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Genesis 3:1-6 “Satan and Temptation”

Intro. In chapters 1-2 of Genesis we read that all that God created was good and beautiful. There was no sin, no sickness, and no death. Adam and Eve lived in a true paradise. But when we get to chapter 4 we read of jealousy, anger, murder, lying, moral corruption, and so forth. By the time we get to Genesis 6:5 we read that “the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth....” Something terribly wrong happened to turn paradise into pain and suffering. Where does all of this wickedness, suffering and death come from? Chapter 3 gives the answer, which is one of the most important chapters in the entire Bible. Here we learn how man became a sinner. In this chapter we have the reason the world is in the mess it’s in. God is not the source of evil (James 1:13). Satan, Adam and Eve were the sources of evil in this world.

And what about your own life? We are all sinners. And when sin is manifested in your own life, it comes first from the sin nature that we all inherited from Adam and Eve. We have a genetic tendency toward sin. You don’t have a teach a child to sin; they do so quite naturally. But beyond that fact, sin also comes into our lives through outside temptation, which is only going to get worse the way our world is turning from God.

This morning, we are going to learn about Satan’s temptation of Eve, and how Satan brings sin into our own lives. And I believe that you will see that Satan hasn’t changed his tactics a bit. I suppose the reason for this is because they still seem to work just as well! So we should be aware of Satan’s devices (2 Cor. 2:11), and be prepared to resist his temptations when they come. So notice with me first of all in our text:

I. THE APPROACH OF SATAN

Nothing is said about Satan here in chapter 3, but surely he was using the serpent to tempt Eve. Rev. 12:9 calls the devil “that serpent of old.” You see, before the creation of man, the angel Lucifer had been created, but he fell into sin and rebellion, and thus became the evil angel known as Satan, or the devil. Job 38:7 implies that the angels had already been created when God set out to create the world. So evil in the universe preexisted the creation of man and woman.

Now note with me how he approached Eve and how he approaches people today. We see in v.1:

A. His Disguise – Satan is a master of deception. He does not come in his true colors, so to speak. In 2 Cor. 11:3 Paul referred to the serpent beguiling Eve, and then in v.14 he said that Satan transforms himself into an angel of light. But here he makes use of an animal to speak to Eve, instead of approaching her directly. We read in v.1, “Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made.” The serpent seemed to be an appropriate choice for Satan, since subtlety was a natural characteristic of the serpent. The word translated “cunning” probably meant “crafty or shrewd” here, but the word is mostly used in Proverbs to refer to those who are sensible and prudent. So as animals have different levels of intelligence, even so this serpent was evidently the most intelligent. Eve was prone to listen to such an intelligent animal. But his intelligence and craftiness was evidently heightened by the devil himself. We know that Satan is very

crafty and shrewd. He will trick you and fool you every time if you are not careful. Now getting back to the serpent, don't think of a slithering snake. At this point the serpent had legs (v.14) and a certain degree of beauty. Even without legs, a snake today can become upright, and with the help of supporting legs, it could perhaps confront Eve eye to eye, especially if it climbed a tree. Also, either some of the animals could talk prior to the fall of man, or Satan supernaturally possessed this animal and enabled the serpent to speak through it. Perhaps this was the only way God allowed him to approach Eve. If, instead of approaching her in the form of a celestial being, he came in that of a creature, far below themselves, they could have no excuse for allowing a mere animal to persuade her to break the commandment of God. After all, she and Adam had been made to have dominion over the animals.

Now as we consider the approach of Satan, consider also:

B. The Object of His Temptation – In the middle of v.1 we read, “And he said to the woman...” Satan chose to seek to bring sin into the world through Eve. Why Eve? 2:16 implies that the prohibition regarding the fruit was given to Adam. He was the head of the home from the very beginning. It is assumed that Eve received this command indirectly. If that was the case, Satan thought he would be more successful with her. He wanted her to make this decision independently of Adam. I'm sure Adam was in love with Eve and wanted to please her. So if Satan got *her* to sin, she would exercise influence over him and they would both sin!

God placed the forbidden fruit in the garden and allowed Satan to tempt Eve to take them from a state of innocence to a state of confirmed righteousness, that is if they resisted temptation and kept obeying God. But Satan had a different object in mind.

Now Satan, or his demons, or his followers still approach people today to tempt them into sin. So we need to consider not only the approach of Satan, but also:

II. THE AVENUES OF TEMPTATION THAT HE USES

First of all, the starting place, the breeding ground for sin is to:

A. Doubt God's Word - There is a vital relationship between the Word of God and righteousness. For example, 1 Cor. 13:6 says that love “does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth.” Iniquity and truth are opposites. Even so, the devil's lies lead to sin. He knows that he must do away with the Word of God if he is to succeed in getting someone to sin. As we have removed the Word of God from our schools and much of public life, there has been a corresponding increase in sin. But he also knows that he cannot begin by attacking God's Word directly. That would have put up her defenses. So he starts out by getting us to doubt God's Word in two ways. First:

1. Through Questioning God's Word - Satan tries to get Eve to doubt the reality of the prohibition by asking the first question of the Bible, “Has God indeed said?” In the Hebrew there is an element of surprise is the serpent's voice. That's why my translation adds the word “indeed.” He just can't believe that what he has “heard” was true. Why would God give life, and then take it away over eating a piece of fruit? It is right here that the slippery slope to sin begins. The first step toward sin, destruction and death is to doubt God's Word.

Even so, there are preachers and seminary professors who cast doubt on the Word of God. You may have family and friends that try to get you to doubt the Word of God. Don't let them do it!

Another approach of Satan is:

2. Through Distorting God's Word - Notice how Satan grossly exaggerated God's

prohibition. He said in the last of v.1, “Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?’” God did *not* say that they could not eat of *every* tree of the garden. Only one tree was forbidden. In fact, an abundance of fruit-bearing trees with unbelievable variety was available for their food. They certainly had no need for this one forbidden fruit. Satan’s aim here was to get Eve to distrust God Himself, and thus to get her to doubt God’s Word.

Even so today, people will exaggerate God’s prohibitions. Yes, there are prohibitions in the Bible for our own good, but Satan would have you focus on the prohibitions of God and ignore all the good things that God has for you. Satan will tell you that if you become a Christian, you won’t have any more fun! He tells you that God is holding so much back from you.

Eve may have followed Satan’s example by adding to and distorting God’s Word. She omitted “freely” from v.2. She already is beginning to word it as if the prohibition was too stringent. She changed God’s Word in v.3 by making God’s “you shall surely die” into a watered down, “lest you die.” The word “lest” means perhaps you will die if you do that. That is not what God said. God said, you will *surely* die.

Too many people distort God’s Word today. The Bible does not say that money is the root of all evil. It says the love of money is the root of all [kinds of] evil. So I appeal to you, don’t listen to those who would cause you to doubt or distort the Word of God, whether it is a so-called preacher, or an educator, or a so-called friend. God is truth, and therefore His Word is true. Instead, hold fast by faith and obedience to the Word of God.

Jesus overcame Satan’s temptations by holding fast to the Word of God. Three times He resisted temptation by saying, “It is written...” (Mt. 4:4-10). Psa. 119:11 says, “Thy Word have I hid in mine heart that I might not sin against thee” (KJV). Faith in God’s Word leads to obedience, and unbelief leads to disobedience. My life as a teenager was transformed as I learned and believed the Word of God.

Now the devil sees that he’s got Eve weakening. So after he put doubt in Eve’s mind concerning the Word of God, then he moved to the next step, which is to:

B. Deny God’s Word – God said that if you eat of that one fruit, you shall surely die. Yet the devil said in the last of v.4, “You will not surely die.” He even quoted God correctly here in saying “surely.” But he just boldly contradicted God! Which one are you going to believe? In John 8:44 Jesus charged that Satan is a liar and the father of lies. Don’t believe him! There are billions of graves in this earth which testify to the truthfulness of what God said. God said the wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23). The Bible says that the soul that sins it shall die (Ezek. 18:4; 18:20). That’s what God said. So now he progresses to actually denying the punishment that God has warned them about.

Even so today people have heard the warnings that God has given concerning the consequences of sin, but they will deny it saying, “There no harm in it.” They refuse to believe God who said through the apostle Paul, “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption...” (Gal. 6:7-8). People deny the just wrath of God and only embrace the love of God. They say, “Oh, a loving God would never let anyone go to hell.” Well, the Word of God teaches that our God is a God of love, but it is a holy love. People today are filling their minds with the devil’s lies through popular music, movies, internet videos, books, and so forth. That’s happening to Christians as well, which is why the church is becoming so worldly in beliefs and practices.

The other thing that Satan will do in the process of temptation is:

C. Deride the Goodness of God – The serpent said in v.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.” Satan justifies his denial of God’s Word by calling into question the goodness of God. “If God is good, why did He put this restriction down?” He suggests that God had not forbidden the fruit because of any harm it brings, but because God does not want to share the opportunity to be like God, knowing good and evil. He skillfully and deceptively mixes truth and error.

Even so, Satan will try to convince you that God is trying to cheat you out of some good. And when bad things happen, the devil will try to get you to doubt the goodness of God. When we question God’s goodness and doubt His love, we are playing right into the hands of Satan. Don’t you let the devil cause you to doubt the goodness of God. According to Roman 8:28, He is able to turn what is bad into something good in the long run.

So we have seen from our text the approach of Satan and his avenues of temptation. Now let’s see:

III. THE ALLUREMENTS OF TEMPTATION

Due to the influence of the serpent, it is quite evident from v.6 that the forbidden fruit had a new appeal to Eve. She was drawn to it. She was attracted to it. There is a lesson here. If you stay in church, and read God’s Word and pray daily, the temptations of this world will have much less appeal. But once Satan gets us to doubt and reject God’s Word, then the things of this world will begin to have an allurements that we may have never noticed before. The apostle John warns of this allurements in 1 John 2:15-16, “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.” I’m going to show you that the same 3 allurements of the world were present with the temptation of Eve. Do you know why the devil hasn’t changed his strategy since the Garden of Eden? It is because he is still so very, very successful with it. Notice how the fruit had appeal unto Eve:

A. Lust of the Flesh – In v.6 it says, “So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food...” The fruit appealed to the appetites of the flesh. She saw that it looked delicious. It would satisfy her hunger.

Satan made a similar appeal to Jesus. He encouraged Him to turn the stones into bread, to satisfy His hunger in such a way.

Even so, many temptations appeal to the lust, or desires of your flesh. There is much temptation regarding the sexual desires that we have. Drug and alcohol abuse appeals to the lust of the flesh. People go for the high they feel. The sin of gluttony appeals to the lust of the flesh. The Lays potato chip commercial recognized this reality when it claimed, “Betcha Can’t Eat Just One.” Yet God had provided legitimate ways for hunger and the desire for food to be satisfied. He provided an abundance of fruit trees and vegetables to eat, but she chose to eat of the one forbidden fruit. He provided a loving spouse for sexual desires to be satisfied. Don’t lust for the cheap substitutes the devil offers to satisfy the lusts of the flesh.

Then there is the:

B. Lust of the Eyes - Eve noticed that the fruit was “pleasant to the eyes.” Temptation typically uses the lust of the eyes.

Satan showed Jesus all the kingdoms of the world and all their glory. What a sight to behold! Satan offered them all to Jesus. He appealed to the lust of the eyes.

Even so, the world is constantly appealing to the lust of the eyes, and has more avenues than ever before, like television, movies, the internet, magazines, and the neon lights of the city. Advertisers appeal to the lust of the eyes with slick ads.

Because of this reality, one strategy regarding temptation is avoidance. Thus, God told them not to even touch the forbidden fruit (v.3b). She should not have looked at it either, though v.6 says she did. Jesus said in Mt. 26:41, “Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” Because of our weakness toward sin, we should be watchful and vigilant against temptation. We should pray that we not even *enter* temptation, and when we do, we should turn our eyes away and get away from that temptation! Merchants know that if they can just get you into the store, you will likely see something and buy something. So if you have run out of money and want to avoid the bondage of debt, you need to avoid going into a store. Those that have a drinking problem need to avoid going to places where they serve alcohol. The best strategy regarding temptation is to avoid temptation.

Then John says Satan uses another allurement of temptation, and that is:

C. The Pride of Life - Satan appealed to the “pride of life” when he said, “you will be like God.” Indeed, when Eve thought about it and looked at the fruit of the tree, she concluded that it was “a tree desirable to make one wise.” She began to long to be like God, similar to the way Satan in his pride wanted to be “as the Most High.”

Again, Satan made such an appeal to Jesus when he took Him up to the wing of the temple and encouraged Him to cast Himself down and let the angels gently lower Him to the rocks below without harm. One reason was he was trying to appeal to pride and fanfare.

The sellers of products appeal to the pride of life when they say, “You deserve it,” like the L’Oreal slogan that said, “Because I’m worth it.” Wheaties claims it is “The breakfast of champions.” So eat your Wheaties, and you too can be a champion! The pride of life is one of the allurements of temptation.

Conclusion: The story ends with the sad reality that Eve yielded to temptation. We read in the last of v.6, “she took of its fruit and ate.” She took the devil’s bait hook, line, and sinker with one bite. Then we read that “she also gave to her husband with her¹, and he ate.” She goes over to Adam and says, “Here, Adam, look what I’ve got. Come on Adam. Eat with me.” She may have repeated Satan’s lies as she encouraged him. She may have told him how good the fruit tastes. So the sinner became a seducer. Have you ever noticed how often that happens? A person is not satisfied to just sin himself. He wants somebody else to get involved with him. That’s why young people face tremendous peer pressure in school. The end result was this: Though Eve was deceived, Adam willfully disobeyed.

We do not have to follow their poor example. We can have victory over temptation. God promises this victory in 1 Cor. 10:13, “No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.” For the Christian, when you yield to temptation and sin, it’s not because you have to, but because you choose to. James 4:7 promises, “Resist the devil and he will flee from you.” One way to resist is to accept God’s escape from temptation which He will surely provide.

Boy, did Adam and Eve mess up! They immediately experienced shame, guilt and spiritual death, which includes separation from God. In time they experienced what it is to get sick, grow old and die. I believe that somehow there entered into the very genes of the human race the poison of sin.

¹ who was present “by her” or “with her,” but I don’t see the Hebrew basis for “with her.”

All of the suffering, all of the tears, all of the tragedy, all of the heartache and all of the death of this old world stem from the fact of the entrance of that poison that came into the garden of Eden that very day. So, the poison of sin entered in. They not only hurt themselves, but also the entire human race. And because of the entrance of sin into humanity, the cross of Calvary was made necessary to save us from sin and death. When you remember all that Jesus suffered, remember also that sin is to blame. Friends, when I see my sin through the crimson lens of Calvary's cross, I can never enjoy my sin again. There is only one place that a sin tragedy can be corrected. That's at the cross of Calvary. There is only one remedy for the terrible poison of sin. That is the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Have you trusted in Christ as your Savior? If not, do so today!

Sources: Stephen Felker, *Devotional & Explanatory Notes on the Entire Bible* (Col. Hghts, VA: Published by Author), 2021; C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament in Ten Volumes*, Vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1978 reprint); Alexander Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture*, Vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977 reprint); J. Vernon McGee, *Thru The Bible*, Vol. 1 (Pasadena, CA: Thru The Bible Radio, 1981); James Merritt (notes on his sermon on Genesis 3:1-7, 15, 24); Larry Pierce, *Online Bible* [Ver. 5:30] (Ontario: onlinebible.net, 2017); Dr. Jerry Vines (notes from his sermon on this text); Warren Wiersbe, *Expository Outlines on the Old Testament* (Wheaton: Victor Books/SP Publications, 1993). Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from *The New King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982).

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