

Empire Church of the Brethren

Sunday Service Sermons

01 September 2024

False Promises

Satan is the great deceiver.

We are going to look at what he did in the Garden of Eden and see what we can learn from that experience for us today.

Text: "You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman. "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." *Gen. 3:4*

We need to know good from evil.

The problem of humanity is not really knowing what is good and what is evil.

Do you know good from evil?

Maybe today our false advertisements are like the deceiver.

Example: a woman had roaches in her apartment and nothing seemed to get rid of them.

The more she killed the more she seemed to have.

She saw an ad for a guaranteed roach eliminator.

She ordered it and when it came it was two pieces of board.

The instructions said, place the roach in the middle of the bottom board, then firmly press down on the roach with the top board.

It would eliminate the roach for sure but it was not what she had in mind.

Misleading advertisements or false promises are not new.

They have been around since the beginning of time.

The serpent, Satan, did so to Eve.

The serpent had no concern for Eve's well-being.

She was only a tool in the ongoing battle by Satan to lure people away from fellowship with God.

We see this in *Genesis 3*.

Promises of Satan.

Penalties won't come true.

Most of us obey rules and regulations because we understand they are devised for our own benefit.

For example, at a crosswalk there are signs telling us when it is safe to walk and when it is unsafe.

We obey those signs because we do not want to be hit by a car and be injured or killed.

Occasionally, as we wait for the light to change, someone will walk out into the street.

Cars slow down; some even stop.

Our minds begin to tell us we don't have to obey the Walk and Don't Walk signs.

We conclude that the cars will stop for us anyway.

A matter of personal safety becomes nothing more than a game of bluff to see who will stop first, the cars or the pedestrians.

Once the penalty of disobedience is removed, it is easier to disobey the rules.

Your eyes will be opened.

The same kinds of promises surround us today.

Those trying to live a Christian life are constantly bombarded with messages claiming the power to introduce one to "the real life."

The appeals of drugs, alcohol, and sex are widely known.

Find a "high" by participating in these; use them as avenues to know what life is really like, we are told.

Other people use power, money, or authority to make themselves feel important at the expense of others.

The promise is the same.

“Think of yourself first, use other people; drink, and be merry; then your eyes will be open to what life is about.

You will be like God, an appeal to the ego.

All of us feel a little uncomfortable with ourselves.

There are always those who are more talented or more attractive than us.

Here Satan promises that by ignoring God, Eve will be like the one who cares for her and her husband, the one who fellowships with them each evening.

Equality with God, that was the promise, and for Eve it was something to be grasped.

You will know good and evil.

The force of the Hebrew word is not knowing good as opposed to evil.

Rather, it is to know good at one end of the spectrum, evil at the other end, and all the things in between.

“Eve,” Says Satan, “not only will you not die from eating the forbidden fruit, you will end up being just like God. You will know all there is to know, You will be in on life for the very first time.”

The price for this promised transformation was disobedience to God.

Process of sin.

We can approach this passage and see only the defiant, rebellious act of disobedience.

Yet disobedience does not spring up full grown without roots to support it.

Disobedience is the climax of the process the fruit of the plant.

Seeds of doubt.

The seeds were the doubts planted in Eve’s mind, doubts about God and about his care for her.

Plant of disbelief.

The doubts sprouted, and a plant of disbelief sprang up.

The plant was fertilized by the false promises of the serpent and watered by Eve’s own experiences.

The tree offered her food; the food was pleasant to the eye, and eating it appealed to her pride, she would be like God.

Fruit of disobedience.

Only then did disobedience occur.

The process was complete.

Eve bought the false promises of Satan with her disobedience to God.

Results of Disobedience.

What Eve and Adam got was something very different than the promise to be like God and to know all things.

Personal shame.

Adam and Eve had purchased shame at who they were personally.

They looked at themselves and were embarrassed.

They wanted to hide themselves, so they made fig-leaf aprons to hide behind.

Altered relationships.

Adam and Eve also purchased an altered relationship with each other.

Before their sin they lived in an idealistic state in which they were helpers for each other.

They were one in every sense of the word and without shame.

Now, however, their individual identity caused them to recognize differences for the first time.

The oneness was replaced by separate physical identities.

Instead of standing together, now each was out for himself or herself; for when God confronted them with their disobedience, Adam blamed Eve for his sin, and Eve blamed the serpent.

Broken fellowship.

Their relationship with God was changed.

Instead of being like God, Adam and Eve were now frightened by his presence.

Instead of having fellowship with God, Adam and Eve hid from him.

Their disobedience had cost them the joyful presence of the one who called them into being and who sustained them day by day.

In one act of disobedience, Adam and Eve changed forever their relationship to themselves, to

others, and to their God.

Satan had promised more than he could deliver.

His promises had been false.

Adam and Eve had only been tools in the Deceiver's war with God.

Wars of today.

This war continues today.

Private lives.

The war continues in our private lives as we repeat the struggles of Adam and Eve.

Will we believe God and live in obedience to his commands, or will we believe the Devil and disobey?

Daily this is the question we face in our family lives, in our business lives, in our political lives, in our spiritual lives.

The pursuit of personal righteousness by God's people is a never-ending quest.

At its core is the single question of obedience to God or believing the false promises of Satan.

Public lives.

In our public life the question is the same.

Will we seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, or will we go after other things?

Our world is full of voices, some of them well meaning, who attempt to equate the kingdom of God with some political state.

Others declare that the work of God is dependent on preserving a particular type of economy.

At the altar of patriotism we are asked to bend our knees and worship.

Yet God's kingdom has thrived under dictators as well as democracy.

It has survived monarchies and anarchy.

The sun has set on many empires, but the sun has yet to go down on the kingdom of God and his Son, our Savior.

We love our country.

We sing its national anthem with pride.

Our nation's achievements in the world are our achievements, and its shortcomings cause us grief.

Yet to bow the knee at any other altar than the altar of our God is idolatry.

As Christians we hear the false promises of our public life, and we must declare that our first allegiance is obedience to our God.

To do any less would result in the same tragedy that disobedience brought to Adam and Eve.

Scripture does not end in tragedy for the disobedient.

Rather, the story holds out the promise of a restored relationship between God and humans.

Once that relationship is restored, barriers between brothers and sisters can be removed, and people can once again find peace within themselves.

The promise of *Genesis 3:15* was fulfilled with the coming of Jesus of Nazareth, God's Son.

Through faith in him we too can become God's children.

Through faith in him our disobedience can be forgiven.

Through faith in him our hopelessness can turn to hope for the present and for eternity.

Refute the promises of Satan and accept the gifts of God to all who believe and obey.

The gift of life and hope now and forever more.