

The Temptation

¹ Now the serpent was more crafty than any [other] beast of the field that the LORD God had made. 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.'"

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."

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

Genesis 3:1-6 ESV

The Apple Tree in the Garden

Have you ever wondered where idea comes from that Adam and Eve ate **an apple**? I grew up believing that, of course, this is what the Bible says. But read the story of Genesis 3 carefully and you will see that it only says that they ate "fruit." In fact, the fruit was identified by the many Jews as being a grape and the tree a vine, as in **Judges 9:13**, "But the grapevine said to them, 'I am not going to stop producing my wine, which makes gods and men so happy, just to sway

above the other trees!” (NET).¹ Nevertheless, the idea that they ate an apple is very old. Many Reformers, including Luther and Zwingli and perhaps Calvin, referred to it as an apple,² but you also find it in a few early Fathers.³

It is possible that **Proverbs 7:1-2** sees the fruit as an apple, for it likens treasuring up the commandments of God and keeping them to live as “the apple of your eye.” However, as we will see a little later on, **Psalms 19** which is very important to understanding the significance of the Genesis 3 story of the fall seems to refer to it, like the Jews did, as a grape.

It is probably better to see the idea of eating from an apple as coming from **Greek and Norse mythology**. As you know, I do not recon pagan mythology as “fiction” or “fairy-tales,” but as distorted memories of our dim and ancient past. They can be informative for the Biblical story which alone puts the proper spin and truthful telling on the story. In

¹ In **1 Enoch 32:3-4**, the prophet comes to the “Garden of Righteousness” and the “tree of wisdom” that is in height like the first, its leaves are like the Carob tree, and “its fruit is like the clusters of the vine, very beautiful.” See also **b. Berakoth 40a**; **b. Sanhedrin 70a**. They also identified the tree with the fig tree.

² Zwingli, *Annotations on Genesis 3:7*; and Luther, *Lectures on Genesis 3:13*; Johannes Brenz, *Commentary on Genesis 2:16–17*; David Chytraeus, *Commentary on Genesis 3:1–6*; in John L. Thompson, Timothy George, and Scott M. Manetsch, eds., *Genesis 1–11: Old Testament*, vol. 1, *Reformation Commentary on Scripture* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012). See also Calvin, Reply of John Calvin to Article II (that is, Calumny II), in John Calvin and Henry Cole, *Calvin’s Calvinism: A Defence of the Secret Providence of God* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2009), 60.

³ Commodian, “The Instructions of Commodianus 35 (“Of the Tree of Life and Death”); Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Eunomius 2.12*

Norse mythology, the golden apples are guarded by the goddess **Idunn** (Iðunn). She has a chest of ash and inside of it are the golden apples that are **the elixir of immortality** for the Æsir (the Norse version of the divine council). This is a fascinating parallel with the Tree of Life where you live forever. But in these stories, whenever the gods began to grow old, they would eat a golden apple, and regain their youth.⁴

Also in Norse sagas is the great tree **Yggdrasil**. This is the origin of the Christmas Tree. Yggdrasil is called the “**home of the gods**” where they give judgment everyday.⁵ From the base of the tree come **three giant maidens** who are called “**mighty in wisdom.**” Think about Genesis and its tree that “makes one wise.” The old saga says, “**Laws they made there, and life allotted | To the sons of men.**”⁶ Another story comes from the **Greeks**. They tell of the fantastic **Garden of the Hesperides**. The garden is a lush paradise in the far western corner of the world.⁷ It also has golden apples of immortality. These apples were guarded by the Hesperides, until one day, Hercules (in his 11th labor) was able to steal the

⁴ See Prose Edda, *Gylfaginning* 26.

⁵ *Gylfaginning* 15.

⁶ *Völuspá* 20; also 2.19-20a.

⁷ Curiously, the tree of Eden must be in the west, for the cherubim are put at the “east” gate to guard the way to the tree of life (Gen 3:24).

golden apples by tricking Atlas through guile. Let's look at some of the facts about this garden a little more closely.

The Hesperides are **nymphs** (divine spirits who animate nature, always depicted as beautiful young women)⁸ who tend the blissful garden. They are the daughters of **Hesperus**. You almost won't believe who Hesperus is. He is **Venus**. His mother is the goddess **Eos**. Her name means "dawn." So Hesperus is the "**Morning/Evening Star son of the Dawn**." Amazingly, the Greek translation of **Isaiah 14:12** which talks about Helel ben Shachar ("**Shining One son of Dawn**" whom we talked about last week as the Serpent) calls him Hesperus (ἑσπερός, *Hesphoros*). His Roman name is Vesper ("evening," "supper," "evening star," "west").⁹ As such, they are the nymphs of the evening (if you will remember, the LORD comes to our parents after the sin in the cool of the evening; **Gen 3:8**).

There's more. The garden belongs to **Hera**, wife of Zeus, and as her title on her *wiki* says, "**Mother of the gods, goddess of marriage, women, and birth**," all themes you find in the Genesis story, though obviously not associated with a goddess. Hera put someone else in the Garden to guard her

⁸ Along these same lines, we referenced a passage (**Pseudo-Philo 25:10-12**) a few weeks back when talking about the land of Havilah in **Genesis 2:11** and the shining stones (see **Ezek 28:14, 16**) of Eden. The stones were said to have been found laying upon seven "sacred nymphs [idols]," who "when called upon, showed the **Amorites** (including **Nimrod**) what to do every hour."

⁹ "Vesper," *Collins Latin Dictionary Plus Grammar* (Glasgow: Harper Collins, 1997).

golden apples of immortality (the same idea you find in the Norse myths). This was **Ladon** (“Strong Flow”), the never sleeping (sleepless one, watcher?) multi-headed serpent-dragon.

To put this all another way, here in the Greek story, you have the garden belonging to a goddess of birth and marriage, who puts the daughters of Lucifer and a many-headed serpent in charge of guarding the precious fruit and the great tree. They do their job until one day a demi-god half-human uses trickery to steal what did not belong to him in order to gain eternal life. You can’t make this stuff up. It is truly an amazing parallel to the biblical story, one that has it so close and yet is exactly backwards on almost every key point as it is told in Genesis. This is perhaps Satan’s greatest trick—retell the old story his way to make himself the hero.

The Temptation

The Plan: Asking the Woman a Question

With that, we want to move to the passage today which is **Genesis 3:1-6**, the **temptation** in the Garden of Eden. Someone said to me this week, “**Remember, it isn’t a temptation, but a deception.**” I thought about this for a while, and have come away concluding that this person has created a logical fallacy—an either/or when it is really a both/and. Why must it be either a temptation or a deception?

Why can it not be both? Certainly, the text says that Eve was deceived (**Gen 3:13**; cf. **1 Tim 2:14**). But as we will, it is also vital to view this as a real temptation.

After introducing the **Nachash**—the shining serpentine seraphim, we find him speaking to the woman. Of course he can speak to her, because he is a heavenly being! This is no chance encounter. The serpent has a **plan**, and it has nothing to do with the welfare or goodwill he has towards humanity. He is shrewd (עָרוּם) and she is vulnerable, naked (עָרוּם).

The plan begins with the person to whom he chooses to speak. It is important that he chooses to go to the **woman** rather than to the man. The command was given to Adam (**2:16-17**), before Eve was ever created. Adam was also directly given the task of defending and guarding the Garden, for God spoke to Adam telling him to do this (**2:15**), again before Eve was created. It is true that Eve was a co-laborer with Adam, his “**helper**” (**2:18**) and one who would carry out **dominion** with him (**1:26-27**), but hers was a functionally distinct role, a complementary role to his. Basically, Satan is **bypassing the authority** figure of the Garden, going to the one person in all the world that holds sway over Adam’s heart.

How many sins throughout history have been started in just this way? Rather than go to the head, to the source, people go behind their backs and begin to stir up trouble with

those who have no business in the matter, but who quickly desire to make it their business. May it be a warning to us all when we know the person we should go to, but bypass for the many reasons we come up with. And may it also be a warning to those of us who are approached with a matter that we have no business entering into a discussion with in the first place. Eve should simply have said, “**There is Adam, go and talk to him.**” Both are culpable in the sorted affair that is the fall of mankind, and they are the first two that are cursed for what they did.

I imagine it this way, though I have no way of proving it. She has spoken to this being many times before, or perhaps she has seen him talking to Adam and/or the LORD, perhaps in the Great Council. They must be friends; perhaps she and he are friends. Though we have no reason to deny this is her first meeting with the Nachash, we also have no reason to believe that it is. It is an open question. But on my view, if they have met before, it simply impresses on us all the more that there is no reason for concern here on her part, no hint of trouble. It is a cautious, non-confrontational encounter. The woman suspects absolutely nothing. She has no defenses up, because there is nothing to defend. Temptation comes when you least expect it.

He begins to **hatch his plan** by **talking**. He does not make a statement or issue a command; he simply asks her a

question. The first and greatest blunder in human history—greatest because of the ramifications it had on humanity—begins with a question. A simple little question. His plan is to get the woman to simply think a little more about what God has said, what he has commanded. Mull it over in your mind. Ask yourself what God actually said. Reflect on it a little. Tell me what he said, then we can talk some more.

“Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’” (Gen 3:1). The way most translations like the ESV here read, it makes it sound like the Serpent shows his hand at the very beginning. He puts suspicion into her mind right away. It sounds almost accusatory towards God. This is certainly possible, but it is also possible that he held his hand more closely to his chest. If I translate it, “Is it true that God said...?” I have given a more benign translation. Maybe he comes across as simply asking her a question. Maybe he doesn’t know what God actually told her? It seems to me that if you are going to trick someone that this would be a better way to proceed.

The Problem: Knowing the Law vs. Adding our Own

The woman responds. The first thing to point out is that most of her response is completely faithful. “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden...’” (Gen 3:2a). She gets it right. Adam had apparently

communicated to her what God had said. She knew what she was supposed to do and not do. This leads me to a point that many are confused about.

| Gen 2:16-17 ~ What God said | Gen 3:2 ~ What Eve said |
|--|--|
| You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat. | We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden.' |

Notice, she has a mind, she has reason, she can communicate faithfully what God said. What she says demonstrates clearly that she knows what is right and what is wrong. She is able to articulate the command to someone else. Many people think that in eating the fruit, that our parents didn't know right from wrong, that only upon eating it did they actually gain this knowledge. The woman's response here proves that they did. Of course they did! The "knowledge of good and evil" gained by the tree is not a brute knowledge of right and wrong, as if they had no idea what a commandment was, what a good thing was, what a bad thing was, what a punishment was, what a reward was. These are not dumb apes; they are men, mankind made in God's image. Their very nature carries with it the knowledge of right and wrong. I'll explain a little later what is gained from eating the fruit.

Of course, some of you have already gone ahead of me, and want to raise your hand and says, “But she got it wrong.” I realize I did not finish her words, but that was because I wanted you to see that she did indeed understand the command. Now let’s finish her words. She does something to the commandment, something that many people do to God’s commands in the name of protecting them, guarding them, fencing them, and helping themselves and others keep them. She added to the commandment.

This is very obvious in the text. It is a deliberate addition. There is no justification for saying that the woman was confused or didn’t know what God said. She knew. That is the point of the exact quotation just before this. But it is sort of like, as one person says, “It is as though she wanted to set a law for herself by means of an exaggeration.”¹⁰ This is exactly what we humans are the best at doing when it comes to morality and God’s law. We add to God’s word, expecting that if we do so, it will be helpful, beneficial for us in the end. “Don’t smoke, don’t drink, don’t chew, don’t go with girls who do.” Don’t get drunk becomes don’t drink at all. We can think of a million examples.

Let me make something clear here. I’m not saying it is always wrong to make rules for people that are not in the

¹⁰ Gerhard von Rad as cited in Claus Westermann, *A Continental Commentary: Genesis 1–11* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1994), 239.

Bible. That would be ridiculous. We set lots of boundaries as parents that the Bible doesn't necessarily set explicitly. We set rules for students that the Bible doesn't set. We set rules for society that are not talked about in the Bible. Sometimes these can be good rules. When we create them, we must use wisdom and discernment. We must also always keep in mind the power of the law, and how it instills in our heart covetousness (as we will see in our own story shortly). We must ask ourselves what the tradeoffs are in creating this rule or forcing others to abide by it.

But *what we must never do* is say that this is God's rule. But this we do far too often. God never says don't drink. He does say don't get drunk. God never says sex is evil. He says it has a context. God never said, as Eve claims he said, "**neither shall you touch it.**" **God never said they couldn't touch it.** She implied this and believed it was a good thing to not touch it, but God never said that. God never says lots of things that we claim that he says, things we think are good, but which he didn't see fit to say.

Here is **the danger**. When we tell others that this is *God's* law (as opposed to our own that we are making for our own reasons), then it wreaks havoc with faith and belief in God. Often we create laws that make no sense whatsoever, and smart people who are told that God made this rule up quickly see that if God said this, he must be an idiot or a fool. This can

sometimes create great confusion in people, so that they think God sometimes knows what is right and other times he makes no sense. This in turn causes us to start doubting the actual laws that God gives us. Today in our society, and at least some of this has been caused by our past in adding to God's law, people no longer take any of God's law seriously or absolutely. They are told that drinking is wrong and that God said this. They never bother to check it out for themselves, but this just doesn't sound right. They decide it can't be right, but if that one isn't right, then getting drunk must not be right either.

Much of the time, this kind of [legalism](#) (adding to God's law and claiming that God said it) actually adds to the burden of keeping the law. Sometimes legalism is turned into faith, so that keeping these rules that we make up is what people end up thinking gets you to heaven. What a burden that is. It is bad enough when we have to keep God's law to have eternal life; how much worse when now we add our own? I'm really moving beyond the text, which deals with Adam and Eve under the covenant of works (Adam did have to keep God's law to merit life), because I want to impress upon you that [adding to God's law and calling it God's law is usually done with the best of intentions](#), but it is religious zeal that is not based on knowledge. It is a fool's errand, and the church must guard against such things, for it is the very first thing that our

first mother did that ended her up in so much confusion and trouble. She added to God's law.

The Psalm: Psalm 19 as Commentary on Genesis 3

At this point, I want to help us see **the goodness of God's law** and how it actually relates to our story. It is vital to understand God's perspective on his law, for too many people think of his law the wrong way. We are going to move out of our story for a moment, into an inspired biblical commentary on it. Psalm 19 is a remarkable and vital chapter for interpreting Genesis 3, for it teaches us about the goodness of God's actual law. I feel like to preach **Genesis 3:1-6** without going into Psalm 19 for help is to impoverish each of us greatly.

The Psalm is 14 verses long. You can divide it logically into **two halves**. The first half (**Ps 19:1-6**) is a **commentary on Genesis 1**. It tells us about the heavens, the sky (**1**), day and night (**2**), the sanctuary idea (the chamber, **5**). It may even comment on the original state of Satan, for it says, "**a strongman runs its course with joy**" (**5**). This refers to the sun and stars. Jesus uses the language of a strong man to refer to the Devil (**Matt 12:29; Mark 3:27; Luke 11:21**). But Isaiah and others liken the devil to a star (**Isa 14:12; Job 38:31-32**).¹¹

¹¹ The language of the Job passage is "binding the chains" of the constellations. Jesus likewise refers to "binding" the strongman. Revelation likewise refers to "binding" Satan.

Each of these things pour forth speech and teach us about our Great God.

The second half of the Psalm (19:7-14) is actually a commentary on the tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. It teaches us what it signifies. It does so uses the very language of our passage in Genesis 3:1-6. It teaches us about the “law” the “testimony,” the “precepts,” the “commandment,” the “fear” and the “rules” of the LORD (7-9). Each of these is followed by a comment on what they do for us.¹² How beautiful those comments are, and they teach us about what the real law of God is like, what it does for us and too us.

First it says that it “revives the soul.” “Soul” is the word used throughout Genesis 1-2 for the “living” (*nephesh*) creatures. This phrase is sometimes used for food. “They trade their treasures for food to revive their life” (Lam 1:11). “My priests and my elders ... sought food to revive their souls” (Lam 1:19). “Wisdom is like honey to one’s soul” (Prov 24:14). “Come buy, and eat ... Hear that your souls may live” (Isa 65:3). And of course, Psalm 23, “He restores my soul ... He prepares a table for me.” So the idea then is that the law of God imparts “refreshment to the inner man

¹² The following discussion comes from the excellent article, D. J. A. Clines, “The Tree of Knowledge and the Law of Yahweh (Psalm 19), *Vetus Testamentum* 24 (1974): 8-14.
https://www.academia.edu/2464517/The_Tree_of_Knowledge_and_the_Law_of_Yahweh_Psalm_xix

[as] his true soul-food.”¹³ If only Eve had seen this. If only we would.

The *second* thing it says is that the Law “makes wise the simple.” This is exactly what Eve saw that the fruit of the tree would do. It says in **Genesis 3:6** that she “saw ... that the tree was to be desired to make one wise.” Here the knowledge of good and evil that is likened to the Law directly by the Psalmist.

The *third* thing it says is that it “makes the heart rejoice.” This has a conceptual or thought parallel with our story. That which is “desirable to look at” (**Gen 2:9** and the trees) will “make the heart rejoice.” Here, I want to return to the idea that the fruit was actually the fruit of the vine as the Jews sometimes taught (and as seems to be the case in Genesis in the parallel story of Noah and his nakedness; **Gen 9:20-27**). Wine is often referred to as gladdening the heart. It cheers gods and men (**Jdg 9:13**). It gladdens life and the heart of men (**Ps 104:15**). In the same way, the tree of knowledge elates the heart with joy.

The *fourth* thing it says is that the Law of God “enlightens the eyes.” Again, this is exactly what Eve found. It was a “delight to the eyes” (**Gen 3:6**) and after they ate it says that

¹³ Charles Augustus and Emilie Grace Briggs, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Psalms, I* (ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1906), 169.

their “eyes were opened” (3:7). So Psalm 119:18 says, “Open my eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of your law.”

The *fifth* thing the law of God is said to do is “endure forever.” There is a contrast here with the fruit of the tree of knowledge. The result of eating it (i.e. not obeying God) is that they are deprived of the access to the tree of life whereby they would eat and live forever (Gen 3:22-24). This is what the “fear” of the LORD is said to do. This is the only word of the six that is not obviously related to the law. But listen to the proverbs that teach us that the fear of the Lord is a departing from evil (Prov 15:6) and a hating of it (Prov 7:13). It is also a bringer of life (Ps 34:12-14; “I will teach you the fear of the LORD. Who is there who desires life and covets many days?”). So here the Law is contrasted with the tree of knowledge as a means to acquiring knowledge itself.¹⁴

The point of all this, then, is that Eve should have delighted in the law of God and understood that God gave her the law because it was what was best for her, what was good for her, what she needed most, what would give her pleasure and joy and happiness above all else. But she didn't see it that way at all. Her addition to the law of God began her downfall. She began to quickly see his law as the very opposite of that. How many of us today follow in our

¹⁴ The rest of the Psalm continues thinking about the fall and comparing the love of the law to it. So see the rest of Clines' article.

mother's footsteps? Indeed, we all do, whenever we choose sin over obedience.

The Presentation: Deceiving and Accusing

Let's return to Genesis. After adding to the command, yet concluding properly that we will surely die (**Gen 3:3; 2:17**), the Nachash now makes a statement. “**You will not surely die**” (4). Then he gives his argument, “**For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil**” (5).

The statement is a disagreement with what God had said. He disputes the claim that God made to Adam that on the day you eat of it, you will surely die. In effect, he **calls God a liar**. This is a chief reason why the Nachash ends up being called the devil, for “devil” means to **slander**, and that is what he is doing here. Calvin says, “**He dares to exalt himself petulantly and with proud confidence against God.**” He does it here because, he adds, “**He is never wont to engage in open war until we voluntarily expose ourselves to him, naked and unarmed.**”¹⁵ Whether from her own internal questioning of the word, or from her superior belief that she can add to the word of God and help him out, Eve is now ready easy prey for the hunter. Eve ends up agreeing with the Nachash, but not before he gives his argument.

¹⁵ John Calvin and John King, *Commentary on the First Book of Moses Called Genesis*, vol. 1 (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 149.

What is striking about vs. 5 in light of vs. 4 is that Satan uses truth to uphold his lie. “He knows that when you eat of it, your eyes will be opened.” Is this not exactly what the text says did happen? “The eyes of both of them were opened” (Gen 3:7). Of course, he did not tell her what all this would mean, but he was telling her the truth. This is the way of it then. The bald-faced lies of the devil are often backed up by truthful arguments. It is the premise, not the line of reasoning, that is wrong.

I believe his argument is actually *strengthened* by what he says next, but it takes some proper understanding to get at it. Again, the ESV reads, “... you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” As I have already said, Adam and Eve already knew good and evil, in that they knew what was right and what was wrong. The temptation here is not for bare knowledge. Nor, in fact, is the temptation to be “like God” as if our parents believed that they could become identical to Yahweh in this or anything else.

This may be new to you, but it will make sense once you remember, again, *where this whole thing is taking place*. The setting never ceases to be important in this story. Most older translations, including the LXX, Vulgate, KJV, and Geneva Bibles say “you will be like gods ...” If you remember, “*elohim*” can be translated as “God” or “gods.” The best way to tell is the verbal form associated with it.

In **Genesis 3:5**, *elohim* appears twice. Each time, it is attached to the verb “to know.” In the first instance, “know” is singular. Thus, *elohim* is singular: God. “God knows that when you eat it...” In the second instance, “know” is plural. Thus, *elohim* should be plural: gods. “... like gods, knowing...”¹⁶ As the old Rabbis said, “The first *’elohim* is sacred, the second non-sacred” (Soferim 4:5.4). This is expressed in the targums by the translations, “You will be like angels before the Lord” (Neofiti); “You will be like angels perceptive (Pseudo-Jonathan); and “You will be like angels who are wise” (Onkelos).

So let’s be clear about what the actual temptation is here. It is not that they are being tempted to be like Yahweh, their creator, but that they are being tempted with being like the Nachash. This is the subtlety, but there is also guile. This becomes clear when you understand what the knowledge of good and evil entails. As we said when we looked at the actual command back in chapter 2, to “know good and evil” is to **make a judgment about it**. It is to act like judges. It is to carry out judgments like kings do. This is the meaning of the phrase.

¹⁶ Sarna is right when he says, “Any possible ambiguity inherent in the use of the same word for ‘God’ and for “divine beings” is here removed by the plural form of the verb ‘know’ (*yode’ei*) and by verse 22 (‘one of us’).” Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis*, The JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 25.

Remember, we are on the cosmic mountain, the place where judicial decisions are carried out every day by the heavenly beings in the court of God. This is made clear in **vs. 22** when it says “**they have become like one of us, knowing good and evil.**” The “us” refers to the heavenly beings of the divine council, even as it did back in **Gen 1:26** when God spoke to them about his decision to make man in the first place.

The **guile** here is that Eve should have known that she already had the right to make these kinds of decisions, as God’s vice-regent, *in accordance with his law and decree*, for that is the very reason they had been given this place on the mountain. This is why they had been put here. This is the very thing that makes the serpent so angry—that Adam would be given a position in the divine council on the Holy Mountain of God. So, in a sense, he is actually tempting her with what she already had. Only, he is tricking her to make her judicial pronouncement, her decision, based upon a different standard—her own. This takes us to the age old problem of autonomy and freedom.

Freedom seems to be the most important virtue in American society, or, at least the appearance and self-belief of freedom; and **freewill** (the right to choose anything indifferently) seems to be the counterpart in the American church. Our country was founded on the idea that all men are

created free. Of course, this was only the appearance of freedom, as an entire race of men were not free at all. But that is the self-deception that runs so deep in our American veins. Once freedom from slave-masters is gained, slavery to institutions or technology or the government or kids or money or whatever takes its place.

A while ago, **Sarah Pain** made the statement that there are really just different kinds of slavery. We have traded one form of slavery in our country for another. This did not sit well with some, including **Martin Bashir** of MSNBC who gave a vicious verbal attack on her, as he publically wished that someone would defecate and urinate in her mouth like slaves in Jamaica had done to them by their slave masters, just so she could see how offensive her comparison was. I would simply say that he proved her point inadvertently, as he appears to be a slave to political correctness and political allegiances that made him want to make such an outrageous statement in the first place, and which close his ears to even trying to understand the point she was making. We can't get away from ourselves. We are all slaves to sin.

Now, for the Christian, Christ has set us free from this slavery, but this freedom means slavery to a new master: to Christ himself. But our flesh does not want to be a slave even to him, and so we, too, often go back and serve sin like slaves. Sin is the carrying out the essence of the desire to be free from

all authority, all constraints, to live life as you want, on your terms, making your own judgments and pronouncements on every matter of morality, of right and wrong. This is our nation and the church today. It is what Satan got our mother to think was good.

Vs. 6 finishes out passage today. It explains to us that she **saw the forbidden fruit**. Rather than the Law of God being good for food, delighting and rejoicing her soul, making her wise, and giving her life, she saw that **disobeying** God was this for her. The temptation worked. “**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 make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate.**” This was her first official judgment as queen of the earth. “I will do what God says not to do.” Perhaps we should look at the last part of **vs. 6** as her second judgment. “**She also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.**” She said to him, “This is my judgment. This is good. God is wrong. The serpent’s words were not poison or venom, but wisdom itself. She acted like a nymph of wisdom and ate. Then she said, ‘Here, take this.’”

We need to speak a word here about **Adam**, though we will talk more about this later in the chapter. Adam was there the whole time. She didn’t have to run out and find him. She didn’t have to call him on the telephone. He didn’t have to

hop on a plane. She took and gave some to her husband who was with her.

What is Adam doing? Nothing. **He is not doing his job.** He was put here to serve and to guard the temple. He is neither serving God nor guarding anything, as was his duty. He is just standing by passively watching his wife get deceived. For this, the text says that of the two, he is the most culpable. For she was deceived, but he was not. He was just a wimp. He just refused to take the spiritual lead in the family, the priestly lead in the house of God, the kingly lead in temple court, the prophetic role of speaking the truth to the Nachash. He decided to set his crown in the mud, while he watched as his glorious queen fall before his eyes. And he fell with her, plunging the whole world into sin and darkness.

Christ and Temptation

Up to this point, the positive we can get out of this story comes from the Psalm. We ought to love God's law as it is, as God has given it. We ought to delight in it, look upon it, treasure it, obey it, love it, store it up in our hearts, memorize it, think upon it, understand why God gives it, recognize the benefits it has when we keep it, not mock it, not add to it, not hate it, not despise it. But we don't.

This is why our hope cannot be found even in Psalm 19 in as much as we have looked at it this morning. Rather, our

hope is to be found in a temptation that came many centuries after David wrote that Psalm, in a wilderness inhabited by Satan, in the God-man who was sent out to it to be tempted in all ways, yet was without sin.

Craig Blomberg suggests, “There are fascinating parallels between the three temptations of Christ, the three temptations in the Garden of Eden, and the three kids of temptation 1 John 2:16 lists to summarize ‘everything in the world.’”¹⁷ Remember, John speaks of the “lust of the flesh” the “lust of the eyes” and the “pride of life.” Eve sees that the tree is good for food. The Devil tells Jesus to turn the stones into bread: food. Eve sees that the fruit is pleasing to the eye. The Devil says to Jesus, “See all the kingdoms of the world.” A temptation of the eye. Eve sees that the fruit is desirable for gaining wisdom, and that in gaining wisdom, she would not die. The devil takes Jesus to the top of the temple and tells him to throw himself down where the angels of God would save his life spectacularly.

The point is, Jesus is tempted with the same things that Eve was tempted with, with the same things that we are tempted with. As Hebrews says, “tempted in every way, just as we are – yet without sin” (Heb 4:15). This is where we find hope in our story today, not in the woman, not in our

¹⁷ Craig Blomberg, *Jesus and the Gospels* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 1997), 223-24

freewill, not in our own power to judge good and evil properly, not in the man, but in Christ. Not in the first Adam, but in the Second, in the one who alone has withstood the onslaught of the Devil and come out unscathed.

Well, actually, **he didn't come out unscathed**. In fact, his wounds were so bad that he died. But he did not die for his transgressions, but for ours. He was put to death for our sins, our breaking of the law, Eve's breaking of the law, Adam's breaking of the law. He suffered the punishment was the due for breaking the law. Indeed, as the law said, "you will die." And die he did, a horrible, brutal, merciless slaughter on a cross as a lamb that was sacrificed so that we might be saved.

In the midst of temptation, do not look to your own power, but look to Christ. As you suffer at the hands of a Devil that seeks to destroy you, look to the one who has overcome him. As you are led into unwilling sin, sin you were not even looking to commit, and are taken away and deceived, look to Christ. As you stand there watching sin go by and the seeping you up in it, turn to Christ in repentance and look to him alone for forgiveness. Learn to love the same law that he loved, see in it the goodness God has given to it. But do not put your trust in this law and your ability to keep it. Put your trust in this law and Christ's ability to keep it for you and in his promise that any who trust in his obedience will have his righteousness credited to them and indeed given

to them as a gift of free grace, as you are clothed in the white robes of the Son of God.

It must have been a fearful thing to fall into such sin. In fact, one of the targums says, “And the woman saw Sammael the angel of death and she was afraid.” But then it says she looked and ate anyway. So fear, but fear rightly. Fear the law, and love it and keep it. Fear of the LORD, for this is the beginning of wisdom and knowledge. As Luther said, believe the Word of God rather than the father of lies, thus despising and denying the Christ who died for you.¹⁸ Then it will be well with your soul, and you will truly live forever.

¹⁸ Martin Luther, *Luther's Works, Vol. 1: Lectures on Genesis: Chapters 1-5*, ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann, vol. 1 (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1999), 156.