

The Fall

*By Pastor Trent Boedicker
Text: Genesis 3:1-24*

*When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings.
(Genesis 3:6-7)*

Introduction:

A man wakes up, one evening, when he hears a strange noise coming from the attic. It sounds like little footsteps scurrying above. It's probably a critter that has managed to find a way inside to escape the snowy weather.

The next morning, the man decides he'd better check it out, so he grabs the flashlight and a tennis racket, just in case. Climbing the ladder he looks around. Whatever it was must be hiding in the corner, but he finds evidence that something has made itself at home. Little teeth and have been gnawing at cardboard boxes.

That's not good. As much as the man enjoys nature, he doesn't like the idea of sharing his home with a wild animal. So he makes a trip to the hardware. If you want to catch a critter, you're going to need a good trap. That's what he finds: the deluxe model. The cage is made from metal bars, and the door is equipped with a hair trigger mechanism designed to spring shut at the slightest pressure. The man takes it home, carries it to the attic, and sets it into place. He even goes the extra mile, covering it with a towel, so it doesn't look like a trap. He wants to catch the critter off guard. For the finishing touch he baits the trap with a few pieces of apple dipped in peanut butter. What creature will be able to resist? Then he goes downstairs for the night, and waits.

Shortly after midnight, there is a loud noise coming from the attic. The trap has sprung. Rushing up the ladder, the man finds a little squirrel trying desperately to escape, but it's no use. "Sorry little guy," the man tells his prisoner, "but you've been caught."

Squirrels aren't the brightest creatures. All they can see is the bait. They don't notice the metal bars around them, and are oblivious to the danger that they're in, until it's too late. That's why they are so they are easily ensnared.

That could also describe how temptation works in our lives. It catches us by surprise. We're not paying attention, and don't realize we're walking into a trap until it's too late. Instead of turning around, and running the other way we allow ourselves to be ensnared by sin. The Holman Bible Dictionary defines temptation as

“...the enticement to do evil. Satan is the tempter... [intent on] destroying a person through sin... God cannot be tempted by evil, and He does not tempt anyone... Temptation is not sin, but yielding to temptation is.” (*Lanier, D. Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary, p. 1568*).

There are all kinds of things that can trip us up, in our Christian walk: anything that would lead us away from God or cause us to compromise our convictions. It is often very subtle. One step at a time, we allow ourselves to be led astray, until we are so far away we have no idea how we got there or how to get back.

The tempter is very good at what he does. He has been doing it a long time. *So we must guard our hearts, because it's very easy to fall into his trap.* We see that in our passage this morning.

Genesis 3 is a pivotal chapter in the Bible. It explains what went wrong in the universe.

When we left off last week, the Lord had just finished creating the heavens and the earth. All that exists was called into being by the command of his voice. He fashioned this world to be a beautiful dwelling place for human beings. When He examined his work, the Lord saw that it was all very good.

The pinnacle of His creation was humanity. He formed the first man and woman, giving them a special role: to bear his image in this world, and to rule over the earth on his behalf. We didn't say much, about the Garden of Eden, but in our reading we saw that it was a perfect paradise.

So what happened? As we look around the world today, it is evident that things are not as they were meant to be. Something is broken – not just out there in creation but inside of us. A good and powerful God would not create a world so full of evil, so where did it come from? Other religions teach that good and evil have existed side by side, through all eternity, in a constant struggle, but that's not the teaching of the Bible. According to Scripture, it came from us. One foolish decision brought ruin to the universe.

The passage does more than tell us about the failure of our original parents. It also informs us of our human condition, explaining why our hearts are so easily led astray. We can learn a lot about the nature of temptation, and the tempter's schemes.

Temptation convinces us to believe a lie. (v.1-3)

Verse 1 tells us,

Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, “Indeed, has God said, ‘You shall not eat from any tree of the garden’?”

The passage doesn't tell us the true identity of the tempter, or where he came from, but it's obvious this was no ordinary reptile. The NT describes him as, "...the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world..." (Revelation 12:9). At one time, Satan was an angel, who occupied a place of prominence among the heavenly host. He was one of the most beautiful angels the Lord created, but his heart became proud. Wanting to rule in God's place, he rebelled, but was cast down to earth. Ever since that day, he has been consumed with hatred and rage, opposing the work of God at every turn. It makes sense that he would have a special contempt toward human beings, since we are made in God's image.

He shows up in the garden, appearing to Eve, not as the prince of darkness, but as a lowly snake. If he had introduced himself as the enemy of God, their defenses would have been raised, and they wouldn't have listened to a single word. But he took an unassuming form to conceal his intentions. Now you may not be very fond of snakes. We found one basking in the sun, last summer, in my sister's driveway. When we went to check it out, one of my daughters ran away crying. And it was only a harmless garter snake. We might expect Eve would have responded the same way, especially when the serpent began to talk. But they had no reason to fear any of the creatures God had made. They were in the garden, where they were safe. Up to this point, the world was a place of harmony and peace. That was about to change.

When the serpent began speaking, Eve must have imagined he was some kind of supernatural being, maybe a heavenly messenger sent to help them. That would not have been surprising. The garden, after all, was the realm of God. It was a bridge, so to speak, between heaven and earth. He pretended to be a friend, and his words had a certain appeal.

There is play on words, in the Hebrew text. At the end of chapter two we are told, "The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame" (2:25). The word for naked is "arom," and it signifies their innocence. The serpent, on the other hand, is described as one who is crafty. The word is "arum," which sounds very similar (it's only a tiny dot that differentiates the two words) but there is an important distinction. They were unsuspecting, naïve, oblivious to evil, and he would use his shrewdness to deceive them.

He begins by questioning God's command. "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?" Now he knows that's not what the Lord said. It's not even close. But Satan has a way of twisting and contradicting God's Word so that we're not sure what to believe. He offers us an alternative truth. He wants to shake our confidence, and get us to believe a lie.

Maybe you've grown up in church, and have been taught right from wrong. But the people around you have a different set of values, the tv shows you watch certainly do not reflect a biblical worldview, and your convictions are constantly being challenged. It seems like there's a little voice in the back of your mind whispering: "Does God's Word *really* say this...? Maybe it's not *really* such a big deal... Maybe I am free to interpret things according to the way I see it..." Once we start questioning God's Word, it isn't long before we reject it altogether. It's amazing how quickly a person's convictions can change, when it suits their purpose. You're in the parking lot at Walmart one day, when you notice a woman drop something from her purse. You try to get her attention, "Excuse me..." but before you can catch up to her she gets in her car and drives away. You pick it up, and it's \$100 bill. Wow! What do you do? You could put it in

your pocket. You tell yourself, it's not really stealing, you found it laying there, and the rightful owner is nowhere to be found. You tried your best to give it back, didn't you? What more could anyone expect. That's one possible decision. Or you could take it inside and give it to a manager, describing the woman and the type of car she was driving. For a few moments, there is a wrestling match going on in your heart: "The Bible tells me this is the right thing to do, but I don't know if that really applies in this situation." Finally you feel convicted. "This doesn't belong to me, I have to do my best to give it back."

The tempter will show up, when we least expect him, pretending to be our ally, offering helpful advice. But it isn't really helpful at all. If we listen to him, instead of listening to God, we will get ourselves into all kinds of trouble. He is a master at distorting God's Word. If we're not grounded in the truth, we're going to be an easy target.

Psalm 119:9–11 asks *"How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping it according to Your word. With all my heart I have sought You; Do not let me wander from Your commandments. Your word I have treasured in my heart, That I may not sin against You."*

Temptation gets us to doubt God's goodness. (v.4-6)

Look at verses 4-6

The serpent said to the woman, "You surely will not die!"⁵ For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."⁶ When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.

Adam and Eve had everything they could have ever wanted. God perfectly provided for their needs in every conceivable way. They lived in a garden paradise, surrounded by beauty. Luscious fruit hung from the branches of nearby trees. If they were hungry, all they had to do was reach up and pick something. An incredible variety of taste was waiting to be discovered. They had companionship. The Lord made man and woman to complement one another. They had a meaningful job: to look after and care for God's creation. Best of all, they experienced God's love for them. But somehow, the serpent convinced them that it wasn't enough. Essentially, he tells Eve, "God's holding out on you. Do you see that tree over there? Doesn't the fruit look amazing? Why wouldn't God want you to enjoy that? He is keeping something good and beneficial and satisfying from you? He must not really have your best interests at heart."

In effect, Satan was attacking the character of the Lord. "God isn't so good. He knows when you eat the fruit, you will be like him, knowing good and evil, but He's is trying to keep you from reaching your destiny."

The more she listened, the more Eve started to agree with the devil. All of the sudden, the garden didn't seem so amazing anymore. She was no longer content with the wonderful things God

made for her to enjoy. All she could think about was that one tree in the middle of the garden and the forbidden fruit it held.

Adam and Eve lost sight of something. God knows what is good for us. The moment we think we know better than him, we are heading for all kinds of trouble.

Picture a kid who is sitting hanging out with his dad in the kitchen, while dad cooks breakfast. He's making pancakes, and eggs, and bacon... There's nothing like starting out the day with a healthy meal. Little Billy is excited, until he notices the jar of cookies on the kitchen counter. "I don't want pancakes daddy, I want cookies." The dad smiles and says, "Sorry buddy, cookies aren't a very good breakfast. Maybe later. Right now we're going to eat some good stuff that will give us energy for our day." That's not the answer little Billy wants to hear. He folds his arms, and frowns, and says, "No! Pancakes are yucky. I want cookies." His dad replies, "What do you mean, yucky? You love pancakes. Last week you told me it was your favorite food. Like I said, cookies aren't for breakfast. If you're hungry, this is what we're eating" Billy stomps his foot and says, "You're a mean, mean dad. You won't let me have a cookie!" I think little Billy is headed for time out...

That's how we act when we reject God's good provision to pursue our own sinful desires. He knows what is good for us, and He knows what will bring us harm. But temptation has a way of drawing our focus to the forbidden fruit, convincing us that our lives are incomplete without it. We wonder, "Why shouldn't I have it? It will make me happy. It will bring me pleasure and enjoyment. How can that be a bad thing? Doesn't God want what's best for me? How can He deny this to me?" But we're not thinking clearly.

I think of a man who has a loving wife, and a beautiful family. His kids adore him. They wait for him to come home from work each day, and love to spend time with him. His wife has always been there, by his side to support him. Sure, they have their ups and downs, like every couple, but what they have is special. It makes no sense in the world for his eyes to wander, but one day he notices the beautiful young secretary sitting at the front desk in his office. She smiles at him, and they begin to flirt. She sits next to him at lunch and laughs at his jokes. He likes the attention. One of his friends asks, "hey, what are you doing, you're a married man?" But tells his friend to mind his own business. "We're just having a little fun, what's the harm in that?" He fails to see he is treading a dangerous path. He forgets all about his wife, and children, and is willing to throw all of that away.

The thing about forbidden fruit is that it never really satisfies. It isn't worth it. What we lose turns out to be more than we gain.

James 1:14–15 (CSB) tells us *"But each person is tempted when he is drawn away and enticed by his own evil desire. Then after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin, and when sin is fully grown, it gives birth to death."* When we allow ourselves to be controlled by sinful desires, we make incredibly foolish decisions. We forget what we have, and long for something more... something that is supposed to make us happy... but it won't.

All of the trees in the garden were good, but Eve couldn't stop thinking about this tree, the one that was off limits to her. She wondered, "Why shouldn't I have it? It is good for food, pleasing to the eyes, and desirable to give wisdom." And so she took it and ate, and gave it to her husband and he ate.

Temptation blinds us to consequences. (v.8-19)

Verse 8-19 tell us

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.⁹ Then the Lord God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?"¹⁰ He said, "I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself."

God warned Adam and Eve what would happen if they disobeyed. He told them that on the day they ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they would surely die. But they refused to listen. They took, and ate, and their eyes were opened. For the first time in their lives, they realized they were naked, and they were ashamed.

As they heard the sound of the Lord approaching, their first impulse was to run and hide. They were afraid to face to him. Up to this point they had never experienced evil... they hadn't done anything wrong... and no one had ever wronged them. But now they came to know evil firsthand. They sinned against the Lord, and that was something they couldn't undo.

The voice of the Lord called out, "where are you?" Even in the beginning, He is a God who pursues the lost. He knew where they were and what they had done, but reached out to them in love begging them to return. It broke His heart knowing that their relationship with him would be different now. Sin had infected the human heart bringing death and ruin to God's creation.

There are always consequences for our actions. That's something parents try to impress on their children. Mom and dad tell them not to climb on the furniture, or jump up and down on the bed, for a reason. If they don't listen, they might fall, and break their arm, and have to go to the hospital. We don't want that to happen, that's why we warn them not to do it. We tell them not to play ball in the house because they could break something. It might hit the lamp, sending pieces of glass across the floor. That's wouldn't be good. So we warn them not to do it.

Adam and Eve's sin would have far reaching consequences, affecting all of humanity. We see result of the curse in verses 16-19.

"To the woman He said, 'I will greatly multiply Your pain in childbirth, In pain you will bring forth children; Yet your desire will be for your husband, And he will rule over you.'"

One of the greatest joys that the Lord has given us is bringing a child into this world, but it isn't easy. Even today, with the help of modern medicine, it is a painful ordeal. In chapter 1 they

were told to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. Not they would have difficulty in fulfilling their commission.

17 Then to Adam He said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat from it'; Cursed is the ground because of you; In toil you will eat of it All the days of your life. 18 "Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; And you will eat the plants of the field; 19 By the sweat of your face You will eat bread, Till you return to the ground, Because from it you were taken; For you are dust, And to dust you shall return."

In chapter 1 they were given the charge to cultivate the land. It was a meaningful job, but from this moment on nature would be far less cooperative, and it would be exhausting labor.

Adam and Eve died that day. Physically, the cells of their body began the process of decay. Sickness and disease would be introduced to the natural order. Spiritually, their relationship with the Lord was shattered. They would no longer be able to walk with him, face to face, but would be expelled from paradise.

When we feel the pull of temptation, one of the first things we should do is consider the consequences. How will this impact my relationship with God? How will it affect my relationship with loved ones? What will it do to my testimony? Will my example lead others astray? As we start to consider the implications of our actions, it becomes clear that isn't the direction we want to go, and we should pray for God's strength to overcome.

Conclusion –

Adam and Eve yielded to temptation that day. They chose to listen to Satan instead of listening to God. They chose to obey their own foolish desires instead of obeying the word of the Lord. They chose to ignore the warning instead of thinking about the consequences of their actions. As a result, the world was plunged into sin. Why is the world in such a mess today? Because we broke it. But the good news is that God can restore the broken. There is redemption in Jesus Christ. Already, in these verses, there is a glimmer of hope that one day He will set things right again. He will heal our hearts and bring us back into relationship with our creator that we were meant to enjoy.

Genesis 3:15 is the first hint of the gospel in Scripture. God says to the serpent, *"And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."* It is a prediction: there will be conflict through the ages of history between the people of God and the devil. He has already crippled the human race, and will not relent in his opposition. But one day, a new Adam would arise, who would defeat Satan and the evil of this world once and for all. It is pointing to the work of Jesus.

So how can we overcome temptation? Don't listen to the lies of Satan, but let the truth of God's Word guide you. Delight in the blessings God has given. Give thanks for his provision, trusting him to meet your needs. Think carefully about the consequences of your actions. And when you do stumble, and we will, run to the Lord and seek His grace.