

## A Novel Idea Genesis 3:1a

“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way.”

So begins *A Tale of Two Cities* by Charles Dickens as he pulls us into the French Revolution.

The opening verses of the Bible provide an overview of the times and setting in which the world began. **“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”** It is the unfolding drama that begins history. In chapters 1 and 2 it was the best of times and in chapter 3 it was the worst of times. Like any novel, this one being true, the Bible unveils its main character in **chapter 1**. His name is Elohim – God. In **chapter 2** He is revealed by another name – Jehovah Elohim – the Lord God. The supporting characters are introduced in **chapter 1** and referred to only as male and female. In **chapter 2** they are described for us as husband and wife about to embark on an epic journey. Their characters will be more fully developed in **chapter 3** where we begin our discussion today. But **chapter 3** also introduces another character. This new character we learn is the villain, the enemy in the story of the Bible. If you haven’t already please find your way to **Genesis 3:1a**.

The person of the enemy

The purpose of the enemy

The plan against the enemy

### I. THE PERSON OF THE ENEMY

At a glance the opening words of our text seem quite innocent. **“Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had**

**made.”**

The KJV uses the term **“subtle”**.

The NLT translates it **“shrewdest”**.

Our text tells us that this is one of the creatures made by God. We know this because of **1:24-25**.

In looking at our passage this past week I discovered that everyone I read had different opinions about this creature. Views were all over the map and look like squiggly lines crisscrossing all over. Part of the reason as we will discover is that this creature could talk. **How was that possible?** One commentator suggested that before the fall all the animals had the ability to speak, that’s why Eve wasn’t startled when the serpent spoke to her. Another suggested that this was Satan himself masquerading as a serpent. I’ll talk more to that in a moment. We read in **II Corinthians 11:14** that Satan masquerades as an angel of light. Then in **Hebrews 13:2** we are told that strangers we entertain may be angels. So why not the serpent?

Many commentators hold that the serpent was embodied by Satan who spoke through the serpent. That is the position I hold. I will tell you why in a moment. Why else would the serpent also be cursed?

We have all seen pictures depicting what the serpent looked like in the Garden of Eden. Some show him coiled around the branch of the forbidden tree as he talks to Eve. Others depict the serpent on the ground upright and eye level her. Either is possible because the reality is we really don’t know. We will read later in this chapter that the serpent was cursed to slither on the ground implying that it had the ability to be upright.

Most of us share a natural hatred and avoidance of snakes. But even with such animosity toward them, there is a beauty about them that is quite attractive. They move with grace. Some are very colorful and beautiful.

That may have been one of the reasons Satan chose this creature above all the other creatures in the garden to use. Let's remember that he was originally created as a beautiful angel for the purpose of reflecting the glory of God. Instead of using his beauty for its intended purpose he became proud and exalted himself causing his fall.

### **Ezekiel 28:12-17**

We can only imagine how beautiful he had been created. His lost beauty after his choice to defy God may have been one reason he chose this beautiful creature to use as a tool to seduce and deceive Eve. He may have also chosen it because of its subtle nature which he could use to his devious advantage.

Now, some of you have asked when Satan and the other angels fell. As we have already said in our study of **1:1-2** that some scholars believe it was somewhere in between these two verses surmising that the darkness was a result of the fallen angels.

Others suggest that it was some time after day six since we read that everything God had made in the heavens and the earth was evaluated by God who said that everything was **"very good"**. They argue that when God made everything in the heavens that it also included the angelic host. They believe that angels fell sometime after day seven and this event in the Garden of Eden we read about in **chapter 3**.

So let me just say a word about their fall – I don't know and quite frankly there is a lot about angels we don't know and so the when is really a guess.

But we do learn some things about Satan from **Isaiah 14:12-14** and **Ezekiel 28:12-17**. While they are about the king of Babylon and Tyre these kings symbolize the fall of Satan. These passages speak both to the power behind their evil who is Satan and about Satan himself and how he fell. So while these passages tell us why Satan fell, they do not say when he fell. We discover in **Job 38:4-7** that angels were created sometime before the earth was created and fell sometime before **Genesis 3**. We just don't

know, but we know he did and he used a serpent here in the garden and we can't even really be sure that he possessed the serpent or merely appeared as a serpent. Serpents can't speak but that doesn't mean he couldn't have spoken through it.

The serpent seems an apt creature to depict the nature of Satan. We read in **Revelation 12:9** and **20:2** that he is called **"the great dragon...that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan."**

This serpent was a creature Satan used for his own purposes. Its natural beauty was something that would dazzle and lure Eve into his deceptive snare. I believe that Satan entered the serpent and used it as a tool for his own evil purposes. We know it's possible because we read in the New Testament that Jesus cast demons into pigs and that people were demon possessed. Scripture even tells us that Satan entered Judas in order to carry out the betrayal of Jesus.

### **Mark 5:1-13**

### **Luke 22:3-6**

We already mentioned **II Corinthians 11:14** which says that Satan masquerades as an angel of light. Had Satan appeared to Eve in his true form, she would have been repulsed and ran away, but as it is he is the master of disguise and deceit. He knows how to appear attractive and lead you astray. He came to Eve in the form of a beautiful serpent. To us it may be in the form of a beautiful, sleek looking car or a new home with all the latest features. It could be in the shows we watch, the music we listen to or the books we read. It could be in a job or a hobby. It could be a new relationship when yours seems old and stale or anything else that is eye appealing – but more on that next week. Just know that Satan will use anything and everything in his arsenal to lead us astray. We are told to be aware of wolves dressed in sheep's clothing. It looks good on the outside but is deadly on the inside.

[One day I came home from school hungry like any teen. Scrounging around I found a pan sitting on](#)

the stove with this green stuff in it. I thought Mom was making lime jello. I dipped my finger for a little taste only to be quite surprised. How many of you remember janitor in a drum.

Satan is the master of disguise appearing to be beautiful but oh, so deadly. Ancient cultures were fascinated by serpents. John Walton (not from the TV show) wrote: “Throughout the ancient world, the serpent was endowed with divine or semi-divine qualities; it was venerated as an emblem of health, fertility, immortality, occult wisdom, and chaotic evil; and it was often worshipped. The serpent played a significant role in the mythology, the religious symbolism, and the cults of the ancient Near East.”

John MacArthur says that Satan does not come to us as an open enemy, but as a false friend. We see it in **II Corinthians 11** and we see it here in **Genesis 3**.

Our enemy is a person. Next we see the purpose of the enemy, because as we read other passages throughout Scripture we get a clearer picture of the purpose of Satan by seeing more of his person.

## II. THE PURPOSE OF THE ENEMY

Embedded in the opening words of **verse 1** we see his purpose. It’s in that word crafty or shrewd or subtle.

Sometimes in Scripture the word has a positive connotation. It is positive when the word is rendered prudent and carries the idea of being wise, astute, perceptive, or intelligent.

In **Proverbs 12:16** a prudent or wise person ignores insults.

In **Proverbs 12:23** a prudent or wise person does not boast about his or her knowledge.

In **Proverbs 14:8** a prudent or wise person thinks before acting or acting with knowledge.

In **Proverbs 14:15** a prudent or wise person looks where he is going. That doesn’t mean when he

comes to an intersection he looks both ways before crossing the street. Instead it means that he carefully considers the path he is taking to make sure it’s the right path.

### Psalm 1:1

In **Proverbs 14:18** a prudent or wise person is said to be crowned with knowledge. They aren’t foolish.

In **Proverbs 22:3** a prudent or wise person sees danger and acts appropriately or accordingly.

But in the context of our passage the word has a negative connotation. We don’t see this in our English translations, but in the Hebrew the spelling of the word for crafty is similar to Adam and Eve being described at the end of **chapter 2** as both naked and unashamed. In the context they are complete opposites. One refers to innocence while the other speaks of willful deceit.

The book of Job reminds us of the negative effect of being crafty.

**Job 5:12** speaks of God thwarting the plans of the crafty.

In **Job 15:5** Eliphaz says that Job has adopted the tongue of the crafty meaning he is deceitful.

As I said earlier, in the context of **chapter 3**, this word tells us that the serpent is deceptive. Satan took something that was positive characteristic of the created serpent and turned it into something he could use for his own deceptive ends.

**Was the serpent hiding in the Garden for the appropriate time to unleash his plans?**

Again, it’s only speculation.

That Satan came disguised as a serpent suggests to us that temptation when it comes is also disguised.

That the serpent is described as crafty reveals the purpose of the enemy. He is out to deceive.

**What else do we know from Scripture about the enemy that we should sit up and take note of?**

**Revelation 12:9** – He is a deceiver out to lead the whole world astray. Like the pied piper he plays his tune to lure many from the truth. He will do everything he can to keep you from following God, to turn your heart from God, to make you question the truth of God. That’s why understanding these opening chapters of Genesis is so crucial to the authority of God and His Word. Doubt this and you can be deceived into doubting anything else about God’s Word.

A Pastor friend posted this on Facebook and if you only get one thing from today’s message, let it be this: *“Satan’s greatest weapon is man’s ignorance of God’s Word.”*

Write it down, remember it, repeat it. *“Satan’s greatest weapon is man’s ignorance of God’s Word.”*

We are going to see that to be true next week as we look at the fall. Eve’s ignorance led to Satan’s victory in the Garden.

Satan is intelligent, has emotion and demonstrates a will. His names give us an indication of his purpose.

Satan means adversary.

Devil means slanderer.

In **John 17:15** and **I John 5:18-19** he is called the evil one.

We have already seen him described as a serpent. In **Revelation 12:3** he is the red dragon. This description emphasizes his fierceness in conflict in attacking believers.

From **Revelation 12:10** we see him as the accuser of the brethren. This brings to mind a courtroom setting where he, as the prosecutor, stands in judgment relentlessly condemning us for all our sins. Day and night he stands in accusation.

In **Matthew 4:1-11** and **I Thessalonians 3:5** he is seen as the great tempter. He tempted Eve in the Garden, he tempted Ananias and Sapphira to lie

about money received for the sale of property, he tempted Jesus in the wilderness to claim His rights as God, and he relentlessly tempts us with all kinds of sin.

He is described as the ruler of the world (**John 12:31**), the prince of the power of the air (**Ephesians 2:2**) and the spirit who works in the lives of the disobedient (**Ephesians 2:2**).

From **John 8:44** we learn that he was a murderer from the beginning.

In **Ephesians 6:11** he is described as a schemer.

Finally, and if those aren’t enough we learn from Peter that Satan is our enemy prowling around like a roaring lion to devour someone (**I Peter 5:8**). Simply put, he wants to destroy you.

The purpose of the enemy is very clear. He is deceptive and is out to take down as many people with him as possible. He has had over 6,000 years to hone his craftiness. He is a foe that should not be taken lightly or flippantly.

There is a story about a church service going on when the doors in the back opened up and in walked the devil. Immediately everyone scrambled for the nearest exits in fear, everyone except one old deacon sitting in the front pew. The devil walked up to him and asked why he didn’t run away like all the rest. The old deacon gave him a look and told the devil he wasn’t afraid of him. The devil barked back why not? The old deacon stood his ground and said because I married your sister.

The devil isn’t to be trifled with. He is a powerfully cunning deceiver out to destroy you anyway he can. **So how do we overcome such a powerful adversary who has planned our demise and who persistently stalks the believer? What is the plan against the enemy?**

### III. THE PLAN AGAINST THE ENEMY

Scripture provides for us a three-pronged approach

in standing against this enemy. The degree to which we utilize what has been given to us is the degree to which we will be overcomers. Charles Ryrie has described these as vaccinations that serve to prevent our succumbing to the disease of sin when tempted.

### **A. Our Inspired Scripture**

**Psalm 119:9, 11**

**II Timothy 3:16-17**

Think of the Word of God as the roadmap that helps us navigate around all the potholes and pitfalls of life. Some of you may have an app on your phone that notifies you of construction zones, heavy traffic or accidents up ahead. It will suggest an alternate route. God's Word is the app that reveals dangers that may be up ahead so that they can be avoided helping you to arrive at the destination of godly character and ultimately heaven safely.

From time to time I have encouraged you to memorize God's Word. Each month there is a new verse in the bulletin. I will continue to do that. I don't know how many of you actually take that passage and memorize it. These verses aren't just randomly selected. There is a strategic pattern to the verses selected.

I was talking with someone recently about taking this to another level and starting a memorization club. I don't have a name for it yet. Decades ago churches used to really emphasize memorizing Scripture. So I'd like to encourage us to be serious about it. Pick an accountability partner, choose the verses you want to memorize and meet before or after service to say your verse to each other. Encourage each other in the week to keep at it.

If Satan's greatest weapon against the Christian is our ignorance of God's Word, then let's turn it around and learn God's Word so that it becomes our greatest weapon. **Ephesians 6:17** says that we are to take the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God as one of the pieces of armor that we use in

order to stand against the wiles of the devil.

Now while memorization is useful, hiding it in our heart so that we won't sin, it's not in the actual memorization that keeps us from sinning, it is in the doing or obeying it. That's what we read in **James 1:22** **"Do not merely listen to the Word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says."**

Memorization becomes the filing system from which we can pull out verses to help us when we face different things in life.

Right now I am working on a series of verses that are about walking in victory.

### **Victory in Christ**

**I Corinthians 15:57**

**II Corinthians 2:14**

### **Weapons for Victory**

**II Corinthians 10:4-5**

**Ephesians 6:10-11**

### **Overcoming the Devil**

**Revelation 12:11**

**James 4:7-8**

### **Overcoming the Flesh**

**Romans 8:5-6**

**Romans 13:14**

Still to come –

### **Overcoming the World**

**I John 4:4**

**I John 5:4-5**

### **Overcoming Sin**

**Psalm 37:31**

**Romans 6:12-13**

If you will notice in your bulletin for March, the memory verse is **II Corinthians 10:4-5**. All the verses for this year are focused on victory. I'm trying to get back in the habit of learning a verse a week, not so I can become a walking concordance but in order to help keep me keep from.

Whatever your need is today Scripture has a verse for you to apply. **Psalm 119:105** tells us that God's Word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. We don't have to walk in darkness if we let the Word of God illuminate our way. Scripture is inspired.

## B. Our Intercessory Savior

### Hebrews 7:25

His intercessory prayer for us is another vaccination against the enemy. Whenever we feel alone or afraid or discouraged or upset or tempted or just name it, Christ, our perfect High Priest is always praying for you.

**Luke 22** provides us with a great illustration. Jesus had just enjoyed a wonderful meal with the disciples, told them about the new covenant through His blood indicating to them that He was going to die. He also talked about His betrayal by the hand of one of the disciples. Incredibly the disciples got into a dispute about who would be the greatest in the new kingdom Christ just spoke about. Jesus then singles out Peter and told him that Satan wanted to sift him like wheat. Harvested wheat was taken to the threshing floor where it was beaten to separate the wheat from the shell. Then they would toss it in the air so that the wind would blow the chaff away. Satan wanted to violently toss Peter around to see if his faith was as strong as he thought it was, but Jesus reassured Peter in **verse 32** that He had prayed that his faith may not fail.

Be comforted and encouraged in knowing that Jesus is praying for you that your faith won't fail in times of temptation. He is our intercessor.

There is one other way to overcome the enemy, to stand against him and that is to remember we have the indwelling Spirit to empower us in the battle.

## C. Our Indwelling Spirit

### Galatians 5:16, 26

This simply means that we are to continually keep

on walking, or keep in step with the Spirit, depending on Him to lead us and empower us through life's challenges and temptations. Keeping in step with the Spirit speaks to our walking in the same step as the Spirit. If we don't deviate from His steps we'll never take a wrong step.

We've all seen those movies where the ground has been littered with hidden land mines and the leader tells everyone following to step in his exact steps. The Holy Spirit knows where all the landmines are so if we walk in His steps we'll avoid catastrophe.

**John 14:26** and **16:13-14** tell us that Holy Spirit is our teacher and that He will guide us into all truth because He is the Spirit of truth. Nothing He says will ever lead us astray, but we have an enemy who is bent on deceiving us. So when the path seems unclear ask, because just like Christ is praying for us, so the Holy Spirit prays for us (**Romans 8:34**) and will teach us.

This warfare is not physical but spiritual so we need weapons that are spiritual. **II Corinthians 10:4-5** **“For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds. Casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.”**

**Chapter 3** has been called the fork in the road. Go one way and the rest of the Bible is unnecessary. Go the other way and well, we already know what happens but our passage next week gives us a clue into the subtle nature of our enemy and his attack on the mind and on the authority of God's Word.

**Chapters 2** and **3** are really the best of times and the worst of times. Let's learn to be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might through the authority of His Word (**Ephesians 6:10**). That's really a novel idea.