

INTRODUCTION

Tonight I want to start with what I am calling, "Paradise Lost." Some of you may be familiar with John Milton's epic *Paradise Lost*. It talks about the fall of mankind into sin. As we are studying the Old Testament let me just give you this by way of introduction. Some people think that you ought to read the Bible like you read any other book. You start with page 1 and read all the way through it. That is not the best way to read the Bible. I can remember when I was a teenager I started reading the Bible in Genesis 1:1, a number of times. I got through Genesis okay and got through Exodus okay but when I got over there in Leviticus and Numbers and hard name begat hard name begat hard name begat hard name and it started talking about all of these weird kind of laws about what you could eat and what you couldn't eat I got bogged down and I gave up. If you really want to appreciate the Old Testament, you must first read and understand the New Testament. Someone wisely said, "The Old is by the New revealed and the New is in the Old concealed." That means if you want to truly understand the Old Testament it is revealed only by the New Testament. The New Testament is the key that unlocks the Old Testament. Once you understand the New Testament and then go back into the Old Testament and start reading it, you will find Jesus is on every single page of the Old Testament. We're going to see Jesus tonight in Genesis chapter 3.

The world began when God created the heavens and the earth. He created Adam then he created Eve. Perhaps you've heard the world's shortest poem entitled, "Troubles" and the poem goes "Adam had 'em." That's right. Adam had a lot of trouble. When sin entered his life, all the trouble began.

I. THE DANGEROUS CONVERSATION

We're going to talk about four different episodes in this "Paradise Lost" message tonight. First of all let's talk about "the dangerous conversation."

Genesis 3:1-5. "Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, 'Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden?' The woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.' 'You will not surely die,' the serpent said to the woman. 'For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.'"

Eve got into a lot of trouble when she entered into a dangerous conversation with the devil. The devil is the tempter and the very best thing you can ever say to Satan is exactly what the Lord Jesus said to him when he was tempted in Matthew 4. The only thing you have any business saying to Satan is "Get thee behind me, Satan!" If you ever enter into a conversation with him if you ever try to dialogue with the devil you are already headed for trouble.

1. The tempter

Notice several things about this dangerous conversation. First notice the tempter. Who was this

serpent that came to Eve in the Garden of Eden? The word serpent in Hebrew is the word *nachash*, which means "shining one beautiful one." When you think about a serpent, you probably think of some hideous creature slithering across the ground and whenever you look at it you say, "Eew! Gross! But the word serpent at this time described a beautiful, shining creature, in fact, the most beautiful of all the shining creatures. Another name for Satan is Lucifer, meaning "bearer of light." We know at one time, Lucifer was a powerful angel. That's who is personified in the serpent. Some people have read this and say, "I know I've heard all the stories but where in this passage of scripture does it say that the serpent is Satan? Could it just be some kind of other evil creature, because it doesn't say Satan, it says the serpent?" This is an example of how the Old Testament is explained by the New Testament in Revelation 12:9. It mentions how the "great dragon was hurled down" and "that ancient serpent called the devil or Satan who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth and his angels with him." This tempter in Genesis 3 is the devil, himself.

What does the devil want to do to you? He wants to try to cause you to turn from God. He wants you to miss God's best for your life so he is a liar, as Jesus said. He is the father of all lies. He cannot speak truth and the Bible also says he is a murderer. He wants to kill you. He wants to kill your joy. He wants to kill your purity. He wants to kill your purpose in life. He has it in for you! He hates you! As much as God loves you Satan hates you. Don't think the devil comes to you as some creature in long, red underwear with pointed horns and a pointed tail and a pitchfork. Don't think he comes to you like some demon like you see in some movie. He's not some ugly creature. He came to Eve as a very beautiful creature. The Bible says the devil disguises himself as an angel of light. So when the devil comes whispering in your ear, don't look for some hideous-looking demon. He's always very beautiful and appealing.

2. The target

Number two, who was the target of his temptation? Eve. Eve had been created from Adam and in this situation the devil waited until Eve was all alone. Whenever you tend to isolate yourself, that's when you become an easy target for the devil. There really is safety in numbers. What I mean by that is surround yourself with a lot of Christian friends. Don't get out there on the edge all by yourself. The New Testament says Satan is like a roaring lion, roaming about, seeking whom he may destroy. Have you ever watched "Wild Kingdom?" Lions approach a herd of antelope and the lions are very shrewd. They don't just jump in the middle of that herd. They separate one weak antelope from it. Then they drive that antelope away from the safety of the herd and pounce on it. When you get away from your Christian friends and fall in with the wrong crowd or you even get all alone sometimes, that's when you become an easy target for the devil.

3. The tactic

The third thing I want you to notice is the tactic the devil uses on Eve, because it's the same tactic he uses on us. In the last part of 3:1, the first recorded words of the devil in the Bible are, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden?'" The devil tries to put a question mark where God has put a period. The devil tries to make us think we're missing out on a lot of great things in life by following God's plan. If you took the time to read Genesis 2, you'll discover there were all kinds of fruit trees in the garden, but in the center the Bible says there

was a tree of life and a tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Adam and Eve were "pre-
innocent." God never said, "Don't eat from the tree of life." A lot of people miss on that. What
he said was, "Don't eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil" but he said, "Everything
else you can enjoy." And the devil comes along and puts a question mark there. "Hey did God
really say that?" Satan is not necessarily out there in the nightclubs, although he's there. He's not
just out there in the gambling casinos, although he is there. Satan is in churches today and he is
taking the authoritative word of God where God has put a period and he's putting a question
mark there. He is questioning the authority of the word of God. He's questioning the accuracy of
the word of God and he is questioning the application of the word of God. There are churches
today where people do not believe this book is the word of God? They think it is a religious
document; an historical document you should study the same way you study the United States
Constitution.

When the Bible speaks, God speaks and when the devil comes along putting a question mark
there, he is doing the same thing he did with Eve. He was saying to her, "Eve there's more to
life! You're not getting everything out of life there is! And God is such a killjoy that he has
restricted you so much that you can never be the woman that you ought to be! There's more to
life, Eve!" That's exactly what Satan is saying today to you. He's saying, "You're missing out
on all the fun of life!" Take for instance sex. People out there who are not following God's
standard for purity in sexuality look at us like we are a bunch of people who are sexually
repressed, unhappy, disjointed, and dysfunctional. God said, "Sex is wonderful! Enjoy it in the
confines of a marriage between a husband and a wife." But Satan comes along and says, "Boy,
you're really missing out on it if you wait until marriage to have sex." Satan says to married
couples, "You're missing out on it if you refuse to go outside your marriage for a sexual
partner!" He hasn't changed his tactics one bit. We are talking about Adam and Eve today as we
are talking about me and you. Be careful you don't get into a dangerous conversation with the
devil.

II. THE DESTRUCTIVE CHOICE

Here's the second part of this episode. I call this "The destructive choice."

Genesis 3:6-7. "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 she ate it."

Now where did we ever get the idea this was an apple? It wasn't an apple. It was some kind of
fruit we are not familiar with. It was some kind of fruit of the knowledge of good and evil.

"She also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of
both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves
together and made coverings for themselves."

The first time I took a group of people to the Holy Land from a church I was serving. I took them
to a fig tree and said, "This is a biblical fig tree." One lady in our group blushed and I asked,
"What's wrong?" She said, "I sure thought those leaves were bigger than that!" No matter how
big those leaves were, they were not big enough, because they could never cover their shame.

This was the lost innocence, the loss of purity. What that means to me and to you thousands of years later is Adam and Eve—the father and mother of the human race—chose to sin. They planted in each one of us a seed, a tendency that when we are born, we all sin. Nobody has to teach you to sin. Nobody has to teach me to sin. It is part of our makeup. When they sinned, sin entered the human race.

Sin Step 1: The thought becomes temptation

Notice the steps Eve went through, because these are the steps many people take when they give in to sin and they make a destructive choice. "When the woman SAW the fruit of the tree was good for food, and pleasing to the eye, and also for gaining wisdom." Then, "she TOOK some and ATE it. She also GAVE some to her husband." Those are usually the steps we take when we fall into sin and when temptation comes along? There is nothing wrong with the thought of a sin. Sometimes Christians feel so dirty because sinful thoughts enter their minds. I want you to know that's not sin and it may not even be temptation. Thoughts come and go through your mind you can't help that. But when a thought begins to grab hold and you begin to really consider that thought and even fantasize about that thought, that's when it becomes a real temptation.

I have quoted Billy Graham's classic remark many, many times. "You can't keep the birds from flying over your head, but you can keep them from building a nest in your hair." You cannot keep these thoughts from running through your mind, but that's where you need to deal with it. When Eve "saw" that fruit—the first step—that's when the thought was there. When you mull that thought around long enough in your mind, it can become a temptation. Before long the temptation becomes an act, because then she "took" it.

Sin Step 2: The temptation becomes an act

It is interesting that Eve misunderstood God's requirement. In verse 3 Eve said God said, "You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die." Wait a minute. God didn't say anything about not *touching* it. God said, "Don't *eat* it!" People have a tendency to add to God's requirements and make life tougher than God makes it for us. God just said, "Don't eat it!" But Eve had it in her mind, "Hey, if I even touch it, I have blown it!" So she saw it and then she took it. The devil placed that thought in her mind at that time, "Hey, point of no return! You've already gone so far, you might as well go all the way!"

Sin Step 3: The act becomes sin

I've heard men say, "I lusted after some woman in my mind. Since I have gone that far, I might as well go all the way." That is the stupidest thing to ever come out of a human mouth. It's like Adam touching it. When Eve *took* it, she still hadn't sinned. When you think something and it becomes a temptation and you handle it it's still not a sin yet. Then the third step she ate it. It became a part of her. She consumed it.

Sin Step 4: The sinner becomes the seducer

The fourth step is the sinner became the seducer. Sin will get you in a lot of trouble and the devil usually starts with one little bitty sin and then tries to entice you to other more serious sins. Are there little bitty sins that don't matter and then big sins that do matter? No, all sin is sin. But there are some sins that the consequences are less severe. Have you ever heard Paul Harvey tell the story of how an Eskimo kills a wolf? In the Arctic Circle when an Eskimo needs a wolf, he'll take a sharp carving knife and a dead seal or some dead animal and he'll coat the blade of the razor sharp knife with blood and let it freeze. Then he coats it with another coat of blood and lets that layer freeze. Then he coats it with another layer of blood until what he has is a thick, congealed, frozen layer of blood over that knife blade. Then he simply goes out into the ice and stands that knife up on its handle so the bloody blade is protruding out of the ice. It never fails. That night a wolf will come along and smell that blood, approach it very carefully and cautiously sniffing. Soon the wolf will chance a solitary taste of that blood and it tastes good. But he's still rather cautious and so he licks again. No harm has come to him yet and so he licks again no harm then before long he just starts licking and licking and licking and licking just feverishly licking as that melted blood fills his mouth. Before long without even realizing it he gets to the end of the frozen blood and he slits his own tongue and the blood in his mouth is his own blood. He chokes on his own blood. Pretty gross, isn't it?

That's what Satan does to you! That's what Satan does to me! That's what he does to all of us! He tempts us with something we think is not going to hurt us. Before long we get into a literal feeding frenzy until we know it has gone too far. So that was the destructive choice Eve made. By the way God gives us all a choice. He doesn't force us.

III. THE DIVINE CONFRONTATION

I call the third episode "the divine confrontation." God comes and confronts Adam and Eve about their sin.

Genesis 3:8-13. "Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man, 'Where are you?' He answered, 'I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.'"

By the way God knows the answer to all these questions. He wasn't saying, "Where are you" so he could find them. They weren't playing hide-and-seek. God knew where they were. He wanted them to admit it.

"And he said, 'Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?' The man said, 'The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.' Then the Lord God said to the woman, 'What is this you have done?' The woman said, 'The serpent deceived me, and I ate.'"

Have you ever noticed how much we shift blame? It's never our fault. It's always somebody else's fault. God comes to Adam and he says, "What have you done?" Adam says, "It's not my fault it's the woman's fault." God comes to the woman, "What have you done?" Eve says, "It's not my fault. It's the snake's fault." and the poor snake didn't have a leg to stand on. One way

we knew for sure they had fallen into sin was that they fell into "the shame game," which all of us have played.

But God comes looking for them. Isn't that a beautiful picture of our God? He's not a God who is hidden on the back side of the universe saying "Find me if you can." He's a God who comes looking for us. Here's the question that I want you to answer. "What are you hiding behind?" To me, this is a ridiculous picture. The Creator, the Lord God of the universe who created all of the trees, who created the ground, who created the mountains, who created Adam and Eve, comes walking in the garden and they think they can hide from him! They're hiding behind some little trees! "If I can't see him he can't see me." Isn't that ridiculous? It's no more ridiculous than a lot of people today who are hiding behind their own trees.

Some of the trees I have seen people hiding behind are the trees of self-righteousness. "I'm a pretty good person. I'm better than a lot of people down at that Baptist church." They're hiding behind the tree of self-righteousness and they think God can't find them. I've seen some people who hide behind the tree of riches. When God comes looking for them they hold their checkbook out around the tree. "God you can have all my money, but you can't have me. Leave me alone." I've seen some people who hide behind the tree of religion. To them they just have some kind of a ritualistic pattern they follow to give their lives some structure and there is no personal relationship with God. Don't be so quick to laugh at Adam and Eve hiding behind those little trees when people today in Tyler, Texas are hiding behind trees the same way.

IV. THE DETAILED CONDEMNATION

Here's the final episode, the detailed condemnation. God spells out the punishment for their disobedience. Before we get into this and before you think God is too harsh listen to this. God had said, "All of the garden is yours. Enjoy it! But there is one area, my holiness, which I reserve for myself. Don't cross that line! If you cross that line, you are going to have to pay the price. God is not so capricious that He just starts handing out punishments unilaterally: God always warns us first. God always gives us a multitude of good choices. When God says the same thing to you today, he says, "There are boundaries. There are lines. Don't you cross over them! I warn you. If you cross over the line, there is punishment there are consequences." God begins to spell out the consequences the condemnation for this sin.

Genesis 3:14-15. "So the Lord God said to the serpent, 'Because you have done this, cursed are you above all the livestock and all the wild animals! [Up until this time, a serpent did not crawl on his belly] You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life. 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.' To the woman he said, I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you. To Adam he said, 'Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat of it,' 'Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it All the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are

and to dust you will return."

1. Satan: You will become a snake

Now what were these condemnations? First of all to the serpent he said, "You're going to become a snake" and every time you see a snake today, ladies and gentlemen, it is a reminder. It is an object lesson of how sin will put you lower than anything else. When you see a snake slithering on its belly down in the dirt and the dust, you remember that sin will reduce all of us to the dust and to the dirt. I heard someone say, "Sin will take you farther than you ever wanted to go. It will keep you longer than you ever wanted to stay, and it will cost you more than you ever wanted to pay." Every time you see a snake it is a reminder of that!

Verse 15 is what is called "the protoevangelium" which means "the pre-evangelism." Genesis 3:15 is the first reference to Jesus in the Bible. So where in this verse is he? God is saying, "Satan you're going to have a family offspring and the woman is going to have offspring and I'm going to put enmity—conflict—between your seed and her seed. One day, Satan, you will bruise his heel" whose heel? The seed of woman, the offspring of woman. Who's that talking about? J-E-S-U-S. Galatians 4:4 says "in the fullness of time, God sent Jesus into the world born of a woman" And he said to the serpent, "You're going to bruise his heel, but he is going to crush your head."

That means there are two families on the face of this earth. Forget this stuff about the brotherhood of man and the fatherhood of God over everybody in the world. That is a lie right out of Satan's hell. There are two families in this world. Jesus Christ said to the Jewish religious leaders, "You are of your father, the devil and the works of your father you are doing." There has always been enmity or conflict between religion, religion and Christianity. These religious people in Israel were the ones the devil used to bruise the heel of the Messiah. When they nailed Jesus to the cross they put a nail through his foot. That was a fulfillment of this. That was Satan, the snake, bruising the heel of the seed of woman. A heel wound is not fatal—but a head wound is.

When Jesus Christ hung on the cross and said, "It is finished," He was crushing the head of the devil! Romans 16:20 says, "And the God of Peace will soon crush the head of Satan under your heel." That means because Jesus did it on the cross, you and I get to stomp on Satan all we want to!

2. Woman: Painful childbirth

What about the curse to the woman? I must say that I have not, and never will, be able to personally relate to the experience of bearing a child. God was saying that ladies, every time you bear a child, you will go down into the valley of the shadow of death. The very experience of bringing life to the world is a life-threatening experience itself and it is a painful experience. Every time a woman gives birth it is God's reminder that sin always brings pain and suffering into this world. Another condemnation against woman was, "Your desire will be for your husband and he will rule over you." Adam and Eve were created in the garden and, apparently, there was no kind of authority or hierarchy. They were there together in total perfection, but

because of sin, God said from this time on there has to be a head of the family and there has to be someone who submits to the head and from this time wives, you will submit to your husbands. I don't know how many hundreds of thousands of men were gathered in Washington over this weekend Promise Keepers but one of the things they have been terribly criticized about by organization NAW, the National Association of Women, said, "We need one more promise. We need the promise of women's equality with men!" The Bible teaches women's equality with men. The Bible never teaches that a woman is in any way *inferior* to a man. All it teaches is that in a *marriage* the husband is to be the head of the wife. It does not mean she is in any way inferior to him. It just means there has to be some kind of hierarchy, some line of authority. Just like every army needs it and every business needs it. You have to have lines of authority. That's what God was doing here. He is saying, "Eve, because you are the one who led Adam into sin from this time on he's going to be your leader." That was part of the condemnation. So ladies it doesn't come easy, does it? There is something in you that when you read that passage of scripture about your husbands you just shake your head or make a face. Blame Eve!

3. Man: Hard work

The third thing he said to Adam. "The environment is going to be hostile. There are going to be thorns, and brambles, and bushes. You're going to have to work and through blood, sweat and tears you're going to have to earn a living by the sweat of your brow. No longer can you just go out and pick fruit from the trees. You're going to have to work to support yourself and your family." Guys, that's just part of what happened because of sin.

Genesis 3:20-21. "Adam named his wife Eve, because she would become the mother of all the living. The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them."

That is a beautiful picture of blood atonement. They were trying to cover themselves up with their own fig leaves. I can imagine that when Eve came out with that on, Adam must have said, "Honey, you look stunning! I mean green is your color!" When God looked at it he said, "You can never cover your shame with the works of your own hands." He said, "I'm the only one who can cover up your shame." So he took skins what do skins come from? Do you go up to a tree and take a skin off of it? No! A skin comes off a living animal. The Bible doesn't say it, but I will not be a bit surprised when I get to heaven if we find out it was a lamb, a lamb God killed to cover Adam and Eve, because all throughout the Bible there was a lamb whose blood was shed to cover the shame and the sin of the human race. When Jesus died on the cross, he was our lamb whose blood covers us and forgives us of our sins.

OUTLINE

I. THE DANGEROUS CONVERSATION

1. The tempter
2. The target
3. The tactic

II. THE DESTRUCTIVE CHOICE

What happens when you give in to sin:

1. Thought becomes temptation
2. Temptation becomes an act
3. Act becomes sin
4. Sinner becomes seducer

III. THE DIVINE CONFRONTATION

IV. THE DETAILED CONDEMNATION

1. Satan: You will become a snake
2. Woman: Painful childbirth
3. Man: Hard work



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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes