do his desires. These men wanted to kill Jesus because he kept pointing out their hypocrisies. He would tell them the truth, as the Son of God, and yet they wanted to kill him. It says that the Devil was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. You see how lies and murder go hand in hand. Satan is the Father of lies and what he would destroy is your soul. He would make you think that you will not die eternally if you do not believe in Jesus. He would make you think God's Word is not the truth and you do not need to listen to it. Well, there is a way that seems right to a man, but the ways thereof, are the ways of death. (Proverbs 16: 25)

Turn with me to 1st John 3: 10-15. "In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother." "For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another, not as Cain who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother." "And why did he murder him?" "Because his works were evil and his brother's were righteous." "Do not marvel, my brethren, if the world hates you." "We know that we have passed out of death to life, because we love the brethren." "He who does not love his brother abides in death." "Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him."

You see here that it is possible to distinguish true Christians from merely religious people. The true Christian practices righteousness. Cain was a religious man. He brought his offering to God of the fruits of the ground; that which he worked to produce. God did not accept his offering, but He did accept Abel and his offering. Abel's offering was of the 1st of his flocks, a living sacrifice which pointed to the future sacrifice of Jesus Christ as necessary for the cleansing and atonement for our sins. Cain did not like that. He became angry with God and with Abel.

Sin was crouching at his door. He hated his brother because his deeds were righteous. His own were evil. God defines that which is evil and that which is righteous. But if we are not a Christian, our sinful heart will not receive the truth and it will not show and demonstrate love. Where are you this morning? Will you believe a lie? Will you live a lie? Or will you receive the truth of the gospel, that you cannot save yourself from your sin or really love the brethren without saving grace. The devil is the father of lies and his lies murder the souls of men. God is the Father of truth and Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life.

3rd – The serpent Satan misrepresented to Eve the truth of the consequences of sinning against God’s Word. (verses 5-7)

He claims to know what God knows concerning her eating of the fruit. He claims to perfectly understand what that will mean, and what it will bring. God had said death, the serpent says God-likeness. He again is portraying before Eve’s mind the idea that God has withheld something good from her, something that will make her more like God Himself and less like just one of his creatures. This seems to be the very temptation that Satan, himself, fell by, and into. He thought himself so beautiful, so powerful, and so wise, that he could make himself become like God Himself. He would take God’s place if he could.

He believes if it was convincing enough for himself, then perhaps it will be good enough for Eve. And it was. She could not resist the logic that she would be like God, that she would know good and evil. Surely God would not forbid that, but really, he would want that. She was free to make her own choice, she could act independently of her husband, and she could think for herself. And so, as she considered this, she considered the tree itself. Abandoning the wisdom of God in His word, she fell into the lust of the flesh.

This was having the desire to think independently of God’s Word, and of her husband’s advice and counsel, and this was followed quickly with the lust of the eyes. The tree was pleasant to the eyes. It was a desirable thing to look upon. And then the motive of her heart became pride, the boastful pride of life. This tree was desirable to make one wise, and surely God would want me to be wise. In eating of this tree I will make myself wise. I can do this myself; I can think for myself, and I will have my eyes opened to see what God has hidden and kept from me. I will then judge whether God or this creature is right.

This, I believe was the progression in Eve’s mind, in the thoughts of her heart. And so she took the fatal bite, and since she didn’t immediately die physically, she thought that she had done well in this act, and so she gave some to Adam also. She either walked up to Adam where he was with the fruit, or he came over to see what was going on. I think that perhaps when Adam saw that his wife had taken a bite of this fruit and she didn’t immediately die physically, that he thought it would be alright to eat it himself. She must have spoken reassuring words as she handed him the forbidden fruit. “You see Adam, I have eaten this fruit, and nothing bad has happened to me.” “Take some and eat it and you will see.”

Later, when God reproves Adam for having disobeyed him He says, “Because you have heeded the voice of your wife...” this curse will come upon you. He listened to his wife when he should have remembered and heeded the words of God. In closing I believe that there are certain lessons which we should think upon and learn this day. We need to see that if Satan could deceive the heart of Eve, that it is also possible for him to deceive us if we are not careful. And if Adam, by listening to the voice of his wife, fell from his original righteousness, it is possible that you may not understand the great importance of heeding God’s voice over that of any other.

It is God’s word that directs us in the good and right way in everything. And when it is questioned, and when it is twisted, and when it is contradicted in the way that Satan did, then ruin and misery, death and judgment come. The consequences of our sinning against God by believing lies and misrepresentations of truth do not always appear right away. Some consequences do appear shortly, but others take a longer time. But when we toy with the idea that we are really getting away with sin, or that to sin just a little will not hurt anyone, then we are truly deceived.

Eve did not die physically, immediately, upon eating the fruit of this tree. It would be hundreds of years until that happened. But it did happen. But what did happen immediately, was that she and Adam died spiritually at that very moment. Their sin brought a separation from God. They were dead in their trespasses and sins immediately upon their eating. The

reason that we know this is because immediately their eyes were opened, in this sinful way, and they both knew that they were naked. They experienced for the first time, the shame attendant to sin. They saw themselves in a position of great vulnerability before God and in each other's sight.

Now, there was something to take advantage of, and something that might be taken advantage of. Now the lusts of the flesh, and eyes, and pride entered into their soul, and loving one another became a difficult thing. Now they must try to do something to cover up what they had done, and what they were thinking toward God and each other. So they sew fig leaves together to make the first coverings for their nakedness, but it didn't feel sufficient. This leads us to the most important question of our study today. How can we ever be sufficient in ourselves once we understand that sin has entered into our hearts even before we were born, through Adam's sin?

We must understand that our sufficiency is not to be found in ourselves. It cannot be found in what we do for ourselves. The fig leaves will not cover our lack of righteousness. This is why we must have Jesus Christ to be our Savior. There is a tree in the center of this garden that we are in here today, in this church. And it is the tree of life. There is one who laid down His life by being crucified on this tree. You and I are under a curse if we think that we can keep God's holy law and find favor with him by the works of righteousness which we have done by our own "free" will. We see this from Galatians 3: 10-13.

But Christ has redeemed all who believe in Him from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us. Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree, the Scriptures say. He was punished there for sinners and for sins, in your place if you will believe. Now come and sit down under his tree this morning and eat of its fruit. This is what is being pictured for us in Song of Solomon 2 : 3 – "Like an apple tree among the trees of the woods, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down in his shade with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste. Will you not eat of the fruit of His tree, the cross, today?"

By coming to this tree and eating of its fruit, you will not only come to be forgiven of your sins, and have a changed heart, but you also will become wise. And over time, you will be more and more changed into Christ's blessed image, the image of God. All that Adam and Eve lost will be restored to you in Christ, and much more will be given to you, through all your journey through this life, and into eternity, because of his grace.