

02 – ANATOMY OF A FALL

Facts About Temptation

1.) It's Not a Sin to be Tempted

- ✓ (That must be true.) Heb. 4:15 - "Jesus was tempted ... yet He didn't sin."

2.) Temptation Plays on a Legitimate Need.

- ✓ God created you with needs and desires. (You desire significance, sex, friendship, money, etc.) Satan targets those things, trying to get you to meet legitimate needs in illegitimate ways.

3.) God Set Limits on What Satan Can Tempt You With

1 Cor. 10:13 – “No temptation has come your way that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation, he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.”

- ✓ Limit #1 – It Has to be Something That's Common to Man
- ✓ Limit #2 – It Can't be Stronger Than Your Ability to Resist It

(That means you can never say, “That temptation was too big to resist!” No. Every temptation is pre-screened by God. If it got to you, then you had the strength to resist it.)

- ✓ Limit #3 – There Has to be at Least One “Off-Ramp” (Escape Route)

Off-Ramp – A moment when you can change your mind and get off the road you're on. You're headed toward sin, then at the last moment, you see an “exit” where you can unhook.

4.) Temptation Thrives on Attention! (Even Negative Attention!)

- ✓ The way to stop smoking is not to repeat, “I'm not going to smoke.

I'm not going to smoke. I'm not going to smoke.” (As you do that, what's going on, on the inside? You're thinking, “I'm DYING for a smoke!” Why does that happen? It's simple! Your desires follow your attention.)

- ✓ You can't help it! You're made that way. Whatever holds your attention, you WILL desire. Think about it. In the winter, *golf* never crosses your mind. But when Spring comes, and you dig your golf clubs out of basement and start cleaning them, what happens? The desire comes back.
- ✓ It works that way with everything – positive or negative! Listen: If you're hardly reading your Bible, and you have almost no desire to read it ... just start doing it! Your desire will follow! On the negative side, if you keep looking at what's forbidden ... (like Eve did with the tree) ... your desire will grow for *that* thing.
- ✓ That's why Satan does his *best* to get you focused on the temptation. That's part of his strategy. (It worked for Eve! The more she looked at the tree, the more she wanted it.)
- ✓ Now think! If Satan's strategy is to get you focused on the temptation, then what's your counter strategy? Get your mind on something else. (If you're tempted to visit an inappropriate website, get out of the house. Go to a football game. Get your mind busy on other things.) The truth is temptation fades pretty quickly when your mind is involved elsewhere.

5.) There's Help When You're Tempted

Heb. 2:18 – “Because Jesus was tempted as we are, He understands us, and He is able to help us when we are tempted. (See NASU, Wuest, TLB)

Heb. 4:14-16 – “Jesus understands every weakness of ours, because he was tempted in every way that we are. But he did not sin! (CEV)

What's the context of this passage? Temptation. (Keep reading.) “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace ...”

- ✓ Think about that! He said, “Come boldly” when you’re tempted! (Like I said last time, when you’re tempted, don’t run FROM God, run TO Him!)

*“Let us therefore **come boldly** unto the throne of grace, that we may **obtain mercy**, and **find grace to help** in time of need.” (KJV)*

There Are Two Times We’re to Come Boldly

- a.) To Obtain Mercy – Think about it! You only need *mercy* when you’ve sinned! Did you know you can come BOLDLY to get mercy? (We don’t usually do that! We slip in sheepishly, feeling like a worm.)
- b.) To Find Grace to Help – what is grace? Divine enablement! When you’re feeling tempted, come BOLDLY to ask God for help! (Remember, He’s your coach, not your condemner!)

Case Studies in Temptation – Eve

*Gen. 3:1-6 – “Now the serpent was more **cunning** than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made.”*

- ✓ Don’t underestimate the enemy. He’s cunning. (The word “cunning” means, “skilled in using deception”.) Satan is a deceiver. He *has* to be! If he just walked up to Eve and said, “Eat that! It’ll kill you!”, she never would have done it. He had to use deception.

*“And he said to the woman, ‘**Did God really say**, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden’?”*

- ✓ At this point, he’s not overtly attacking the Word. He’s just trying to plant a doubt in her mind. (He’s inserting a question mark where God put a period.) “Are you SURE that’s what God said? Maybe Adam misheard it. You know how *men* are ...” Eve responds with the Word.

“The woman answered, ‘God said we could eat fruit from any tree in the

garden, except the one in the middle. He told us not to eat fruit from that tree, or to even touch it. If we do, we’ll die.’” (CEV)

- ✓ Some say that she added to the Word. She may have added the second part, but not necessarily. Maybe Adam added it (to keep her FAR away from the tree). Or maybe this is the first time the Bible recorded God’s complete command. If it were *really* a big deal, the Bible would have said so. (Either way, that’s not what took her down. Staying further back from the tree didn’t put her in more temptation.)

*“Then the serpent said to the woman, ‘**You will not surely die.**’” (Satan takes it to the next level here. Now he’s called God a liar.) “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.” (He’s questioning God’s goodness.)*

- ✓ Essentially, he’s saying, “God’s holding out on you. You’re really missing out!” Remember I said, **Satan will try to get you to feel “hard done by”**.
- ✓ “So when the woman saw ...” (The CEV says, “The woman stared at the fruit...”) That’s HUGE! **She’s got her eyes off the Word, and she’s focusing on the temptation**. Remember, your desires follow your attention. If she keeps this up, it’s only a matter of time.

*v. 6 – “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** ...” (The devil hit her with all three realms of temptation. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life – 1 John 2:15).*

... she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.”

What Did Satan Do?

- He questioned the Word, put a doubt in her mind
- He outright contradicted the Word
- He shook her trust in God
- He appealed to the lust of the flesh/eyes/pride

- He got her to focus on the temptation

What Did Eve Do?

- She listened to the enemy
 - She entertained his thoughts
 - She allowed herself to be drawn away from the Word
 - Set her attention on what was forbidden
- ✓ But she did something else, *before* all of that. What was her *first* mistake? She got close enough to be tempted. **One of your best defenses against temptation is distance.** (Solomon gives this strategy to avoid sinning with the prostitute.)

Prov. 5:8 – “**Remove your way far from her** and **come not near** the door of her house.”

- ✓ **You can’t sin, if you’re not there.** On the flip side, when you look at the young man that *fell* in Proverbs 7:8, his physical location was part of the problem. “*Passing through the street **near her corner**; and he went the way to her house ...*”
- ✓ When I read Genesis 3, I have to ask, “What was Eve doing hanging around the tree?” The safest position would have been, “I’m not *looking* at the tree ... I’m not *touching* at the tree ... I’m not *talking* to a snake about the tree ... *Nothing to do* with the tree ...”
- ✓ Her first problem was her proximity. She was in a place where Satan could start talking to her about it. Compare that with Joseph.

Gen. 39:7-10 – “*Potiphar’s wife soon began to look at him lustfully, ‘Come and sleep with me,’ she demanded. But Joseph refused ...*

*She kept putting pressure on Joseph, day after day, but he refused to sleep with her, and **he kept out of her way as much as possible.***”