

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 1/12/03 Brad Brandt

Genesis 3:1-7 "How the Enemy Works" **

Main Idea: God wants us to know Satan's strategy so we'll be ready. Genesis 3:1-7 gives us a vivid picture of how Satan works in his attack on us. In this text we discover that the enemy uses three dangerous tactics.

I. Tactic #1: The enemy tricks (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. Tactic #2: The enemy teases (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. Tactic #3: The enemy takes (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 Bottom Line: The enemy is too powerful for us. We need Christ.

A couple of months ago fear struck our country. An unknown enemy was killing unsuspecting people in the Washington D. C. area. The sniper struck in random, senseless fashion, creating near panic for the public. Even those of us living hundreds of miles away began to wonder how safe we really are in this crazy society. As you know, the suspected killers were eventually caught, a man and his nephew, and with them behind bars life returned to normal, whatever *normal* is these days.

Many of you can remember when you didn't need to lock your front door at night. Not all that long ago a child could hop on his bicycle and ride across town to play ball with his buddies, but now there's a fear factor, and parents rightly take precaution to protect their son or daughter from child predators.

The fact is, there's an enemy out there, an *unseen* enemy. The Bible calls this enemy "the prince of the power of the air" (Eph 2:2) and "the ruler of the darkness of this world" (Eph 6:12). He is "the spirit that works in the children of disobedience" (Eph 2:2) and "the tempter" (1 Thes 3:5). He is the "evil one" (Matt 13:38).

Last week we began a new series entitled "Living with a Warfare Mentality." I said then and I'll repeat it today that I'm convinced that if you want to succeed in the Christian life, you must live with a *warfare mentality*. There's no room for passivity.

The reason is we have an enemy, none other than the devil himself. Jesus Christ defeated Satan at the

cross, and victory is ours if we know Jesus as Savior and Lord. But that doesn't mean Satan has conceded defeat. He is a roaring lion, as we saw from our study of 1 Peter 5:8, and his aim is to devour us.

What are we to do? Peter exhorted us to *resist him* (1 Pet 5:9). How? By standing firm in the faith. We don't have the innate ability to stand against this foe, but God has given us in Christ the resources we need.

God wants us to know Satan's strategy so we'll be ready. That's why He gave us the resource of His Word. In Genesis 3:1-7 God gives us a vivid picture of how Satan works in his attack on us. In this text we discover that our enemy uses three dangerous tactics.

I. Tactic #1: The enemy tricks (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 encounter the enemy.

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.

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. For starters, *he tricks*. He is the master con-artist. Notice how the temptation

process involved three downward steps.

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?'"

He 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. At first, the question seems rather innocent, almost casual conversation. It's not. It's malicious by its insinuation.

Please notice something. The tempter doesn't argue with the woman. He merely suggests. He drops a seed of doubt into her mind. He also flatters. Think of the presumption in those words, "Did God say?" Do you see what the tempter is doing? He is implying that God's word is subject to our judgment. Is that true? Friends, Satan's strategy hasn't changed one bit in thousands of years.

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 said doesn't apply in your situation. You're different."

"Did God really say you should stay married to someone you're not compatible with? That doesn't make sense, does it? God wouldn't want you to be unhappy, would He?"

"Did God really say He wants you to give Him the firstfruits of *all* your income, even when things are really tough? Surely, He understands things are tight, and won't mind if you keep the tithe for car repairs this week. After all, He's the one that allowed the transmission to break."

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

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!" That's what a lot of non-Christians think.

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 trickery began when the tempter questioned God's Word. Was it effective? Look closely at how Eve responded in verses 2-3. In short...

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 ways.

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.'"

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.'"

Satan is no longer being subtle. In fact, once the devil 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?

By the way, commentator Derek Kidner rightly points out the first doctrine Satan tries to get us to deny is judgment. "You won't die. There aren't really any consequences to eating a little piece of fruit." The words of today's modernists aren't much different, are they? "You don't believe in a literal hell, do you? How could a loving God send anyone to hell?"

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."

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 how our enemy works. He tricks. That's tactic #1. There's more...

II. Tactic #2: The enemy teases (6).

He's a master at knowing which buttons to push.

Verse 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?

There's one more tactic the enemy used. We've seen two thus far. First, he tricks. Next, he teases. Finally...

III. Tactic #3: The enemy takes (7).

Satan promotes himself as a giver, but he's a *taker* all the way. Thomas Brooks offers this insight:

*Satan promises the best, but pays with the worst;
he promises honor and pays with disgrace;
he promises pleasure and pays with pain;
he promises profit and pays with loss;
he promises life and pays with death.*

Notice verse 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. Nigel Wright has this to say about the devil in *The Satan Syndrome*, "The devil is not impersonal like stones or bureaucracies; he is a non-person. The Devil has become all that God is not; he is not beyond personality--he is without it. His purpose in creation is not to destroy God; he knows that he cannot do that. He wants to draw us into the vortex of non-personhood that he has become, and the nothingness of non-being that he is becoming. Satan, in short, aims to take as many of us with him as he can."

How true. The enemy tricks, teases, and in the end *takes*. Is there hope? Yes, but it's not within ourselves.

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."

We've taken a close look today at how our enemy works. Here's the bottom line...

The Bottom Line: The enemy is too powerful for us. We need Christ.

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