



If you were here to study Genesis with us, you might have felt a mixture of encouragement and shame. You may have been reminded of sins in your own life that you feel immense shame about, and as you walked away from this building and got in your car, you thought to yourself, “Why do I do that? Why do I think that? Why do I feel that way?” And then, in an effort to prove you’re not as bad as you hope you aren’t, you say, “I’m never going to do that again!” Even if this wasn’t you last Sunday, you can probably relate, right? Maybe you grew to realize that you are never going to make statements like that because you always fail. So, you resort to other methods. Maybe you beat yourself up and think that shaming yourself is going to really help you. If you just feel bad enough, you’ll stop, right? Wrong.

Many people live in these kinds of cycles. I imagine many people here do as well, and you just think to yourself, **“Why do I do this, and how do I get out of this cycle of shame?”** These questions are good questions to ask, and God answers these questions right at the beginning of Genesis. God, in his mercy, reveals to us why there’s so much brokenness not only in this world, but within us. And God himself points us to where eternal hope can be found. We see this all the more in the text we’re looking at today.

Before we read from Genesis, let’s review one brief fact that we’re taught in Genesis 1 and 2. What is the mission of humanity? As Caique explained a couple weeks ago, the Garden of Eden is the Temple of God on earth. Within this temple, Adam and Eve are called to rule under God’s rule. And, in ruling, they are *together* to image forth his glory. And, we get this idea that Adam and Eve are to protect the Garden from rebellion. Terms like “subdue” indicate that Adam and Eve are to ensure creation submits to the glory of God. Not only are they to ensure that creation submits to God’s glory, but they are to expand the borders of Eden so that God’s glory is over the whole earth. God’s intention is expressed clearly in Habakkuk 2:14: **For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.**¹ This is God’s commission to Adam and Eve. Protect and expand for God’s glory.

And, we know that this is a good command of God because God’s glory is the supreme joy that humans were made for. God’s glory truly is very good, beautiful and best. As we have been trekking through the creation narrative, I have been in awe of the original creation and at how glorious it is. Have you thought similarly? I see God’s power and God’s grace. And last week, we ended with the creation of woman and the marriage covenant. Now, we move into verse 25, which says, **“And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.”**² This is one of those verses that when you read it to young children, they start to giggle because they are shocked that Adam and Eve were naked and didn’t seem to care. Intriguingly, this Hebrew word for “naked” here is different than the one that shows up just 7 verses later. There’s a sense that there’s an unashamed nakedness, and then there’s a shameful nakedness.

¹ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Hab 2:14.

² [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ge 2:25.

Ultimately, I think the point of verse 25 is to show that Adam and Eve were completely vulnerable and open before each other – and their nakedness showed it. There was no fear of abuse. There was no fear of judgment from each other. There’s complete transparency and no pain. Can you imagine a world like this? I can’t. We’re always tempted to put on our “masks” to protect ourselves and to create walls so people don’t hurt us. We naturally think of self-protection. In the Garden, there was no need to be protected from other humans. There was no need to be protected from a spouse. There was no need to be protected from a man or a woman. They were naked and unashamed. How glorious. Can we agree with God that this is all very beautiful and good?

Now, we can move forward to see if Adam and Eve further the commission given to them. Will Eden be expanded? Will Adam and Eve subdue and exercise dominion – ruling faithfully under God’s rule? But hold on. Isn’t it interesting that God tells them to “subdue” the earth when Eden is sinless? To subdue can have connotations of force to it. Why subdue if nothing is tainted by sin? Well, let’s read 3:1 together: **Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made.**³ In ancient times, serpents represented many things. Oftentimes, serpents were used in Near Eastern Divination practices. The Hebrew word here can also be connected to something shiny – almost like bronze. So, this serpent would grab Eve’s attention. It’s beautiful. But notice something else in the text. The serpent was made by God. I actually wish our English translations said “created,” because it’s the same Hebrew word. Remember, only God can create from nothing. Here, Moses doesn’t reveal God’s enemy as someone who is of equal power. No. The enemy was created by God, which means God has all power over the serpent. Just like he has power over the waters and chaos of Genesis 1:2, he has power over the chaos of the serpent. Now, we’re not told how his serpent ended up rebelling. We’re not told how sin entered his being. This is a mystery we don’t know the answer to. But we do know that in God is no sin. We also know based on Revelation 12:9 that this serpent is actually Satan. There we read: that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world. . . .⁴

So, at this point, we have Adam and Eve together in sinless Eden. Will Adam and Eve kick it out of the garden by force (i.e. – subduing it) or will they tolerate its lies? This gets very practical for us today. As I said a little earlier, how do you deal with your own sin? Do you ever wonder why you feel or act the way you do? This narrative gives us answers. And not only does it give us answers, but it also reveals to us *how* temptation works so that, if you are a follower of Jesus, you can fight against the serpent’s attacks.

Here’s where I want to give you the main idea of the sermon: **Satan tempts humanity so that we would embrace lies about God and live ashamed for ourselves.** Let’s jump into the remaining verses to further define what this all means:

1. Satan tempts humanity so that we would embrace lies about God (vv. 1-5).

Again, verse 1 says, “Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made.”⁵ The serpent is more crafty. The word associated with that is the word “shrewd.” Shrewdness is not always bad. It can communicate a creativity about how to live life. Clearly, this serpent, Satan, used his shrewdness to then rebel against God. Now, in his craftiness, he wants to see how he can get humans to rebel. Think of this. Humans. We’re told humans are the highest created beings – imaging God’s glory like nothing else. If Eve understood the value she has in God’s creation, she would not be taking heed to a lesser being. She’s a ruler. She’s an image-bearer. But she listens to the

³ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ge 3:1.

⁴ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Re 12:9.

⁵ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ge 3:1.

serpent. (And, as a side note, some may say, “If a serpent came talking to me, I’d be shocked an animal was talking!” Others say, “This shows us animals spoke before the Fall.” I think both of these points are making too much of these verses. The reading indicates the temptation comes soon after Adam and the woman’s marriage. They’re new to the Garden. They’re probably still discovering things. A talking animal may not have seemed odd.)

But let’s take note of what’s really important here: Satan’s mission is always to keep people separated from God. The very word “satan” means adversary. Now, in verse 2, we read this: **He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’”² And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden,³ but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’”⁶**

Here’s the first interaction between the serpent and humanity. What some people tend to think at this point is, “Where’s Adam in all of this?” And they assume he isn’t around. They think Satan divided and conquered, but that’s not what happens. Eve responds in plural answers – being like a spokesperson for Adam and herself. And then, in verse 6, we’re told that her husband was with her. So, now we have the scene set. Adam and Eve are naked and unashamed in the Garden of Eden. They’re commissioned to rule and spread God’s glory. They’re called to subdue. Then a shiny, beautiful, crafty serpent shows up and talks to the woman.

What takes place next helps us to understand the way temptation works. This is valuable for ancient Israel, wandering in a wilderness, to know. And, this is helpful for us in 21st century America to know. We don’t want to be ignorant of the adversary’s crafty ways, do we? So, let’s read *how* the serpent tempts. What we discover is that he wants humanity to believe lies about God. In most English translations, we’re told that the serpent asks a question first: Did God actually say. . .? However, nowhere else is this Hebrew construct ever used in question form in the Old Testament. I think it might better be translated, **“Indeed! To think that God said that you are not to eat from any tree of the garden.”** Either way you translate it, what you see is that the serpent seeks to tempt the woman to think God is stingy, controlling, mean. The serpent speaks with such boldness as to indicate he knows something negative about the character of God, and that humans probably aren’t seeing fully. Can you relate to this? The first temptation is to doubt God’s superior beauty and goodness. It’s to doubt God himself. Satan wants to blind us to think God is a scrooge, whereas the creation account shows that God freely gives. They can eat from *any* of the trees – just not from one. So, Satan exaggerates in order to draw the woman into a conversation.

The woman’s response to the serpent is that they can eat of the fruit of the trees, but that God just said they can’t eat from the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it. Wait a second. Is this what God said? No. Just as the serpent exaggerated, so now Eve’s response exaggerates. There’s a legalism that shows up here. The command was simply to not eat the fruit. Now the woman seems to have created a rule around God’s rule in order to keep God’s rule. Don’t touch so that you don’t eat. Have you ever thought this way in your life? You try to protect yourself from certain sins and so you create more rules to keep you from doing something. I’m not against setting up things to help to spur you on to obedience, but sometimes we can lean on our crutches as though they too are rules from the Lord. If we do that, we’ve failed. We’re trusting the rules and not trusting the Lord.

The serpent now has the woman engaged in conversation, and instead of the woman quoting God’s words verbatim and trusting them wholly. She speaks incorrectly, and then the serpent responds with

⁶ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ge 3:1–3.

outright rejection of God: ⁴ **But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. ⁵ For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”**⁷ The serpent now doesn’t play dumb with his words. He openly defies God’s word. The way the serpent’s words are written in Hebrew emphasize his defiance. It’s “not you shall surely die.” Having the “not” at the beginning is placed for emphasis. In other words, the serpent is saying that there’s no way they will actually die.

Do you see what the serpent is doing? He’s tempting Adam and Eve by causing them to think that God’s a fearmonger. His threat is actually just a means of self-protection because God doesn’t want them to have what’s really good. God wants to keep things for himself. And thus, Satan’s temptation is for us to see that we should live for ourselves instead of for God’s glory.

2. Satan tempts humanity so that we would. . .live for ourselves in shame (vv. 6-7).

Do you experience this with temptations? At first, maybe you fight against the temptation, and you create some rules to depend on. Then you start to wonder if God is actually keeping you from real enjoyment and real life. You might think, “Well, I know other people who do these things and they’re ok.” The serpent goes so far to say that when they eat this fruit, their eyes will be opened and they will be like God.

Hold on! Their eyes are actually already opened. They see beauty, goodness, and what is best! They’re not missing out. And they already are like God in the sense that they are created in God’s image. Do you see what the serpent wants them to think about themselves? **The serpent tempts humanity by trying to get them to believe that their worth is found in something other than God, and that they need the created in order to have greater meaning.** Oh, I hope you’d listen well here. You are created in God’s image. Your worth is not found in things. Your value isn’t found in what you do. Your worth and value is found in God. To be separated from him is to lose everything. To abide in him is to have everything.

And yet, in our world today, people fall prey to this exact temptation. They think if they lose more weight or if they acquire more wealth or if their children would become very obedient moralists or if you find the perfect job, then you can be satisfied. Do you see Satan’s temptation? He’s actually tempted us all to believe that we’re less than created in God’s image, and thus we need something else to have more value. Yet, God is the supreme value, and has created us with great worth as image-bearers. Will you trust God or the accuser?

Right here, I’m reminded of the passage we read earlier together from 1 John: ¹⁶ **For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. ¹⁷ And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.** ⁸ This beautifully deceptive serpent seeks to tempt Adam and Eve with the created realm. He promises they will be like God and have open eyes. He says they’ll “know” good and evil. The desires of the flesh, eyes and pride come together. But humans were never meant to have to decipher between good and evil. They were just to protect from evil and live in good. Somehow Eve is drawn in. She thinks God is keeping good from her. Look at verse 6: ⁶ **So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to**

⁷ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ge 3:3–5.

⁸ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 1 Jn 2:16–17.

make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate⁹

She saw the tree was good for food. Her evaluation of goodness is not the same as God's. After every day of creation, it was good. Here, she calls good what is evil. This fruit will not give her life. It will not give her nutrition. And it's not because there's poison here. It's because this tree is set out to test Adam and Eve's commitment to rule under God's rule. Will they submit? She wanted to be wiser. She wanted to experience greater delight. In the perfect garden, with the perfect Heavenly Father, the crafty serpent planted seeds of discontent and got Eve to believe lies about God. And not just the woman, but Adam, too. Intriguingly, the Hebrew words for "took, eat and gave" are actually difficult to pronounce together in this structure, emphasizing how horrible this simple act is. Rebellion and treason against the Creator is taking place.

To add to this horror, Adam stood there the whole time, listening to everything. Great husband, right? It was with Adam that God made the covenant, according to Hosea 6:7. And in 1 Timothy 2:13-14, we read this: **¹³ For Adam was formed first, then Eve; ¹⁴ and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor.**¹⁰ Some may say, "Well, that shows women can be deceived more easily." No, that's not the point of these verses. The point is that Adam was of highest accountability and responsibility. Adam received the command straight from God. Eve was deceived, but Adam *wasn't deceived!* He should have wrung that serpent's neck and thrown him out of the Garden in order to reveal the glory of God and to also protect his wife. But instead, he lets the serpent tempt his wife. He allows the woman to be deceived. And, with full awareness, Adam eats. He chooses created things over his Creator who gave him all this glory.

When you see this, you might say, "None of this makes sense! I'd never do that if I was in Adam and Eve's shoes." But I think we'd all have to admit that we would. Sin never makes sense, does it. Does your sin make sense? You can say, "I'd never do that," but then you realize how many times you've said that and done it in the past. We're just as guilty. And isn't this what we're supposed to think? Why do we sin? Why do we do foolish things against God? Why do we wish we could change our past? Why do we battle with internal struggles and questions? Because this is the intent of the serpent from the beginning, and the battle continues to rage. The serpent wants us to believe lies about God so that we would continue to defy him. Will you continue to defy him?

Look at the results of woman and Adam's giving into sin in verse 7: **⁷ Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.**¹¹ Their eyes were opened – not in a life-giving way, but in a death-producing way. They knew they were naked. This idea is that they were filled with shame. This is a bad nakedness. And from this point on in the Old Testament, whenever nakedness is mentioned, it always carries the idea of shame. So, what do they do? They sew fig leaves together to cover their nakedness.

There's a contrast Moses is creating here. After Adam and the woman are married, they're naked and unashamed! In God's design, fullness of transparency and trust in the creation. But in rebelling against God, there's distrust and shame and fear. Human relationships shatter when the serpent is followed because we know deep down inside that something isn't right. The shame is deep. We may try to cover

⁹ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ge 3:6.

¹⁰ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 1 Ti 2:13–14.

¹¹ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ge 3:7.

it up in various ways. And, we will turn to all sorts of created things to give us comfort. But only reconciliation with God is the answer.

As we move further into Genesis, and throughout the Old Testament, we see various ways that people “sew fig leaves” to cover their shame. They justify their bad behavior and try to act like everything is fine. Israel, in the wilderness acted this way. At one point in time, God sent poisonous serpents in the wilderness to the Israelites and said the only way they could be healed was if a bronze serpent on a pole were created and the people looked to that serpent for healing (see Numb. 21:7-9). That’s interesting, isn’t it? Serpents represent evil. Yet, looking at a murdered serpent will heal? It’s not because the serpent has magical powers, but it’s a test. Will the people trust God to kill the serpent of sin or will they do things their own way?

This same reality comes to us as well. After we go through the Old Testament and see all the ways people try to self-justify, we turn into the stories of Jesus, and in John 3, Jesus brings up this bronze serpent situation, and says, ¹⁴ **And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up,** ¹⁵ **that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.**¹² What?! Is Jesus evil like the serpent? No. Jesus is the anti-Adam. Jesus was tempted in the wilderness and trusted God’s words completely. Jesus lived perfectly and loved God and humans perfectly. But we’re told that on the cross, Jesus took the sins of people on himself; so, the Bible says that Jesus became sin! In Galatians 3, we read: **“Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree”**—¹³ On the cross, he took the punishment of sinners, and in taking that punishment, he alone saves and can forgive. He alone can take away the shame and restore us to transparency and love with him and others.

Do you trust him? Will you look to Christ in the midst of your guilt and shame? Whatever sins you’ve committed or whatever struggles you face, do you know he offers himself to you? How do I know this? Well, do you remember what Jesus does with his disciples at the last supper? He takes the bread and the cup, and then we’re told he says “Take, eat” and he gives it to his disciples. For millennia, the phrase “take, eat, and give” communicated the fall into sin and shame and rebellion. Yet, in the Last Supper, Jesus reveals that he will reverse the curse and welcomes people back into communion with God. He reverses the cycle of sin and shame. Have you turned to him in faith?

If you’ve been restored to God on the basis of Jesus, we’re now taught that we can live for God’s glory in this world – and not just for ourselves. And we’re also told that God will crush Satan under our feet, and someday, we’re told in Revelation 12: **that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.** ¹⁰ **And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, “Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God.** ¹¹ **And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony**¹⁴ In this day, the glory of the Lord will fill the earth as the waters cover the sea. And Jesus, the second Adam, will have fulfilled God’s commission!

Satan tempts humanity so that we would embrace lies about God and live ashamed for ourselves. Jesus offers humanity himself so that they would return to God, in the freedom of truth and grace so that we can be unashamed and reconciled before God.

¹² [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Jn 3:14–15.

¹³ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ga 3:13.

¹⁴ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Re 12:9–11.