

**Message no:** 2TS01  
**Series:** Two Important Temptation Scenes  
**Section:** Temptations of the Evil One  
**Sub-section:** Major Areas That Can Go Wrong (1)  
**Date preached:** 24 Apr 83  
**Date edited:** 15 May 01

## **CASTING DOUBTS ON GOD**

Casting doubts and confusion on the Word of God  
Contradicting the Word of God  
Casting Doubts on the Goodness of God

### **Introduction**

We live in a fallen world, under the siege of the evil one and the powers of darkness and in peril of their temptations and attacks. If we wish to live well, it is important that we try to understand how the evil one operates and not be ignorant of his wiles and devices. We must also learn how to overcome the temptations of the evil one. In this respect, God has important truths and lessons for us to learn from two important temptation scenes.

In my understanding, these two are the most significant and important temptation scenes recorded for us in the Scriptures. The first temptation scene took place in the Garden of Eden and is recorded right at the beginning of the Scriptures in the Book of Genesis. Genesis 3:1-6 record how the first man Adam and his wife Eve were tempted by the evil one and how they fell.

The other important temptation scene took place in the wilderness and is recorded in Matthew 4:1-11. Here, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, the last Adam (1 Cor. 15:45) was tempted by the evil one but He overcame. The best way to learn how we can counter and overcome the temptations of the evil one is to look to our Master and Teacher, the Lord Jesus Christ.

In 1983, I was impressed by the Lord to reflect on these two temptation scenes recorded in the Scriptures and a series of messages was preached on some of the important truths and lessons we can learn from what Adam and Eve went through and their failures; and from what the Lord Jesus Christ went through and how He overcame. The contents of these chapters are edited from transcriptions of these messages.

### **Similarities and Contrasts**

As we look at the two temptation scenes, we will find that there are similarities and contrasts. In both of these scenes, Satan was present. As far as I am aware of, in all the Scriptures, there are only these two temptation scenes recorded for us, which

describes how Satan tempted and how those tempted responded to his temptations. In both of these incidents, how those who were tempted responded and fared has far reaching consequences and implications for all mankind.

#### *Adam and Eve: In the Garden of Eden*

When Adam and Eve were tempted, they were in a situation of abundance and comfort in the Garden of Eden, where God had provided bountifully for them. However, they failed and they yielded to the temptation of the evil one. They sinned against God and their fellowship with God was disrupted. God pronounced judgement against them and they were expelled from the Garden of Eden.

There were adverse consequences not only for them but also for all mankind. As a result of their sins, we are now living in a fallen and corrupt world where mankind, in general, is under bondage to sin and to the evil one, with a strong tendency to indulge in the desires of the flesh, even when we can recognise it is damaging to our lives.

#### *The Lord Jesus Christ: In the wilderness*

On the other hand, we see that although the Lord Jesus Christ was in the discomfort of the wilderness and was hungry, having fasted forty days, yet He was able to overcome all the temptations that came upon Him from the evil one. The Lord Jesus Christ continued in this life of victory, which culminated in the great victory at the Cross where He overcame Satan and all the forces of darkness and triumphantly opened up the way of reconciliation to God and salvation for all mankind.

It is now feasible for us to experience freedom from bondage to sin and the evil one, know the Lord in a very personal way, know His enabling to overcome the desires of the flesh and live a fruitful life in tune with God and His purposes.

### **Understanding The Ways And Wiles of Satan**

A closer look at the two passages, Genesis 3:1-6 and Matthew 4:1-11, can help us to understand the ways and wiles of Satan and how he attacks us. We can learn from these two passages some major areas that can go wrong in our lives, areas that can be attacked by the powers of darkness and how to be vigilant. Let us learn from the Lord Jesus how to live an overcoming life.

#### **Genesis 3:1-6**

1 Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden'?"

2 The woman said to the serpent, "From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat;

3 but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, "You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die."

4 The serpent said to the woman, "You surely will not die!

5 "For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

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.

### **Matthew 4:1-11**

1 Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

2 And after He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He then became hungry.

3 And the tempter came and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread."

4 But He answered and said, "It is written, "MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD.""

5 Then the devil took Him into the holy city and had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple,

6 and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down; for it is written, 'HE WILL COMMAND HIS ANGELS CONCERNING YOU'; and 'ON THEIR HANDS THEY WILL BEAR YOU UP, SO THAT YOU WILL NOT STRIKE YOUR FOOT AGAINST A STONE.'"

7 Jesus said to him, "On the other hand, it is written, "YOU SHALL NOT PUT THE LORD YOUR GOD TO THE TEST.""

8 Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory;

9 and he said to Him, "All these things I will give You, if You fall down and worship me."

10 Then Jesus said to him, "Go, Satan! For it is written, "YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD, AND SERVE HIM ONLY.""

11 Then the devil left Him; and behold, angels came and began to minister to Him.

## **First Area of Attack: Casting Doubts and Confusion on the Word of God**

### *Temptation of Adam and Eve*

Let us begin by looking at Genesis 3:1. We see here an attempt by the evil one to cast doubts and confusion on the word of God. His approach was "Indeed, has God said?" The evil one further distorted the word of God by stating what was clearly not correct. Satan told Eve that God said she should not eat from "any tree" of the

garden, which is totally different from what God had instructed, as recorded in Genesis 2:16, 17.

**Genesis 2:16, 17**

16 The LORD God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely;

17 but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die."

We see that God's instructions to Adam and Eve were that they could eat from any tree of the Garden except from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This is very different from, "You shall not eat from any tree". The evil one sought to confuse as well as to shake Eve's position to cause her to be in doubt and confusion.

For us today, casting doubts, confusion and distortion of the Scriptures is a very major area of attack which the evil one and the powers of darkness will in many forms seek to attack God's children. The evil one knows that once he can cause confusion, doubts or distortion of the Scriptures, and what God intends to communicate to us through the Scriptures, a very important area of the life of the believer has been shaken and our faith is threatened.

If the evil one manages to succeed in any significant degree to cause us to doubt the reliability of the Scriptures, and what God has spoken and revealed to us in the Scriptures, we will find that the very foundation and basis of our lives, the basis of our actions will be shaken. Depending on the extent and seriousness of the doubt and confusion, to that degree our lives will be in danger. Our ability to walk faithfully with God will be threatened.

*Beware the tactic " Indeed, has God said...?"*

As Christians, the basis and foundation of our lives and actions are linked to our understanding of what God has revealed to us. The major and primary source of God's revelation is through the Scriptures. If we come into a position whereby we are unable to base our lives on the Scriptures, we will not be able to work out our lives properly. Our whole faith can be destroyed.

In the history of the Church, this issue has been well illustrated by the adverse effects of liberal theology. In the approach of liberal theology, the position and authority of the Scriptures have been strongly challenged, resulting in devastating consequences. The adverse effects are still present today. Liberal theologians generally do not accept the plain, literal meaning of the supernatural and miraculous occurrences recorded in the Scriptures. They may think they are examining the Scriptures on the basis of "modern" or "scientific" approach; there are also those who hold the view that the Lord Jesus was merely accommodating Himself to the superstitious beliefs of the ignorant people of His time. As such, what has been recorded has to be reinterpreted according to our present knowledge and

understanding in a manner which they think would be more accurate and more in line with the truth. This has resulted in serious distortion of the meaning of what has been recorded in the Scriptures.

Another rather similar line of thinking in liberal theology is that the understanding of the people who wrote the Scriptures were influenced by their times and their ignorance. Because they were ignorant of the many things that we have now come to understand, there are things which they wrote which are unacceptable today or must be reinterpreted to conform to the thinking and understanding of "modern" man. It is the mentality of "we know better". In reality, the evil one has succeeded in influencing them into this kind of approach to the Scriptures. Instead of submitting to the authority of the Scriptures and thereby submitting to God who has inspired the writing of the Scriptures for our learning, they have been sitting in judgement on what is acceptable in the Scriptures. They have sought to reinterpret clear revelations in the Scriptures according to their own understanding of what the truth ought to be.

The approach of the liberal theologians is actually along the same line of attack of the evil one when he said to Eve, "Indeed, has God said...?". What they are trying to say in respect of the truths which are revealed in the Scriptures is:

- Did God really intend to communicate these things?
- Have we interpreted the Scriptures correctly?

The approach of liberal theology has adversely affected the lives of many and undermined the confidence of many Christians in the authority of the Scriptures. What has taken place is not merely men straying away from the truth or their own flights of thought and fancy, but behind it all, the evil one has been actively at work along the same line as he has worked right at the beginning in the Garden of Eden.

It is very important for us to be clear and accurate about what the Scriptures reveals and teaches, so that in whatever form the powers of darkness may try to confuse or disturb us, we will not be easily shaken. We must take pains to study the Scriptures diligently. There are different ways Satan can attack us in this area. The most serious form would be if the evil one could completely destroy our confidence in the Scriptures. But he may not be able to do that and so he will try other forms like distorting the truths here and there. He can do so more easily when we have prejudices and personal inclinations that are contrary to the truth and when our hearts are not fully committed to God.

*The First Temptation of the Lord Jesus -  
Similarity with Genesis 3:1 "Indeed, has God said...?"*

When I reflected on the first temptation faced by the Lord Jesus Christ recorded in Matthew 4:3, I noted that there is similarity with the line of attack in Genesis 3:1.

**Matthew 4:3**

And the tempter came and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.

"If You are the Son of God..." - this is how the evil one started his temptation. The first word is "If".

It is interesting to note that in the preceding verses in Matthew 3, in the context of the baptism of the Lord Jesus Christ, God the Father had just spoken, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." Immediately after what God had clearly declared, we see Satan asking the question "If You are the Son of God", to try to shake the confidence of the Lord Jesus in what God the Father had just declared.

This is similar to what took place in the Garden of Eden. God had given specific instructions and the evil one tried to confuse and query what God had spoken. His line of attack was "Indeed, has God said?"

It would be helpful if we picture ourselves in the situation of the Lord Jesus. God the Father had just declared that He is the Son of God, but now He is in a situation where He is facing hunger. He has been without food for 40 days. When Satan tempted the Lord Jesus Christ by phrasing the question in this way- "If You are the Son of God, command these stones...", the line of attack is - "If you are the Son of God, is it consistent that You are hungry in this way? If You are the Son of God, then surely You need not be in this state of hunger, You can turn these stones into bread."

*Applications In Life's Situations*

Just as the Lord Jesus is the Son of God, are we not also children of God? The Scriptures has declared that we are children of God and that God cares for us. However, for many of us and in many of life's situations, we may face literal hunger, many kinds of difficulties and trying situations and there is a sense of deprivation. The evil one can then put thoughts into our minds to disturb and confuse us, thoughts such as:

"If you are a child of God, why are you in this kind of state? Should you be in a deprived state?"

During such times, we need to be alert and careful. We must not entertain such thoughts and allow them to disturb us. We may think it is understandable to have such thoughts during such times. However, we must be aware that this is a tactic of the evil one to confuse us with such thoughts and we need to know how to reject and counter them. We need to recognise our richness of life in God and the meaning of trials in Christian living.

I remember reading an incident recorded in the biography of a well-known servant of God of spiritual stature. In his earlier days, he was quite a promising student. During

a difficult period in his life, when he was feeling discouraged with how things were going on in his life, in his relationship with people and the work of God, he met his old professor. The professor looked at him and shook his head, feeling very sorry for him, that he was in this pathetic state. He himself felt uncomfortable. He was a child of God! How could he be in such a pathetic state!

Sometimes, we do go through situations like this and during such times, many doubts may come into our minds. If we do not know how to face them, we can become very discouraged and devastated. It is helpful to be prepared beforehand, to know that it is a tactic of the evil one to put such thoughts into our minds to shake our faith and to destroy us. We must be equipped and ready to counter the attacks when they come, recognising that there is indeed great riches and richness of life in the Lord Jesus Christ. The way we look at life must be from the eternal perspective. We should not be influenced by the worldly and temporal perspective. Difficulties or what others may call deprivations which come our way can actually be very meaningful times that we can go through if we are indeed walking with the Lord.

### **Second Area Of Attack: Contradicting Directly What God Has Said**

There is a progression in the attack by the evil one. If he succeeds in casting doubts and confusion regarding the word of God, he will go on to the next step and that is to contradict directly what God has said.

#### *Temptation of Adam and Eve*

We see recorded in Genesis 2:16, 17 that God had instructed Adam and Eve that if they partook from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they would surely die.

#### **Genesis 2:16, 17**

16 The LORD God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely;

17 but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die."

Satan, however, told Eve, "You surely shall not die." (Gen. 3:4). This is a direct contradiction to what God had said. Note that this is in the context where Satan had already cast doubt and confusion on the word of God.

Genesis 3:4, 5 show us that the intention of Satan was not merely to confuse Eve. His ultimate goal was to cause Adam and Eve to partake of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, that is, to do what God had expressly forbidden. He wanted them to disbelieve the truth of what God had spoken and to disobey Him by eating the forbidden fruit. This intention of his is expressed in verse 5, when he told Eve:

**Genesis 3:5**

"For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

Beware of this tactic of the evil one. One of the most serious manifestations is to cause us to disbelieve in the reliability and trustworthiness of the Scriptures and the truths revealed in them. The evil one often begins by causing us to have various queries and doubts about the Scriptures and be in a state of confusion. He then progresses on to suggest to us that the Scriptures and what it reveals and teaches are inaccurate and unreliable. If the evil one succeeds in influencing us such that we no longer have confidence in the authority and reliability of the Scriptures and what is revealed and taught in it, our whole faith can crumble.

At times, it may not be up to this serious extent of rejecting the whole of the Scriptures. But it is already extremely damaging and dangerous if the evil one has succeeded in causing us to be confused about important areas of truth revealed in the Scriptures and then progressing on to disbelief and rejection of these truths.

Some of us may think what we are considering here is not applicable to us because we are very clear about the authority of the Scriptures and we do acknowledge the truth it teaches, even if at times we may fail to live according to what we recognise we ought. However, these things can take place subtly and if we are not vigilant, we may succumb.

We must not believe that anything that the Lord has said can ever be untrue or that they will not come to pass, whether they be promises or blessings, warnings of judgements or consequences of courses of action.

The Bible does reveal to us not only blessings as we walk with the Lord but also warnings and consequences of disobedience to the Lord. If we succumb to the attacks of the evil one and accept what the evil one plants in our minds and live as if what the Scriptures reveals is untrue, we are in reality disbelieving God and His instructions. This is a serious matter. At times we may not be so conscious of the significance of what is happening because it takes place in subtle ways.

*Two Examples of Subtle Manifestations*

There are many different ways in which this can happen but I will just give two examples on two major areas of Christian living.

*Example 1 – Living according to the flesh*

The Bible reveals to us about living according to the flesh or living according to the Spirit. These are very familiar truths and principles that we often hear because they are central to Christian living.



**Galatians 6:7, 8**

7 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap.

8 For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.

The Scriptures clearly states that we should not live according to the flesh and feed the flesh because if we do so, we will reap corruption; but we need to sow to the Spirit and from the Spirit reap eternal life.

Along the same line of thought:

**Rom 8:6, 12, 13**

6 For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace,

12 So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh --

13 for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

These are clear statements: that we should not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. This means we should not live according to our own inclinations and desires, a life independent of God and walking in disobedience to God. Instead, we should walk according to the Spirit, that is, in dependence upon the Lord's leading and enabling.

The Scriptures also clearly reveals that if we live according to the flesh, we are moving in the direction of spiritual death and destruction. It will do us harm. In contrast, life in the Spirit is a life of wellbeing and abundance in the Lord.

However, the evil one will subtly and constantly seek to attack us in this area. For example, he may plant thoughts in our minds to cause us to think along these directions: "Is it so that every time I do some of these things, it will be so bad for me? Is it so?" As we begin to waver and become confused, querying the truth of the principle operating, the next thought would be: "It is not so". This is how Satan tempted Eve in the Garden of Eden.

The evil one may initially plant thoughts like:

"Is it so?"

"See how nice these things are, how pleasurable they are, how much you are missing in life."

"Why should you be so deprived?"

We may accept such thoughts as our own. Indeed, human beings can have such thoughts. However, they are often suggested, magnified, manipulated and encouraged by the powers of darkness.

At times, we may in moments of weakness have thoughts along lines that the Lord does not desire us to indulge in. Thoughts like:

“Isn’t it nice and pleasurable, am I not missing so much?”  
“Why should I be so deprived?”

The evil one will begin to feed and encourage us in that direction - to taste a little of it. He will put thoughts in our minds like:

“It won’t harm you, just a bit of it.”  
“It won’t harm you, just taste a little and see how nice it is.”

This is actually the same tactic Satan used on Eve when he told her, “Surely you will not die”.

If we reflect on this, in principle are there not these things which disturb us in different forms from time to time - things which we know that the Lord does not want us to indulge in, whether it be things which are clearly unhealthy or things that may be alright if we know how to regulate them. But in reality, we know that we are proceeding in the direction of fleshly indulgence. We think they will not harm us and we will not die. We are already moving in the direction of the flesh, we are sowing to the flesh and yet we carry on and think that “we will not die”.

The Scriptures clearly tells us that if we feed the flesh, we will die. But the evil one tells us, “You will not die”, and he will encourage us to think that it is alright to carry on. If we accept what the evil one says and yield, it will result in our moving in the direction of spiritual death and destruction. Whatever God has spoken and whatever He has taught us in the Scriptures will come to pass. We must never be deceived into thinking it will not.

#### *Example 2 – Importance of the Scriptures*

The second example is concerning the Scriptures and how we may be deceived by the evil one in this area.

#### **2 Timothy 3:16, 17**

16 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;

17 so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

There is inexhaustible spiritual food and riches in the Scriptures. We should earnestly seek to understand what God desires to speak to us and teach us through the

Scriptures in the same way as a new born babe longs for the nourishing milk, that we may grow in respect to salvation. This is how the apostle Peter puts it in:

**1 Peter 2:2**

like new born babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation.

The Lord Jesus in countering the first temptation of the evil one answered and said:

**Matthew 4:4**

It is written, "MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD."

Bread is needful for our physical life. Feeding on and living according to what God has to say to us is vital for our spiritual life, for our spiritual health and development. The Scriptures is the primary source of this spiritual food. We must absorb the truths revealed in the Scriptures in the same way as our body absorbs food, so that they become a part of our lives. We are to live accordingly and manifest the truths in our lives.

The evil one knows that the Scriptures is extremely important to our lives and he seeks all ways and means to hinder us and keep us away from it. It may take the form of physical tiredness, busyness, sleepiness and all kinds of distractions. In subtle ways, the evil one seeks to deceive us into thinking that we can afford to neglect our set-apart time with God each day and the reading, understanding and absorbing of the truths revealed in the Scriptures, and yet still be alright. This may take place over a period of time and we may not be very conscious that it is taking place. Initially we may feel we are quite alright and we may not be aware of the significance of what is taking place.

But how can we be alright spiritually if we are not hearing and receiving from the Lord and feeding on what He has to say to us? How can we be sustained and grow and be adequate, equipped for every good work? How can we be alright if we are not absorbing and living out the truth? Degeneration will set in, though initially it may not be so perceptible and obvious. More and more we are straying away from the principle of living on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. Slowly but surely we are drying up and dying from lack of spiritual nourishment and yet the evil one is still telling us, "You surely will not die!"

*The Second Temptation of the Lord Jesus -  
Misapplication Of the Scriptures To Justify Wrong Actions*

We find in the second temptation of the Lord Jesus, recorded in Matthew 4:5, 6, that the tactic of the evil one is more subtle:

**Matthew 4:5, 6**

5 Then the devil took Him into the holy city and had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple,

6 and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down; for it is written, 'HE WILL COMMAND HIS ANGELS CONCERNING YOU'; and 'ON THEIR HANDS THEY WILL BEAR YOU UP, SO THAT YOU WILL NOT STRIKE YOUR FOOT AGAINST A STONE.'"

Here we see the evil one in the second temptation misapplying the Scriptures. We should be careful about this tactic of the evil one, that he can quote the Scriptures to justify wrong actions. Here we see the evil one quoting the Scriptures to persuade the Lord Jesus to do something that is clearly wrong.

We need to beware that the Scriptures can be misapplied and used to justify wrong actions. When we have personal inclinations to embark on courses of action which are not right, we are especially vulnerable to the evil one planting thoughts in our minds to justify our wrong actions. One of the ways he does this is by causing us to misapply Scriptures to justify those wrong actions.

Satan was quoting from Psalm 91.

**Psalm 91:11, 12:**

11 For He will give His angels charge concerning you,  
To guard you in all your ways.  
12 They will bear you up in their hands,  
That you do not strike your foot against a stone.

This Psalm tells us how God watches over and protects the one who loves and trusts Him. He is one who dwells in the shelter of the Most High and abides in the shadow of the Almighty, who says to God, "My Refuge and my Fortress, my God in whom I trust" (v. 1). The Psalm expresses a sense of faith and security in God. However, the evil one twisted and misapplied it to try to urge the Lord Jesus to do something that is senseless and foolish. The gist of what the evil one is trying to say is - "Throw yourself down, God will take care of you. Throw yourself down, you will not die."

The precious truth of a proper sense of security in God and His watching over and undertaking in the life of one who loves and trusts Him is misapplied to a senseless and foolish action of throwing oneself down from a height for no good reason. The gist of the reply of the Lord Jesus is that this would be tempting God and it is clearly something that is wrong and ought not be done.

It is true that God loves us and He watches over us. However, we must not be presumptuous and take unnecessary risks. We ought not just go ahead and do things according to our own desires or things that are not what the Lord requires of us and have a presumptuous spirit of a sense of security on the basis of the Lord's

sovereignty and His sovereign undertaking. We may happily console ourselves or even tell others that it is alright, God will take care of us. This is a false sense of security and false confidence. If we proceed in this manner, God will not be pleased and we may end up in very serious trouble.

For example, in any kind of dangerous undertaking, task or sports which we may embark upon, we cannot simply say, "I can trust God's sovereign undertaking". We have to ask ourselves:

"Am I walking according to His will?"

"Is it what He desires of me?"

If it is clear to us that what we are doing is in accordance with His will, we can trust in God's sovereign undertaking no matter how dangerous it may appear to be and entrust the outcome to Him. The greater the danger, the more we have to be certain that it is the path that God is leading us, that He desires us to take.

At times, a Christian may say, "Well, I am a Christian, I have no fear". This is not always correct. Let us be careful of a false sense of confidence. It all depends on whether we are walking with the Lord or walking in our own ways, doing something foolish and yet having a false sense of security.

#### *Satan the murderer*

In the Garden of Eden, one main thrust when Satan tempted Eve was by telling her "You surely shall not die!". We see in the second temptation of the Lord Jesus that in the same way, Satan was also telling the Lord Jesus "You surely will not die!" when he quoted those verses from Psalm 91 to tempt the Lord Jesus to throw Himself down from the pinnacle of the temple.

The Scriptures tells us Satan is a murderer:

#### **John 8:44**

"You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies."

The apostle John tells us that Satan is a murderer. There is no truth in him. He is a liar and the father of lies. These features in Satan's character are manifested in both the temptation scenes.

We need to take note of this point that Satan is a murderer and his motive and desire is to kill and destroy us. We need to be careful in our lives.

The Lord Jesus tells us in

**John 10:10**

“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life , and have it abundantly.”

Sometimes, the evil one may seek to kill us and destroy us in the literal, physical sense just like when he tempted the Lord Jesus to throw Himself down. His intention was to cause Him to die but at the same time he was telling the Lord Jesus, “You will not die.”

The evil one does seek to destroy the lives of God’s people in this kind of way. He may tempt us to do things that may result in death. He may push us in a certain direction seeking to destroy us or may tempt us to do things that are dangerous that may result in our death. Sometimes, it can come in the form of suicidal thoughts.

We need to be aware that this is one of the tactics of the evil one and we must be careful especially when thoughts enter our minds urging us to do foolish and dangerous things. Thoughts like “Throw yourself down either from a high place or in front of a moving vehicle.” We must firmly reject such thoughts recognising that they come from the evil one who is a murderer seeking to destroy and kill us.

In Genesis 3:4, Satan told Eve “You surely will not die!”. The word “die” in this context has two aspects. The Lord had told Adam that if he partook of the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, “You will surely die” (Gen. 2:17). Death here involves the direction of both physical as well as spiritual death. Satan was tempting Eve in that direction of physical and spiritual death but telling her that she surely will not die.

*Yielding To Temptation Leads to Spiritual Bondage and Death*

Generally, as children of God, we do not want to have anything to do with the evil one and neither do we want to come under his bondage. We try to stay away from them and there are those who do not even want to hear anything about them or what they are doing. Although this may be the conscious attitude and desire of our hearts, yet my concern is that at times, we may actually be moving in the direction of bondage without being conscious of it.

It is not sufficient just to say we do not want to have anything to do with the powers of darkness or that we do not want to be under bondage. When temptations come our way, sometimes in very subtle forms, we must be careful to understand what the evil one is seeking to do in our lives and to reject them in a definite manner. If we do not, we are actually yielding to what comes from the evil one and as we yield we become entangled and we move in the direction of bondage. There are varying degrees of bondage depending on how significant the failures and how long we have continued to move in that direction. It also depends on how open we are to the Lord

so that when the Lord speaks to us and rebukes us, we can quickly be awakened and take corrective measures.

When Adam and Eve yielded to the temptation of Satan, they came under his bondage. Partaking of the fruit may appear nice and desirable but it resulted in spiritual death and bondage. Let us beware of the "you will not die" deception because in reality we will. The Scriptures has pronounced that if we sow to the flesh, we will from the flesh reap corruption (Gal. 6:8), the mind set on the flesh is death (Rom. 8:6) and if we are living according to the flesh we must die (Rom. 8:13). If we yield to temptations of the evil one, we are living according to the flesh and disobeying God and we will reap corruption and move in the direction of spiritual bondage and death. Do not be deceived by the evil one into thinking it is alright and we will not die.

### **Third Area of Attack: Casting Doubts On the Goodness of God**

#### *Temptation of Adam and Eve*

Another serious angle of attack by Satan can be seen in:

#### **Genesis 3:5**

"For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

Here, the evil one was seeking to cast doubts on the goodness of God, alleging that God was withholding what was good from Adam and Eve, that is, disobedience to God was better for them. Satan told Eve God knew that if she ate the fruit, "your eyes will be opened and you will be like God". However, God was withholding this from her, so disobeying God would be better for her.

We may think we are very clear that God is a good God and we will never succumb to the temptation to doubt His goodness. In reality God's children do succumb to this angle of attack by the evil one at some points in time in their lives. There are varying degrees of seriousness of failure in this area. In its more serious forms, our faith in God and confidence in Him can be shaken because we have real doubts about God's goodness to us.

Generally, God's children would affirm in their hearts that God is good and that He loves us. But, in various subtle ways, the evil one would proceed to attack us in ways we may not be very conscious of, causing us to begin to question the goodness of God and think that God is withholding good things from us. For example, do we not at times have queries and thoughts as follows:

"Is the path that God is leading me really good for me?"

"God's ways and principles do not seem so practical or suitable for me in my context... does not seem to be the best way to go about it, there is a better way."

And so the evil one will slowly tempt us in the direction that makes us begin to compromise, to deviate from God's ways and from what God has revealed in the Scriptures. This can creep in subtly, bit by bit and then more and more, whether in our place of work, in doing business, or our dealings with people. In principle, once we begin to move in the direction of compromise, deviating from God's ways, are we not being led to deny by our lives what our lips profess? We may still continue to affirm and profess that we love the Lord, we may still sing hymns praising God and expressing our confidence in Him that He is a good God, that He desires the best for our lives. But if in our practical daily living, we are knowingly violating and contradicting the truths and principles God has revealed to us in the Scriptures with the sense that it is better for us, are we not deceived and are we not denying by our lives our confidence in the goodness and wisdom of God?

Although not every failure is equally serious, in principle every failure is of significance and we must be watchful and recognise that what the evil one is seeking to do is to destroy us. If we are not careful, it may begin a small thing but it will slowly develop into bigger and bigger things and soon our lives are flooded with many compromises and deviations. Our fellowship with God begins to be adversely affected. Reading the Scriptures is no longer as refreshing and helpful as before and our prayer life becomes increasingly less meaningful. We slowly drift further and further away from the Lord. All kinds of negative thoughts become more and more entrenched in our minds. Our faith in God and His goodness is eroded. We may not even realise that it is we who have failed the Lord and not that the Lord has in any way failed us. We may not be aware that the whole process has taken place because the evil one has deceived us into denying the wisdom and goodness of God and His ways by the way we live our lives.

*The Third Temptation of the Lord Jesus -  
Offering Attractive Things Outside God's Will*

**Matthew 4:8, 9**

8 Again the devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory;

9 and he said to Him, "All these things I will give You, if You fall down and worship me.

There is a certain direction in this temptation faced by the Lord Jesus which is similar to that found in Genesis 3:5.

Satan was trying to tell the Lord Jesus Christ, "I will give you many things, just worship me.". In other words, it is as if Satan had good things to offer that the Lord



Jesus was not getting from God the Father. The principle of operation here is along the line: "You worship me, it is better for you".

The evil one tries to lure us in many different ways, along lines that are outside of God's will, to do things that are clearly contrary to what God has revealed. Sometimes, it is through over indulgence in things that in themselves may be alright but that is not how God wants us to channel our time and energy, resulting in our moving further and further away from fellowship with God.

Beware of the many attractive things Satan offers us outside of God's will: position, power, wealth, worldly pleasures. Acceptance results in bondage. When the evil one offers us things and we accept them, we are actually following after him rather than worshipping and following the Lord, as if following the evil one is better. In principle, it is an attack on the goodness of God, as if God is withholding what is good for us from us. It is an attack on the very foundation of our faith in God and His goodness and goodwill towards us. To whatever degree Satan succeeds in shaking our confidence in God, in His goodness and goodwill towards us, to that degree our faith and quality of life would be adversely affected.

### **Concluding remarks**

It is vital that we can say with deep conviction that we believe in a perfect God who loves us and desires the best for our lives, who will not withhold from us anything really good for us: "He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?" (Rom. 8:32) and "they who seek the LORD shall not be in want of any good thing" (Ps. 34:10). Paul says, "I know whom I have believed" (2 Tim. 1:12). Do we?

Let us reflect in our lives and the affirmation of our lips that we believe in a perfect and good God. However difficult or unpleasant or however much we may be disinclined towards any particular issue or area relating to God's instructions for our lives, it is important to bear in mind that God is a perfect God, He knows what is best and to submit willingly and joyfully.

We must be clear headed and recognise the temptations that come our way and understand what the evil one is seeking to do. We must realise that whenever we stray from the instructions of God, we are yielding to the evil one. By working through the attractions in the world, by acting upon our flesh, the evil one is always seeking to pull us away from God. Let us recognise that the evil one is behind the various temptations of our lives. He is scheming to bring about our downfall. If we stray from God's instructions, it can never be better for us. It will destroy us. Many things may appear desirable and good, just like the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, but it will be bitter in the end.

It is imperative that we do not continue in freely giving way to temptations in our lives but awaken to what is happening to us before it is too late. Let us recognise that yielding to temptations have a cumulative negative effect on our lives. Every failure will aggravate our condition especially where there is absence of a repentant spirit or where there is stubbornness and a defiant spirit. It is dangerous if we continue to let things be. Heed this warning in Proverbs:

**Proverbs 29:1**

A man who hardens his neck after much reproof  
Will suddenly be broken beyond remedy.

Let us not persist in ways that are not pleasing to God. If we harden our hearts, it may become beyond remedy.

God is grieved when we go astray. He is our gracious and loving heavenly Father who wants to help us. He does not want Satan to take advantage of, manipulate and destroy our lives. He is reaching out to us. He is speaking to us. Let us humbly cry out to Him for help and He will help us.

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