The Schemer & His Schemes — Delivery Transcript

Genesis 3:1–5 (ESV) · Wes Terry · Sunday, February 26, 2023 · *The Fall*

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All right, well thank you choir and Russell and Mary for leading us this morning. If you have your Bibles, you can open them to the book of Genesis. We're going to be in Genesis chapter three this morning as we kick off a new series in the book of Genesis. We're still in the same book of the Bible, but I like to switch up the series so it feels like it's new and you don't get too bored. And it is a natural shift in the book from Genesis chapters 1 and 2 to Genesis chapter 3, same genre of literature, same basic story of the beginning and the foundations, but there's a shift in the topic matter that's being discussed.

And so for the next several weeks leading up to Easter, we're going to talk about everybody's favorite topic, which is sin and shame and choices and consequence. And you know, everybody comes to church eager to talk about those things. And I'm totally joking. No one's laughing. Honestly, just like me. No one wants to hear a sermon on sin, on temptation, and repentance and those kinds of things. "Let's hear a feel-good sermon about the love of God and I need an encouraging word." And certainly scripture is full of truths about the love of God and his encouraging words throughout Scripture, specifically many in the Psalms.

But that's not what we're looking at this morning. And one of the convictions of our church, at least our philosophy of ministry and preaching is to work through books of the Bible and wherever the Bible speaks, God speaks, and we allow God to set the directive of if we're going to do this book, he's going to set the discussion matter for the next several—however long it's going to take. And so I see this as God's sovereign way of helping us think through matters that maybe we don't naturally want to think about, but they're helpful for us and good for us, especially as we work our way towards Easter Sunday and celebrating the resurrection and life and those kind of encouraging themes, oftentimes it's necessary to get to a point of eagerness and desperation and an acute awareness of our brokenness and of our sin.

Genesis 3 is not a beloved chapter of the Bible. It's actually one of the most hated. D. A. Carson, I was reading him this week. He said there's probably no other chapter in the Bible that is as universally hated as Genesis chapter 3. A lot of Christian people kind of stay away from it because of its discussion about themes and the fall. Nobody likes to talk about those things. Skeptics kind of push back against it because you've got a talking snake and two people in a garden who are the only two people in the world and they kind of mock that idea and push back against it.

And as universally hated as the chapter may be though, I think it is absolutely central and foundational to understanding human brokenness. And there's all kinds of people in the world today who identify the problem. They say this world's broken, we've got problems, there's injustices, there's things that we need to remedy. There's all kinds of people who debate on the solutions to those problems. "Well, if you'll just elect me or hire me, then I'll fix what's broken." But the truth is a lot of those hypotheses and ideas are they're either not complete or they're absolutely incorrect because they deviate from what true truth is and true truth is right here in Genesis chapter 3 and it's the story of how the world broke and what's broken in us and what's broken in you and then specifically how God can heal that brokenness by his grace and through his kind provision.

And so this morning we're going to look in chapter 3, verses 1 to 5 specifically, with a message entitled "The Schemer and His Schemes." And it is a message about that talking serpent in the garden. And we know him today as the devil and Satan and really have a lot of insight this morning from God's word on how temptation comes. And why temptation works and why is it that you're able to resist some temptation, but you're not able to resist other types of temptation. It's a very much a greater challenge.

Why is it that you can resist some and not others? I think we'll discover that here in God's Word this morning. If you're taking notes, I think of Genesis chapters 1 and 2 as paradise given, Genesis chapter 3 as paradise lost. And this is how Adam and Eve lost the great blessing of God and the paradise they were entrusted with there at the beginning. And Genesis 3 really brings a wrecking ball to the communion and intimacy that they had enjoyed, both vertically in their relationship with God and then horizontally in their relationship with one another.

So it says in chapter 3, verse 1, that "the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made." And "he said to the woman, 'Did God actually say, "You shall not eat of any tree in the garden"?' And the woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, 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."' But the serpent said to the woman, 'You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes

will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.'" And so right out of the gate, we're introduced to this new character called the serpent.

And the first question that hits my mind every time I read this is like, where did this guy come from? I thought this was paradise. This is the garden, everything's right, everything's wonderful, and now here comes this talking snake trying to persuade Eve to do the opposite of what God asked her to do. And it really does raise the age-old question that philosophers have tried to wrestle with. From whence comes evil? Where does evil come from? And how did it show up? If it's true that God is all powerful and all good and all knowing and He created this world and this is supposed to be a good world that honors Him and glorifies Him, then what happened?

And where did it come from and how did it start? And there are many who would say the reality of the evil in the world means one of two things: either God is not all-powerful or he's not all good. And what you see in the book of Genesis is an answer to the problem. And for those who are more agnostic and atheistic, I think it's somewhat interesting that they raise this challenge against Christianity that somehow God doesn't exist because of the reality of evil. I always want to ask them the question, "Well, on your worldview, where does—what does evil even mean?"

Because if there is no God, there is no real ground for goodness. There is no ultimate standard of good and evil because it's all just natural. We're all just evolving. It's might makes right. There is no supreme, universal, non-subjective standard of good and evil. So if there is no good, there is no evil on your view. And if you think about it, the honest atheists in history have said that, guys like Nietzsche and Jean-Paul Sartre, they've said as much that there is no God, therefore there is no good, there is no evil, there is no absolute morality, but most people who raise this question say there is an absolute morality and God isn't measuring up to it.

And so what you see in Genesis chapter 3 is why God is not the author of evil and how God deals with evil and where evil actually comes from. If you think about it on a Christian worldview. And the whole sermon won't be philosophical like this, but just to kind of get it out of the way, in Christianity, evil is nothing in the very strict sense of the term, as in it is not a thing. Christianity is not kind of like the monistic religions where there's like the God who's both good and evil.

Think of Star Wars, the force. May the force be with you and there's the Sith Lord who's kind of in the force. He's using the force, but it's kind of the evil side. And then there's Luke Skywalker and the Jedi, and they're kind of using the good side of the force. And the key is to find the balance and Anakin Skywalker is supposed to bring the balance,[1] and that's not Christianity. In Christianity, it's not kind of this good and—there's a good God and there's a bad God, and there's good and then there's anti-good and they're kind of duking it out.

That's not the case in Christianity. There's just one God, He is all good. And there are creatures that He has made with volition, with choice and the ability to decide. He's created us with the option to love or not love, to choose or to reject. And when God, who is the supreme standard of goodness, creates creatures, who can respond to him positively or negatively, that itself, that act itself entails the possibility for evil to be introduced, because evil is not a thing. Evil is not its own substance. Evil is just a deviation or drift away from the good.

So evil only has its essence in relationship to the good. If there was no good, there could be no evil. So what is evil? Evil is just deviating from the good. Evil is just rejecting the good. It's robbing the good of its goodness. And so at root, where does evil come from? It comes from the corruption of the will. It comes from us people made in God's image saying, "I don't want to do it God's way." And when enough people make that decision, evil begins to abound. And the more that will gets corrupted the more the brokenness begins to manifest in any given culture.

And you can probably, if you're honest, see this even in your own life when you've said, "God, it's my way or the highway. I'm going to do it my way. I'm not going to do it your way." Maybe at first it was great and a little bit fun, but eventually you began to suffer the consequences of doing life outside of God's design. Evil and suffering began to be manifest in your life because you've deviated from the good. Now that's not to say all suffering is a result of personal sin. Obviously not.

Jesus makes this clear in the gospels that it wasn't this man who sinned or his parents who sinned. It is so that the glory of God might be revealed in his healing. Sometimes your suffering is the result not of your sin, but of someone else's sin and maybe generations and generations and generations of people's sins who created a context of a broken world where you were just—it wasn't your fault, but it is your problem. But it all stems back to this original corruption of choice, where Adam and Eve were given a choice and they chose wrongly.

And you may ask the question, well, isn't it possible for God to create a world where everybody freely chooses the right thing? And I guess it's logically possible, but it might not be feasible. How many children have you had? And how many of them did everything right? It may be that there is no possible world that God could create where there were free creatures who eventually one of them doesn't eventually choose wrongly. And it's the corruption of that choice that introduces evil into the world. And that's why understanding temptation matters.

Because if you can understand how that temptation to corruption comes, you can guard yourself against it and you can choose rightly instead of choosing wrongly, and you can take that brokenness that's in your life and begin to see God heal it and restore it again. So evil

originated because we took God's gift and we used it wrongly. The origin of evil comes from the corruption of choice. So how does temptation come? Let's look at it again in chapter three, verse one. It says that the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made.

I think that's an interesting phrase, more crafty. It was common in ancient Near Eastern worlds for the serpents to be like a source of protection and wisdom. We think of snakes and we think of what? Rattlesnakes, and they're terrible and they're bad and they're a menace and that's why we have a celebration every year to kill a bunch of them that were in Sweetwater, Texas. But that's not always—you wouldn't think about dragons in ancient Near Eastern cultures, just like the old tales of Sir Lancelot and King Arthur, the dragon was a protector, the dragon was often very, very wise: "Solve me a riddle, young man."

And if you could solve the riddle of the dragon you could get to his protection and his power. That was somewhat of the symbolism of the serpent. And so the word more crafty isn't necessarily a negative word. It just means to be wise, it means to be prudent. It means to be shrewd. And it's not always bad to have that kind of a mindset. You can use it to be manipulative and deceitful, but it's not necessarily that. It is, though, a reminder that Satan is shrewd and it is the shrewdness of Satan that makes us more susceptible to temptation.

Temptation would not be any problem whatsoever if temptation felt like saying no to broccoli. It'd be easy to say no to broccoli, but Satan doesn't present temptation as broccoli. He presents temptation as homemade vanilla Blue Bell ice cream. He makes it seem good and reasonable and inevitable because he's shrewd and he can take untrue things and make them seem true. He can take bad things and make them seem like good things, and that's exactly what he does here in Genesis 3. It's a reminder that Satan is shrewd, and so we need to be on guard.

That's why Paul in Ephesians chapter 6, verse 11 says if you're going to resist the evil one, you better suit up. You better put on the armor, take the belt and the breastplate and the sword and all of those things and get ready because your enemy is shrewd. He has methods is the Greek word that is used, the schemes of the devil. It's the Greek word *methodeia*. It's where we get our word methods. He's methodical, he's slow, he knows you better than you know yourself, and so he'll play the long game and he'll exploit your weaknesses and your passions and your lust and he will snag you if you are not armored up.

Same thing in 2 Corinthians where he says, this guy that you're angry at, you need to release that anger. You need to get rid of that bitterness. I've already forgiven him. If for anything else, for your sake, because I don't want you to get that poison of anger in your heart because Satan will use that "I'm not ignorant of his schemes," and you need not be ignorant of his schemes because he is a master tactician. He is a dangerous foe, and oftentimes his greatest weapon is convincing you that he doesn't really exist.

And that your temptation to do evil is actually not evil at all. It's actually good and it's actually your idea, not his idea. And he's a shrewd serpent. So be aware of his shrewdness and know this that he has three primary vehicles to deploy his schemes. And those three primary vehicles, at least from Genesis chapter three, that I can see, are your reason, your mind, It's your desires and it's your fears. He will appeal to your reason, your desires, and your fears. He appeals to your reason through deceptive arguments. He'll use half-truths and hidden premises to take nonsense and make it sound sensible.

He'll appeal to your desires, your passions, your lusts, your wants, your cravings, and make it seem irresistible, and then he will exploit your fears. What if I never matter? What if my kids aren't safe? What if my husband doesn't love me? He'll exploit that fear to entice you to sin. I want to look at these three in Genesis chapter 3. The first is the appeal to reason. Satan appeals to Eve's reason by planting seeds of doubt. He plants seeds of doubt and he questions God at two levels. He questions, he plants seed of doubt as it relates to God's character first, and then he plants seeds of doubt as it relates to God's Word.

When it comes to the doubting of God's character, it's hard to see this in the English, although you can see it there, but he removes the covenant name of God when he's talking about the Lord. Something that if you were with us in this journey through Genesis, you remember that in Genesis 1, the name of God is Elohim. It's the Hebrew word Elohim, which is just kind of a generic reference to God. It's actually the plural form of the generic reference to God at that. But it's not until Genesis chapter 2 that the covenant name of God is used.

Which is the Hebrew word Yahweh. And remember Moses is writing the book of Genesis. He's writing it post-deliverance from slavery to Pharaoh in Egypt. And so this whole I am who I am business is in their context. And so when they read Yahweh, they read the God who delivered us, the God who redeemed us, the God who is our God. And He's personal, he's relational, he is a God of deliverance who is passionate about us. That name is the name Yahweh and when Satan tempts Eve to sin, he says it's not Yahweh, it's Elohim.

It's not a personal God, it's just a generic God. It's not a God who cares about what you're doing in your life. It's a God who's distant and detached and disinterested in what's going on in your life. And this scheme is very prevalent today, especially amongst young people. There's a growing kind of therapeutic deism that says if God exists, he's kind of like indifferent to what's going on down here—obviously, or things wouldn't be so messed up. And that's how Satan attacks God's character out of the gate. He's not Yahweh, he's just Elohim.

And then he doubts God's word. He says, "Does God really..." Now, throughout the New Testament and Old Testament, there are warnings against false teachers. And oftentimes the warnings against false teaching, it's not about the big scary wolves outside the church or outside of God's people, but it's the big scary wolves inside of the church and amongst God's

people that are the most dangerous. They are wolves in sheep's clothing, and such is the case here with Satan. He's kind of masquerading as an angel of light: "Did God really say you couldn't eat of any tree in the garden?"

And notice how Satan sets up the question. There are several ways that he takes God's word and he twists it just a little bit and he adds just a little bit. And he kind of affirms Eve's misunderstanding of God's word. The first thing that he does is he kind of switches this moral seat of authority. It's "Eve, you're the judge of what God said," not "God is the judge of what you should do." When you're reading the scripture you can make a choice. Either the scripture is judge over me, that's the authority, or I'm the authority.

In this case Satan is tempting Eve, you be the authority. After he has an exchange of authority, I see him exaggerating God's prohibition. He says, did God actually say you shall not eat of any tree in the garden. But if you go back to Genesis 2 and you look at what did God actually say, what does God actually say? It's right here in Genesis 2:16: "God commanded the man, saying, 'You may surely eat of'" how many trees? Every tree in the garden, except one. So he took God's prohibition and he exaggerated.

You mean you can't eat of any tree? And then Eve's response is not much better. The woman responds to the serpent in chapter 3, verses 2 and 3. She says, we may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden. But God said you shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that's in the midst of the garden. God never said anything about in the midst of the garden, but she kind of emphasizes it's the one in the middle. And then she adds to God's word, and neither shall you touch it lest you die.

Did God say you can't touch it? We just read it. Did God say that? No, he didn't say that. But Eve said that. And some people say, "Well, that was Adam. He was adding rules." You know, maybe, and if so, that's Adam's fault. But the point is she did not accurately represent what God actually said. She added a restriction, God never gave, and then she watered down the permission that God did give and watered down the penalty that God gave. You can see this. I put them side by side. Here's God's words in Genesis 2, and here's Eve's representation of God's words.

She added, neither shall you touch it, so she kind of added a dose of extra rules and fences. She emphasized the midst of the garden, so she's majoring on the minors and minoring on the majors. And then she weakened God's grace. God says, you may surely eat. And Eve says, we may eat. And then when he talks about the penalty, God says, you will surely die. And Eve says, will die. So she's watering down God's word, she's watering down God's grace. Majoring on the minors, minoring on the majors. Now I took these five things and tried to boil them down.

I don't have time to give a sermon on this, but maybe some other day I've thought about looking at this. There's four ways that Satan uses to cast doubt on God's word. You see all of these four still today. Individualism, this is the exchange of authority. I'm the one that judges God's word. It's not God's word that judges me. You hear this all the time, even in small groups: "Well, what does that mean to you?" Well, there's what it means. How might it apply to you is an interesting question, but what does it mean to you is not often as interesting.

God's word is usually pretty clear on the parts that matter the most, and it's our judge, we're not its judge. The second one is legalism. This is adding extra rules and fences. This is exaggerating God's word like Satan does. You mean you can't eat of any tree? And this is Eve saying, and you can't touch the tree. That's legalism. It's extra rules and fences. And like I said, maybe Adam said to Eve, "You know, you have a problem with touching. So we're going to add an extra rule for you, an extra fence. No touching, Eve."

But that's her extra rule. That's not God's extra rule. And when you take your personal extra rules and you add them on top of God's rules, that's called legalism, especially when you carry the same weight of your extra rules. This is just okay, here's what God's word is, it's the highest weight of authority, and here's what my thing is, and we're going to equal them together because what matters to me equals just as much as what matters to God. That's legalism. And it twists God's word. It's a very big problem, especially amongst very conservative Christians.

It's fine to have extra rules and fences, but you can't give them the same weight that you give the word of God. The third one is the opposite, and that's liberalism. This is watering down God's word. Well, it wasn't an actual miracle. It wasn't actually splitting the whole sea. It was maybe it was a shallow part of the sea. It wasn't an actual resurrection. It wasn't an actual feeding of 5,000. Let's water down God's grace. Let's water down God's power, let's water down God's permission, and let's also water down God's penalty.

You know, hell isn't real. It's just a description of suffering of life without God. That's liberalism, watering it down. And then the third or the fourth one is extremism for lack of a better word. And this is majoring on the minors and minoring on the majors. This is how cults get started. This is oh, I found this one little verse. This is Eve saying it's in the midst of the garden. It's in the midst of the garden, so it's the most important tree. Well, it is in the midst, but God didn't seem to care about it being in the midst, and now you're taking something that was minor and you're majoring on it.

That's how Satan twists the word of God. That's how cults get started. And that's how he casts doubt on God's word. So he casts doubt on God's character, he casts doubt on God's word, and then he appeals to Eve's fear. In verses four and five, the serpent said to the woman, You won't surely die. So he does two things here. He appeals to her fear in verse five, but first, before he appeals to her fear, he stimulates her—he affirms her weakening of God's

word. You're not surely going to die. He's kind of saying, "We agree on this, Eve. You see it, you're so bright, you're so wise."

And he uses the word *surely*, even though Eve took it out. It's almost as if he's saying, yeah, you are right. We should take away that part of God's word. And then in verse 5, he appeals to her desires and her fears. He says, God knows that when you eat of it, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil. So he moves from softening her fear to strengthening her desire. Satan questions God's character and then he exploits Eve's fear. Hey Eve, don't you want to be like God?

Don't you want to know things that only God knows? Don't you want to know the secrets of the universe, that's always Satan's strategy. First he softens our fear of God's judgment, and then he strengthens our desire for personal gratification. First, let's weaken what you're afraid of, and now let's strengthen what you know you shouldn't do, but you want to do it so bad. It's always how Satan works. Shrink your fear of judgment, strengthen your desire for personal gratification. And notice his argument. He says, God's jealous. God's not really going to punish you.

He's just afraid. Somebody else might get the power he has. God is just a jealous monarch. He thinks it's all about him. Which, news flash, it is all about God, but it's right for him to think that. But that's always been Satan's problem. I want that glory. I want it for me. And Eve, you should want it for you. And then he takes sin, which is a bad thing, which is a heavy burden. He says, it's not bad. It's good to know good and evil. It's good to be like God.

You want to sit in that seat. Because you could do it better. And the time is now. You don't have to wait. Quit putting off the inevitable. Ready, shoot, aim. If you don't take it now, you'll never be able to have it. And the craziest thing about it is Satan's not a hundred percent wrong. He's telling the truth. If they ate of that fruit, they would get that knowledge. We know that because if you look a little later in Genesis chapter 3, verse 22. It says, God says to himself, we got to get this guy out of here because now he's like one of us, knowing good and evil.

So Satan was using if you're taking notes, he leverages half-truths and hidden premises. It's a half-truth. Yes, it is true. You will be like God. You will know good and evil, just like he says in Genesis chapter 3 verse 22. But the hidden premise is that's good for you. It's actually not good for you, it's bad for you. That's the hidden premise. If you're not God, it's not good to have godlike power. It's not a good thing to know the difference between good and evil because you're not God. God knows the difference between good and evil because of his omniscience.

You're not God, you're not omniscient, so the only way for you to know the difference between good and evil is through participating in the evil It'd be like my daughter and she

wants to know what doing drugs feels like and like okay I may know what that feels like because of my knowledge base. Okay, because I've been there, I've done that just like God knows everything there is to know. But her only way of knowing the destructive power of addiction and drugs is for her to participate in it. And I don't want that for her.

I would, anything but that. And this is what God is doing. This is, yes, you will get knowledge, but I don't want that knowledge for you. Not because I'm ego driven, not because I'm some kind of killjoy, it's because I love you, it's because I want to protect you. And Satan takes that truth. And he hides a premise and he kind of majors one side of the truth and says he's not a good God and it's actually a good thing. So sin is good, God is bad, time is now. Hidden premises, half-truths.

And what's the result? It's accusation. It's condemnation. Look at Genesis chapter 3, verse 8. You don't have to skip it there if you're taking notes, man. They do what they shouldn't do and they immediately they become aware of their knowledge. They know good and evil and they know we're evil. We're sinful. So what did they do? They heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.

We're going to explore this next week, but every invitation to be like God isn't a good one. Godlike ability entails a godlike responsibility. And the day Adam and Eve ate the fruit was the day they woke up to their shame and inadequacy. They know we're not like God. We shouldn't possess this power. And so here's what Satan does. He uses temptation to draw you in, and then he switches. After he's drawn you in and hooked you, he changes his strategy and he shifts from temptation to accusation. He uses temptation as a hook to draw you in.

And then he uses accusation to shut the door and lock the key and keep you enslaved. God's not that serious. God's not that angry. It won't be that bad. Come on in. Come on in. Come on in. And then once you dive in, he changes the tune. He switches the song. He says, you are a wicked sinner. You are a worthless, no-good, nobody. How could God ever love somebody like you? How will you ever get over this? And some of you know exactly what I'm saying because you're right there in the prison right now.

It felt right, it felt good going in, but now you feel like a worthless failure. I'll never have a life again. I'll never have God's grace again. First temptation, then accusation. And they're both lies. They're both lies. The gospel, if you take the gospel into two truths, the first truth is you are far worse off than you could have ever imagined. And the second truth is you're far more loved in Christ than you could ever dare to hope. You've got to have both truths for the gospel to be true. There is bad news, there is sin, I'm guilty, but there's also good news.

What Satan does is he comes to the first pillar and he says, you're not that bad, and God's not that mad. So he reverses the first truth of the gospel, and then the second truth that says you're far more loved than you could have ever imagined. He says the opposite to that. He says God can't love you, he can never love you. He uses accusation to tear down the second pillar of the gospel, and he uses temptation to tear down the first pillar of the gospel. And his goal in both cases is to rob you of God's grace and to rob you of God's forgiveness and to rob you of your need for repentance and salvation because if he can rob you of that then he can take away everything.

And so how do you overcome? The only way of overcoming temptation is to look to the cross because the cross shows you the truth. It destroys Satan's lie. At the cross, you see, there you see my sin was so bad Jesus had to die for me. I was so helpless. I was so incapable that God Himself had to send His one and only Son to live this sinless, perfect life that I couldn't live. And then willingly in love lay that life down. He cried out on the cross, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Because I am forsaken by God I am cut off. I am wicked. So you see the truth of Satan's lie. You are bad. God is not, God is good and you are bad. And then at the cross, you also see the second lie of Satan, that God does love you. He loved the world so much he sent his son. Greater love has no one than this, than that he lay down his life for his friends. That that Jesus loves you enough to actually die in your place for your sin. And that when you see him there, love so amazing, so divine, that breaks the power of temptation in your life.

He's given all to me. Who am I to withhold this from him? Who am I to demand my rights? Who am I to cling to these passions that I know deep down are not good for me. If I can trust him with my salvation, I can trust him with his instruction and his wisdom that this is not good for me. And so when you look to the cross, you'll be able to overcome temptation and get free from the prison of accusation. You'll never get free from the prison of accusation without the cross.

The devil is preaching the song of the redeemed. I am cursed and gone astray. Cursed is the one who can't abide. See, the devil's telling the truth. You are cursed. You are gone astray. But he's forgotten the refrain. And the refrain is Jesus saves. Jesus saves. And so if you're someone who knows the reality of sin and temptation and accusation and you've never received the gift of liberation and adoption and love that's available to you through Jesus Christ, through repentance of sin. And faith in the Lord Jesus. For those of you who know the Lord and are trying to walk in holiness, You know, being a Christian doesn't take away your desire to sin, and so I want to give some real quick application and then we'll be done.

Where I think Eve went wrong and where I think we can prevent temptation is number one, extinguish self-pity through contentment and gratitude, Eve was focused on the wrong thing. She wasn't focused on what God had already given her. She wasn't focused on being grateful.

She was focused on that's in the middle. And I want the one in the middle. And that's what happens in your life. You've got all these blessings from God, all of this richness. And you go off and focus on the one thing that isn't there. The scriptures constantly encourage us to be grateful, thanksgiving, pray with thanksgiving, in all things give thanks.

This is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. Contentment with godliness is great gain. So extinguish self-pity in your life. Secondly, listen to your heart. Proverbs 4:23 says, "Keep your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life." The heart is important. You've got to ask yourself, I know this is weird for me as someone who likes the brain and arguments and stuff, but every now and then I've got to ask myself the question, how do you feel? What's going on in here? Did anything get in here that doesn't need to be there?

This is good parenting as well. Good grandparenting. What's what got in here? You know, I heard what they said to you. I saw you crying. I know that hurt. Is there any root of bitterness, any root of anger? Listen to your heart. Constant criticism, constant frustration, constant meanness, bickering, those are symptoms of a heart that isn't rejoicing in the Lord, that's not content in the Lord. Jesus says, if you want to know what your heart feels, just listen to what your mouth says. So those things that you say and you say, well, I'm just kidding.

Well, you got to think it to say it. So think about it. Thirdly, abide in God's word. David says in Psalm 119:11, I've hidden your word in my heart so that I might not sin against you. Colossians 3:16 says, Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly. Jesus says, if you'll abide in me and my words abide in you, then you can ask whatever you wish, and it'll be done for you. People fall prey to false teaching because they aren't familiar with biblical truth. That's what he did. She didn't know what God actually said.

So since she didn't know what God actually said, Satan was able to come and say, maybe this is what he actually said. Maybe this is what's actually true. So if you don't know the word, because you don't ever read the word, you're susceptible to temptation. And that's also to say, read the word in community. You know, Adam failed here. He should have been able to come alongside of her and say, you shouldn't. No, that's not what he said. He said this, that's a lie. You need God's word dwelling in you, and you need God's people surrounding you, enforcing God's word.

So plug into a small group. Have a personal quiet time. Dwell in the word. Let the word dwell in you. And then finally remove the hook. One of my mentors once told me, scared me to death. He said, "Satan is not in a hurry to ruin your life." And he says what he'll do with young guys, especially young pastors, is he'll set a little hook. And it's innocent at first. It's just a little thing, it's just an inclination towards greed. It's just a little lust. It's not pornography. You're not cheating on your spouse, but you're taking a second look.

You're entertaining thoughts you shouldn't entertain. A little hook left there long enough. The compromises will grow. And what he'll do is he'll wait until the opportune time where the most amount of damage will be done to you and the most amount of damage will be done to the kingdom of God. It won't just ruin you, it'll ruin your marriage and your family. And everything you've built, and then he'll pull the hook. And then he'll reel you in, and then he'll put you in prison and keep you there. So you want to prevent temptation in your life?

Get the hook out of your mouth. And some of you know exactly what the hook is. It's an inclination towards bitterness, it's a critical spirit, it's gossip, it's greed, it's not honoring the Lord with your finances, it's not honoring the Lord with your sexuality. I mean the application could be multitude, but get the hook out of your mouth. So what I want us to do with the time we have left is to enter into a time of response where we can allow the Lord's grace to address our brokenness and to allow the Holy Spirit to move in our hearts during a time of response to resist temptation.

And so if there's a way I can pray for you, I'd love to be available to pray. For some of you, maybe it's just getting the hook out of your mouth, and you don't necessarily have to come to the front, but just right there where you're seated. You can say, Lord, I know that you know this, and I want you to know I know this, and I want to take the hook out. And maybe you need to tell somebody. You actually you probably should tell somebody there's this hook in my mouth.

And I want to take it out and I need to tell somebody and I need somebody to hold me accountable. And maybe I can be that person for you if you want to come and confess your sin. It's through that confession of sin that God forgives us of our sin and he cleanses us of unrighteousness. There's something about bringing it into the light that God uses to heal you and change you. Maybe you're here this morning and you're not a Christian and the Lord is calling you to repent of your sin and find grace in Jesus Christ.

You've been putting it off and putting it off and putting it off and I'm having too much fun, I'm enjoying this too much. But the reality is you're on a path of destruction. It's just a matter of time. And God's spirit this morning is calling out to you and saying, stop, turn around, come home. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, repent of your sin, and he will save you if you'll call out on the name of the Lord. And so as Mary comes, we'll have a time of response. The altar's open if you want to come and pray.

You can respond right there where you're seated if the Lord leads. There's also going to be a QR code if you want to make this conversation something you do after the service, but as the Lord leads, you respond. Holy Spirit, we do thank you for your word and for your Spirit in this place. We thank you for that. We recognize that that where your word is preached and where Christ is exalted, you are pointing people to Him and you are drawing people. And so

I thank you that right now in this moment the Holy Spirit is at work in the hearts and minds of every person in this room, including me.

And so we ask you, Holy Spirit, that your intentions would prevail over the intentions of our enemy. Help us to resist the devil so that he might flee from us. And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

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1. Transcript note: spoken as "Luke Skywalker is supposed to bring the balance"; in Star Wars the prophesied Chosen One who would "bring balance to the Force" is Anakin Skywalker, Luke's father. Source: Wookieepedia, "Chosen One" (starwars.fandom.com/wiki/Chosen_One), citing *Star Wars: Episode I The Phantom Menace* and George Lucas. ↩