

Message no: 2TS03a
Series: Two Important Temptation Scenes
Section: Temptations of the Evil One
Sub-section: Major Areas That Can Go Wrong (3)
Date preached: 5 Jun 83
Date edited: 4 April 02

REBELLION AND NEGATIVE INFLUENCE

Introduction

In the first two messages on the two important temptation scenes recorded for us in the Scriptures, one in Genesis 3 and the other in Matthew 4, we have considered the following points:

1. Casting doubts and confusion on the word of God
2. Contradicting the word of God
3. Casting doubts on the goodness of God
4. Physical, bodily needs, appetites, urges
5. Temptation through what we see
6. Aspirations and attainments not intended by God
7. Knowledge and wisdom contrary to what God said

In this message, we will concentrate on Genesis 3:6, a verse from which we can derive many helpful truths and principles. There are three important issues that we will dwell upon:

1. Rebellion
2. Negative influence
3. The issue of choice

This message will be divided into two parts: 2TS03a and 2TS03b. I will cover the first two issues in the first part (2TS03a); the third issue will be covered in the second part (2TS03b).

1. Rebellion

God has created man to know and submit to Him, to walk according to His perfect will and work out His purposes in fellowship with Him, according to His guidance and enabling. A primary objective of Satan in his temptation of Adam and Eve was to cause them to disobey and rebel against God and thus frustrate God's intentions for man. The objective of the evil one is not merely to cause Adam and Eve to falter on that specific occasion but to bring about a fundamental change in their way of life and those of their descendants. Satan himself has been in rebellion against God and his ultimate objective is that mankind joins his camp, be subjected to him, and worship him instead of God.

Temptation of Eve: Disobedience, Rebellious Spirit

Genesis 3:6

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 desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.

In Genesis 3:6, Eve's action was deliberate and in disobedience to God's instruction that forbade Adam and Eve from partaking of the fruit of this tree. We can describe Eve's action as sin or rebellion against God. Since the Fall of Adam and Eve, this has been a major problem area of mankind: a tendency to disobey God and having a rebellious spirit.

In Ephesians 2:2, the apostle Paul describes mankind as "sons of disobedience" who walk "according to the prince of the power of the air", that is, living according to the influence of the evil one.

Ephesians 2:1-3

- 1 And you were dead in your trespasses and sins,
- 2 in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.
- 3 Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.

Rebellion against God and disobedience to Him is the root of man's problems. It means turning away from the source of goodness, truth, righteousness, light and life, resulting in sin and darkness. This would cause us to come under the influence of the evil one and be in bondage to him.

King Saul's Disobedience

King Saul fell from favour with God because of disobedience to God. Let us look at what Samuel has to say on this subject of disobedience to God and rebellion.

1 Samuel 15:22,23

- 22 Samuel said,
"Has the Lord as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices
As in obeying the voice of the Lord?
Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice,
And to heed than the fat of rams.
- 23 "For rebellion is as the sin of divination,
And insubordination is as iniquity and idolatry.

Because you have rejected the word of the Lord,
He has also rejected you from being king.”

In the above verses, Samuel sums it up very beautifully for us: to obey is better than sacrifice (v. 22). In the Old Testament context, burnt offerings and sacrifices offered up to God were an important part of the lives of the Israelites. However, a heart of submission and obedience to God is far more important than the mere outward act of sacrifices and burnt offerings. In fact, the “sacrifices and burnt offerings” offered will not be acceptable to God if the former is absent. Whatever man may seek to do and offer up to God will not be acceptable to Him if there isn’t a heart of submission to Him.

The Lord seeks and desires obedience from us. Thus, when we disobey, we rebel against God. Verse 23 tells us that rebellion is as the sin of divination and idolatry. It brings home to us how seriously God views the matter. Because Saul disobeyed the Lord, God rejected him from being king.

Overcoming the Tendency to Walk Contrary to God's Instructions

Man has a tendency to walk in his own ways rather than in obedience to God. There are many whose hearts are rebellious and are bent on indulging the desires of the flesh. However, even for those who want to walk with God, they may still succumb to temptations and walk contrary to God's instructions.

The Scriptures teaches that if we desire to walk in the ways of God, we cannot do so in our own strength. To overcome the tendency to indulge in the desires of the flesh, especially in the context of the temptations of the evil one and the attractions of the world, we must look to God to help us. We must learn to walk by the Spirit so that we will not carry out the desires of the flesh (Gal. 5:16). We must be prayerful at all times, constantly asking the Lord to guide and strengthen us to walk in His ways.

We have been created in the image of God so that we can know Him and walk in fellowship with Him. We have not been created such that we are able to live a life of righteousness on our own. To walk in God's ways, we must walk with God and be guided and empowered by His Spirit. An important strategy of the evil one, which can be seen in the temptation scene in the Garden of Eden, is to alienate us from God. When the evil one succeeds in drawing man away from God, man will then move in the direction of sin and bondage to the powers of darkness. This strategy of the evil one to draw us away from God and alienate us from God will be considered in greater detail in the subsequent messages 2TS07 and 2TS08.

The Rebellious Spirit Reflected in Disobedience to Authority

The rebellious spirit in man is reflected in disobedience to authority in general. We see many instances of rebellion and unwillingness to submit to the authority of the state and the laws of the country. In the area of personal relationships, whether it is the relationship between parent and child or husband and wife, many have difficulty maintaining a healthy submissive spirit according to the will of God as revealed in the Scriptures.

Although we can observe many outward expressions of this spirit of rebellion in the world, the situation would have been worse if this rebellious spirit within man were not restrained by the fear of punishment, fear of the loss of reputation and other adverse consequences.

Many may outwardly appear to be law abiding and submissive to those in authority, not because they recognise that it is the right thing to do, but because they know that if they were to rebel or contravene laws and regulations or refuse to submit to their superiors, there would be penalties and unpleasant consequences involved. Thus breaking the laws of the land may mean a fine or going to jail or both. Defying one's superiors may mean jeopardising one's career prospects and promotion or even losing one's job.

Many are very concerned about what others would think of them and are fearful that their reputation may be adversely affected or others would laugh at or ostracise them if their wrongdoings become known. In contexts where people are confident they can get away with it or nobody would know, manifestations of the rebellious spirit are seen in various deeds of darkness. When law and order breaks down, many crimes including looting and robbing may suddenly erupt.

Submission to God and Proper Authority

The Scriptures emphasises the importance of having a submissive spirit. Submission and obedience to God is primary and is part of our expression of love for God. As the Lord Jesus tells us, "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments" (John 14:15).

God is a God of order and He has instituted various areas of order. We find constant references being made in the Scriptures of the need to submit to authority in society, to proper order in relationships and to leadership that the Lord has instituted for man to live under.

In the epistles of the apostle Paul, we often find that a major section is devoted to this area of submission. For example, in the book of Ephesians, we find that Paul, after sharing very deep spiritual truths in chapters 1-4, continues with practical areas of outworking. We find in chapter 5 that a major section is dedicated to proper relationships and submission. From 5:21 to 6:5, he tells us that we need to be

subject to one another, that wives are to be subject to their husbands, children need to obey their parents, and slaves to be obedient to their masters.

In Colossians 3:18-22, Paul gives the same exhortation, after sharing deep spiritual truths and principles in the earlier chapters. He talks about how wives ought to be subjected to their husbands, children to be obedient to their parents, and slaves to be submissive and obedient toward their masters. In Romans 13, Paul emphasises the need to submit to the governing authorities.

Besides the apostle Paul, the apostle Peter also talks about the need to submit to those in authority (e.g. 1 Pet. 2:13, 14, 18).

Hebrews 13:17 records the need to submit to spiritual leadership.

Hebrews 13:17

Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.

Submission to these various authorities is not in the absolute sense but only where we recognise that it is in line with our submission to God. Ultimate submission is to the Lord. In fact, we submit to various authorities as part of our expression of submission to God.

A submissive spirit towards the Lord has a moral element in it. It does not mean that we simply obey whatever people tell us. That is not what the Bible encourages us to do.

James 4:7

Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

In James 4:7, we are asked to submit to the morally perfect God and to resist and reject the devil because he is of darkness and is evil. In the Garden of Eden, Eve failed to resist the temptation from the evil one and to submit to the Lord God Almighty.

Having a submissive spirit means submitting to the truth and to God. As part of the expression of our submission to God, we also submit to people whenever it is in line with God's intentions and desires. Therefore, we will not simply submit to whatever people tell us. If what they tell us to do is evil, our stand should not be submission but rejection. We are to resist whatever is evil regardless of the source. Proper submission has a quality and meaning behind it. We submit to God because we love the truth and desire to walk in it.

Temptation of the Lord Jesus: True Submission

Let us look at the Lord Jesus Christ, the perfect example for us in the area of submission. We find that in the three temptations that the Lord Jesus encountered, He submitted to God the Father and He overcame. In the first temptation, Satan tempted Him to change stones into bread. But the Lord Jesus Christ resisted and said to the evil one, "Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God." It is submission to the will of God – every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.

On the second occasion, when Satan tempted Him to throw Himself down, His answer was, "On the other hand, it is written, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'" The Lord Jesus knew that to throw Himself down was not what God wanted Him to do and so He rejected Satan's temptation. The Lord Jesus shows us that we must not be presumptuous and do whatever people may expect of us even though it may appear to be a very heroic act or a glorious thing to do. He knew that the evil one was distorting the true intent of the words of the Scriptures that he had quoted. In submission to God the Father, the Lord Jesus Christ rejected this temptation.

In the third temptation, the evil one offered the Lord Jesus the world and all its glory. But He rejected it and told the evil one, "Go, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only.'" These words of our Lord Jesus are very helpful and appropriate for us to consider in relation to the subject of submission.

Submission has to do with the worship of God and our desire to serve Him. If we maintain the spirit of true worship of God, it would include the spirit of submission to Him. To serve God only, means that ultimate service, loyalty and obedience is to the Lord. We can see this throughout the life of the Lord Jesus. He constantly manifested an attitude of submission, always doing what was pleasing to God the Father. Take for example Philippians 2:5-8.

Philippians 2:5-8

5 Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus,
6 who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,
7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.
8 Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

The Lord Jesus humbled Himself by being obedient. He submitted to God the Father even to the point of the painful and agonizing death on the cross. He had left His glory in heaven to come down to earth as part of the submissive spirit that He had. The Lord's actions had meaning and quality. There is an ultimate purpose behind it. This kind of submissive attitude towards God the Father will always have a

meaningful, beautiful and good result. It will lead to bearing fruit in our own lives and also contribution to the kingdom of God.

People in the world often have wrong ideas of submission. They tend to sneer and look upon submission as something humiliating. People with a submissive attitude are often misunderstood as people who are weak and unable to stand up for their rights. In reality, it requires moral and spiritual strength to submit properly and consistently in the way God desires of us. The Scriptures repeatedly highlights to us the importance of a healthy submissive spirit if we desire to walk well with the Lord and bear fruit in every good work.

2. Negative Influence

Temptation of Adam and Eve: The Negative Influence of Eve

In Genesis 3:6, Eve became a negative influence. She not only took the fruit from the tree of good and evil and ate but also gave it to her husband to eat. Not only did Eve disobey and sin against the Lord, but Adam also faltered similarly.

There is a principle here that is helpful for us to bear in mind: we need to be aware of the danger of yielding to negative influences, thereby disobeying God. This can come in many different forms and ways. Very often it is the evil one seeking to draw us to sin against the Lord through situations and people.

This problem of coming under bad influence is common in the world. Younger people are especially vulnerable to such influences because of peer pressure, picking up bad habits. It is not uncommon for people to be influenced and drawn into very harmful activities including criminal activities, taking drugs and a promiscuous lifestyle. It is easy to be led astray when mixing with bad company. 1 Corinthians 15:33 tells us "bad company corrupts good morals".

Why Did Adam Disobey God?

Let us now look more closely at the lessons we can learn from the fall of Adam.

1 Timothy 2:14

And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.

1 Timothy 2:14 makes clear to us that it was not because of deception that Adam fell into sin, unlike Eve who was deceived. The reasons for Adam's disobedience are not clearly indicated in Genesis. We are simply told that Eve ate the fruit and gave also to her husband and he ate. However, it is not difficult to understand the possible reasons although we cannot be conclusive.

If we look at the issue casually or carelessly, we may say that Adam sinned because "he happened to be around and he took and ate what Eve offered. He was not thinking about what he was doing. Perhaps he was half asleep!"

As this is a very major issue with far reaching implications for the whole course of human history, it is highly unlikely that Adam did not know what he was doing and that he ate the fruit unthinkingly.

I see two likely reasons why Adam sinned. One likely reason could be his feelings for Eve because she was his helpmate and it is natural that he had feelings for her. Because of his feelings for Eve and his desire to please her, he took the fruit without resistance when Eve gave it to him. Another possible explanation is that he yielded to Eve's persuasion. Perhaps after eating the fruit, Eve persuaded Adam to do likewise and because of his feelings for her, he succumbed to her persuasion.

Whether or not Adam's eating of the fruit was due to either possibility, the above scenarios do often occur in many of life's situations. Because of our feelings for someone or due to persuasion, we do things that are improper. We may then try to justify ourselves by saying that "I did not consider very carefully," but this would not free us from blame.

Taking a Stand on the Truths We Know

We need to be mindful of the requirements of true discipleship: supreme love for and obedience to God. In Genesis 3:12, Adam tried to excuse his wrongdoing when God questioned him. He said, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate." Adam's answer was that he had listened to his wife. But did God accept this excuse? No, instead we see God pronouncing judgment on him in verses 17 to 19.

Just as Adam could not excuse himself on the ground that he had listened to his wife, neither can we excuse ourselves that we have been influenced or persuaded by others. Here, the important principle to be mindful of is that we need to take a stand on the truths that we know. Adam knew the truth. He knew what he ought to do and what he ought not to do. Adam knew that he had transgressed God's expressed instruction and he could not excuse himself for listening to his wife although she was someone dear to him and it was not wrong for him to have affection for her. He had to take a stand on the truth that he knew and understood.

In this instance, we also see that Adam failed in his responsibility to exercise leadership. God had created Adam first and Eve was created to be a helpmate for him. Adam was to exercise leadership but he failed to do so. Instead he listened to his wife in an area that he knew to be wrong.

Effects of Our Sins on Others

As we look at the words "Eve gave" in Genesis 3:6, we should remind ourselves to be careful in regard to what we "give" and how we affect the lives of others. When Eve sinned against the Lord, not only did she bring adverse consequences to herself but she also failed to fulfill God's intention for her as a helpmate to Adam. Instead of helping Adam fulfill God's intentions for their lives, Eve contributed to his fall and ruin.

In life, those we are close to, those whom we love or with whom we have a deep bond, can strongly influence us. Such people, whether they are spouses or loved ones, can strongly influence our lives for good or ill. Likewise, we can also influence their lives for good or evil.

The sin of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, generally referred to as "the Fall", has serious negative consequences on all mankind. It has resulted in a fallen world in which it is very easy to sin. The whole world lies in the power of the evil one (1 John 5:19); Satan is actively at work, taking advantage of the weakness of the flesh and through the attractions in the fallen world, easily tempts us to indulge in the desires of the flesh (Eph. 2:1-3).

The lesson for us to take note is that we need to be mindful that sinful living can have a strong negative effect not only on our own lives, but also on those around us.

Nature and Quality of Our Influence

We are called to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world (Matt. 5:13, 14), exercising positive influence by our lives on others. But what is the nature and quality of our influence? By "nature of the influence", I mean whether the influence is for good or ill; and by "quality of our influence", I mean the strength of our influence. The nature and quality of our influence depend not only on our intentions but also on the quality of our lives.

It is true that the kind of influence we exert depends to some degree on our intentions, that is, whether our intentions are good or evil, but beyond intentions, the quality of our lives is also important. Often we may want to exercise good influence on people and our intentions are noble, but because of the poor quality of our lives, the outcome intended could not be achieved. Therefore, there needs to be sufficient quality in our spiritual life and in our life in general because we exercise positive influence on others not just through the words we speak, but also through the life and power that come forth.

Some parents may at times lament that they do not understand why their children are not growing up well when they have tried so hard to instil good values and

attitudes. But when we look at the lives of the parents, we see that their personal values and attitudes are not good and they do not set good examples. Although these parents' intentions may be good, they are not able to influence their children positively because of the poor quality of their own lives.

In a general sense, we are influencing others by our lives all the time and God will hold us accountable for the influence of our lives on others. Likewise, we are subject to various kinds of influences all the time.

However, though the influence that we exert on another person may pull him in a particular direction, it may not necessarily result in him moving in that direction. Each one of us can still choose how we want to respond to the influences that come upon us. For example, a person may be exerting a bad influence on those around him but it doesn't mean that the others will necessarily become bad. However, the stronger the influence, the stronger will be the pull in that direction and if it is negative, it would be more difficult to resist it.

The Scriptures does record instances of godly parents with ungodly children. One example that comes to mind is the prophet Samuel's children. Samuel had good attitudes and he lived a godly life, but his children's lives were quite terrible.

Similarly, we see this happened in the life of another outstanding character in the Scriptures - David, the man after God's own heart. Although he had his weaknesses, he was basically a godly man. Generally his life and attitudes were much appreciated by the Lord. In the Old Testament, David was often lifted up as a standard, with other kings being compared with him and whether they were walking in the ways of God like David did. Nevertheless, he did have children who lived quite terribly and with poor quality lives.

Therefore it does not mean that our influence on another is absolute because each person will still have to exercise his responsibility and live accordingly. In the same way we cannot simply blame others for our own failures. Yes, the Lord does bear in mind what kind of influences we come under. The fact that we are under good influence and yet live lives of poor quality will be a factor against us. The fact that we fail in the context of adverse circumstances and unhealthy influences God will take into account, but we will not be excused.

God does bear in mind all relevant factors when He judges us, whether it be the adverse circumstances and influences we have been subjected to or the opportunities and degree of knowledge that we have. The words of the Lord Jesus in Luke 12:47, 48 are relevant:

Luke 12:47, 48

47 "And that slave who knew his master's will and did not get ready or act in accord with his will, will receive many lashes,
48 but the one who did not know it, and committed deeds worthy of a flogging, will receive but few. From everyone who has been given much, much will be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more.

The slave who knows what is wrong and yet does it will be given more lashes than the one who does not fully understand. But that does not excuse the latter from wrongdoing.

For personal reflection, we need to ask ourselves two questions: -

a. Do we exert positive influence on the people around us?

Are we the salt of the earth and the light of the world as we are called to be, or are we bad influences? Do we build up the lives of others or do we tear them down? It is important that we learn to exert good influence not just by the words that proceed from our mouths but what comes forth from within our hearts and the quality and whole direction of our lives.

b. Do we allow ourselves to be negatively and adversely influenced?

While we live in this world, negative, adverse and corrupting influences surround us, but we cannot excuse ourselves by saying, "I was under adverse influence." We must be prepared to stand by the truths that we have come to understand and not excuse ourselves.

Concluding Remarks

Let us reflect on our lives. Do we have a rebellious spirit within us? Do we easily yield to adverse influences upon our lives? What kind of influence do we exercise on others? Is it a positive one? Or do we destroy other people's lives? Let us prayerfully evaluate before the Lord and ask Him to search our lives and help us deal with all the different areas of failures and weaknesses that we have.

www.godandtruth.com

Copyright

The content of this message is protected by Copyright © 2002 Lim Kou. Permission is given to print and reproduce part (where the meaning intended is retained and the part is not quoted out of context) or all the content, for personal use or for distribution, on condition that there is proper acknowledgement, no changes are made and the content distributed free of charge. Please be prayerful and discreet in distributing or making the content available to others. *This paragraph and that below should be included in any and all content reproduced for distribution.*

Scripture Quotations

Scripture quotations unless otherwise stated, are taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD Bible®, Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.