

Intelligence for Temptation (Gen. 3:1-8)

Intro: The Department of Homeland Defense has essentially one goal—to keep our citizens protected from another terrorist incident. It also has one essential mode of operation—to gather as much intelligence about the enemy. Already we can see how invading the enemy’s domain and learning about their tactics can help foil their attempts to bring destruction to our citizens and property.

This is also a good strategy for the Christian. Satan is a spiritual terrorist. His goal is to destroy us. But we can foil his efforts if we know his modes of operation.

With that in mind let’s revisit tonight a familiar text—Gen. 3. Moses here gives the account of the fall of man and woman into sin. While doing so he gives us insight into how the devil works. This intelligence can help us better prepared to defeat him!

We can conceptualize Satan’s attack in six distinct steps (Virkler).

He maximizes the restriction.

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?’” (Genesis 3:1)
Think about the question the serpent asks Eve. Did Satan not know what God had said? Surely not! So, why does he ask it this way? Is it not to set Eve up? To make her question what God had said? If we could re-word, “Did God really say you couldn’t eat from any tree?”
And the woman said to the serpent, “From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; 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, lest you die.’” (Genesis 3:2-3)
Has Eve quoted God accurately? She omitted the word “freely”. This word called to mind the generosity of God; but God’s generosity has been overcome in her thinking by God’s restrictiveness. Thus, she even adds a restriction not found in God’s original statement. You shall not “touch it”.
Hence, Satan has cleverly made Eve think more about God’s restrictiveness than His generosity! And so he does today! He wants us to think that God is being unduly strict with us! He wants us to believe that there is more enjoyment to life than God is willing to let us experience. And so he seeks constantly to maximize the restriction.

You Christians can’t have any fun

He minimizes the consequences of sin.

Actually we could say, he denies the consequences of sin. He argues that what God has promised as a consequence of disobedience will not occur! And the serpent said to the woman, “You surely shall not die! (Genesis 3:4)

Did you know that Satan was the first teacher of the doctrine, “once saved, always saved”? He contended that Eve’s behavior could not affect God’s actions.

Satan’s approach is to minimize the evil consequences of sinful behavior.

He does not want people to think about the consequences of drunkenness or fornication or idolatry.

Sin will not hurt me!

He re-labels the action.

“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.” (Genesis 3:5)

How does Satan persuade a person that sin is not a sin.

He just gives it another name!

By eating you won’t be doing evil; you’ll be knowing evil!
Satan domain is not a “no spin zone”. In fact, he’ll spin every act of disobedience to look innocent and harmless. He’ll change the name:

He won’t call it “shedding of innocent blood”; he’ll call, “exercising reproductive choice”.

He won’t call it “fornication”; he’ll call it “an alternative lifestyle”.

He won’t call it “drunkenness”; he’ll call it “relaxation”.

He won’t call it “lasciviousness”; he’ll call it “adult entertainment”.

He promises another outcome!

This will be not a moment of death! Instead it will be an epiphany! Eve will see things she’s never seen before! She will be as god; she will know what God knows!
And so one sin after another is presented as having a positive benefit:

Reproductive choice will bring “freedom”

Alternative lifestyle will bring “self-actualization”

Drunkenness will bring “relief from life’s pressures”.

Lasciviousness will bring “harmless pleasure”.

He accentuates the desirability of sin.

Suddenly that forbidden fruit looked entirely different to Eve. Had she looked at it through God’s eyes, she would have been repulsed. There is nothing good that brings death. There is nothing pretty that brings death. There is nothing desirable that brings death.

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. (Genesis 3:6)

The forbidden fruit is now seen through Satan's eyes:

Good for food

Attractive to the eyes

Desirable to make one wise

Satan cleverly packages every sin. He presents it with beautiful wrapping. He excites the possibilities of opening the package.

He assumes the place of God.

When the narrative begins, God is truthful and generous. But when the narrative ends, Eve has become persuaded that God is a liar and unlovingly restrictive.

And what Satan had done is cleverly step into God's place. By his denials of God's word and by his clever obscurations he convinced Eve that he was the truthful and the generous one. Only he would reveal the whole story! Only he would give her what God had not been willing to give!

Thus, we see that the real evil of sin is seen not in the mere exchange of a right act for a wrong one. It is not the substitute of one law for another law. The real evil of sin is in the assassination of the character of God!

Think of this! Satan could not kill Eve, until he had first "killed God"!

And when he had successfully killed God, Eve was like putty in His hands! When we accept his presentation of God, we are vulnerable to every temptation!

That's why we cannot focus too much on God—upon His goodness, His faithfulness, His grace. For it is our belief in these things that inoculates us from Satan's accusations about God.

Conclusion: Tomorrow you'll face the enemy, I hope, a little smarter. Through this intelligence report, you'll know what to look for!