

## GENESIS 3:1-6 (WHO IS THE LIAR?)

Albert Einstein said, “If you are out to describe the truth, leave elegance to the tailor.”

Today we’re going to look at where truth was first called into question. Is what is true for you not necessarily true for me? Is truth even knowable at all? If truth is presented, how can we know if the elegant trimmings Einstein warned about have a subtle and cunning purpose of twisting it?

It’s scary to think that we can be manipulated so easily in life by words which sound correct, but which are so wrong. What we need to do is to think clearly, but in our society, clear thinking isn’t even taught anymore unless you get to the college level and even then it’s taught only as a single discipline and not as a general rule.

Proverbs says – “The first *one* to plead his cause *seems* right, Until his neighbor comes and examines him. (18:17)

If we attempt to use clear and rational thinking in a global warming class, we’ll probably get a failing grade. If we challenge a theory such as evolution, again... there’s a big fat F for you.

Our first parents were presented with challenges to the truth and they didn’t handle it very well.

Their choices, based on bad decision making have resulted in everything from Joseph Stalin and Adolph Hitler, to communism and fascism. Their bad decisions have caused us to lose little babies through death and spouses through divorce. What a sad state we’re in... all because of words of deception.

**Introduction:** Despite the depressing circumstances which surround the Fall of Man and all its subsequent woes, without the fall, we could never fully appreciate the greatness and the glory of God. There was no mistake in God’s plan then and there is no mistake in God’s plan now.

Everything each of us faces in life, including my own trials and frustrations, is known to God and will be used for His glory and for the benefit of those who He has called. If you can truly accept that, then what Adam and Eve did, shouldn't make you kick at their memory and say "stupid, stupid, stupid." Instead you can look on what occurred and say to God, "Oh God, how great Thou art."

**Text Verse:** Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death. James 1:13-15

May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

### **I. A Cunning Foe – Twisting Things Around**

**<sup>1</sup> Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?"**

Chapter 3 starts out with the tempter, the serpent, whom we later find out is the devil or Satan. He remains a part of the unfolding story of the Bible almost to the very end. Not until Revelation Chapter 20 is he done away with. He makes his entrance on the scene in the third chapter into the Bible and he makes his exit from the scene in the third chapter from the end of the Bible... the symmetry in the Bible never ceases to astound me.

In this verse, it says he "was more cunning than any beast of the field..." The devil's cunning brings about a hugely complicated issue. If God created the devil and the devil caused evil, then did God cause evil? We'll ask this question now and again later as we go on. The answer to this is one of the most important issues we can determine and nothing could be more relevant.

There is evil in the world, this we all know very well. The question is, “why?” Did God lose control of things or did God cause the evil? If either of these is the case, then we are at the arbitrary failings of an inconsistent Creator.

Augustine said “There is no possible source of evil except good.” Evil is simply an absence of good and this only comes from something else drawing it out of the good state it was originally in.

But whatever draws it out of the good state is something else that is good as well, because as Thomas Aquinas says, “Only good can be a cause; because nothing can be a cause except inasmuch as it is a being, and every being, as such, is good.”

What he means is that nothing can cause something unless it is a being and that every being God created was good at its creation. When we understand that, we see that good doesn’t cause evil which is contrary to itself. Instead it causes **some other** evil.

In the case of the devil, he was created “good.” However, something else which was good drew the evil out of him. What good could draw out the evil from the devil? The answer is found in Isaiah 14 and in Ezekiel 28. These passages are speaking of the King of Babylon and the King of Tyre, but the premise is the same as for the devil –

I established you;  
You were on the holy mountain of God;  
You walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones.  
<sup>15</sup> You *were* perfect in your ways from the day you were created,  
Till iniquity was found in you. ...  
<sup>17</sup>“Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty;  
You corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor;  
Isaiah 28:14, 15 &17

For you have said in your heart:  
‘I will ascend into heaven,  
I will exalt my throne above the stars of God;

I will also sit on the mount of the congregation  
On the farthest sides of the north;  
<sup>14</sup> I will ascend above the heights of the clouds,  
I will be like the Most High. Ezekiel 14:13, 14

The good which the devil saw in the rule and authority of God drew out the evil of envy in the devil. And his own beauty and splendor in comparison to others drew out the evil of pride. The good in God and the good of His creation drew out the evil.

What God intended for His creation is the good of the order of the creation. However, the good order of the creation requires that some things will fail – stars exploding for example, or trees dying to make mulch for new trees to grow. So God causes in things the proper order of the universe, and by the nature of that proper order, by accident, things corrupt.

It says in 1 Samuel 2:6 that “The LORD kills and makes alive.” But God didn’t make death for the sake of death. He made Adam alive and to live. Death however, is the result of justice which belongs to the universe based on the nature of God. This requires that sinners are to die. The result is that God is the author of the evil we know as penalty because God’s standards are immutable, but He is not the author of the evil which is fault. This can only come from a lesser being, a point we’ll clarify later.

Once he was corrupted through no fault of God, the devil went about his business of corrupting God’s crown of creation – man. Why would he do this? For the same reasons as we already explained, envy, boasting, and pride.

By subverting God’s authority over the physical world, he would gain rule over it, including man because man was given dominion over the other parts of the creation. He wanted to rule and be like God and this was how he could do it.

This is proven in the devil’s tempting of Jesus when he said, “All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for *this* has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. Therefore, if You will worship before me,

all will be Yours.” Luke 4:6, 7

When man fell, the devil gained rule over the earth.

The first words the devil spoke to the woman came from a being perfectly described in the verse, “cunning.” He said to her –

**“Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?’”**

But this isn’t at all what God said. What God said was, “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat,…”

The devil knew he couldn’t destroy man as he was because the natural order of things says that in order to die, one must sin. He also knew that if they couldn’t eat of **every** tree of the garden that man would be forced to sin because man needed to eat, so his question was a subtle attack.

“If you’re not forbidden from eating from every tree because that would result in death, then how could eating from just one tree result in death? Come on girl, think it through…”

As Matthew Henry said so well, “The divine law cannot be reproached unless it be first misrepresented.”

This is a really good lesson for all of us today. When we hear people telling us what the Bible says, we’d better check it out for ourselves. It’s so easy to fall into the trap of the prosperity gospel, idol worship, or a host of other things simply because the word is misrepresented to unsuspecting hearers.

Balaam was told by God that he couldn’t curse Israel, so he came against them by tempting them. The devil did the same thing. He had to tempt them to sin and once they sinned, they would be under his authority and would also die. As Jesus Himself said, the devil was “a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him.”

If Adam, as the federal head of mankind, could be won, then all mankind was his. And the devil was going to do it through the woman while the man wasn't present. She was created from him and was the weaker vessel.

Not only that, but if you remember from a previous sermon, women process information differently than men. In both problem-solving and reacting to stressful situations, the woman is the ideal target for the devil's cunning work. By coming to her, he would have the position of working against her processing abilities in a way that wouldn't work with the man.

And watch out Eve, the devil is coming at you in a way which will make you think he's looking out with your best intentions. This is how he worked then and this is how he works now. Paul says in 1 Corinthians, "For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light." His tricks never change.

## **II. Subtracting From or Adding To**

**<sup>2</sup> And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden;**

**<sup>3</sup> but of the fruit of the tree which *is* in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.' "**

There are a couple things to consider in what the woman said to the serpent and what is said **must** be inferred, so please make sure you know that before I give you these thoughts. Let's go back over what Chapter 2 records –

The tree of life *was* also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

&

Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; 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."

What I'm going to say here is based on assumptions and I'll explain each one as I get to it. What I just read from Chapter 2 is all that's recorded for the points I'm making, so there is no proof that it's everything that was said by God. In other words, I don't want to make unfounded conclusions, only reasonable deductions.

The woman said, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden, but of the fruit of the tree which *is* in the midst of the garden..." This differs from Chapter 2 which says "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat.

If you notice the difference, the woman said they "may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden," whereas the earlier verse says "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat." Already her defenses have been weakened by the subtle attack of the devil. She has waffled on what God so clearly laid out.

Also, she said, "but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden..." Chapter 2 said "The tree of life *was* also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil."

There were two trees in the midst of the garden, not one. She simply noted that she couldn't eat of the tree in the midst of the garden without making a differentiation between the two. Her defenses are showing the weakness of not processing what God had said and repeating it back in that way. What is good in her is being drawn out as evil or a "lack of goodness."

Think of it this way. Your dad tells your brother that there are two women in a house down the road and that one is engaged and one isn't and to leave the engaged one alone. Your bother then says to you, "Dad says you can have any girl in Sarasota as a wife, but leave that one in the house down the road alone."

When the devil comes up and says, "Did your dad say 'You can't go out with any girl in Sarasota?'" If you answer, "Oh no, I can date any girl I want except the one in the house over there..." You have set yourself up for

trouble. He knows very well there are two girls and he is only going to tempt you with the engaged one.

When God spoke to Adam, in Chapter 2, it doesn't mean there weren't more conversations with more details later, but remember the general rule – everything recorded is for our understanding of what happened and why. So, we can make the deduction that Adam told the woman what God said he and wasn't as clear as he should have been or she simply didn't pay attention.

Either way, if what is recorded in Chapter 2 is accurate, then what the woman said is inaccurate. If this is the case, then let's review her errors –

God said they could “freely eat” but she said only that they “may eat.” This may seem inconsequential, but elsewhere in the Bible, the term “free” or “freely” is used to indicate divine grace such as in Romans 3:24, where it says “being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”

Paul could have said, “...justified by His grace” but he added in “freely” to indicate the superbly gracious nature involved in the gift. The woman left this out accidentally or thoughtlessly.

A second omission is what I said a minute ago, “but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden...” There were two trees in the midst of the garden; the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge. The tree of life was not forbidden from them, only the tree of knowledge.

Assuming these are her words as she spoke them, this is a big error and one which proves the subtlety of the devil because later he never brings up the tree of life when he speaks to her, only the tree of knowledge.

And a third change is one which isn't an omission, but is an addition. She said, “You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.” But Chapter two says nothing about touching the fruit. It only warns them not to eat it.

Admittedly, God could have told them on another occasion not to touch the fruit, but this would leave the account missing something important that's added only by Eve. When we get to the next verse, we'll see that the serpent never mentions "touching it" but only mentions "eating" and so for this reason, we can deduce that Eve added "touching" as a warning, possibly given by Adam.

The reason why this is important is because we are dealing with God's word. The only words to this point which man has as his rule and guide of the faith are what we read in chapter two –

Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; 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.

That is Adam's complete set of instructions for life. He and the LORD could have had ten other conversations about almost anything, but God has shown us that this is what was important to the account... and the woman has negligently misrepresented it. The lesson for us here is to remember Proverbs 30:5, 6 –

Every word of God *is* pure;  
He *is* a shield to those who put their trust in Him.  
<sup>6</sup> Do not add to His words,  
Lest He rebuke you, and you be found a liar.

### **III. Mixing Truth with Lies**

<sup>4</sup> Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die.  
<sup>5</sup> For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

The serpent first says, "You will not surely die" or literally, "No dying you will die." *Lo mot te-muthun*. This is a bald faced lie and brings the LORD's integrity into question and is a direct challenge to His authority. The serpent denies that there is any danger in disobeying. It may be a transgression, but he says there won't be any penalty.

The second thing the devil says is actually true, “God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” The problem is that Adam and the woman weren’t told this and it was therefore something God held back for His own purposes.

The purpose of placing Adam and the woman in the garden was so that they could worship and serve Him. To the woman, being like God would mean that she and Adam would also be worshipped and served. Imagine her wheels turning over that one. The devil has tempted her with pride and he also has revealed something that God didn’t reveal to her... “What more has been kept from me?”

In Chapter 10 of Revelation, we read this –

I saw still another mighty angel coming down from heaven, clothed with a cloud. And a rainbow *was* on his head, his face *was* like the sun, and his feet like pillars of fire. <sup>2</sup> He had a little book open in his hand. And he set his right foot on the sea and *his* left *foot* on the land, <sup>3</sup> and cried with a loud voice, as *when* a lion roars. When he cried out, seven thunders uttered their voices. <sup>4</sup> Now when the seven thunders uttered their voices, I was about to write; but I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, “Seal up the things which the seven thunders uttered, and do not write them.” (1-4)

Paul speaks of the mystery of the blindness of the Jews, the mystery of the church, the mystery of lawlessness, the mystery of the gospel, as well as other mysteries of the wisdom of God.

In all of these examples and so many more in the Bible, God keeps certain things a hidden from us for our good, in order to unveil His plan in His own timing, and to satisfactorily bring about what He determines. This was also the case with Adam and the woman.

Having the knowledge of good and evil was a mystery to them and the fact that they would be like God in this respect was kept from them for their own good.

By his cunning, the devil will undermine what he can't actively overthrow. And this is the pattern he always follows. He gets people to doubt God first and then eventually to deny Him. He starts with skeptics and produces atheists.

He's done it in people, he does it in families, he does it in societies, and eventually he even accomplishes his goals in seminaries and churches.

In people and families he does it through tragedy and death – maybe of a loved one. He calls God's word and His goodness into question and eventually people walk away from faith all together.

In societies, he works against goodness and truth, bringing once God honoring cultures to apathy and eventually to destruction. In England, Charles, the Prince of Wales is planning a symbolic change of his title from Defender of the Faith to Defender of Faith when he becomes King.

He's doing this to reflect Britain's multicultural society. This would mean that the Supreme Governor of the Church of England would no longer be known as Defender of the Faith – meaning Christianity – for the first time since the reign of Henry VIII. Unfortunately, Defender of Faith means Defender of Anything and therefore Defender of Nothing.

In seminaries, the devil has taken great institutions, founded on the Bible and the gospel message, such as Harvard, Princeton, Yale, and so many others, and has turned them into bastions of secular humanism and worldly lies such as evolution and global warming.

And the devil has actively used these same lies in churches almost since the beginning. Within 1 generation after the time of Christ, the Lord wrote 7 letters to 7 churches, 5 of which had fallen partially or almost completely under Satan's dominion. Today, once Christ honoring denominations are filled with homosexuality, supporters of abortion rights, and New Age spiritualism.

All of these examples have come about because people would rather follow the lies of the devil than the truth of God and His eternal word. In the end,

only death will result from not following the clear word of God as He reveals it to us. Jesus tells us of the devil's cunning in the book of John –

He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.

#### **IV. His Song Remains the Same**

In our sermon on Chapter 2, verses 16 and 17, we asked the question, “Whence cometh evil?” The answer was from free will. The obvious question which arose from that, and which we didn't fully evaluate or answer is that “If God created man with free will and free will is the cause of evil, then didn't God create evil?”

We did mention that what occurred was done in innocence, but that really wasn't a full explanation of the problem of evil. If it was, people wouldn't argue over the issue, they would comprehend it.

The Bible says in 1 John 5:19, “We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies *under the sway of* the wicked one.” How did this come about and fit into God's plan without God being the author of evil?

In order to completely understand this, we need to grasp what Thomas Aquinas wrote in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. He said, “...evil never follows in the effect, unless some other evil pre-exists in the agent or in the matter... But in **voluntary things the defect of the action comes from the will actually deficient**, inasmuch as it does not actually **subject itself** to its proper rule. **This defect, however, is not a fault**, but fault follows upon it from the fact that the will acts with this defect.

Whether you got that or not, it is astonishingly profound – and the Bible in the book of Romans bears it out. “The defect of the action” – in this case eating of the fruit which is a defect of the action – “comes from will actually deficient.” What was deficient in Adam and the woman's will? It was the lack of the knowledge of good and evil – they were in a state of innocence.

But was this God's fault? No, Aquinas says it is "deficient, inasmuch as it does not actually subject itself to its proper rule." What was the proper rule concerning their state of innocence? It was to obey their Creator and not eat the fruit.

When they disobeyed by using free will, was it because of a fault in them as created by God? No! It "is not a fault, (according to Aquinas) but fault follows upon it from the fact that the will, (meaning their free will) acts with this defect." The blame is placed squarely and solely on man.

The "defect" as we perceive it was part of what was "very good" in their creation. Creating a man with no knowledge of good and evil is called a "defect" by Aquinas, but we could rename it a "lack." Just because there was a lack, doesn't mean there is anything wrong with it. When Adam and the woman acted against proper rule with this lack of knowledge, it resulted in fault (or sin).

And fault, as you know, resulted in death. Our text verse today can be understood far more clearly now –

Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.

Let me give you another example which may help with this. If the Bible is the Word of God, then its doctrines are perfect. But people disagree on issues – for example some say Jesus is God and some don't. Only one can be true.

However, our lack of knowledge in understanding what the Bible says and then teaching it inaccurately is sin. But it's not God's fault. It's ours. We have the instructions just like Adam did. Therefore, evil can result from two "good" things. "The defect of the action comes from the will actually deficient." Wah lah.

Now you can see how God is neither the tempter nor the author of evil. The only way this could never happen is if God never created any other beings because what He creates is necessarily less than what He is and is therefore deficient in some way.

And we are now ready to evaluate our final verse of the day –

**<sup>6</sup> So when the woman saw that the tree *was* good for food, that it *was* pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make *one* wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.**

The devil seized upon the opportunity to draw out of the woman's lack, meaning her innocence in knowing good from evil. When he did, he drew out of it disobedience which resulted in fault and this fault resulted in death...for all of us ever since that moment.

And the three modes of drawing out this lack? The first was the lust of the flesh, when she "saw that the **tree was good for food.**" The second was the lust of the eyes, when she saw that "it was pleasant to the eyes." And the third is the pride of life, when she found it was "a tree desirable to make one wise."

This one verse is the complete example of every sin that has ever been committed in human history. Any sin that you can recognize in yourself or in another will stem from right here. And how effective is it? The Apostle John warns of it in his first epistle 62 books into the Bible –

Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. <sup>16</sup> For all that *is* in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. 1 John 2:15, 16

Not only is this the prime example of worldly sin, but John addresses it in exactly the same order of categories as Genesis does, lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. It worked in Eden and it is still at work in each and every human soul today. But John gives us a remedy in his next verse –

And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

This brings us to another dilemma though. If this pattern of sin has infiltrated every human since Adam, then how can we “do the will of God” in order to abide forever? We already stand condemned. This is a destiny deciding thing and looks hopeless. But yes, there is hope. God hasn’t left us without a remedy. Enter Jesus Christ.

After his baptism, Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness where he was tempted by Satan in exactly the same manner as the woman was tempted. Let’s read the account together –

Then Jesus, being filled with the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, being tempted for forty days by the devil. And in those days He ate nothing, and afterward, when they had ended, He was hungry. And the devil said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread.” [**This was a temptation of the flesh**] But Jesus answered him, saying, “It is written, *‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.’*” Then the devil, taking Him up on a high mountain, showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said to Him, “All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for *this* has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. Therefore, if You will worship before me, all will be Yours.” [**This was the temptation of the eyes**] And Jesus answered and said to him, “Get behind Me, Satan! For it is written, *‘You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.’*” Then he brought Him to Jerusalem, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down from here. For it is written: *‘He shall give His angels charge over you, To keep you,’* and, *‘In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone.’*” [**This is the temptation of pride**] And Jesus answered and said to him, “It has been said, *‘You shall not tempt the LORD your God.’*”

During these three temptations, the devil twisted God’s word. He mishandled it and misapplied it in an attempt to subvert God’s work. At the same time, he used his same old tricks against Jesus, but it was Jesus who

prevailed and the devil who failed. Jesus defeated the devil at his own game.

There are two ways open for each of us to “do the will of God and abide forever.” The first is to do what Jesus did every time he was tempted, to properly quote and apply Scripture to the situation. But the only way you can do this is to know what the word says. If you’re not reading and memorizing your Bible, you are setting yourself up for continual defeat.

But even if you’re well armed, it doesn’t take care of the other problem we all face. We’ve all sinned already. We’ve all failed the test. How can we “do the will of God and abide forever” if we’ve already violated the word of God? The answer is Jesus...

“This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent.” John 6:29

Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Hebrews 12:2

Cunning and sly is our foe  
He waits to set an evil snare  
The serpent hisses his moves are slow  
But when he pounces it’s a tragic affair

He searches for whom he may devour  
And masks himself as an angel of light  
He is an enemy of terrifying power  
And to steal man’s soul is his delight

He is the accuser of the brethren  
He is the one who appeals to our faults  
He is the leader of every false religion  
And the one behind disobedient cults

He engages us in mortal battle  
And leads men astray like lowing cattle

The unsuspecting are easy prey  
But the wise stand in safety of the Lord  
Though he can easily ruin our day  
He cannot prevail over the Holy Sword

Stand firm then in the Lord Jesus  
Who triumphed o'er the wicked foe  
By His blood he did purchase us  
And in His strength and power we will go

Hail to the Lamb of God  
On the serpent's head He did trod

Though tempted thrice He stood fast  
And gained man's freedom from certain hell  
At the cross it was finished at last  
Once again with God we can dwell

Call on Jesus who will save your soul  
When you accept the gospel story  
Then through heaven's gates you will stroll  
Praising the God of everlasting glory