

Nov 1, (Don't be Deceived by Sin) Genesis 3:1-13

Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?" 2 The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, 3 but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'" 4 "You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman. 5 "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, & you will be like God, knowing good and evil." 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. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. 7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, & they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. 8 Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. 9 But the Lord God called to the man, "Where are you?" 10 He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid." 11 And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?" 12 The man said, "The woman you put here with me — she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it." 13 Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?"
The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

Before beginning, let me state emphatically that sometimes we get hung up on the wrong thing. One famous theologian, Karl Barth, was asked: "How can serpents talk?" His answer was classic: "Never mind how serpents can talk – what did the serpent say?" This ancient story explains a lot of things. Rather than trying to take a trip to try find the lost and mysterious Garden of Eden, let's understand that the purpose of this story is to tell about God, about who we are and why we have the problems we do, and about what provisions God has made for us to be redeemed from the curse.

Leadership & Self-Deception @ Main Entrance

The Good: We have been given some wonderful privileges. "What a wonderful world." We can taste, touch, smell, and see. We can also experience the presence of God. God's original intent was for us to live in Harmony with God, with one another & with nature.

The Bad:

a) We have also been given **boundaries**. God gives us choices. We're not robots. When we step over these boundaries and **rebel** against God's authority, it's known as **sin**. It's actually not just in the doing of these things, it's even about thinking about them. It's more than just the more obvious sin; it's also the sin which is more subtle.

b) There is a **malevolent** force in our world that seeks to disrupt our relationship with God, each other & to distort our self-image. "*Did God really say?*" sounds mocking & cynical. Sounds a lot like what people are saying today. This worldly wisdom can be crafty. He never tells you about the consequences. He directly contradicts God's word: "*You will not surely die.*"

Sometimes we let that which looks good apprehend us. If it had looked bad, it would have been an easy rejection. There's collusion. She rationalized. One little hook can catch you. It's the lure of a little bit. When it's set, it's an active evil. **Drugs** can do this. Methamphetamines are

the most addictive substance on earth. It can absolutely ruin your life. People will do anything for it. You've seen the pictures of people who have lost their teeth, their faces are gaunt, and their overall health has been greatly compromised, if not destroyed. People become slaves to satisfy this demon. They will do anything to get it. It begins in innocence. It's just one little pleasure. It's just something on the side. I can manage it. But it's subtle and insidious. The glamorous offer for pleasure is not advertised with the inevitable consequences. Deception is subtle. We usually don't fall for obvious lies.

1 John 2:16-17 *For everything in the world — the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does — comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.*

The **Ugly**: When sin enters the world, things really do get ugly. Once the boundary is crossed, all the relationships changed.

Like our two original parents, we also have a sinful nature. We know what the right thing is to do & yet somehow seem incapable of doing it. We have to be continually reminded of what God's intent is for us & also to avoid the negative consequences.

After sin (it really gets ugly...for Adam & Eve...but also for ALL of their children)

- 1.) **Innocence** is gone (Guilt & shame)
- 2.) They realized they were **naked**. For the first time, they become self-conscious.
- 3.) Watergate was not the original **cover-up**. If you don't deal honestly and openly, they you try to conceal the evidence.
- 4.) The game of **hide and seek** was created. They hid from God (separation from God). They could have repented, but instead a different course was set.
- 5.) **Responsibility** is denied. They justified themselves. Even after confronted, they didn't accept God's judgment. We create diversions that try to shift the focus away from us.

When people do evil, it makes perfect sense to them. How could someone like Bernie Madoff rip off people like he did? It made sense to him! It's perfectly obvious to everyone else that he was evil – but he deceived himself first. Then he set about deceiving others, and that eventually destroyed an incredible amount of wealth in a wide network of people. Evil things happen – but it's NOT God's fault! We intentionally choose to live in bad ways. It's easy to point the finger @ Madoff or some other really bad person (Hitler), but it's sometimes hard to see ourselves as sinners. That our own deception.

6.) We **blame** others for our problems. In the book, Leadership @ Self-Deception, there's a wonderful illustration of this tendency to blame others. The husband/father is asleep in bed. The baby cries. He hears the kid, but pretends he doesn't. When his wife finally awakens and attends to the needs of the infant, HE has a problem. He has to justify why HE didn't get up and take care of the baby. She was just as tired as he. Since he has "betrayed himself," he either has

to admit it or rationalize. He chooses the latter. He makes his wife the bad person. The next morning when she asks, “How are you?” he snaps at her. He is “in the box” with her.

This is exactly what we see with the original pair. Adam and Eve blamed each other, the serpent, and eventually God. Instead of owning up to their culpability, they did the wrong thing and thus, were at enmity with each other and God. Instead of harmony, there is now disharmony.

7) There are **huge consequences** that follow the fall. (Including Chapter 4)

This was **Act I**. **Acts II** = how Jesus dealt with the deception/Temptation of the evil one. Act I is the story of the “First Adam” who started with such promise and produced such ruin. Acts II is the narrative of how the worm turned – the “Second Adam” was Jesus Christ, who was God Himself in the flesh, who came to redeem all who believe from the effects of the fall.

5 practical applications:

1) Read/understand/apply God’s word.

We must **know** and **believe the truth** contained in God’s Word. If there is one thing I’d like to be known as, it would be as a pastor who tried to equip his congregation with a knowledge and love of the Bible. I’m absolutely convinced that if you don’t know the Bible, you’ll not be able to lead the type of life God wants for you to have. And it’s more than knowledge and belief – it is application, too.

One of the big questions in life is asked by the serpent: “**Did God really say?**” This questioning of authority strikes at the very heart of the issue. “Who is my authority?” If it’s the Bible, then I am challenged to live in a certain way. Many answer today: “I am the sole authority. I decide what is right and what is wrong. Nobody’s going to tell me what to do?” This lies at the source of our basic human problem = who is God? I want to have a coup & be God. If I can get rid of God, then I can do as I please. No one will have a claim on my body. I can do what I want with my money. I spend my time just as I please. But if God is the governing authority of my life, I’ve got to look at life through a new lens. You see, nothing has really changed since Genesis 3.

2) “Nip it in the bud.” (Many of you will think of Barney Fife on the Andy Griffith show). When we start going in the wrong direction, we need a good set of brakes.

3) Don’t go it **alone**. We are not intended to take life on our own. We need godly friends who will coach us in the right direction. They also need us to participate in their lives.

4) When we sin – admit it, agree with it. The Bible calls this “**repentance**.” It means to turn around and go in the opposite direction.

5) Even after sin and all of its consequences, life can still be good again. We can be **redeemed**. Good News always is in the message we share. We see this in God’s activity to clothe the original pair. An animal is sacrificed on their behalf so that they might be acceptable in their own sight, and in the sight of each other. In the Old Testament, a sacrificial system is developed whereby animals are sacrificed for the forgiveness of people. In the New Testament, this is

further developed when redemption is made possible through the blood of Christ. Forgiveness is extended when we confess our sin to God in Jesus' name (1 John 1:9).
Not only are we forgiven, but we are also **empowered** to live a life for God.