

# Temptation and Sin

## Genesis 3:1–7 (ESV)

**INTRODUCTION:** Today, we are looking at the First Temptation and the First Sin.

***Temptation IS a complex, multifaceted way to get you to believe Satan's word over the Word of God. Today, we are doing a case study on temptation.***

**CONTEXT:** Last week, we saw - Adam and Eve created in the image of God, joined together as one, and completely without shame. They were placed in a literal paradise by God himself, and they were commissioned by God to take Eden and expand it globally. They had everything a brand-new couple might possibly desire.

Beyond that, they were given immense freedom—they could eat freely from any tree in the garden. Yet, there was one tree in the midst of the Garden that they were warned not to eat from. The fruit of that tree would be extremely poisonous, not only to their bodies but also to their souls.

Last week, we suggested that a good and loving God placed the tree in the garden for a good reason. It was not simply placed there to tempt man, which would not at all align with God's character.

### **James 1:13 (ESV)**

<sup>13</sup> Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one.

The tree must have served a purpose, and I suggested last week that, perhaps, the purpose of the tree was to produce food for the animals that would raise their intellect and enable them to communicate. How did I come to that conclusion? In this week's text, Eve is conversing with a serpent. As we will see, somehow, this serpent convinced her that the fruit of the tree would not kill her; it would actually elevate her intellect to that of a god.

Now, before we get into the text, there is a **backstory** you need to be familiar with. You see, this is no ordinary serpent. In fact, this serpent is possessed by Satan himself.

**Can animals be possessed?** Remember - where did Jesus send the legion of demons who possessed the Gerasene Demoniac? Into a herd of swine. So, yes, demons can possess an animal.

**Where did Satan come from, and what is he doing in paradise?**

We know this is Satan for a couple of reasons:

In **Revelation 12:9 (ESV)** John refers to Satan as...

<sup>9</sup> And the great dragon was thrown down, **that ancient serpent**, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world...

Then Ezekiel speaking of Satan writes - **Ezekiel 28:13–16 (ESV)**

<sup>13</sup> **You were in Eden**, the garden of God

You see, Satan didn't begin as the enemy of God. He began as one of the top Angels.

Sometime prior to Genesis 3, God not only created the human race but also another race of beings called "**Angels**." Now, Angel is the catch-all term. There are many different kinds of Angels, with varying responsibilities and abilities: Cherubim, Archangels, Seraphim, and Living Creatures.

From what we can tell, 1/3 of the Angels rebelled against God and were cast out of their station - these became Demons. A demon is simply a fallen angel.

If you want to learn more about Angels and Demons, get a copy of my book, "**Our Fight**." You can get it on Amazon or Audible.

But they are eternal, they are powerful, there is not a set way angels appear - we see some that look like humans, some that have four faces and resemble animals.

The Leader of the Angelic Rebellion was Lucifer. Lucifer was cast down and became Satan. In today's text, Satan has possessed a serpent and engages Eve in a conversation.

NOW, from this first episode of Satan's dealings with man, we can learn a great deal about how Satan tempts us. Look with me in verse 1.

### **TEXT: Genesis 3:1–24 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made.

The use of the word "Crafty" to describe the serpent is interesting. It's the same word in Hebrew that will be used to describe the fig leaves later - a covering. It indicates that there is more there than meets the eye, something is concealed.

On the one hand, it is a virtue we are encouraged to cultivate (Prov 12:16; 13:16), but it can also be misused, making it into guile (Job 5:12; 15:5; cf. Exod 21:14; Josh 9:4).

1b. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?"

I want to show you five aspects of every temptation.

## 1. The Angle of the Temptation -

1b. He said to the woman.

**He goes to the woman and not to the man.** Why? Well, Eve had not been created when God gave the command not to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. She was less familiar with the Word than Adam.

It is presumed that everything Eve knew about the prohibition she learned from Adam.

That is why getting familiar with the Word of God is your best defence against temptation.

Also, notice, the serpent's **problem is supposedly with God...** but he is not talking to God... he is talking to someone on God's team. He does this all through the scripture

- The Pharisees have a problem with Jesus, they go to His disciples and ask, "why does you Master do this?"
- The Pharisees have a problem with the disciples; they go to Jesus and say, "Why do your disciples do this?"

Satan exploits the angles. He sows seeds of discord and disunity. That is why we seek to develop a culture in this congregation of taking concerns to the source. Go directly to the person. ***Talk to people, rather than about people.***

*Not only the angle of the temptation... notice secondly....*

## 2. The Tone of the Temptation -

"Did God actually say, '

Can you pick up on it? *It's snarky and sneering* - "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?" You can almost hear a subtle laugh.

So the idea is, he's not outright denying what God had said... but rather, he's mocking what God said. He's saying - "that is ridiculous".

That's how Satan works. He doesn't come to Eve and say, "God doesn't exist". He doesn't even begin by saying - "God is lying"... ***He comes with a sneer.***

Before Satan tempts you to sin, he will always attempt to control the emotional atmosphere. This is one of the things that can make high school and college so difficult - the atmosphere can be very godless. It's NOT that it is inherently evil - but

rather that truth is sneered at, it's mocked.

You see, most people don't lose their faith through argument, but rather through sneers.

**Tim Keller said** - *For every 1 argument I've gotten against the faith, I've gotten 99 sneers.*

**From nearly 30 years of ministry** - I have found that it is NEARLY impossible to reach a young person who has a mocking father. You want to damn your child's soul? Go home and mock and sneer about what is said at the church.

Simultaneously, one of the most powerful tools we have - is the ability to put our kids in an environment where God's Word is honored, believed and proclaimed.

*angle of the temptation...the tone of the temptation...*

### **3. The Concern of the Temptation**

1b. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?"

Satan comes to Eve as someone who is deeply concerned about her well-being. Eve, there is a nasty rumor floating around the garden that God actually said you can't have any fruit from any of the trees.

NOW - what Satan is tempting her to do is about to cost her EVERYTHING. Not only her, but all who would come after her. Untold billions of people will be cast into Hell because of that is about to happen. BUT, he approaches her as if he is simply trying to help.

He still operates this way - he disguises himself as an ANGEL of light. An ally, a friend.

What is happening? Satan has planted the idea in Eve's mind that God is holding out on her. And he does so by misquoting God - the fact was, God said, you may eat freely of all the trees but one.

Eve tries to correct Satan, but you can tell he is getting to her...

*angle of the temptation...the tone of the temptation...the concern of the temptation...*

### **4. The Confusion of the Temptation**

<sup>2</sup> And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden,

Is that what God said? What word did she leave out? **FREELY** God said, “Guys its all yours!” Enjoy! Eve, didn’t represent God accurately. She removed part of God’s Word.

<sup>3</sup> but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’ ”

Did God say anything about **touching** the tree?

**Liberalism** (left our freely) takes away from God’s word. **Legalism** (nor touch it) adds to God’s word.

Before Satan gets Eve to sin in DEED. He messes with her theology.

- Liberalism looks at God’s Word and says, “I’m not accepting that part.”
- Legalism looks at God’s Word and says, “He should have said this”.

**ILLUSTRATION:** Several years ago, at my first church, Miss Margaret was chewing out one of the young guys because he wore jeans to church. She was telling him it was a sin against God! I very politely said, “Now, Miss Margaret - do you have a verse for that?” She said, “what on earth do you mean?” And I said, “Well, if it’s a sin, God would have said something about it in His word, don’t you think?” I’ll never forget what she said - **“Well, if He didn’t say anything about it, He should have!”**

**Liberalism and Legalism both lead to the same Hell.** They are both saying - what God said does not represent reality.

He has tee’d her up perfectly... now look at verse 4:

*angle of the temptation...the tone of the temptation...the concern of the temptation...the confusion of the temptation...*

## 5. The Lie of the Temptation

<sup>4</sup> But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die.

Now, if there was any doubt before, it is clear now that this creature is blatantly denying the trustworthiness of God. Not only does he say, “God is lying to you,” he offers a **substitute truth**... he offers his word in place of God’s Word.

All sin is basically choosing to believe the word of Satan over the Word of God.

<sup>5</sup> For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

Eve - you are like a newborn puppy... and that's cute... but sweetheart, you are blind. You don't get it... but eat the fruit...

Now this is a fascinating suggestion. Because there is an element of truth to it - they would have a measure of understanding that they did not have before... but while it is partially true, it is a TOTAL LIE.

**You see - God knows good and evil by virtue of His Omniscience.**

- God knows evil the way a Oncologist knows cancer.
- But Eve would know evil the way a cancer patient knows cancer.

**It would be INTERNAL, EXPERIENTIAL.**

***The essence of every temptation is a belief that God is holding out on you.***

That there is something out there that would be good, if God would only let you have it.

- That's why people commit adultery - they believe God can't meet their needs in their marriage.
- That's why people don't give - they believe God is trying to get their stuff.

**ILLUSTRATION:** Al Pacino's played [John Milton](#) a human personification of Satan in the 1997 movie, "The Devil's Advocate". *He said at one point, "Let me give you a little inside information about God. He is a prankster. Think about it. He gives man instincts. He gives you this extraordinary gift, and then what does He do? I swear for His own amusement, his own private, cosmic gag reel, He sets the rules in opposition. It's the goof of all time. Look but don't touch. Touch, but don't taste. Taste, don't swallow.*

That's the basis of satanic thought. God is keeping something from you. You can't trust Him.

EVERY TEMPTATION - has at its root that God is not to be trusted.

**ILLUSTRATION:** I remember when my kids were younger - there would be times when I would command them to do something and they would come back with something like, "Dad, I would be perfectly happy to do what you suggest if you would simply explain to me why this would benefit me or humanity in general in some way." But do you see what's happening - if they only respond positively when they understand, they aren't obeying me, or even trusting me, they simply agree with me.

BIGGEST LESSON AS LITTLE KIDS - THEY DON'T HAVE TO AGREE, THEY DON'T HAVE TO UNDERSTAND... THEY HAVE TO LEARN TO OBEY.

<sup>6</sup> So 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 to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.

- Lust of the Flesh - good for food - are you hungry?
- Lust of the Eyes - saw that it was good - is it pretty?
- Pride of Life - will be made wise - want to be more?

Now, Adam's decision to eat was peculiar. **1 Timothy 2:14** tells us that Eve was deceived; she foolishly believed a lie. But it seems to indicate that Adam's sin was **willful**, it was an act of treason. He was willfully joining a rebellion against the Creator.

Throughout time, Adam would be held **as the most responsible party** for all that would follow.

**Romans 5:12** - Therefore, just as sin came into the world **through one man**, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned—

Why did Adam knowingly choose to disobey God? Well, he had experienced life alone - he didn't want to go back to that. Adam knew that Eve would now die, and he knowingly took the fruit and ate, knowing he would die as well.

What if he had obeyed God? Everything about God leads us to believe He would have provided for Adam... but Adam chose to sin.

<sup>7</sup> Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.

This is the first man-made religion - an attempt to cover our sin and shame. Poor pitiful attempt it is. Covering their shame with something man-made.

Why did they cover their reproductive organs? Because that is what would bring about the results of the fall. Untold billions of sinners would now inhabit the planet all because of their decision.

Interestingly, in Heaven, this is one aspect of the Fall that is not undone - when we are given a glimpse into glory, we see them robed in white. It is a perpetual reminder that God will have to cover our sins, if they are to be covered.

**CONCLUSION/INVITATION:**

Next week we will see how God promises that the seed of the woman would come. He did come and He also faced Satan's temptation. Yet He, the second Adam, withstood Satan's temptation.

He faced the enemy not in a Garden, but in the wilderness.

The temptation to Christ was similar-

- **Lust of the Flesh** - Stone into bread - good for food - are you hungry?
- **Lust of the Eyes** - Kingdoms of the World - saw that it was good - isn't it pretty?
- **Pride of Life** - Angels will bear you up - Don't you want to be more?

Yet, in the face of that pull, Jesus answered every lie with truth... so that today you don't have to run from Him, you can run to Him.