
Temptation: A Heart Attack

Genesis 3

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Being under attack. Highlight its suddenness, dangerousness and deadliness. Connect to the text, for here we have the first heart attack.

John Bunyan's *The Holy War* is a book that understood and portrayed the attack our hearts are under. The city of Mansoul is seeking to be pleasing to the great King. But it is under deadly assault from the outside and deceitful treachery from the inside. Its valiant leaders and servants seek to hold fast until the King comes and brings a final and grand rescue.

The Bible establishes in the record of the fall in Genesis 3, where the real battle to obey God is located. There will be external temptations. They will be presented through the body (eyes, ears, etc.). They will come into the heart, the inner man, where beliefs and wants flow in words. Out of the words of the heart, the Word of God is believed or denied resulting in sin.

What does it mean to please God in the midst of temptation?

The Commencement of Sin

(v.1-7)

The shift from the innocence of the Adam and Eve to the crafty serpent marks an ominous turn in the story. It is carried by the sound of the similarities of the Hebrew words for "naked" and for "crafty". Adam and Eve are vulnerable and Satan is vile.

¹ 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 Person of the Tempter

(v.1)

The serpent is introduced with attributes that are more than animal. This is a particular serpent. Here is deceit and evil craftiness as the embodiment of evil. Here is someone in the snake. The serpent, not just as a part of the animal creation, but as a part of the rebellious and fallen heavenly hosts, is an ever growing menace through the Scriptures. So while a talking snake sounds fairytale like, it tells us two very important things.

There is more going on here than just an animal tempting Eve.

There is a malevolent intelligence, an evil presence who uses the snake as his tool. The serpent here is not to be equated with modern, crawling reptiles. What we see today is the product of the curse. The clear implication here is that the serpent had legs, a dragon beautiful and superbly intelligent. Eve does not see the serpent as either strange or sinister.

Satan never appears as he is.

He is always parading as something or someone else. He even pretends to be an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14) when he is in fact a fallen cherub and full of darkness and deceit (Ezekiel 28:14, 16).

Here is the introduction of competing voices.

God's Word and counsel have been the sole guide for Adam and Eve. Their world is not only made by God, but their understanding of that world is entirely shaped by God. Since one of the persons of the Godhead is Word, Satan attacks humans by perverting and twisting what was to be their life and substitutes his own dark lies. This is what we face today. Even though we have the grand clarity and sufficiency of the Word of God, we can be overwhelmed with a cacophony of compelling, but corrupt counsel.

The Presentation of the Temptation (v.2-6)

In these verses, Moses establishes a clear understanding of how sin functions. Notice that Satan tempts Eve through the way God has made her soul to function. There is no sin nature driving this or being appealed to. This is temptation aimed squarely at her heart, at how it believes and wants.

Through Lies Directed at the Heart Beliefs (v.2-5)

The temptation is first presented directly through lies aimed at the part of Eve's soul which knows and believes.

Satan Questions God's Word (v.1)

He undermines its accuracy and authority The questioning is two-fold.

Is the Word she has accurate?

Did God actually say it? Is Eve really sure that what she believes is what God said? Is the Word she has, *ACCURATE*? The question intends to shake Eve's confidence in what Adam has taught and told her. Is the voice of counsel she has been following really telling her the way it is?

Is the Word she has authoritative?

Are you, Eve, included in this prohibition (due to the plural pronoun)? Was this prohibition for Adam only so that she is exempted? Is the Word she has, *AUTHORITATIVE*? The question may be including Adam's standing by in the plural. It also may be insinuating that while the command was given to Adam, it may be good for him, but not Eve.

This line of attack is used over and over again. We are challenged with whether we have the Word in our hands. We are often tempted to think that what it is saying isn't applicable to us. I hear this all the time in counseling through sentences like, "Well that is just your interpretation;" and "I don't think that text applies to my situation."

Eve Changes God's Word

(v.2-3)

She undermines its scope and sufficiency. Her quoting of God's Word here is inaccurate by both taking away and adding to. The affect is to change what she believes to be true about God.

- ❖ She leaves out "freely" and "all" thus making God less gracious.
- ❖ She adds "neither touch it" thus making God more restrictive.
- ❖ She leaves out "surely", making God less serious about judgment.

Note that she knows enough to respond to Satan with the Word of God. But she is not holding the line. She is not getting it right. She goes above the line by adding to the Word and below the line by taking away from the Word. Thank God for Jesus in the wilderness temptation who not only uses the Word of God to ward off temptation, but He gets it right and uses it right. Jesus holds the line when everyone else, including Eve and Adam here, fail.

Satan Challenges God's Word

(v.4-5)

He attacks God's integrity and intention. Satan now declares that what God has said is simply not true. He does not challenge the precept itself, only its punishment.

He attacks God's integrity.

He effectively says that God has lied. It is simply not true that you will surely die. He is denying the consequences and chastisement for not pleasing God. Satan lives in denial of the results of his own rebellion. He entices us to folly, to disconnect consequences from choices.

He attacks God's intention.

He also imputes evil motives to God. God has given this command in order to keep you down, to keep you below Him and beneath Him.

Notice that this attack is aimed at what God knows and what God intends. His slander of God is framed by the God's own heart functions. God has not spoken the truth because God wants to preserve His unique deity and not grant equal status to anyone.

Here is the heart of Satan and the underlying sin in all sin. Satan wants to be equal with or just be God. And so do we. At the root of sin is self. At the root of self is the deceit and desire to be like God. In our desire to be like Him in idolatrous ways, we mar the very holy and righteous ways we are like Him as image bearers.

Do you see how these are lies and deceits aimed at getting Eve to agree with Satan and to believe what is not true so that she will act on them? This is part of why you do what you do. You believe certain things to be true and that belief causes actions (as well as emotions, affections).

Through Lusts Directed at the Heart Wants (v.6)

Now the temptation moves to present an attraction through lusts to the heart desires.

Temptation appeals through a physical medium, sees.

Most temptations are presented through the medium of the body. It is not that the body is evil, but that it is how the soul interacts with the world around it. Satan speaks, Eve hears. The tree is pointed to, Eve sees. Her heart is engaged with the temptation as enticement using the body.

Many temptations are to the misuse of legitimate things. There is nothing wrong with eating. But there is everything wrong with eating this fruit. Nothing is evil in and of itself. But almost everything has an evil misuse.

Temptation appeals to the wants of the heart, desires.

She is driven by her craving, desires and wants. She is going to trade desiring all the rest of the food and fruit of the garden to desire the one fruit she is forbidden. If she does not desire it, she will not take it. But she reaches out following the flow of her desires to take and eat.

Her believing Satan's lie shapes the object of her desires. The tree is not truly desirable to make one wise, but it is what Satan has said. Her wants are directed to what is false, deceived by Satan's lies. They deceive her into thinking this is a greater pleasure than all the legitimate ones God has given. Prizing this fruit more than the others causes her to crave, to be mastered by her desire for her.

Temptation appeals in thematic heart elements.

Notice that the fruit is delicious, delightful and desirable. It is good to eat. It is lovely and beautiful. It will bring me something I do not have now. The thematic heart elements have at their core pleasures and promises. Temptations hold out to the desires phony pleasures and false promises. Can you see in your own temptations how they appeal by presenting to you some sort of pleasure or promising you something desirable? Can you see how often they are substitutes for the true pleasures and promises God holds out for us?

Now, be clear on this: desiring is simply a function of the heart. It is not possible to "not want". But those wants, desires and cravings are to be shaped by truth and submitted to God. Now we watch what Eve believes linked with what Eve sees turn her desires against her to crave what God has forbidden. In the midst of sin, an important question is, "What did you want?"

I want you to see some important implications here:

Your wants are shaped by what you believe to be true.

Notice the movement here. Satan must first change what she believes before her wants begin to master her. This is why faith, knowledge and wisdom are the most essential ingredients for holiness.

Your wants and desires are carried about in words.

You want in words. We know what we want through the words that express and carry those wants.

You are responsible to control and to change your wants.

You are not at the mercy of the pull of vague, inward tuggings called wants. Your wants are your responsibility. Here is where we seek to please God. We recognize that our inner desires are what temptations are appealing to.

The Product of the Temptation**(v.7)**

What are the results of the temptation?

Sin Resulting from Disobedience

Eve takes and eats. She disobeys God by believing Satan' lies and desiring what is forbidden. Deceived, she disobeys.

Adam takes and eats. It is clear to me that in the words, "gives to Adam who was with her," that he is standing there watching this happen. He is with her. He is not deceived. He chooses Eve over God. He chooses to disobey. This single act of disobedience takes the whole human race down with him.

Shame Resulting from Guilt

They are aware of their sin. Satan said their eyes would be opened. They are opened, but not to what they expected. The poison of sin in their souls now changes how they see what they see.

They are ashamed of their sin. Their knowledge now of evil is the root, the cause of the emotion called shame. Their holy simplicity is now corrupted by guilty shame.

This knowledge of good and evil they now know is not Godlike. Their experience has not made them into gods. It has exposed them as visible and vulnerable and needing to be covered because of sin and guilt.

The Confrontation of Sin

(v.8-13)

I cannot help but think that verse 8 is immediately after verses 6-7. Here they are, startled in the first moments of their sin and shame, by the sound of the Lord God in His presence moving in the Garden.

⁸ And 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 But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?" ¹⁰ And he said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself." ¹¹ He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" ¹² The man said, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate." ¹³ Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

Engages through Relationship

(v.8)

Live in the context of fellowship and relationship.

God engages Adam and Eve in a relationship with them. He comes to where they are to meet with them and fellowship with them. He confronts them out of a context of his communion with them. This encourages us as we want to counsel others to do so with a love, know speak, and do engagement. Build relationship, understand issues, represent God's agenda for change and give practical steps of action.

God initiates an active pursuit of the sinner.

God is the seeker and man is runner. God knows that Adam and Eve have sinned. He is not coming into the Garden just to have a time of fellowship. He is coming in the time of fellowship to confront them with their sin. He is seeking them. They are hiding from God. This is ever the way it is – no one seeks after God first; He is always first in seeking man.

Sin destroys the relationship breaking fellowship through fear and folly.

The hiding and running from the Presence of God is a graphic picture of a broken relationship. How sin causes us to cower in fear. When they ought to be moving toward God in loving delight, they are running and hiding in shame.

Sin destroys ones ability to see clearly, contrary to what was promised in the temptation.

Here is the insanity and irrationally, the madness sin causes. How is Adam going to hide from omniscience? Where will Adam run from omnipresence? The most blinding affect of sin is that we are blind to it.

Exposes through Questions

(v.9-13)

God exposes Adam and Eve through questions. God is not asking in order to learn what He does not know. He is asking penetrating questions in order to give Adam self-knowledge. The soul is poised to answer questions even if the answer is not spoken out loud. God causes Adam and Eve to face their own sin by exposing it through carefully crafted questions aimed to expose the heart.

Notice the categories of questions:

Questions around broken relationships (v.9-10)

These are questions that ask the “Where are you” around life and life’s relationships. They are designed to show how sin alienates and turns friends into enemies, love into fear, walking with one another into running and hiding from one another.

Questions examining evidences of guilt (v.11a)

These are questions which probe how guilt is working itself out. They are designed to expose the foolish words of counsel, the fake pleasures and false promises. It exposes our exposure.

Questions about the facts of sin (v.11b-12)

These are questions that gather data about what one did or how one responded. It is meant to get the story straight. They are direct, centering on the precepts. Did you do? Did you say? What happened? It makes the response of Adam even more terrible that in the face of the great wonderful Counselor he attempts to deflect the questions and shift blame.

Questions requiring self-accusation (v.13).

These are questions which draw out admission of sin. They are designed to expose how one is culpable and how one has contributed. They help us see us as being responsible, responsible for our own sin and responsible for being the means to tempt, provoke, contribute, be the occasion of someone else’s sin.

For all of us as brothers and sisters, or in our roles as spouses or parents, or in our spheres of relationships in church, home, community or work, here is how we help people change. Our counsel uses God’s kind of questions to help people see. And often they will not. Even here, we find Adam and Eve not repenting when counseled by God Himself.

Explains through Illustrative Responses

Look at how Moses relates the universal sinful responses to sin and guilt.

Denial – We will cover the effects of our sin.

How do you tend to cover your sins?

Escape/Avoid – We will hide from our accusers.

How do you tend to avoid or escape your sin?

Blame-shift – We will place blame on others.

How do you tend to blame shift? On whom? On what?

This is how we tend to respond to having sinned ourselves. We try to cover our sin, to hide from counsel, to shift blame. We refuse the Word of God and the Spirit of God and the people of God. How we need to be humble and receive the grace of God to grant repentance so that we will not respond like Adam and Eve.

Reflect and Respond

Give these as challenges and launch pad for discussion.

Pay close attention to the Word of God.

Read it carefully. Learn it well. Handle it accurately. Obey it completely. Satan's surrogates will question its accuracy and authority. You must not add to it or take away from it. You must be clear from it who God is and what He promises and provides.

Reject all forms of false counsel.

Eve listened to the quiet, compelling questions and denials of the serpent. Adam listened and obeyed the tempting voice and example of Eve. Eve needed to hold the line and not listen to Satan. Adam needed to hold the line and not listen to Eve. We all need to hold the line of the Scriptures and not listen to false counsel of the world.

Watch over your heart with diligence.

Out of your heart, you act. Out of what you believe and what you want, arise all affections, emotions, choices and actions. Over the patterns of sin in your life, ask the "what was I thinking" questions. What do you believe to be true? What do you want? What appeals to you and why? What pleasures and promises does sin hold out to you that your heart moves toward?

Respond in humble repentance when confronted with godly counsel.

Do not hide your sin, run from counsel or shift blame. We are a culture of skilled blame-shifters. While our families, our childhood, our bodies, our brains, our spouses, our children, our situations, our jobs even our churches may contribute, tempt, test, provoke, be the occasion or the context for sin, they never ever cause sin. Be humble and receive grace to change and grow.

Accept the consequences of sin.

When you have dealt with sin and repented of sin, be willing to live with its consequences. Rejecting the results of sin often is a sign that there has been worldly sorrow, not godly repentance.

Bank your hope on the Redeemer of our souls.

In the darkness and difficulty of sin, turn to Christ. Turn to Him for salvation. Turn to Him for transformation. You are saved and transformed by a Person, by the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the fulfillment of the promises and prophecies begun in Genesis 3. He is all you need. Trust in Him, O sinners and saints today.

Training in Life

Proverbs 4:1-27

Pay attention!

The Instruction in the Family (v.1-4)

¹ Hear, O sons, a father's instruction, and be attentive, that you may gain insight, ² for I give you good precepts; do not forsake my teaching.

³ When I was a son with my father, tender, the only one in the sight of my mother, ⁴ he taught me and said to me, "Let your heart hold fast my words; keep my commandments, and live.

Solomon speaks affirming the father's responsibility (v.1-2) which leads to the son's remembrance (v.3-4). While some see this as a conversation between Solomon and Rehoboam, it is much more likely that Solomon is recalling the instruction of David, his own father. He is following an example set for him.

Solomon models, in his instruction for his son, 5 important principles.

He aims to instruct his children so as to give insight.

He will command his children along with instruction.

He will seek to connect instruction and correction.

He will begin from a very young age as he was taught.

He will instruct with truths in words he can recall.

The Instruction in its Focus (v.4b-9)

Pleasing God instruction has as its focus the acquisition and attainment of wisdom.

To Acquire Wisdom (v.4-7)

⁵ Get wisdom; get insight; do not forget, and do not turn away from the words of my mouth. ⁶ Do not forsake her, and she will keep you; love her, and she will guard you. ⁷ The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom, and whatever you get, get insight.

If there is any repeated command in the Proverbs it is this: "Get wisdom". Wisdom is only cultivated in the context of the fear of the Lord. It requires knowledge. It is developed through marrying truth with the situations of life. It is not innate to us. Folly is innate to us. We are born both in naturalness and in fallenness to not make the connection between our choices and consequences. This is the purpose of discipline. It is designed to help us see that connection.

At the beginning and end of this unit, wisdom and insight are connected together. Get wisdom and insight, whatever you do, do that. Where it is that we instruct, in the home or at church, this is what we are to press people toward. We say, “Become a wise and insightful person. Seek it. Do not forsake it. Love it. Then, wisdom will guard and protect you.” Then God uses that instruction to impart wisdom to the person, a son or daughter, a new Christian, an untaught Christian, and even seasoned saints.

To Embrace Wisdom

(v.8-9)

⁸ Prize her highly, and she will exalt you; she will honor you if you embrace her. ⁹ She will place on your head a graceful garland; she will bestow on you a beautiful crown.”

In our instruction we are to exhort others to embrace wisdom. Now I have carefully chosen this word. It is at the center of this unit. It involves our desires and affections. Wisdom must be seen something valuable. Every phrase here points us to seeing wisdom as infinitely desirable. Wisdom and being wise is to be prized, valued and held to tightly. To his sons, Solomon constantly represents wisdom as a beautiful woman who will bring honor and respect.

Let us remember that the Bible is not just holding out the Greek idea of *Sophia* for us to pursue. All through the New Testament, the wisdom of God is shown to be radically different from the wisdom of the world. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 1:20-25:

²⁰ Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? ²¹ For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. ²² For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, ²³ but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, ²⁴ but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, **Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.** ²⁵ For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

The unfathomable wisdom of God which confounds the wise of this world reaches its apex in Christ and the cross. So, our instruction to others to pursue, to acquire, embrace wisdom will ultimately rest in Christ. It will find its fullest expression in the stunning wisdom of God to send the Lord Jesus Christ to die on the cross for our sins and to be raised for our justification.

Therefore, we are not just seeking to grow kids or church members who are sages, who are wise only in the context of practical living in this world. We are seeking to show how all the paths of Biblical teaching for wisdom will bring them to Christ. In Him is the greatest union of truth and life. The trajectory of all our teaching of wisdom terminates in Christ.

The Instruction for the Path

(v.10-19)

Keep on the Path of Righteousness

(v.10-13)

¹⁰ Hear, my son, and accept my words, that the years of your life may be many. ¹¹ I have taught you the way of wisdom; I have led you in the paths of uprightness. ¹² When you walk,

your step will not be hampered, and if you run, you will not stumble. ¹³ Keep hold of instruction; do not let go; guard her, for she is your life.

Avoid the Path of the Wicked (v.14-19)

¹⁴ Do not enter the path of the wicked, and do not walk in the way of the evil. ¹⁵ Avoid it; do not go on it; turn away from it and pass on. ¹⁶ For they cannot sleep unless they have done wrong; they are robbed of sleep unless they have made someone stumble. ¹⁷ For they eat the bread of wickedness and drink the wine of violence.

Instruction for pleasing God must command to not get involved with the wicked or their ways. Now make no mistake – it is *people* who are to be avoided. But even more, it is their ways, their paths, their manner of living, their lifestyle. The wicked ones ways will lead to destruction. It is a path, but one that will lead to ruin and judgment.

These commands have a reason and purpose. The wicked are to be avoided because of their depravity and their danger.

Their sinful depravity is expressed in the craving for sin. They are restless and sleepless until they have satisfied their sinful cravings. You should avoid people who do not sleep because they are up at all hours of the night on the computer, playing video games, prowling the streets.

They are a serious danger to others. They are restless and sleepless until they have caused someone else to join them in their sin. There are so many examples of this today. Some of the worst manifestations of this are in gangs (neo-pagan tribes.) But even in your Christian schools kids come under enormous pressure to do what others are doing.

¹⁸ But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, which shines brighter and brighter until full day. ¹⁹ The way of the wicked is like deep darkness; they do not know over what they stumble.

The Instruction in its Examples (v.20-27)

...fundamental instruction: Pay attention...

To Your Teachers (v.20-22)

²⁰ My son, be attentive to my words; incline your ear to my sayings. ²¹ Let them not escape from your sight; keep them within your heart. ²² For they are life to those who find them, and healing to all their flesh.

To Your Heart (v.23)

²³ Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.

To Your Words (v.24)

²⁴ Put away from you crooked speech, and put devious talk far from you.

To Your Eyes**(v.25)**

²⁵ Let your eyes look directly forward, and your gaze be straight before you.

To Your Lifestyle**(v.26-27)**

²⁶ Ponder the path of your feet; then all your ways will be sure. ²⁷ Do not swerve to the right or to the left; turn your foot away from evil.