

Satan's Strategy for Church Growth - Part 1

Selected Passages

April 28, 2013

Dr. David Harrell

It is once again my great joy and privilege to be able to minister the word of God to you this morning. I would like to continue in our series on spiritual maturity, the whole issue of what it means to really be mature in Christ and the danger of being banished to an island of spiritual infancy. This morning I want to speak to you specifically about Satan's strategy for church growth, because if you are in that kind of a church, you will certainly never grow into spiritual maturity.

In Matthew chapter 7, you will recall that Jesus says that not everyone that calls himself a Christian is. In fact, not everyone that calls himself a pastor is truly God's shepherd. Certainly not every church that calls itself a Christian church is a Christian church. Jesus said in Matthew 16: 18, "I will build my church." My friends you must understand that Satan says the same thing, "I will build my church." Satan is a counterfeiter; we see this all through scripture. Certainly in the book of Revelation and other passages, we see that before the Lord returns there will be a counterfeit trinity with Satan, the antichrist, and the false prophet. He is going to build a counterfeit church that will ultimately exist right before the Lord returns. It's described in Revelation 17:15 as "mystery Babylon the great, the mother of harlots, and of the abominations of the earth."

In 1 Timothy chapter 4 we read how Satan will use demons to contrive doctrines that false teachers will teach. Now, unfortunately, most Christians fail to understand that they are at war with a diabolical, supernatural foe. You might want to ask yourself, do I really realize that? I want you to ask yourself this morning, how is Satan trying to attack me? How is Satan trying to attack my family? How is Satan trying to attack my church? Are you aware of his schemes? Do you study his tactics?

Before every campaign, Napoleon considered all possible options. He wrote, "There is no man more pusillanimous than I when I am planning a campaign. (Pusillanimous basically means cowardly) I purposely exaggerate all of the dangers, and all the calamities and the circumstances made possible. I am in a thoroughly painful state of agitation."

One historian remarked about Napoleon, "In the months and weeks before operations actually commenced, he would begin to collect information. In addition an enormous number and variety of books bearing on the enemy, and the theater of war, he studied the copious volumes of intelligence reports forwarded by the agents that he had scattered throughout Europe. He would pursue works of political history, accounts of the state of roads and bridges, reports on the politicians and generals and even studied local patterns of food stockpiling and distribution."

My friends this is how we need to study our enemies. We have two, our flesh and Satan. This morning once again we want to deal primarily with Satan. I might also add this is how Satan studies us, this is how Satan studies the church, and he is a brilliant and

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viscous general. All we have to do is look around the world today and we see the carnage that is a result of his brilliance and of his diabolical nature. We must remember that Satan absolutely loathes God and all who belong to Him. For this reason Paul was concerned about the saints in Corinth.

In 2 Corinthians 11:2, "For I am jealous of you with a Godly jealousy. For I betrothed you to one husband so that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin, but I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ." The New Testament pictures the church as a bride that is betrothed or pledged to Christ. Here the apostle Paul is very concerned that the Corinthian church would be deceived by the enemy, by false apostle's emissaries of Satan who would trick them into believing lies like Satan deceived Eve. The question is, how did he trick her? What was the strategy that Satan used to deceive Eve, to corrupt her mind? Because my friends, these will be the same strategies that he will use to build and bless his church and therefore deceive people that are within his church, and especially for any believers that are in that kind of a church, they will never grow into spiritual maturity until they see what is happening and get out.

Later, in 2 Corinthians 11:13-14, he said this, "For such men are false apostles deceitful workers disguising themselves as apostles of Christ, no wonder for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. Therefore, it is not surprising that his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness whose end will be according to their deeds." Earlier in 2 Corinthians 2:11, he warned the saints of satanic attack that would come in the form of believers refusing to forgive one another and thus producing disunity in the church. He said there that we must forgive, "so that no advantage would be taken of us by Satan for we are not ignorant of his schemes."

If you will notice the words "take advantage" and "ignorant" really indicate that Satan targets our minds with various "schemes." In the original language "schemes" is a term that speaks of plots or plans to effect how we think. So Paul is saying that we've got to have prior awareness of Satan's purposes and his methods to deceive us into thinking things that are not true. In Ephesians 6:11 Paul says, "put on the full armor of God so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil." In that text, the term schemes, "methodia" in the original language is different than the one that I just read in 2 Corinthians 2:11, but it has the same idea. Satan's schemes, according to the original language means that he has a plan, he treats it very methodically, meticulously, he deals with people in churches systematically, according to a plan. His plan is very cunning. He is a diabolical enemy. So we must understand that Satan has a plan to destroy Christians, and he has a plan to build his counterfeit church, because ultimately he wants people to worship him, not God. So we need to understand Satan's schemes and how he deceives our minds and methodically, as Paul says, "takes advantage of us and brings us to a place of destruction as he did Eve."

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Some of you may discover that he has already taken advantage of you especially after what you will hear today. If so, you will remain in a state of spiritual infancy, assuming you know Christ, unless you wise up and stand firm against his schemes by embracing the truth. My goal this morning is to primarily address the truth as it relates to the church.

Now, as we look at the church biblically, we see that Christ is the head of the church and he's promised that He will build his church. But likewise, Satan is the counterfeit head of his church that he will seek to build and we have to discern between the two. In order to do that, first we must understand Satan's schemes, the kind of church that he builds and that is what we are going to look at today. Then secondly at a later time, we must learn what a true church looks like. You will never understand a counterfeit unless you can see what the true version would look like. So with Paul I can say to you, "I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ."

So, where do we go in the bible to understand how Satan works? Well we go where Paul says; we go to Genesis chapter 3. You will recall as you turn there that God allows Satan to tempt Eve in the garden. He speaks to her through some kind of an upright reptile that would later be cursed to crawl upon its belly. It was probably some type of a reptile unlike anything that exists today. We know as we look at scripture that Satan is a highly intelligent created being and he had lived in the presence of God so he knows God, and he knows that God wants every creature to do His will, to bring Him glory, but that glory is what Satan wants for himself. Remember, Satan originally said, "I want to be like God." As a result of that attitude, God judged him instantly and so he is going to appeal to Eve in the same vein.

Before we look closely at the text, may I remind you that Satan does not make her sin? Satan cannot compel anyone to sin. He is ultimately under God's sovereign control whereby God allows him to deceive in order that God may accomplish the purposes of His eternal decree to bring glory to Himself by saving those who repent and damning those who do not. So he can only tempt us to do evil. This is what he did with Adam and Eve in the garden on that horrific day. Frankly, the worst day in the history of the world when sin entered the realm of humanity, resulting in every conceivable form of sorrow and death. You will recall that when God created, He said that everything was good, everything was perfect, but because of sin now everything is corrupted, everything is infected with sin. No part of our world, no part of the human condition has escaped the catastrophic effects of sin.

In chapter 3, the first 5 verses as we will see, Satan's goal is to deceive Eve and to deceive frankly all of God's image bearers. Image bearers that are the highest form of creation in the natural world, the only ones that can actually procreate, something the angelic world cannot do. So he wants man to ultimately disobey God and be judged by God, a curse that he knows will then be passed on through the progeny of Adam and Eve. It's important for you to realize that he deceives in primarily in two basic categories. He

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wants to deceive people with respect to the character of God, and secondly with respect to the word of God. In this first scene we see that as Satan comes along he is not threatening, he is appealing, he appears to be genuinely concerned about Eve's well-being as if he has her interests at heart, but what is even more diabolical is the fact that he approaches Eve, not Adam and he approaches her alone. Notice Genesis 3:1, "now the serpent was craftier than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the women indeed has God said, you shall not eat from any tree of the garden?" Now, the term "crafty" in the original language means subtle, cunning, intelligent, and wise. This is what Paul used in 2 Corinthians 11:3 when he said, "I am afraid lest as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness."

Now we have to first answer the question why would he approach Eve alone? The answer is because he knows that God has uniquely made women very differently than men and not merely physiologically. We read for example 1 Peter 3:7 that by design women are emotionally and physically what he calls "the weaker vessel." They are to be protected and provided for by men, especially their husband if she is married. She is called to be in subject to her husband who is to sacrificially love her, according to Ephesians 5:22-33. Her husband should cherish and nourish her as Christ does his bridal church. As we look at scripture and as we look at just normal life, we see that men are the warriors, women are the nurturers. Men are wired by God to lead, to provide, to protect women. We are to be the physical as well as spiritual leaders and guardians of our women.

Women are by design far more sensitive, emotional, nurturing, compliant, and even tender than men. They are designed to help men especially in the raising of children. This is a divine counterbalance for the man who is more aggressive and initiating in terms of his essence of masculinity. Now spiritually, we know biblically, that men and women are absolutely equal in their standing before God, but physically and emotionally and with respect to their God-given functions and responsibilities, they are very different and Satan knows this. Men are designed to initiate women to respond. Men are designed to lead, provide and protect. Women, to affirm, nurture and enjoy Godly leadership. A woman's greatest joy and her greatest form of fulfillment come from being a wife and a mother who submits to the loving authority of a Godly husband.

Even the triune Godhead demonstrates to us the equality of essence between the trinity, yet we see differences in roles as well as function. We see headship, we see submission in the triune Godhead. 1 Corinthians 11:3, Paul says, "but I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man and the man is the head of a women and God is the head of Christ." Although Christ is equal in essence to the Father, we know that in His incarnation He humbly submitted Himself to do the Father's will.

So a woman on her own is going to be vulnerable, she needs the protection and the care of a Godly man. That's the way God designed it. This, by the way, is why Paul told Timothy that young widows are to marry, that women who have divorced on biblical grounds are to remarry. This is why he tells single women to submit to the elders of the

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church who are in charge of caring for them and so forth. This is why God forbids women from exercising any form of authority in the church, any form of authority over men in the church. This is part of God's order. He established her role as part of her original design. He made the woman after the man to become his suitable helper. That's why in 1 Timothy 2:11 the apostle Paul says this that a women must, "quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness, but I do not allow a women to teach or exercise authority over a man but to remain quite for it was Adam who was first created and then Eve and it was not Adam who was deceived but the women being *deceived* fell into transgression." The term "deceived" in the original language means "quite deceived." So Eve we know, not only yields to the serpents temptation, but she also steps outside of her God-ordained role as the submissive responder to the leadership of her husband and she usurps his headship over her. She acted independently and this placed her, therefore, in a position of vulnerability, exactly where Satan wanted her. Outside of the protective guardianship of her husband. Her violation of the divine order of the roles of men and women resulted in an act that hurled humanity and the universe in which it exists into the abyss of sin.

Now Satan knows all of this. He is an expert theologian. He knows the divine order, but he wants women to doubt, to reject all of this and to live unto themselves. Frankly, we have seen the catastrophic effect on families and churches where the deceptions of even evangelical feminism has taken route in churches. Again, Satan wants everyone to believe lies with respect to God's character and Gods word. Marriages and churches that violate these roles are inevitably in chronic chaos, in conflict, and forfeit divine blessing because they violate the clear will of God. In fact part of the curse on women is not only multiplied pain in childbirth, but also resentment in the authority-submission relationship between a husband and a wife as we read in Genesis 3:16.

So Satan defies God's order for the roles of men and women and he approaches Eve now in her unfallen innocence, a perfectly tender, sensitive, compassionate, compliant, responder. He sees her in this vulnerable state apart from the covering and protection of her husband. Here we read the first question in the Bible initiated by Satan in verse 1. "He said to the women, indeed, has God said you shall not eat from any tree of the garden?" Literally it can be translated this way, "Is it really so that God said?" I want you to notice closely, although Satan is speaking to the woman, in the Hebrew the word "you" is in the plural, indicating that he is referring to both Adam and Eve. So here is what he is saying, "Did God actually say you both are not to eat from any tree in the garden?" Now, this is a clever distortion, this is how the enemy always works. He takes a passage of scripture and he begins to twist it. Here he subtly twists the divine prohibition that we read in chapter 2:16. Notice the truth of what God said. It's found there in verse 16, "the Lord God commanded the man saying, from any tree of the garden you may eat freely, 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 knew that God placed the tree amidst the other trees of the garden as a test for Adam and Eve. His goal now is to make them fail

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that test so that they will fall into a state of sin and be estranged from fellowship with God. This is what he wants for every one of us.

So the purpose of his question is to begin to create a little doubt about the goodness of God. That He is maybe holding out on us a little bit here. Something that had never entered into her mind before this. That maybe there is a better way; maybe this isn't really what He said. So he wants her to doubt His word. To not only question God's authority, but make it seem necessary and reasonable even acceptable to place herself in a position of judging what God has said.

Notice something else very fascinating. Every day of man's life he has a rabid commitment to self-determination. Therefore, one of the things that man hates is the doctrine of the sovereignty of God. And we see that here in this text in Satan's question. Notice what he says, "indeed, has God said?" In the original language the term God is "Elohim" and that is just the generic term for God. But what Satan does not acknowledge is that he is "YHWH Elohim", "LORD God" as He is designated earlier in the verse. Why is that? Because YHWH is God's personal, proper, covenant name that designates His sovereignty. Satan omits this title because he despises it. Yet the designation "Lord God" "YHWH ELHOHIM" has been repeatedly used since chapter 2:4, in fact it's used over 6,400 times in the Old Testament. This denial will be a priority in every church that Satan builds. The majority of Christian churches today resent, or even deny the sovereignty of God. They deny His right as well as His ability to be a covenant making and covenant keeping God, and here is where that thinking comes from.

So he cleverly asks: "Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden'?"

I want you to notice how he conveniently rewords what God really said. He leaves out the liberality of God's provision by omitting the word "freely" and then he inserts the words "not eat" at the beginning of the sentence. All of this to confuse Eve, to animate her suspicion of God, to make her think that somehow God's prohibition is unfair, that He is holding out on her, that He is harsh. Notice he didn't say, "Look at all of the things God has given you, how He has lavished His blessings upon you, all these good things to eat, everywhere! Isn't it amazing, there is only one tiny prohibition and since God has commanded you not to eat of that you need to obey Him for your good and His glory." But no, the emphasis is not on God's goodness; again, it's an attack on His character. It's not on all that He has given, but the emphasis is on His restriction in one area. Here he is trying to create doubt.

"Come on Eve! Really? Is that what God said? Why do you suppose He would say that, are you sure that is what He said? Use your head here, you need to be the judge of whether or not this is really what He meant, maybe we need to really rethink the interpretation of His words and by the way, don't get upset with me here, but is that fair? If you ask me, He may be holding out here and maybe robbing you of a little joy. It

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seems a little narrow and limiting to your freedom don't you think? I'm just looking out for your best interest here; I want you to be all that you can be. I want you to find your purpose in life. I want you to enjoy your freedom; I want you to have your best life now! So we may need to question God's word and character a little bit here.”

Now, she should have said, “Look reptile, I don't know you, but I know God and I know that He is precious to me. I know that He has given all of this to me and I trust Him, I trust His word and I resent your insinuation that somehow I need to be suspicious of Him! I resent your subtle suggestion that somehow I am being deprived by God's unfair restrictions on my life. Furthermore, He has given me a command and I will not question that command because my God is not only good, He is God! I will obey Him come what may.” But she didn't do that. Beloved, because she didn't do that, at that moment sin entered the world. It wasn't when she ate of the apple, it was right here. She walked right into Satan's trap. She began to doubt the character of God and the word of God. Instead of affirming His goodness and adamantly renouncing the idea that God is unfair and in refusing to go against His wisdom and will, she yields to temptation.

I also want you to notice Satan doesn't begin by calling a person to outright, overt rebellion. He is too clever for that. He wants to toy with your mind a little bit. To get her to say, “You know maybe that isn't really what he said, maybe I did misunderstand what God was saying. Maybe he didn't really mean that if that's what he said and maybe at some level I am getting the short end of the stick here.” But again at that moment God allowed His perfect universe to become infected with the metastasing corruption of sin. Ever since then man is not satisfied with all that God has given him. Isn't it interesting how we always lust for that which is forbidden? Put a child in a room and give him 427 toys to play with and tell him, “but this one toy you can't play with!” and watch what happens.

Ever since that tragic day Satan goes to great lengths to raise up false teachers that will tamper with the text to confuse you. False teachers that are ingenious at distorting scripture. Just look at the books that many of them write. Instead of using literal translations of the Bible, they will use every possible free translation and paraphrase they can find to support their view—translations that greatly deviate from the original languages. You see friends since that day man by nature resents God's character and rebels against His will. We cannot stand the fact that God is absolutely sovereign over all that He has created. We even question His goodness, we question His power, and we question His omniscience. We stand in judgment of His word. We say, “Well I know that's what it says, but I don't think that's what it means. Let me reinterpret that because after all, that doesn't fit into my agenda.” Or, “Frankly, I think what He is saying is untrue, maybe unfair and you can't really trust the Bible. After all, it's probably got alot of myths in it anyway. I've got a better way.”

So now with her fallen heart, she responds to him as if his argument is plausible. Certainly no need to fear some upright reptile speaking to her, she's in a perfect garden

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and never experienced fear before. Plus, according to 2 Corinthians 11:14, Satan “disguises himself as an angel of light.” So now with the lust of self-will and self-fulfillment alive in her heart, she begins to justify her suspicion of God. She no longer fully trusts Him, so she begins to question the constraints that she perceives has been set forth upon her according to His will.

Now notice verse 2, she responds to Satan’s cynicism by rehearsing God's prohibition, but with a slight twist: "The woman said to the serpent, 'From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat.'" I want to stop there. That isn't exactly what God said, right? Chapter 2:16 God said, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely." But now there is a subtle shift here emphasis, an insinuation that God might be a unfair, a little too restrictive, maybe holding out on her. Verse 3 she goes on: "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.'"

Wait, where did you get "touch it"? God never said that. That's a convenient addition to God's prohibition. Why? It's an attempt to justify her animated resentment towards God's unfair and restrictive will upon her life. She suspects that He is somehow depriving her of some pleasure or some freedom. How often do we all do that? We see the clear teaching of the word of God and we resent it because we want to go in a contrary direction and so we want to do everything we can to either blot out that verse or reinterpreted it to our liking.

Notice what she didn't say, "Look reptile, I don't know you, but I know God...I know that He is infinitely wise, He is a good and glorious God...so beat it!"
You know what else she didn't say? "Adam, come here a second. God come here."

Folks this is the proclivity of the human heart. In Proverbs 22:15 we read: "Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child." What is foolishness? It's that I can only be happy if I have my own way. Isn't that true with every child? What child naturally responds to authority? Satan is tireless in creating church's that think and act the same way—churches and church leaders that doubt and deny the character of God and the word of God.

So now that she has taken the bait, Satan is going to set the hook. Verse 4: "And the serpent said to the woman, ‘You surely shall not die!’" What he is really saying here is “that's not what God means? Come on, God doesn't judge rebellion! You really think that? He is such a loving good God. He doesn't judge that. There are no consequences to disobedience, assuming that is what that would be.” We hear this all the time, don't we? How many people call themselves Christians and deny a conscious, literal eternal hell and punishment? Everybody seems goes to heaven, especially in our culture. We just pass through some tunnel into some white light of serenity, some light of enlightenment. Or if you don't believe in that you can believe in reincarnation, or you can just believe that we are completely annihilated. Liberal theologians who deny the absolute

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truthfulness of the bible reject the doctrine of eternal conscience punishment even though Jesus spoke more of hell than He did heaven.

This should be no surprise. In John 8:44 Jesus described those who were hostile to God, those that resent His word: "You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do." Son ship is always predicated upon conduct. Like father, like son. He was a murderer, Jesus says from the beginning. By the way folks, this is the beginning. And does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it."

So he says, you surely shall not die! Verse 5, "For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened (in other words he knows that you will be given power to perceive things that you have never seen before. You're going to understand things that you've never understood before), and you will be like God (the promise of deity!), knowing good and evil." "You're going to understand what I'm trying to tell you." So God is a liar. That is essentially what he is saying. You're not going to die the moment you eat of the forbidden fruit, your going to be like God. Isn't that the way people think today? People want a God that will subordinate His will to theirs, right? People want a god that is malleable, that they can manipulate. They want a god that will ultimately worship them.

When I think of this deity notion that we read here, I think of the Jehovah's Witnesses. They say that only the 144,000 are "the anointed class," those that are born-again and going to heaven. The rest will live forever on a paradise on earth. They believe that unbelievers will be annihilated at death. There's no judgment.

The Mormons believe that you can become like God and have your own planet and there you will enjoy celestial sex and populate your own planet. You see the same parallels with Islam; there are direct parallels between Mormonism and Islam.

When you look at the mystical religions you see how they teach that man can ascend to increasingly higher levels of consciousness and deity. You look at the Quasi-evangelical groups among the Charismatics and the Pentecostals and they will tell you that you can become more like God through mystical experiences.

You look at the Word Faith heretics like Binny Hinn, Joyce Meyer, Joel Osteen, Kenneth Copeland. They believe that God created mankind to be a race of "little gods". They teach that man is a "little god" capable of creating in the same fashion as God did, through the power of spoken words. "Name it and claim it." Kenneth Copeland said this, "On the cross, Jesus won the right for believers to be born again back into the "god class." Resulting in "healing, deliverance, financial prosperity, mental prosperity, physical prosperity, and family prosperity." Folks this is where all that comes from.

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Even the seeker-sensitive gospel of evangelical pragmatism is a very man-centered gospel. It's the good news of self-fulfillment, not self-denial. It focuses primarily on having a purpose driven, successful, and happy life. It's a religion "all about me and my needs, not God and His glory." This is how Satan builds his church.

Again in verse 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." In other words, you're going to become wonderfully enlightened and alive in a new and glorious way!

Satan is saying, "God's got a serious character defect, He hates rivals." Of course Satan knew this first hand. "He can't stand anyone that tries to be like him. He is self-centered; he will not allow you to eat of that special tree because he knows that if you do you're going to be like him. He doesn't want that. He doesn't want to share his position; he doesn't want to share his abilities. He doesn't want you to know good and evil. He wants to keep all that to himself because if you have it, you would no longer need God to tell you what to do and He wants to keep you under his thumb. He doesn't want you to be independent of his tyranny."

Well of course all of these things are half-truths. It's true that God will not share His glory with anyone because He alone is the creator and He alone is holy. It's true that you will know good and evil. In fact in verse 22 we read, "Then the LORD God said, 'Behold, the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil.'" But they knew good and evil not like God who was separate from it, but like man who now has evil as a part of his very nature. You see all that Eve had known was good, but the moment that she eats the forbidden fruit she will know evil because it will be in her heart, not because the fruit had something evil in it. It's because of her selfish, sinful attitude.

Remember what James said in James 1:14, "each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death. Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren." But friends, Eve was deceived.

We must understand that Satan attacks the mind with lies. As a result of that, he begins to animate our emotions and activate our wills to rebel. He appeals to three categories of lust that we see in the world as described in 1 John 2:16, "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world" (this orderly system controlled by Satan).

So notice in verse 6: "When the woman saw that the tree was good for food (there's the lust of the flesh), and that it was a delight to the eyes (there's the lust of the eyes), and that the tree was desirable to make one wise (there's the pride of life), she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate."

It's not unlike the strategies we see today, it was new then, but it's the same thing we see today. This is the same strategy that Satan used with Jesus; you remember when he

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tempted Him in the wilderness? He began to try to appeal to his flesh, remember Jesus was hungry. What did Satan say? If you're the Son of God tell these stones to become bread. He appealed to his eyes. Remember he showed him all the kingdoms of the world and offered to give them to him if Jesus would just worship him. He even appealed to the pride of life. He said to come up to this temple. "I want you to take a nose dive off of the pinnacle of the temple and the angels will protect and rescue you. Then everyone will know that you are the Messiah and worship you." Of course Jesus didn't yield to any of those temptations.

So Satan has appealed to Eve in the same way. She swallows this delicious looking bait, hook, line and sinker. Notice the end of verse 6: "she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate." Here we see Adam enters the scene. The protector shows up. We know that he wasn't deceived in the same way as Eve. According to 1 Timothy 2:14, "but the women being *quite* deceived, fell into transgression." But of course Adam did partake of the fruit with Eve, although God doesn't tell us why. It's also important to note that it was Adam, not Eve that was held responsible. Why is that? Because of the biblical principle of headship: 1 Corinthians 11:3, "Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ." So Adam bears the responsibility and therefore in 1 Corinthians 15:22 we read, "In Adam all die."

Romans 5:12, "through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men."

So they rebel against God, they lust for self-will, self-fulfillment, and self-satisfaction thinking God isn't enough. Then in verse 7 we read, "Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin covering." A fascinating text.

Suddenly they are filled with shame because their eyes are opened to evil. They see their own wickedness in rebelling against God. Suddenly they actually experience something that they've never felt before and that is guilt, shame, and embarrassment. They are self-conscience and afraid. Moreover, it's fascinating how sin warps our ability to see our own sin. It separates us from fellowship with God and even fellowship with one another. It's interesting, Adam blames God for the woman He gave him in chapter 3:12, and Eve blames the serpent. Isn't that how we always do? We always blame somebody else.

But in chapter 2:25 we read, "The man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed." But now they are. Here's why, when sin entered into the world suddenly the battle between the body and the soul began. The body with its capacity for sexual pleasure is no longer pure; it's no longer an innocent expression of the spirit that is united to God. So being awakened to the guilt of their sin caused them to instantly experience the threat of embarrassing exposure to the presence of a holy God. Even the exposure to one another. So it was appropriate for them to cover themselves. This is why God places such a premium on dressing modestly and having sexual propriety. Because that is the

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natural expression of the awareness of our fallen nature, an appropriate reaction to guilt and shame so often experienced in our sexual lusts and immorality.

In fact later we read that God covers them with His own covering. He covers their guilt with His own covering. He killed an innocent animal, you will recall. A sacrificial animal of His own choosing to cover their shame. That covering of course pointed ultimately to the sacrifice of the Lamb of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, the one who would become our substitute and sacrifice for sin.

So folks as we close this morning let me just rehearse for you, here are Satan's methods that Paul was so concerned about. Here is Satan's strategy to grow his church. He is going to approach people who are alone and vulnerable with one purpose, to deceive them about the character and the word of God; to get people to question and reject the authority and the sufficiency of scripture—especially God's commands, including His design for the roles of men and women in marriage and in the church. Satan despises God's order in creation. You will recall in Revelation 2 in Thyatira, they wouldn't tolerate the women Jezebel (a pseudonym for a wicked woman who had great influence in the church).

I might add that any time you see a woman in leadership and having authority in a church, you know that it's a mark of spiritual defection. Moreover, Satan especially loves to target vulnerable women with lies. In 2 Timothy 3:6-7 Paul speaks of false teachers who, "enter into households and captivate weak women weighed down with sins, led on by various impulses, always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." We know that historically women spawned most of the cults and women make up the majority of their ranks. By the way that's not to excuse men, but certainly to say that this is a priority where Satan targets.

In Satan's church he is going to send emissaries, pastors, who will appear to be winsome, caring and knowledgeable. Like their father the devil, they will appear as an angel of light. They are what Jesus calls "wolves in sheep's clothing." Which literally means they will have the outward appearance of a faithful shepherd.

They will make it a priority to cause people to question the sovereignty of God and the authority of His word. They will get people to doubt God's goodness, to question the fairness of His will and convince us that somehow it's okay to question, even to challenge His authority. Satan will confuse people with counterfeits, offer alternative truths and pleasures that appeal to the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, the boastful pride of life. He will create churches that basically offer a religion that is all about you and your needs, not God and His glory. He will convince you that God is not the final authority that needs to be obeyed but that you also have a standard, maybe even the standard of the culture; after all we need to be politically correct. So let's vote on what the standard needs to be.

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He will twist God's word; he will confuse people. He will persuade people to believe that there exists a better way; that perhaps they didn't understand scripture, that there is satisfaction and joy apart from what God has designed, that they need to choose freedom, not bondage. That somehow the God of the bible is unfair and they need to be free to do their own thing. He will create a church that basically says, "God doesn't judge or condemn people for doing what they want to do; there are no real consequences for sin or rebellion? A God of love wouldn't do that! When you start doing your own thing and do what you want to do then your going to finally ascend to a place of spiritual superiority."

My friends, he will raise up and bless thousands of churches that will reinforce all of this so that you will feel good about yourself. Churches that have a low view of God and a high view of man. Their theology and worship will be man-centered, not God-centered. The church will be filled with phony Christians, and the few believers that do exist in those churches will remain spiritual infants unless they run to get of it.

Folks don't be ignorant; we are dealing with a supernatural, brilliant adversary of God. A diabolical genius, a theologian committed to our destruction. Eve didn't realize that, but we must. The next time we get together we will look specifically at the message, methods, and the nature of churches that Satan builds and blesses.

Let's pray together. Father thank you for the truth of Your word. I know, as your servant, that many of the things we have examined here today are highly offensive to people in our culture because we have deviated so far from Your word that when we hear it we react very similarly to Eve thinking somehow that it is unkind, it's unfair, there has got to be a better way, a different way. Lord I know, that it is only by the power of Your Spirit through Your word, that any heart be changed. So I cry out to You to do Your work, that we all might give You glory. In Jesus' name, amen.