

## It's Tempting Genesis 3:1-7

Alexander was trying to save up enough money to buy a baseball bat, but was having a hard time. One night when he was saying his prayers his mother overheard him say "O Lord, please help me save my money for a baseball bat. And, God, don't let the ice cream man come down this street!"

We have all been there with Alexander, haven't we?

The dictionary defines temptation as the desire to do something wrong or unwise; something that allures, excites, and seduces someone.

Psychologist B. F. Skinner thought giving in to temptation was nothing more than a lack of self-control.

Theologically speaking it is anything that draws the heart from obedience to God into any sin.

Benjamin Franklin is credited with saying that in this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes. Let me add a third thing that is certain and that is temptation. In fact, we are reminded by the Apostle Paul that temptation is common to man. No one is exempt.

That was certainly the case for the very first couple created. How long they were in the state of innocence is unclear. It could have been hours, days, weeks, months. It was long enough for the serpent embodied by Satan to observe the couple in this perfect setting supplied with everything and anything they needed. But we will see that there was one thing Satan could tempt them with, the one thing that was his own undoing.

From this passage we will take a look at temptation. Scripture has numerous examples that reveal a consistent pattern. But Scripture also provides a plan to help us be overcomers of temptation.

Now let's be clear about one thing, God never tempts us to sin. **James 1:13** makes that absolutely clear. **"When tempted, no one should say, 'God is tempting me.' For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He tempt anyone."**

The message says that God does not put evil in the way of anyone. God isn't going to dangle something out in front of us to see whether or not we have the moral fortitude to resist sin. Because He is holy in nature, there is no sin that will appeal to Him so He will not in turn try to tempt us with some sin if we have the spiritual fortitude to resist it. Some ancient Rabbis taught that evil impulses were part of man's original created nature. After Adam and Eve fell God repented that He had given man this evil tendency. They go on to teach that if He hadn't given man this evil impulse man would not have rebelled. But James says that God doesn't tempt us. He is too holy to be tempted and too loving to tempt us.

Today as we take a look at temptation let's consider the following:

The pattern of temptation is dangerous

The penalty after temptation is destructive

The path from temptation is dependable

### I. THE PATTERN OF TEMPTATION IS DANGEROUS – vs. 1-5

Last week we were introduced to a new character in this drama unfolding in the newly created garden. The serpent we found was one of God's creations. If you believe that the serpent was a creature that was possessed by Satan, it was a created being. If you believe that this was Satan who took the form of a serpent, he too, was a created being. Either way the serpent was created by God. This serpent we discovered was crafty, wily, and deceitful.

As I said last week, **chapter 3** is the fork in the road. What happens in this chapter will change history forever. Let me just add here that having a

temptation is not sin. The sin comes when we give in to that temptation. Again James makes that clear. **“Each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.” (James 1:14-15)**

From that passage we see a pattern and that pattern is clear in the Garden with Eve as we will see from our passage today. Notice first, that it all began with a doubtful word.

### A. A Doubtful Word – v. 1

The very first question was posed to Eve. There are different opinions about why the serpent approached her and so we can only speculate why he spoke to Eve and not Adam. Scripture does not say. All we know is that he spoke to her. It appears that she was not at all taken back by his appearance. Maybe she had seen the serpent but hadn't interacted with it yet. Maybe this was the first time she had seen the serpent and didn't know it shouldn't talk but wasn't surprised that it could. Again, we are left to wonder.

People make certain inferences about things not in the text. One thing we do know for sure is that the very first question is an attack on the authority of God's Word. Satan raises doubt in the mind of Eve about God and His intentions. Notice the difference between what God said in the command given to Adam and how Satan altered it. God said they were free to eat from any tree in the garden except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The serpent changed it by insinuating that they weren't to eat from any tree in the garden. Did God intend for them to starve? The question is an attempt on the part of the serpent to separate man from God, possibly hoping that he could get them on his side in his effort to overthrow and usurp the throne and rule of God.

He attacked the mind of Eve with a seed of doubt. That's clear in **II Corinthians 11:3. “But I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to God.”**

The weapon of deception begins in the mind and the serpent attacked the mind of Eve by casting doubt about what God said. Temptation always begins with a seed of doubt.

Many in today's church have listened to the words of Satan subtly casting doubt on the Word of God. Consequently some churches and believers have compromised the authority of God's Word and condoned what it says regard what God has always condemned. They have asked the very same question that Satan did in the Garden: Did God really say? It's a question that asks if we can fully trust God. Okay, maybe He said that, but maybe He really didn't mean it or maybe only meant it for those people back then and not for us. Maybe God has some ulterior motive. Did you hear Him right?

Doubt is the planted seed of temptation that when germinated sprouts the weed of sin. Have we listened to that question? Did God really say...

When we begin to doubt one area of God's Word then it's easy to doubt everything else God said. Statistics are showing that one of the major reasons many of the younger generations have left the church is because the church has doubted what God said about the opening chapters of Genesis. If the church questions what God said about the beginning then how can any of the rest of it be trusted. We must stand on the unchanging, inspired, and inerrant truth of God's Word without question or reservation.

The path of temptation to lead astray begins with doubt, with questioning the Word of God. If Satan had come right out and told Eve that God was lying

to her she would have had all kinds of red flags so he cast a seed of doubt because his intent was to deceive her. He wanted an ally, not an enemy.

The dangerous path of temptation begins with a doubtful word.

The second step in the pattern of temptation is a distorted word.

## B. A Distorted Word – vs. 2-3

What we assume is that after God told Adam the instructions about the prohibition, Adam in turn relayed them to Eve sometime later. But Satan raised a question which in turn excited her curiosity. In their commentary, Walvoord and Zuck suggest that Eve either did not know God's command very well or she did not want to remember it based on the ensuing conversation with the serpent.

In **Matthew 4:1-11** we find an excellent example in Jesus who knew God's Word well and used it effectively in His time of temptation. In the first temptation, Satan brought into question His deity. Are you really the Son of God? If You are, You can turn these stones into bread to feed your hungry belly. No mere man could do that. If You are God then show me.

Back in **Genesis 3** Eve also used the God's Word, but notice in her response she adds and omitted words that are important to the understanding of the command.

She added that they should not touch it. God never said that.

God said they could eat freely of any tree except one. In her response she omitted the words freely and surely.

She belittled the privilege of living in the garden with all her needs met and weakened the penalty.

When we linger at the place of temptation we are in danger of following it to its logical end. When we are not as familiar with God's Word as we should be, we run the risk of falling for and following any

wind of doctrine that seems right. As your pastor I have been tasked with the responsibility of building you up in faith and the knowledge of Christ so that you become mature no longer infants tossed back and forth by every wind of doctrine or by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. (**Ephesians 4:14**)

Paul told Timothy to watch his doctrine closely. (**I Timothy 4:16**)

I stressed last week the importance of knowing God's Word when confronted by our enemy by memorizing it. Let me add something I didn't mention last week. When you memorize God's Word, memorize it accurately. Eve may have known God's command but obviously didn't know it well and Satan capitalized on her error. He did the same thing in the wilderness. Compare what Satan said about angels lifting up Jesus so He wouldn't stub His toe with the actual quote from **Psalms 91:11-12** and you will see that he left some things out. He is a deceptive seamstress making alterations to God's Word for his own devious ends.

A doubted word led to a distorted word. What we see next in **verses 4-5** is a deceitful word.

## C. A Deceitful Word – vs. 4-5

Now that Satan had her attention and saw that she had misstated God's Word, he went on a full frontal attack. He called God a liar.

“You won't die and God knows it.”

He questioned God's love and truthfulness. Why would God want to put to death a lovely creature such as yourself whom He just made? He must not really mean it and must not really love you if you think that eating this fruit will cause death. Satan totally cast aside the penalty of death.

Remember that according to **John 8:44** Satan is a liar from the beginning. He is the father of lies.

On the other hand we read in passages like **Numbers 23:19** that God is not a man that He should lie. We also read in **John 16:13** that through His Holy Spirit, God will guide us into all truth. So whenever someone begins to question the Word of God and cast doubts about what His Word says, never forget that God's Word is truth.

If Eve had been smart she should have run to Adam to confirm whether or not what Satan was saying was true. "Hey, Adam, I met this talking snake who said that if we eat the forbidden fruit we won't die. What did God really say?" She would have learned that Satan was a liar. When someone raises the question "Did God really say", always go back to the truth of God's Word. It never will.

Essentially Satan was telling Eve that someone can sin and get away with it, that God is jealous and was holding something back from them because if they ate it, they would become like God.

Folks, Satan was telling Eve that she could have what he tried to get but couldn't, knowing full well that she could not get what he promised she could have. He tried and failed, but he didn't tell her that.

#### **Isaiah 14:12-14**

He wanted to be like God. He wanted to rule as God. He wanted his will over God's will. The lie here is that man could become his own god. It's the first sin of relativism. You can make your own rules.

You don't have to make your bed.

You can stay up late.

You can watch whatever you want.

You can eat whatever you want because there are no consequences.

That's why we'll fine someone for destroying a turtle egg but not someone for killing a baby through abortion. That's why we can define marriage however we want. We're god and we make the rules. We have effectually changed the hymn to say "King of my life I crown me now,

mine shall the glory be."

One author stated that every temptation we give in to is an act of wanting to become divine. A funeral director noted that among the unbelieving crowd the number one most asked song to be played at funerals is "My Way" by Frank Sinatra.

Victor Hamilton writes "The serpent intends to place before her the possibility of being more than she is and more than God intended her to be." Hamilton went on to say that "Deification is a fantasy difficult to repress and a temptation hard to reject."

Von Rad adds "The serpent's insinuation is the possibility of an extension of human existence beyond the limits set for it by God at creation, an increase of life not only in the sense of pure intellectual enrichment but also familiarity with a power over mysteries that lie by one man."

That's the lie Satan dangles with every temptation, we can become our own god, follow our own will. All Eve had to do was change from doing God's will to her will and she could be like Him. It would give her what she did not have – the wisdom of God, but what she could get by asking God.

**James 1:5 "If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him."**

She coveted what she did not have because she thought it was something that would make her happy in getting it – to be like God.

Don't let the path of temptation take you down the road of covetousness.

Puritan pastor John Owens writes in his book *Overcoming Sin and Temptation* that it is possible to be in temptation but not fall under temptation. By that he means we can be tempted but we don't have to cave into temptation.

Eve was being tempted by Satan who subtly attacked the authority, the authorship, the accuracy and the acceptability of God's Word. Did God really say that, surely He didn't mean it.

It is interesting to note in passing as we learned in **chapter 2** God revealed Himself as the covenant God – Jehovah Elohim – the Lord God. In **chapter 3** Satan conveniently left that out and referred to Him only as Elohim, or the creator God. Eve followed his lead and referred to Him only as God.

Eve has entered the high noon of temptation. She stands on the brink of her destiny. Will she listen to God or to Satan: obey or disobey?

**J. Vernon McGee says that “faith leads to obedience and unbelief leads to disobedience.”**

The pattern of temptation begins with doubt, then there is distortion, and finally there is deceit. It is the same pattern that Joseph faced with Potiphar's wife, what Achan faced in Jericho, what David faced with Bathsheba, and what Jesus faced in the wilderness. It is the same pattern that we face. John states it this way: **I John 2:15-16 – “Love not the world neither the things that are in the world, for all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life is not of the Father but is of the world.”**

It is dangerous to linger there in the dark shadow of temptation because the penalty after giving in to temptation is destructive.

## **II. THE PENALTY AFTER TEMPTATION IS DESTRUCTIVE – vs. 6-7**

In **verse 6** we notice first a disobedient act.

### **A. A Disobedient Act – v. 6**

Put yourself in the garden as an observer. Eve and the serpent are in conversation around the forbidden tree. It's only speculation here, but maybe at that

moment the serpent reached up and plucked a juicy piece of fruit playing off her words that by touching it they would die. Maybe he wanted to show her that he didn't die when he touched it so she wouldn't either. Maybe at that moment he then put it in her hand. I have heard that an effective salesman will put what he is selling in the hand of a customer because you're more likely to buy it.

The discussion ended. There is a time when talk is over and it's time for action.

She saw the fruit was good for food.

She saw the fruit was pleasant to the eye.

She saw that it was desirable to make one wise, although she had no proof that it would. It was in that moment the deceitful temptation swept her into a decisive act and she took it and ate it. She was given the will to choose.

**Henry Morris writes “Man was not created as an automation, but as a free being with the moral ability to love God or reject God as he should choose. Here was not the slightest reason why he should sin, but he could if he so desired. God had made him perfect and placed him in a perfect environment, with every need fully supplied. He did not have an inherited sin nature, as we do now; so he was fully capable of resisting any external pressure toward sin.”**

In her moment of decision she moved from a theoretical knowledge of good and evil to an experiential knowledge of good and evil. **You can tell a child not to touch the stove because it's hot and he may understand the concept in theory, but when he touches the hot stove he has moved from theory to experience.**

She took and ate and then gave some to Adam to eat. If we read the text as it is written the implication is that Eve was speaking for both of them. What we don't get in our English translations is that the “you” in each verse is plural implying that Adam must have also been present but chose to

be passive in the conversation. If that's the case I'm curious to know why he didn't step in and confront the doubt or correct the distortion or condemn the deceit. He certainly knew God's command. So why didn't he intervene?

Some believe that Adam either came up to Eve after she had eaten or that she went and found him. If the latter is the case, maybe he didn't know it was fruit from the forbidden tree, like when Samson gave his folks honey from the carcass of the lion he had killed. Whether he knew it was the forbidden fruit or not they both ate, they both disobeyed God. While Eve was deceived Adam ate it willfully.

Our wrong choices become the wretched chains that bind us. We live with the consequences of our wrong actions. What God promised for disobedience would come true. In that moment they died spiritually. They were separated from God. In that moment they began to die physically. Sure Adam lived to be 930, but he still died physically because there was a change in his DNA that began the process of aging and death.

In **verse 7** we see that two wrongs don't make a right. Their disobedient act led to a desperate act.

## B. A Desperate Act – v. 7

**If you had kids did they ever do something out of disobedience only to try and cover it up so they wouldn't get caught? Did you? How many of you have heard the saying "be sure your sins will find you out"?**

They realized their sin and desperately attempted to cover it up. There was shame associated with their being naked. They became conscious of their wrong doing and its consequences for sin. Man would no longer be ignorant or innocent of knowing evil. He was fully aware of his sin and he tried to hide it by covering up with the largest leaves he could find - fig leaves. These leaves could conceal

them but could not cover their sin.

**Jeremiah 23:24** **"Can any hide in secret places so that I cannot see him?" declares the Lord. 'Do not I fill heaven and earth?" declares the Lord."**

**Psalms 139:7** **"Where can I go from Your Spirit? Where can I flee from Your presence?"**

Paul says that man's attempt to cover up his sin is to suppress the truth (**Romans 1:18**).

Try as we may there is nothing we can do on our own that will ever cover up our sin.

We will never know what would have happened had they confessed their sin right then and there instead of trying to conceal it.

It was a desperate act to cover up act of their disobedience. **How often do we do the same?** Maybe God won't notice.

There are several things I think we can learn from this. The first is we should be ashamed when we sin. We have disobeyed God.

The second is that we can never in our own efforts cover our sin. We'll learn later from this chapter that only God can do that.

The third is that God's Word is truth and His truth alone will set you free. Wisdom isn't gained by doing your own thing. **Proverbs 1:7** says that wisdom is gained when we fear the Lord, when we obey His commands.

**Warren Wiersbe notes that "It's when we linger at the place of temptation that we get into trouble, especially when we know what we're thinking is contrary to God's truth."**

Last week we closed by looking at a plan against the enemy. The tools we noted include an inspired Scripture, an intercessory Savior, and an indwelling Spirit. Tools have also been given for us to overcome temptation. I want to close with some additional insight from Scripture that will help us be overcomers against the subtle, but deceitful attacks of the enemy when he dangles temptation in our

way to lure us from obedience to God. I cannot stress enough knowing God's Word. I think that's why God instructed Israel to teach the Word to the children of every generation. (**Deut. 6:5-10**)

**Joshua 1:8** "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to according to all that is written therein; for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success."

Scripture gives us the path from temptation.

### III. THE PATH FROM TEMPTATION IS DEPENDABLE

Two principles are found in Jesus' instructions to the disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane.

**Matthew 26:41** "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak."

#### A. Look Outward - Watch

Jesus told the disciples to watch so they wouldn't fall into temptation. Multiple times in the gospels we are told to watch or keep an eye out for danger. Temptation lurks around every corner so be ready for it. It is when we are looking out for it that we are in the best position to be ready to defend against it. By watching we won't be caught off guard when temptation comes to deceive us. We'll be alert to it. Look outward by watching.

#### B. Look Upward – Pray

As part of His model prayer, Jesus said that we should pray so that we won't be led into temptation. It's not enough just to watch, we need to be praying that we won't be tempted.

I well recall times visiting my folks when the day ended with devotions and prayer. My Mom would often pray for my brother who worked for the Sheriff's department. She would pray that he

wouldn't get caught up in all the office gossip and crude talk that can go on in a place like that. In essence she was praying for him not to be tempted. Pray that for yourselves. Pray that for your family. Pray that for your leadership. Pray that for each other.

Paul concludes the passage on the armor of God in **Ephesians 6:18** with these challenging words of exhortation "And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert (there it is again to look outward) and always keep on praying for all the saints."

Look upward by praying.

#### C. Look Inward – James 4:7-8

1. Submit to God
2. Resist the devil
3. Draw near to God
4. Purify your heart

It is only when we submit to God, yielding to Him in obedience that we will be able to resist the devil and purify our hearts. Look inward.

#### D. Look Onward – II Corinthians 12:9-10 I Corinthians 10:13 ("There hath no temptation)

Know that any temptation you face God has given both the grace to endure and the confidence to escape. In the temptation you face He has made a way out, you aren't stuck in the temptation. The way of escape will be different for each situation. And remember this – you don't face it alone. **Hebrews 4:15** says that Jesus is a High Priest who was also tempted in every way we are tempted and He faced them without sin. In **Hebrews 2:18** it says that because Jesus was tempted and overcame He can help us when we are tempted. Victory over temptation is possible.

#### I Corinthians 15:57 "But thanks be to God

**which gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”**

**II Corinthians 2:14 “Now thanks be unto God, which always causes us to triumph in Christ.”**

The pattern of temptation is always the same.

The lust of the flesh

The lust of the eyes

The pride of life

It is dangerous

The person who is tempted to play with fire will always get burned in the end.

The penalty after temptation is destructive. It leads to a disobedient act that results in a desperate act to cover it up. So learn to look onward at the victory we have in Christ.

Thanks be to God who has given us a way out. He has given us the victory through Christ.

Learn to look outward, look upward, look inward, and look onward.

As you bow your heads and close your eyes this morning. I'm wondering if there is anyone today who is facing temptations that seem overwhelming. Only you know what those temptations are or how strong they have been. You're not sure that you can resist, know that you aren't alone. God has given you the tools to overcome. **Would you lift up your hand so that I can pray for you today?**

Maybe you have already given in to the temptation like Adam and Eve. Rest assured that when you confess your sins God is faithful and just to forgive you of your sin. **Would you talk to the Lord right and confess it to Him and repent of it?**