

# THE TEMPTATION

Genesis 3:1-6

## INTRODUCTION

- Genesis 3 is the darkest chapter in the history of man
- How did man go from a state of righteousness, immortality and fellowship with God, into a state of unrighteousness, mortality and enmity with God?
- Genesis 3 tells us how this fall took place
- The events recorded in this chapter are not merely a record of distant events from 6000 years ago on the other side of the world, but they are a contemporary description the problem that every one of us suffers
- This is not merely the record of the fall of one woman and one man, but of you and me and our entire race
- “In Adam’s fall we sinned all”
- God had established a simple test of man’s allegiance and obedience by forbidding him from eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil
- In due time, likely a relatively short time after the creation, the day came when man faced the temptation to eat of the tree, putting them to the test
- Satan, who himself had fallen from his perfect state through his pride, was the instigator of the temptation
- One might wonder why God allowed this wicked creature to tempt man to sin – was this fair or just?
  - ✓ It can be supposed that Adam and Eve would have sinned at some point of their own volition, without the serpent’s beguiling, even as Satan himself fell of his own volition
  - ✓ While man is fully responsible for his sin, yet there was an external influence that inflamed and aggravated the temptation

- ✓ In this we can see God’s mercy – man did not beguile or tempt himself, but this great enemy, Satan, did and thus provides a mitigating circumstance to man’s sin
- ✓ Now, in God’s plan of redemption, Christ will not only destroy sin, but will destroy the serpent by whom man was brought into a state of sin (Genesis 3:15; Romans 16:20)
- It is important to be reminded as we read this account that this is a historical narrative – it is a record of actual literal events that took place
- *“It is idle to call the narrative of the Fall a mere allegory; one had better say at once that he does not believe the Book. There was a real serpent, as there was a real paradise; there was a real Adam and Eve, who stood at the head of our race, and they really sinned, and our race is really fallen. Believe this.”* (Spurgeon)
- In this message we will focus on Satan’s temptation of Eve, how “the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtily” (2 Corinthians 11:3), and how we can overcome the temptation we are exposed to

## **I. THE WICKED ONE’S STRATEGY OF TEMPTATION**

### **A. The person Satan targeted – Eve**

1. Because of her position as Adam’s helper (2:18)
  - a. In the creation of man, God established the man and woman as equals, yet in a hierarchical relationship with the man as the head and the woman in submission to him
  - b. While Satan ultimately wanted Adam, he saw Eve, his helper, as the means by which he would conquer him
2. Because of her unique characteristics as a woman
  - a. As seen previously, the woman was created as Adam’s suitable helper and endowed with qualities that make her ideal for this role
  - b. While man is the head and leader, endowed with physical and emotional strength, the woman in the role of his

supporter is comparatively weak and more susceptible to being overcome (cf. 1 Peter 3:7)

## B. The circumstances of his attack

1. He seduced Eve when she was alone, without the protection of her husband
  - a. Temptation and the lure of sin is much greater when we are alone (cf. Genesis 39:11-12)
  - b. "Two are better than one..." (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12)
  - c. Christ sent his disciples out in pairs (Mark 6:7)
  - d. In the fellowship of the church there is exhortation, encouragement and accountability which serves to guard us against sin (Hebrews 3:13)
2. He seduced Eve when she was in a place of greater danger of temptation
  - a. While the garden was vast, with many other good trees, she apparently was found near the forbidden tree
  - b. Temptation is greater when we are in certain places, circumstances, or around certain people
  - c. A key to avoiding temptation and sin is avoiding those environments (Proverbs 4:14-15)

## C. The particulars of Satan's temptation

1. He planted the seed of doubt in God's word (1)
  - a. The key to Satan's success was to undermine Eve's confidence in God's word
  - b. Whenever man casts doubt upon the Bible, he is taking up Satan's refrain
  - c. When men doubt the inerrancy of Scripture in its text – "Is the Bible really inspired?", "Aren't there copyist errors in the Bible?"

- d. When men doubt the infallibility of Scripture in its teaching – “The Bible doesn’t really mean that”, “Everyone has their own interpretation.”
2. He planted the seed of discontent with God’s provision (1)
    - a. He drew Eve’s attention away from the bounteous provision God had given them, and focussed her on the one prohibition he made
    - b. His insinuation was that God did not have their best interests at heart, and that he was withholding something good and beneficial from them
    - c. This is a highly successful tactic of Satan – men today are blind to the countless blessings God pours out to them, while they see only those things he has forbidden them (cf. Psalm 84:11)
  3. He planted the seed of disregard for sin’s consequences (4)
    - a. Satan knows that if he can convince men that there are no consequences for sin, then men will freely engage in it
    - b. God has made it abundantly clear that sin’s wages are death (Romans 6:23), and that every person must stand before God on the day of judgment to give account for their works (Ecclesiastes 12:14; Acts 17:31; Hebrews 9:27)
    - c. But Satan has convinced multitudes that there is no day of judgment, and so we may live for sinful pleasures – “let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we die”
  4. He planted the seed of desire for selfish gain (5)
    - a. Satan spake truth when he said their eyes would be opened, and they would know good and evil, but *“Satan left out the material part of the truth, that they should know good, without the power to do it; and that they should know evil, without the power to avoid it.”* (Leupold)

- b. Satan in his pride thought to make himself god (Isaiah 14:14), and he feeds the same lie into the hearts of proud men and women
- c. The word “gods” is *Elohim*, and so this can be understood as “Ye shall be as God”

## II. THE WOMAN’S SUCCUMBING TO TEMPTATION

### A. Eve doubted God’s word

1. From the outset, Eve should not have entered into a dialogue with Satan
2. By listening to Satan she opened the door of doubt in her heart that would eventually lead to the fall of her race

### B. Eve diluted God’s word (2)

1. Eve omitted the words “every” and “freely” when quoting God’s command given in 2:16
2. This demonstrates the ungrateful heart of man who sleights the benevolence of God

### C. Eve doctored God’s word (3)

1. When quoting God’s prohibition in 2:17 Eve added to what God had said, saying “neither shall ye touch it”
2. On the one hand she omits God’s abundant provision, while on the other she adds to his restrictions, making him appear harsh

### D. Eve diminished God’s word (3)

1. God had said, “thou shalt surely die” (2:17) but Eve suggests that death was not certain, saying, “lest ye die”
2. Under Satan’s delusion, men hear God’s solemn threatenings of judgment, and dismiss them as empty and hollow

## III. THE WAY TO SURMOUNT TEMPTATION

### A. Facts about temptation

1. God is not the author of temptation (James 1:13)
2. We are drawn away of our own lust, and enticed (James 1:14)
  - a. The depraved heart of man is an abyss from whence all manner of sin finds its origin (Jeremiah 17:9; Mark 7:20-23)
3. Temptation is not evil in itself, but yielding to it is sin
  - a. Christ underwent temptation, yet remained sinless
  - b. Temptation serves to test us and prove the genuineness of our faith
4. Every person must face temptation (1 Corinthians 10:13)
5. God sets limits to our temptation, knowing what we are able to bear, and always giving us a way to escape it, if we choose to (1 Corinthians 10:13)

#### B. The three points of temptation

1. In 1 John 2:16, we are told that the satanic, antichrist world system has three elements: “the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life”
2. All temptations fall under one of these categories
3. In Genesis 3:6, Eve yielded to all three of these points, and in doing so sinned
  - a. She saw it was “good for food” (lust of the flesh)
  - b. She saw it was “pleasant to the eyes” (lust of the eyes)
  - c. She saw it was “to be desired to make one wise” (pride of life)
4. When the Lord Jesus was tempted of the devil, he also was tempted by these three points
  - a. The lust of the flesh – “If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.” (Matthew 4:3)

- b. The pride of life – “If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.” (Matthew 4:6)
  - c. The lust of the eyes – “Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.” (Matthew 4:8-9)
5. Where Eve failed, Christ was victorious, using the word of God to defeat Satan’s temptations (Hebrews 4:15)
6. Romans 12:1-3 gives the antidote to the three points of temptation
- a. We overcome the lust of the flesh by presenting our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service (Romans 12:1)
    - i. My hands are not going to be used for sin because they are sacrificed unto God
    - ii. My feet are not going to take me into a place of sin because they are sacrificed unto God
    - iii. My mouth and my tongue is not going to be used for uncleanness because it is sacrificed unto God
  - b. We overcome the lust of the eyes by being “transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Romans 12:2)
    - i. Our minds and our affections are to be set on things above, not on things on the earth (Colossians 3:1-3)
    - ii. “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.” (Philippians 4:8)

- c. We overcome the pride of life by “not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith” (Romans 12:3)
  - i. We must have a right view of ourselves – as vile, unworthy, hell-deserving sinners
  - ii. “For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.” (Galatians 6:3)

## **CONCLUSION**

1. Satan sought to mar and defile the innocence and purity of the first woman, so today he continues to seek to defile the innocence and purity of young women, and sadly he is too often successful
2. Unregenerate man, being a slave to sin and his fleshly lusts, is incapable of standing against the powerful temptations of the devil
3. The first step in overcoming temptation is to realise you are a sinner before God and come to Christ in repentance and faith
4. Only then, having been born again and indwelt by the Holy Spirit, can we have victory over temptation
5. What is your “easily besetting sin” that you are prone to fall into?
6. Learn from Eve’s error and flee from all those circumstances where temptation is greater
7. “But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.” (Romans 13:14)
8. By God’s grace, may we stand against the wiles of the devil and overcome his temptations, even as our Saviour did