

In the first week in the book of Genesis we saw that God created everything from nothing by His powerful word. He made everything in our universe in perfection and order. God made people in his own image.

We were given a glimpse of the amazing pattern of blessing that God gave where he set the seventh day as a day of rest as a reminder that we are not God, that our power is not unlimited, that we are not self-sufficient, that we must take rest we must rely on God's goodness to sustain us.

last week we zoomed in on the activity of God in creation. We thought about how the prohibition not to eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil was a platform for trusting God's Word. And the beautiful one-ness between the first man and woman who lived in a one flesh relationship

Verse 25 of chapter 2 was the culmination of creation 'the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.' it's a beautiful picture of innocence of perfect relationship between a man and a woman just as God intended it to be in his good and perfect created order.

But that perfection was not to last. In verse 1 of chapter 3 there's a new character on the scene it says 'Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made.'

We know from Revelation chapter 12 verse 9 that this serpent is the great enemy of God. Satan. He was cast down to earth from heaven for leading a rebellion against the Lord and now he comes to recruit Adam and Eve, the first people, to join in that rebellion.

As we consider that act of rebellion today we're going to focus on two key areas; firstly we'll consider the tactics employed by the enemy of God to tempt God's people to turn their backs on him and secondly we'll think about our great hope in the Lord Jesus who overcame temptation and lived a life of perfect obedience and the help that gives us as his people today.

Before we dive in why don't we pray?

Father God we thank you that we're able to open your word today.

help us as we examine the truths you've laid before us so that we might become more like the Lord Jesus.

Help us to understand the way the devil tempts us to rebel against you and give us the strength to look to the Lord Jesus and to follow his example we pray in His name. Amen.

Well we've already seen that the serpent enters into the Garden of Eden and we know his intention; we're told in One Peter 5 that he comes like a lion looking to devour. His goal is to kill, and ultimately he wishes to separate people from their God. In order to fulfil that aim he comes to the woman, Eve and he poses a question "did God actually say that you shall not eat of any tree in the garden?"

Look at the first tactic of the enemy he questions the word of God. In chapter 2 verses 16 and 17 God spoke to Adam and he said "you may surely eat any tree in the garden but of the tree of knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat for in that day you will surely die."

God's word to Adam was absolutely crystal clear but now the devil comes and he makes God's word, his plain and straightforward command, a matter for debate. He doesn't openly deny the word of God, not at first anyway, he opens up a debate about its meaning.

Eve replies in verse 2 "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.'" but she doesn't reply accurately. She is 90% of the way there, but she adds to the Word of God. In chapter 2 verses 16 and 17 there is no mention of touching the fruit. whether Adam has passed on the injunction inaccurately or not we don't know, but Eve doesn't know the Word of God well enough to be able to rebuff satan when he comes and challenges God.

In her reply, her modification of God's Word, she also softens the likelihood of the penalty that God has given. God was explicit in His words "if you eat this fruit you will **surely** die." Eve's rendering is noticeably different. She says "lest you die." it's like saying we might die, or perhaps we'll die.

Her recall is without the certainty which came from the Word of God, where the penalty of death was explicitly guaranteed, if Adam and Eve rebelled.

The devil has caused Eve to question the plain meaning of the word of God and he's exposed her lack of understanding that what God says is always true.

Our enemy uses the same tactic today. He comes and he questions us about the

Word of God. He invites us to rebel when he asks questions like, "did God really say that what you do in the privacy of your own bedroom matters?" "did God really say that you should give away the hard-earned money that you've worked for?" "did God really say that all people are made in his image?" "did God really say that even your terrible sin could be forgiven?"

In a myriad of ways God's enemy tries to cause us to doubt the Word of God and its plain meaning.

But he doesn't stop there. In verses 4 and 5 we see that he continues with his attack on the Word of God. Now he moves on from questioning the Word of God and its plain meaning, to distorting it with flat out lies. Look at verse 4, "but the serpent said to the woman you will not surely die, 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 distorts the Word of God. In the devil's smooth words he tries to deny that there will be any judgment for wrongdoing. Eve has to decide who she will trust. Will she trust God's Word, or will she trust satan's word?

Sadly the denial of the Word of God is a default position in the world we live in today. Not just the kind of questioning that we considered earlier, but a refusal to accept that God will judge the world.

It seems to be an odd juxtaposition that we live in a world which desperately wants justice, but without the judge. We want criminals to be judged and we want justice to reign but we don't want to be culpable or responsible for our own wrongdoing.

We aren't keen on the idea of being held to account for our own sin. Even some churches today deny the doctrine of God's judgment to keep favour with the world. Some churches deny that sin needs to be repented of, to be turned away from.

Sadly in these places the gospel has been watered down and grace has been cheapened.

The idea that God is angry at sin and sinners for their deliberate rebellion is well and truly out of fashion, and the church in some places tries to affirm people

as they are without any concept of the transforming work of the Holy Spirit changing us from the inside to make us more like the Lord Jesus.

If you're watching at home and you're not yet a follower of Jesus, dear friend don't hear me saying that you're not welcome in the church. You are absolutely welcome to journey with us, to explore the gospel, to ask questions about God and the Lord Jesus and you are welcome in all of your messiness because you're messy just like us. We don't have to be perfect, we don't have to be cleaned up people to be followers of Jesus. but we do need to accept that if we're going to be one of his people then we have to hold fast to his word where he tells us that the wages of sin - what we deserve for our rebellion against God - is death. (Romans chapter 6 verse 23).

We acknowledge that God will judge and we throw ourselves on His mercy knowing that He is faithful and just and will forgive us when we ask Him to. We cannot dear friends, we must not, fall into the trap set by the devil to deny God's Word which speaks of judgment.

As satan denies the certainty of God's judgment, he also holds out something very attractive to Eve. He brings an enticement. He offers Eve the opportunity to dethrone God and to crown herself in his place. He attempts to reverse the created order; instead of being creatures living in harmony with their creator Eve can be the one who calls the shots.

She can be self-sufficient. She can be all-knowing - knowing the difference between good and evil. She'll be able to make her own rules, no submission required, if she will just reach out.

The ability to be the master of her own destiny and to define for herself what is good and what isn't, the power to make the rules, almost akin to divinity is within Eve's grasp if she will just take the fruit and eat.

It's an intoxicating offer and it isn't just an offer that's an empty lie. It is full of venom and poison which will lead to death. Eve is about to reach out and take charge, to grab the crown off God and to rule.

The relationship with her creator, the unashamed nakedness relationship with Ada, the life of purposeful work partnered with God, all hangs in the balance.

Do you see how satan calls into question God's goodness by telling Eve that God is withholding something from her? He said "God knows that when you..."

We face the same temptation don't we? The enemy's tactics haven't changed. He will come and he will show us something something we desire, and he will cast doubt that God wants our very best.

Why struggle financially? Take a cut like everyone else. Why feel lonely? Sleep with them. Why feel awkward? Have another drink.

He will work to convince us that God's way isn't a way characterised by love and goodness and mercy, but that it is restrictive and cruel and that somehow we'll be missing out if we follow God's way instead of trusting the word of God.

In verse 6 Adam and Eve trust the desires of their own hearts. The fruit looks good and so Eve reaches out and takes the fruit and gulps it down, and Adam who is right there with her does the same.

Having received the warning in chapter 2 verses 16 and 17, Adam does nothing to warn, or correct, or rebuke his wife. He's seen all of this unfold and he shares in her rebellion. In this one small action their doubt that God's word is true and, their desire to rule over all the universe themselves, changes everything forever.

Next week we'll see the consequence of death entering into the world. Death both mortal as their bodies start to decay, and eternal as they are separated from their God after eating that fruit.

We see in verse 7 that their eyes are opened. The horror of that moment is unimaginable. For the first time they know shame and fear and nakedness and misery. Their condition now sits in such stark contrast with their state of nakedness at the start of the chapter where they felt no shame together.

Rejecting the Word of God, the one who created everything from nothing and has immeasurably blessed humankind because of his great love, rejecting his Word they climb a rickety dais and sit on a throne of lies wearing crowns that are as feeble and flimsy as the clothes that they make for themselves from leaves.

God's created order, the perfection he has completed, would never be the same again.

How do we respond to this rebellion against God? As Christians we know the tactics of the devil. We know that he has been defeated on the cross by the Lord Jesus. We can take courage when we are tempted to question the plain meaning of the Word of God then we must hold fast to it.

When we are tempted to doubt that God's way is best for us whether it's to do with money or family or sexual relationships or business transactions or school results or any other aspect of our lives, in those areas we will at times be presented with alternative ways to get what we think is better than what God says is good.

And when that happens dear brother or sister, take courage from the temptation of Jesus. When he was tempted by the devil his response time and time again was to say, "it is written." he comes back to the scriptures. He absolutely 100% knew and trusted that the Word of God is good.

Or consider his response to Peter after Peter tries to convince Jesus that he couldn't possibly suffer and die for the sin of the world. See Peter can't handle the reality that what God has set ahead of Jesus is for his good. Jesus rebukes

Peter sharply and He says, "get behind me satan! you are a stumbling block to me you do not have in mind the concerns of God but merely human concerns."

Jesus is able to shift the focus and to consider God's good purpose as He totally and 100% trusts in God.

I'm realistic. I know myself. I will fail. I will give in to temptation. I will doubt and question the word of God. I will at times put the crown on my own head.

But what a hope we have in Jesus, that our failure, that our questioning of the Word of God isn't the end. We can repent, we can come to God and ask forgiveness and we can be restored. We can be strengthened as we look at His example and allow the Holy Spirit to bring it to mind as we hold fast to the sure Word of God.

When we are tempted to crown ourselves, to rebel and to climb onto a throne which isn't ours to sit on, then dear brother or sister we must humble ourselves.

look to Philippians chapter 2 verses 6 to 11. Look there to the example of the Lord Jesus who even though He was God, took on the lowly position of a slave. He died to self. He was obedient to his Father, even to death on a cross. When he had the opportunity to grasp at what the devil offered Him in that temptation, He denied that desire and He sought God's way instead.

As we live this life, as we come up against the temptations and the wiles of the devil, having a healthy view and a good understanding of Genesis 1 to 3 will

help us greatly, as we are reminded that we are loved and blessed by God, that we are made in His image and that what He defines as good is truly good for His people.

Why don't we pray and ask God to help us to hold fast to these truths?

Let us pray: