
SERMON NOTES

Genesis 7: Chapter 3:1-6

We have discussed the identity of the snake and God's master plan to create love and defeat the evil that came into the universe as a result of creating love. Let's look now at the specifics of what happened to Adam and Eve there in the garden.

First, we need to notice something. The devil has to *trick* Adam and Eve into sin. He does not have any direct control over them unless they agree with his suggestions. He can't come at them with his strength of will or spiritual force – instead, in order to interfere with them, he must convince them to agree with him, and they must act out of their own choice. This is a very important point, for several reasons.

Number one, it means that, in spite of his immense power, the devil can't *make* you do anything. The only power he has over you is power that you have, at some point, willingly given him. If you say “no” to him, and his temptations, there really isn't anything he can do to you. I don't mean that you will never experience anything negative in life (now that sin is in the world, we all suffer from its consequences), but listen to what Jesus says:

Don't fear those who kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; rather, fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. (Matthew 10:28)

He means *God* here, not Satan is the one who can do what he wants with us. Satan, or sin in the world, might mess up your physical circumstances, but he can't make you go to hell. Jesus also said this:

“I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. ¹⁹I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. ²⁰However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.” (Luke 10:18-20)

Once again, Satan has no authority over us except what we give him. On the other hand, Jesus gives his followers authority over Satan. I believe this is part of the fulfillment of God's judgment in the garden when he told Satan he would be lower even than the animals.

Now it is key for us to understand that since Adam and Eve gave Satan authority, he does have some power in the world. And the fact is, because we were born in sin, the only way we have the ability to say no to Satan is through Jesus Christ and the indwelling Holy Spirit.

There is a second reason that this concept of Satan not really having power over us is important. We live in a day when everyone seems to love being a victim. In fact, if you can manage to be a victim of something, chances are you'll get special treatment, special rights, and maybe even some payment for your victimhood. You might even get away with murder. Most of you have heard of Mary Winkler, who admits to killing her husband last year in West Tennessee. After spending a total of seven months in custody, she is now a free woman. This is because her attorneys successfully argued that the murder was not her fault – it was actually the fault of her abusive husband. But the Bible is showing us something different here about sin. It is our own fault. It isn't the devil's fault. It isn't the fault of poor upbringing or abuse. No one else makes us do it. We aren't the victims – we are the *perpetrators*, every last one of us. We can't blame it on anyone else.

The devil is fiendishly clever (ha!) about how he goes about inducing Adam and Eve to sin. Notice how he begins: “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden?’” (Genesis 3:1)

This statement contains some of the truth, and some lies as well. Because of that, it isn't something that an honest person can just reject, without explanation. It is true that God said they shouldn't eat from *one* tree. It isn't true that he forbade *all* trees. By doing this, Satan is seeking to get Eve to learn the habit of agreeing with him. Also, Satan is trying to get her to view God in a new light – *what a miserly, mean person he is, refusing all that fruit to them*. And third, he is trying to cast confusion and doubt about what God actually said, and about what his will truly is.

Her reply is interesting. She doesn't reject him emphatically. But she does correct him about which trees they can eat from. However, when she corrects him, she adds something. She says that they aren't

even allowed to touch the fruit from the forbidden tree. Now, that isn't precisely what God said. Eve is starting to move toward the devil's camp – she is starting to view God as more harsh than he really is.

Next, the devil hits it hard. He flat out calls God a liar. And he attributes a reason for God's lies. He says, in essence, “Those bad things God said, won't really happen to you. God wants to withhold good things from you. He wants to spoil your fun. He knows you will be like him if you do this, and he wants to keep you under his thumb.” In fact, he was trying to convince her that God was withholding something she needed. Satan was trying to say, “you've got to reach out and take it for yourself, because God's is not going to take care of you. God does not have your best interests in his heart.”

The next verse says this:

When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. (Genesis 3:6)

This implies something to me. Previously, she had not even looked at the fruit of this tree, or considered it. God said don't eat it, so apparently she had simply ignored it. The first part of her downfall was, of course, listening to anything that the devil said. But the second part was contemplating the forbidden fruit. The thing about temptation, is that it is hard to reverse the process. If you want to avoid ice-cream for the rest of your life, it would be better if you had never tasted it at all. And it would be better still if you never looked at it or brought it to mind. Eve had never looked at or contemplated the fruit. *But when she did, the temptation gained more power.* It was the tipping point for her.

After Eve ate the fruit, “She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it” (verse 6). So, this whole time, Adam was standing there, letting the snake talk to his wife, saying nothing, not intervening to protect her spiritually! I imagine the conversation went like this:

Eve: “I think Mr. Snake is right. I think we should eat this fruit. I don't know, what exactly did God tell you about this? I mean this fruit looks good, doesn't it?”

Adam: “Whatever you say, dear.”

I think this is part of why Adam is the one who is blamed for bringing sin into the human race – because it was his responsibility to be a man and lead – and that means active involvement, and sometimes even standing up to criticism from his wife. He didn't do it. He dropped the ball. Of course, the hearkens back to what I said two weeks ago, about men needing to step up to the plate and be the leaders they were made by God to be.

The temptations we face today contain the same elements that Satan used to trick Eve and Adam. Many people – even church people – are hearing Satan ask, “did God really say that Jesus alone is the way to be saved? Did he really say that those who don't trust Jesus are going to hell?” “Did God really say that sex outside of marriage is wrong? He's just trying to spoil your fun!” “Does God really want you work so hard on your marriage, even though your spouse is such a jerk?” “Don't you see that your narrow-minded faith is stopping you from getting the good things in life?” “God doesn't really have your best interests at heart – if he did, these bad things wouldn't happen to you or your loved ones.” “Did God really say to not worry, and trust him? But how will anything get done unless you do it your way? If you wait for God, it will never happen.” “Look at the alternatives to God's way. Aren't they attractive? Nothing bad is going to happen to you just because you do things your own way instead of God's.”

Listen folks, Satan is a liar, cheater and murderer. He doesn't play fair. He deceives, he confuses, he casts doubt. Don't listen to him, and don't contemplate what he is asking you to contemplate.

If you have received Jesus, you don't have to listen to the devil. You have the power through Jesus, to say no. Paul wrote:

But remember that the temptations that come into your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will keep the temptation from becoming so strong that you can't stand up against it. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you will not give in to it. (1 Corinthians 10:13)

God's desire for you is good. Trust him in that. Trust him for the power to stand up to temptation.