

Humanity's Fall
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Allen Power

Genesis 3

Opening discussion: **What does it mean to be “sold a bill of goods?” How can this happen to smart people like you and me? What methods does the salesperson likely use? What blind spots might cause us to buy? In these days of massive information on the Internet, what are some ways we might avoid being “sold a bill of goods?”** When it comes to the decisions of life, we have something better than customer reviews and Consumer Reports. We have warnings and guidance from a loving Heavenly Father.

The fact is: We're all capable of worse behavior than we'd like to think we are!

Ever since Genesis chapter three, tempters have been using lies and deception to lead us to make the wrong decisions in life. And because of our human nature, every person has weakness when something seems desirable; attractive; or promises to make us greater than we are.

Here's the big idea: The bad news is we are weak; flawed; and inclined to think we know better than God. Acting on that is called SIN. The good news is God has given us supernatural power to resist sin and supernatural grace to forgive us when we slip!

Let's look at the first seven verses of chapter three. As always we'll ask: What does it say; what does it mean; and, how should it change me this week.

To have the right context for this familiar story, let's read the last two verses of chapter two. When we left Adam, God has created Eve, his perfect mate:

Genesis 2:24–25 (ESV)

²⁴ Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. ²⁵ And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

Everything was perfect in paradise! Then one bad decision changed the whole situation, not just for Adam and Eve, but also for all of mankind. With no further background or build-up, Moses begins chapter three with these words:

Genesis 3:1–7 (ESV)

3 Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made.

He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’” ² And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, ³ 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.’” ⁴ But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. ⁵ For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” ⁶ So 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 to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. ⁷ Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.

- The serpent was crafty and cunning. Those are not bad qualities in and of themselves, until they are used for evil purposes. The serpent was good at using his craftiness to tempt others to sin. He still IS!
- We might wonder, “Why Satan is not specifically named— [one commentator suggests:] The emphasis of the text is on mankind’s responsibility not on supernatural temptation.¹ Other scripture makes it clear though, the serpent is Satan (See: Revelation 12:9; 20:2)
- Verse one: **What was the first move the serpent used on Eve? How did the serpent misquote what God had told them?**
- **How does Satan use this technique to mess with our heads today?**
- Eve responds in verses two and three. Let’s compare verse 3 with 2:17:

Genesis 2:17 (ESV) God told Adam...

17 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”

Genesis 3:3 (ESV) Eve told the serpent...

3 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.’ ”

- **How did Eve get it wrong? Why do you think Eve got it wrong?**
- Eve either did not know God’s command very well or did not want to remember it. By contrast, Christ gained victory over Satan by His precise knowledge of God’s Word (Matt. 4:4, 7, 10).²
- **How could that be a lesson for you and me today as we fight Satan using God’s word?**
- In verse four the serpent’s technique was a bold-faced lie! **What was it?**
- **How does this happen to us when Satan (or another human) tries to convince us it’s okay to disobey God’s commandments?**
- The serpent followed the lie with an argument. **In verse five: What “buttons” of Eve’s nature did the serpent push?**
- God only restricted them from one tree. They could eat from any other tree in the garden. But Adam and Eve just HAD to try that “forbidden fruit.”
- Most people won’t say it out loud, but down deep inside **when we decide to rebel against how God tells us to live, what are we really saying?**

Listen to what Warren Wiersbe had to say about these verses:

As long as the mind holds to God’s truth, Satan cannot win; but once the mind doubts God’s Word, there is room for the devil’s lies to move in. Satan questioned God’s Word (v. 1), denied God’s Word (v. 4), and then substituted his own lies (v. 5). Note that Satan seeks to undermine our faith in the goodness of God—he suggested to Eve that God was “holding out on them” by keeping them from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. When we question God’s goodness and doubt His love, we are playing right into the hands of Satan. Satan made the temptation sound wonderful by making an offer: “You will be like God!”³

- It wasn't just what the serpent was saying that "hooked" Eve.
- Look at verse six. **How did the fruit appeal to Eve? How does this apply to us? How can we protect ourselves in this kind of situation?**

Here's a fact: Our sins don't always appear ugly to us, and the pleasant sins are the hardest to avoid. So [we must] prepare [ourselves] for the attractive temptations that may come [our] way.⁴ It's been said, the battle of temptation is often lost at the first look!

Another fact: Satan often tempts us to misuse or covet things that, under other circumstances, might be good or satisfying but in the wrong context are a violation of God's commands.

- End of verse six: **Once Eve had tasted the fruit, what did she do next?**
- Have you ever noticed that sinners love company?
- Those who engage in a pattern of sinful behavior don't just do it alone...they do OUTREACH! They recruit others to participate in their disobedience to God's commands. 1 Corinthians 15:33 (ESV) warns us:
³³ Do not be deceived: "Bad company ruins good morals."
- So Eve offers the fruit to Adam and he joins in her sin.
- **Was Adam's sin more outright rebellion than Eve? Why?**
- Once the excitement and pleasure of sin has past, guilt and shame set in.
- Satan told them they would have knowledge to be like God.
- **How does verse seven say that worked out?**
- Verse seven tells us the only knowledge they received from eating the fruit was the fact they were naked, and they were embarrassed by it. They were so embarrassed; verse eight says they hid themselves from God.
- That's the way it is when we do something we know isn't right. During the act it may feel good. Even afterward we may rationalize and justify our actions. But sooner or later our conscience starts calling us "out."
- We try to cover it up as if God can't see what we've done.
- Our rebellion puts distance between God and us.

- We go into hiding from Him, but we're only isolating ourselves from the One who loves and cares for us the most. As Johnny Hunt puts it: We're "walking at a guilty distance."
- **A big philosophical question: If God didn't want us to sin, why did he make things we shouldn't have appeal to us? Why not make them repulsive? Why didn't God just put fence around that tree? Why doesn't He put anything that would make us sin out of reach?**

The Life Application Study Bible tells us:

Rather than physically preventing him from eating, God gave Adam a choice, and thus the possibility of choosing wrongly. God still gives us choices, and we, too, often choose wrongly. These wrong choices may cause us pain, but they can help us learn and grow and make better choices in the future. Living with the consequences of our choices teaches us to think and choose more carefully.⁵

- Another truth: God didn't make us robots. He gave man a choice!
- After sin comes punishment.

Genesis 3:14–19 (ESV)

¹⁴ The Lord God said to the serpent,
 "Because you have done this,
 cursed are you above all livestock
 and above all beasts of the field;
 on your belly you shall go,
 and dust you shall eat
 all the days of your life.

¹⁵ I will put enmity between you and the woman,
 and between your offspring and her offspring;
 he shall bruise your head,
 and you shall bruise his heel."

¹⁶ To the woman he said,
 "I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing;
 in pain you shall bring forth children.
 Your desire shall be for your husband,
 and he shall rule over you."

¹⁷ And to Adam he said,
 "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife

and have eaten of the tree
of which I commanded you,
'You shall not eat of it,'
cursed is the ground because of you;
in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life;
¹⁸ thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you;
and you shall eat the plants of the field.
¹⁹ By the sweat of your face
you shall eat bread,
till you return to the ground,
for out of it you were taken;
for you are dust,
and to dust you shall return."

- Adam and Eve had been given paradise and perfection and they blew it. Their sinful acts brought a curse on every one of us.
- You may have had wonderful parents. But every human carries baggage from a "broken" home...our first human parents Adam and Eve.
- When we see crime and injustice; when we feel fear and doubt; when we experience sickness and pain; when we ourselves rebel against God; that's the legacy of our first human parents.
- Before we go to our therapist and blame it all on Adam and Eve we have to realize that God has given you and me the same opportunity He gave them. The opportunity to make the right choice.
- He gives believers supernatural power to resist sin and supernatural grace through Christ to be forgiven when we slip.

So, What's the Takeaway?

Adam and Eve didn't trust God to come through for them the way he promised. Instead they tried to do it their own way. Satan's real temptation is a reflection of his own nature: he wants to be God. Down deep in side so do we!

- We're all capable of worse behavior than we'd like to think we are!

- And because of our human nature, every person has weakness when something seems desirable; attractive; or promises to make us greater than we are.
- We're weak; flawed; and inclined to think we know better than God. Satan uses lies and deception to lead us to make the wrong decisions in life.
- Sin feels good at first, but it never pays off on what it promises. Sin is the ultimate example of being "sold a bill of goods."
- The good news is God has given believers His word to know how to obey His commands; supernatural power to resist sin; and supernatural grace through Christ to forgive us when we slip!
- Only followers of Christ can take part in that GOOD NEWS!
- Here's a VISUAL reminder: This week, when we're tempted to act in a way that's not pleasing to God, I hope, in our mind's eye we see one of those yellow warning signs with the outline of a snake on it. BEWARE OF SERPENTS and THEIR TEMPTATIONS!

¹ Utley, R. J. (2001). *How it All Began: Genesis 1–11* (Vol. Vol. 1A, p. 56). Marshall, Texas: Bible Lessons International.

² Ross, A. P. (1985). Genesis. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 32). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

³ Wiersbe, W. W. (1993). *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the Old Testament* (Ge 3:1–6). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

⁴ Life Application Study Bible.

⁵ Ibid