

Genesis 3:1-7 "The First Sin"**

Proposition: In the world's first sin, recorded in Genesis 3:1-7, we discover that the temptation process involves three downward steps.

I. Step #1: It starts with foolish dialogue (1-5).

A. The tempter questioned God's Word (1).

1. He undermined God's authority.

2. He undermined God's goodness.

B. The woman misrepresented God's Word (2-3).

1. She misquoted it.

2. She added to it.

C. The tempter attacked God's Word (4-5).

1. He offered a *rival* message.

2. He made sin sound *good*.

II. Step #2: It leads to a forbidden decision (6).

A. Eve was deceived.

1. She based her decision on what she *saw*.

2. She based her decision on what she *wanted*.

B. Adam was just plain defiant.

1. He became a passive husband.

2. Instead of leading in a godly manner, he became a follower.

III. Step #3: It results in a fateful discovery (7).

A. They had changed.

1. Their innocence was gone.

2. They felt shame.

3. They tried to hide their shame.

B. They were in trouble.

The Remedy for Sin: Jesus came to reverse the curse.

Why is the world in the shape that it's in today? Ultimately the answer is Genesis 3.

In Genesis 3 we see the slippery slope. I cringe every time I read Genesis 3. Adam! Eve! Don't do it! But they did. It's there in black and white on the pages of God's Word, the record of the world's *first sin*.

Just what is sin anyway? Our sophisticated culture doesn't like to talk about "sin."

Man calls it an accident, God calls it abomination.

Man calls it a defect, God calls it a disease.
Man calls it an error, God calls it an enmity.
Man calls it a liberty, God calls it lawlessness.
Man calls it a trifle, God calls it a tragedy.
Man calls it a mistake, God calls it a madness.
Man calls it a weakness, God calls it willfulness.

But realize this. Until we call it what God calls it there's no hope for it. We battle with sin and the effects of sin every day. How we experience victory?

Here's where we must start. We need to give serious attention to Genesis 3. In Genesis 3 we learn where sin originated and how sin operates. Our attention this morning will be the first seven verses of the chapter. In the following weeks we'll move through the rest of the chapter.

This is practical, life-changing truth. We need it desperately. In the world's first sin, recorded in Genesis 3:1-7, we discover that the temptation process involves three downward steps.

I. Step #1: It starts with foolish dialogue (1-5).

Verse 1 begins, "Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made."

Remember the context. According to Genesis 1:1, in the beginning there was God. Nothing existed prior to God. Just God.

Then, as Genesis 1 records, the self-existent God created the universe. In six days, He fashioned the heavens and the earth, all that is, and then rested. At the conclusion of His creative work God assessed all that He had made and declared that it was "very good (1:31)."

In Genesis 2, Moses, the human author of this account, puts the spotlight on the events of Day 6. He explains in detail how God formed the *first man*, and from him the *first woman*, and then how God arranged the *first marriage*. Genesis 2 concludes with Adam and Eve living in a perfect environment, enjoying a perfect relationship with God, with each other, and with the created order. In the words of Genesis 2:25, "The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame."

Time passed. How much time? I don't know since the biblical text doesn't say. But one day Adam and Eve woke up and began their routine, not realizing that they were about to take the ride down the slippery slope of sin.

In the first verse we're introduced to "the serpent." What was this serpent? Moses informs us of some important details concerning this creature. For starters, it was a *creature*. God, the Creator, had made it. In addition, we're told that it was part of the animal world--it was one of the "wild animals" [the term is translated "beast" in the KJV].

Was it a snake? Whatever it was, it was different then than now. According to verse 14, the curse changed its physiological and anatomical structure. That is, it used to walk in an upright fashion, but after the curse it crawled on its belly and ate dust.

This was a special creature. How special? The text states that it was "more crafty" ["subtle" in the KJV] than any of the wild animals. There's been plenty of debate about the word translated "crafty." Should this term be understood in a positive or negative light? As it appears elsewhere in Scripture it is used in a favorable sense, and is translated "prudent" or "wise" (Prov 12:16, 23; 13:16; 14:8, 15). In a few places it's used in an unfavorable sense (Job 5:12; 15:5).

In light of the fact that everything that God made was "very good" (1:31), I'm inclined to understand the word in its positive sense. Whatever it was, this was an incredible creature, perhaps the most skillful creature in the animal kingdom.

The narrative continues, "He said to the woman." Whoa! Here's a talking animal! Don't miss that. Remember, this isn't Dr. Dolittle here. That should have raised a red flag for Eve. A talking animal? What's going on here?

What's going on, as the rest of the Bible explains, is that this animal was being used by another being. What being? The devil. This serpent was merely a tool in the hands of Satan. In Revelation 12:9 Satan is called "that ancient serpent." Jesus called the devil a liar and the father of lies (John 8:44). Satan is a fallen angel, but he and his wicked followers present themselves as "angels of light (2 Cor 11:14)."

So the serpent came to Eve. Why? Satan's strategy hasn't changed one iota. He works the same way today as he did in the garden. The temptation process involves three downward steps, and it starts with foolish dialogue. The dialogue begins with the tempter.

A. The tempter questioned God's Word (1). "He said to the woman, 'Did God really say, You must not eat from any tree in the garden?'"

The serpent began with a question. He's subtle. He acts like he's merely requesting information, but as will be apparent from his follow-up statement in verses 4-5, he already knows the answer to his question. The tempter knew what God said. His aim was to initiate a dialogue. In fact, by asking the question, the tempter actually undermined two things.

1. *He undermined God's authority.* "Did God really say?" the serpent asks. The question seems fairly innocent. It's not. Concealed in the question is a malicious craftiness. He's asking the woman to take the judge's seat.

Answer this. Is God's Word subject to our judgment? Do we have a right to evaluate what God says? Is it okay for a creature to inspect the speech of the Creator? Did God really say...?

"Did God really say homosexuality is wrong? Maybe it's just a cultural thing."

"Did God really say that sex outside of marriage is a sin? You two are different. You *love* each other. It can't be wrong for you."

"Did God really say that stealing is wrong *in all situations*? Your situation is unique. You need the money. And your company won't even miss it. Go ahead and take it."

"Did God really say you need to forgive *that* person? That person hurt you and doesn't deserve to be forgiven. What God says doesn't apply in your situation. You're different."

Then and now, here's Satan's tactic. He starts by undermining God's authority. Then...

2. *He undermined God's goodness.* "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden?'" In the Hebrew the words are so arranged that the statement can be read in two ways. It can be read, "not from every tree," or "not from any tree." What's the devil trying to do? He wants to arouse suspicion in the mind of the woman.

Suspicion of whom? Of *God*. Namely he wants to cast a shadow on the *goodness* of God. "From *any* tree, Eve? Is that what God said?" The insinuation being, what a stingy God.

The evil one loves to twist God's Word, doesn't he? That's what makes false teaching so dangerous. It sounds okay at first. In this case, the tempter tries to make God seem miserly. And he does the same in the contemporary scene. "You don't want to be a Christian, do you? You can't do *anything*. It cramps your lifestyle. God won't let you have *any* fun!"

No, the tactics of Satan and his hosts haven't changed. Henry Morris remarks (57), "If he can just get a person to begin, even in the slightest degree, to doubt God's Word or His sovereign goodness, then it is easy to go on, step by step, until that person is either openly rebellious against God or else utterly unable to accomplish God's purpose in his life. How blasphemous for one who is a *creature* of God to question in any respect what his Creator has said or done!"

The foolish dialogue began when the tempter questioned God's Word. It continues in verses 2-3...

B. The woman misrepresented God's Word (2-3). "The woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, You must not eat from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'"

Apparently Eve thought she was doing God a favor by entering into the dialogue. "You poor serpent. I'd better straighten you out. You've got your facts mixed up." In the end *she* got mixed up. In her response she misrepresented God's Word in two way.

1. *She misquoted it.* How so? Compare what God actually said with what Eve *said* that God said. In Genesis 2:16-17 we find God's actual words, "And the LORD God commanded the man, 'You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.'"

Sidney Harris put it this way, "Once we assuage our conscience by calling something a 'necessary evil,' it begins to look more and more necessary and less and less evil."

Notice how Eve misquotes God's Word. She calls it "the tree that is in the middle of the garden" rather than "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil," as God did. And where as God said you will "surely die," she merely says, "you will die."

What's she doing? She's misquoting God's Word. There's a warning in this for us. A fuzzy understanding of God's Word leads to foolish decisions. If you do not know the Scriptures *well* you are fair game for the tempter. Eve got into trouble when, first, she misquoted God's Word. Then...

2. *She added to it.* Concerning the tree she said, "You must not eat fruit from it...and you must not *touch it*." Did God say that? No. What's Eve doing? She's adding to God's Word, and by so doing, she's making God appear *stricter* than He is.

We get into trouble whenever we add to God's Word. Eve put another command alongside God's. Is it okay to do that? Be careful how you answer that.

Is it okay to have to have standards in areas where the Bible is silent? Is it okay to have *personal preferences*? Sure, as long as we call them what they are--*personal preferences*. We get into trouble when we attribute our personal preferences *to God*.

Eve misrepresented God's Word. In essence, she made the command *more* severe and the penalty for disobedience *less* severe than what God said.

By the way, how should Eve have responded? Like Jesus did in Matthew 4. Remember what happened there? The Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness for a forty day period of testing. At the end what happened to

Jesus? Satan *tempted* Jesus with three temptations. Why did Jesus subject Himself to the temptation? Because as the Last Adam He had come to undo what the First Adam did.

And how did Jesus respond to the tempter? Did He dialogue with him? No. He refused to analyze and question God's Word. Rather, instead of debating the Scriptures He *quoted* them. *Three* times He said, "It is written."

In many ways the battle was lost by the time verse 3 ended. Eve had entered into foolish dialogue with the tempter. First the tempter questioned God's Word and then she misrepresented God's Word. Then came the heavy arsenal...

C. The tempter attacked God's Word (4-5). "'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.'"

There's a "No Trespassing" sign in west Texas signed in blood red paint at the bottom by the rancher. It reads: "STOP. I know you're thinking about crossing this gate. What you should know is that if the Coyotes, Cactus, Mesquite, Heat, Dust or Rattlers don't get you, I will."

That's what I call blunt. And blunt is what Satan was in verse 4. He's no longer being subtle. In fact, once Satan gets you to question God's Word and casts a doubt on it, he's got you. Then comes the all out assault. First he questions, then he attacks. In Eve's case he attacked in two ways...

1. *He offered a rival message.* "You will *not* die," he said. There's a blatant contradiction. God says, "Eat and you will die." The tempter says, "No, not true. God is lying. He's keeping you from the 'good stuff.'" That's a rival message, isn't it?

There are two rival voices in the world. One says, "If you sin, you will die." And the other says, "If you sin, you will not die." Does the latter, rival voice still speak? Yes, indeed. Every time you turn on the television you hear the conflicting, rival voice:

In living color right before your eyes the rival voice says, "If you're not satisfied with your spouse, then get another. You've got a right to be happy." But God's voice says, "No, till death do you part. You've got a responsibility to be holy."

You turn the channel and hit the commercials. What's the rival voice saying now? "Think of yourself. Buy for yourself—use credit if you need to. Don't deny what your senses crave. You only go around once in life." But God says, "No, don't love the world neither the things that are in the world. Deny yourself. Use your resources to serve God and others. Be a giver, not a getter."

Have you been listening to the rival message or God's message? Satan's strategy is to attack God's Word, and in Eve's case he did it first of all by offering a rival voice.

2. *He made sin sound good.* What did he tell Eve? Three *half-truths* in verse 5. One, if you eat your eyes will be opened. Two, you will be like God. And three, you will know good and evil.

There's an element of truth in what Satan said, isn't there? There usually is. Would their eyes be opened? Indeed, they were about to see what they had never seen before—and Satan would laugh all the way. Would they become like God? The fact is, by eating the fruit they would usurp the place of God. And would they know good and evil? Sadly, they were created innocent were about to experience evil. Oh, how the evil one loves to make sin sound good!

Remember, the serpent is talking to a person who literally had *everything*. A perfect environment. A perfect

marriage. An intimate relationship with God. A fulfilling life. Yet in the end she *wanted something more*.

You say, "I wish I'd been there. I'd have handled things differently." Oh, really? The fact is, you face the same decision every day.

But you say, "No. I don't have all the resources Eve had." Really? Do you know Christ? If so, you have *every spiritual blessing* in heavenly places (according to Ephesians 1:3). If that's true—and according to God's Word it is—then the question for you is the same question Eve faced: "Are you be satisfied with what God has given you, or do you *want something more*?"

Why do we sin? It boils down to this—our desires. I want *that*. I must have *that*. That's exactly what James explained in James 1:13-15, "When tempted, no one should say, 'God is tempting me.' For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil *desire*, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after *desire* has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death."

Do you like to fish? A fisherman sees this principle in action, doesn't he? He throws that nice, shiny lure into the water, and begins to retrieve the line. Slowly, slowly, right past the large mouth bass. The bass eyes the enticing object, resists at first, and resists again, until finally, if the fish could speak we'd hear these words, "I *want* that! I *desire* that. I must *have* that! I'll do whatever it takes to *get* that." And so he grabs it. Then while he's being yanked across the water by the hook in his cheek, you can hear him mumble, "Why did I do that?"

And the answer is, because he lived by his desires.

My friend, you face the same decision every moment of every day. Will you live by *your desires* or by *God's commands*? John Calvin said that the human heart is an idol factory. That's why we need Christ. Only Christ can give you a *new heart*.

Whose voice are you listening to, the tempter's or God's? Here's where the downward spiral all starts, with a foolish dialogue. That's step one.

II. Step #2: It leads to a forbidden decision (6).

"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 ate it."

We don't know what kind of fruit that tree bore. Legend suggests it was the apple, but the Bible doesn't say so. What we do know is that the foolish dialogue led to a forbidden decision—by two parties. A. Eve was deceived. The dialogue is over. Eve contemplates the two conflicting, rival messages, and she becomes the judge. On what basis did she made her decision? Based on two factors... 1. *She based her decision on what she saw*. The text states, "When the woman saw." Eve is now doing what she was never created to do—judge the validity of God's speech. And she does it by her senses, namely, what she *saw*.

What caught her eye? She saw two appealing features about the fruit. One, it was good for food. Two, it was pleasing to the eye.

But wait. Eve had plenty of other trees from which to choose. According to Genesis 2:9 the rest of the trees in the garden were also "pleasing to the eye and good for food." Why then did Eve entertain the thought of picking the forbidden fruit? According to 2 Corinthians 11:3, she did for one simple reason. She was *deceived*. Tricked. Beguiled.

Here's what Paul said, "But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ." What happened to Eve? She

was deceived. Rather than submitting to what God said, she based her decision on what she saw. And there was a second factor. 2. *She based her decision on what she wanted.* She saw the fruit was "desirable for gaining wisdom." The word "desirable" is from the root meaning "to covet," the sin prohibited in the tenth commandment (Deut 5:21). Eve is now living by her desires rather than God's Word.

Several years ago I met with a man who was leaving his wife. "Why?" I asked. "You know the Bible forbids it. Why are you leaving her?" His response, in essence, was this, "I *want* to be happy, and I'm not." So he made a decision based on his desires instead of God's Word.

I must warn you, beloved. If you are a person who lives by your *desires*, you will live a roller-coaster life.

Centuries ago Augustine wrote: "Sin arises when things that are a minor good are pursued as though they were the most important goals in life. If money or affection or power are sought in disproportionate, obsessive ways, then sin occurs. And that sin is magnified when, for these lesser goals, we fail to pursue the highest good and the finest goals. So when we ask ourselves why, in a given situation, we committed a sin, the answer is usually one of two things. Either we wanted to obtain something we didn't have, or we feared losing something we had."

Then it happened. Eve took the fruit and ate it. She failed to ask God for guidance. She failed to consult with her husband about the matter. She made the decision on her own.

At this point I want to scream, "Adam! Where are you? You're needed right here, right now! There's a problem on the home front! Get over here and get your wife out of this jam! Where are you, Adam?"

Where was he? Out tending the garden? No. He was *right there*. Notice the final statement in verse 6, "She also gave some to her husband, who was *with her*, and he ate it." Where was Adam? The preposition seems to indicate he was *right there*.

Let that sink in. The forbidden decision was made by *two* parties. Eve was deceived, but not Adam...

B. Adam was just plain defiant. What is defiance? According to Webster it is "open disregard of or bold resistance to authority."

Lest we place the blame on Eve, realize this. The Bible attributes the origin of sin *to Adam* (Rom 5:12). Why? 1 Timothy 2:13-14 states, "For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner." Adam wasn't deceived. Apparently, he ate the fruit deliberately.

It was to *Adam* that God gave the command, "Don't eat!" (in Genesis 2:16-17). That was *before* Eve's creation. Did Eve know about the command? Without a doubt Adam told her. She was responsible for her actions, certainly. But who does God hold accountable as the most responsible person in the situation?

Adam failed in two ways...

1. *He became a passive husband.* He shirked his role as a leader. He should have stepped forward and said, "No, Eve. We must obey God." But he didn't. In fact, they flip-flopped their roles. Eve led, and Adam followed. In other words...

2. *Instead of leading in a godly manner, he became a follower.* Notice the specific transgression of which God confronted Adam in verse 17, "Because you *listened to your wife* and ate from the tree." Adam followed his wife instead of following God's Word. One commentator calls him "Adam Tag-along."

As a passive husband, Adam failed to lead his wife in a godly manner. Men, are you leading your families or

are you shirking your responsibility? And ladies, are you making it easy for your man to be the spiritual leader in your home?

The temptation process involves three downward steps. It starts with foolish dialogue that leads to a forbidden decision. Where does it end?

III. Step #3: It results in a fateful discovery (7).

"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."

Gary Richmond, a former zoo keeper, had this to say: Raccoons go through a glandular change at about 24 months. After that they often attack their owners. Since a 30-pound raccoon can be equal to a 100-pound dog in a scrap, I felt compelled to mention the change coming to a pet raccoon owned by a young friend of mine, Julie. She listened politely as I explained the coming danger. I'll never forget her answer. "It will be different for me..." And she smiled as she added, "Bandit wouldn't hurt me. He just wouldn't."

Three months later Julie underwent plastic surgery for facial lacerations sustained when her adult raccoon attacked her for no apparent reason. Bandit was released into the wild.

Sin, too, often comes dressed in an adorable guise, and as we play with it, how easy it is to say, "It will be different for me." The results are predictable.

For Adam and Eve the forbidden decision resulted in a twofold, fateful discovery.

A. They had changed. How so? In three ways according to verse 7.

1. *Their innocence was gone.* Their eyes were opened, and now they saw themselves in a totally different light.

2. *They felt shame.* They realized they were "naked." Before sin, there was total transparency, total, unhindered intimacy—with God and with each other. But that's gone now. The innocence is gone. They're now *guilty*. They felt shame. So what did they do?

3. *They tried to hide their shame.* How? They took fig leaves—probably because the leaves were large—and sewed them together as coverings. Why? Not for warmth—the climate is still tropical. It was because they knew...

B. They were in trouble. It reminds me of the following story. A drunk husband snuck up the stairs quietly. He looked in the bathroom mirror and bandaged the bumps and bruises he'd received in a fight earlier that night. He then proceeded to climb into bed, smiling at the thought that he'd pulled one over on his wife. When morning came, he opened his eyes and there stood his wife.

"You were drunk last night weren't you!"

"No, honey," he replied.

"Well, if you weren't," the wife returned, "then who put all the band-aids on the bathroom mirror?"

The world's first sinners tried to hide and we've been doing it ever since, haven't we?

We may read verse 7 and say, "What do they think they're doing? You can't remedy your guilt with fig leaves." No, you can't. Nor can we fix our guilt with the filthy rags of our own self-made righteousness. But

we try, don't we? We try to cover up our sinful hearts by putting on a "respectable" life.

Ask the average person on the street how to get to heaven and you'll hear, "Just live a good life, and you'll be okay. Going to church won't hurt, but the bottom line is to do your best. If the good in your life outweighs the bad, you'll make it."

Is that true? Actually, it's no different than the mentality exhibited by Adam and Eve right here. The truth is, we can't make ourselves "respectable" before a holy God. Our righteous deeds--the best we can offer God--are as filthy rags in His sight (Isa 64:6).

We need God to do for us what we can't do for ourselves. We need Him to clothe us with what Isaiah 61:10 calls "a garment of salvation" and "a robe of righteousness."

That's why Jesus came, didn't He? When He died on the cross, He paid the penalty of sin for sinners. And having risen from the dead, He now offers the gift of eternal life to all who will believe on Him.

"What's wrong with the world?" a newspaper editorial once asked. G.K. Chesterton wrote in reply, "I am."

Are you entangled in sin, my friend? Do you want to experience the free forgiveness of God? There's only one remedy for sin. It's Jesus Christ.

The Remedy for Sin: Jesus came to reverse the curse.

We'll explore more about what that means next time.