

Empire Church of the Brethren
Sunday Service Sermons

22 September 2024

Challenging God

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.*

Hey, how did the serpent know so much?

And how was it that it was speaking to Eve?

Remember the story of Balak and Balaam?

It is found in *Numbers 22* and *23*.

This guy, a prophet of God, is riding along and an angel with a drawn sword is about to kill the prophet and the donkey moves and scrapes the leg of the prophet and after a few times of this the prophet tells the donkey what he thinks of him.

And the donkey answers and the prophet answers back.

No surprise, no, Hey you can't talk.

Here we have Eve speaking to a creature in a tree and carrying on a conversation with it.

If an animal spoke to me I would be taken back.

Wouldn't you?

But Eve just speaks to it.

It is things like this that make it easy for people to say that these stories are not real, just stories to make a point.

You can believe what you want but I believe the Bible as it is written.

So Eve must have been checking out the tree in the first place.

Then she is told to not trust and believe God but be suspicious of his motives.

Then taste and see.

She sees that it is delightful to sight and then takes a bite and everything is changed.

And there is no going back.

She gives it to Adam and he eats.

They say he knew better but he also knew that he and Eve were now terribly separated and he decided to go with her, whatever that meant.

Have you ever been lied about and have someone spread bad things about you?

I have. (Tell story)

The Devil lies about God.

Satan lied to Eve.

Although Satan directed his initial attack at Eve, the real target was God himself, and the ammunition was words attributed to God.

The serpent contended that God had forbidden the couple to eat the fruit from any tree in the garden.

Already the serpent was lying about God.

Eve corrected the serpent.

She knew the words of the Lord.

She knew that God had commanded that they not eat from only one tree, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Thus, armed with knowledge of the Word of God, Eve corrected the serpent.

She could speak from confidence born out of certain knowledge gained from learning the Word of God.

Eve got a foretaste of what Jesus would experience years later when he encountered the Tempter

in the desert.

When Jesus was tempted he quoted the Word of God as his rebuff.

Jesus knew the power of God's Word.

The point of the serpent saying it wrong was to engage Eve and get her attention and begin a conversation.

So the knowledge Eve had was accurate.

She judged the truthfulness of the statement the serpent made.

Then Satan makes God out to be the enemy.

He wanted to break the fellowship between God and humankind.

He then challenges what God had said.

Telling Eve that she would not surely die.

But she would become like God knowing all things.

Satan was attacking the divine nature of God.

Then he planted the notion of rebellion in Eve's mind.

Remember God had created man with great ability, little less than God.

Satan is telling Eve that the best thing for her to do is to become like God so she does not have to rely on God.

She can rely on herself.

So God's nature is under attack and Eve's nature is being expanded.

It is most difficult to refute charges on a person's character.

This is going on around us constantly.

In families some charges are factual.

They involve what one person said or did.

These can be proved or disproved by the actual facts.

But how about attacks about the nature of an individual or their character?

In business employees and employers often scream at each other across bargaining table or picket lines.

Each branding the other as the one in the wrong.

Misunderstandings bring charges against other people.

One often sees what they are looking for.

The facts can be misinterpreted because of one's bias or presupposition.

A mate may do something they think is loving and it can be taken as the opposite.

A parent may discipline a child but the child sees it as abuse.

An employer might do something for their employees but it is taken wrongly.

Each perspective can be partly correct and partly incorrect, but different perspectives cause things to be seen differently than they are meant to be.

Joys of sin for a season.

Sin presents itself as attractive, as possible.

As an animal is lured out of the safety of its den by a tempting bait, so sin attempts to lure the Christian into its snare.

The fruit on the forbidden tree looked good.

And it was more than fruit, it had power.

It looked like it must taste good and it was a means to self-actualization.

Mankind would become much more than they were.

They would become equal to God himself.

The problem was, Eve did not actually know what was about to happen.

She was believing a lie that tempted her to want something she would not have.

She was not like God after eating the fruit of the tree.

She was a sinner and separated from God.

The allure of sin is to have what we think will make us better or happier.

It might be nice for a season but in reality it makes us much less because it separates us from the source of life, God himself.

Sin lures its prey.

Can you see Eve inspecting the fruit and considering what it might do for her?
As she ponders it nothing bad is happening to her.
So she continues.
And she does not realize what has happened until God approaches.
And in her shame she hides.
Sin happens step by step.
First in the mind then in action.
Then once done it changes the heart.
Her eyes were opened, Satan was right, but the result of her eyes being opened was that she could see her sin and guilt.
She knows what she has done and invites her husband to join her so that she is not alone.
Sin has its payday.
The bliss of sin is but for a season.
So many things that destroy us begin so innocently.
Many of the things that destroy us in excess are good for us in moderation.
We need food, we need love and acceptance, but too much can do us in or damage us.
Like the song says, looking for love in all the wrong places.
Eve and Adam found out that God was right.
They suffered the death of relationship with each other and brokenness before God.
They believed the Devil's lie about God, and they paid the price.
This brokenness so early in our history was fixed many years later in the blood of Jesus The Christ.
God's response.
God could have killed mankind off right then and there.
His perfect plan was gone, never to be lived out by his perfect creation.
God did not respond with vengeance.
He gave mankind his mercy and sent them out to fend for themselves since that was what they seemed to want.
God does give his creation the desires of their heart.
Be careful what your heart desires.
The rest of the Biblical story is God reaching out to mankind to give them a way back to himself.
Abraham was to become a great nation so the world could see the loving God of creation and he was to bring God to the whole world.
Then God sent his Son into the world that the world might be saved through believing in him.
We can almost hear the words of Jesus on the cross, with arms outstretched as he declares to the world, Look!, God is not your enemy. God is not against you. See how much he loves you,
And Jesus died so that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.
Do not believe the Devil's lie about God.
From the beginning God has reached out in mercy, grace, and steadfast love.
He is reaching out even today.
The Bible says, Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.
Today you can be saved or come into a close walk with God.
Resist the Devil and accept Christ as your best friend and Lord of your life and allow him to bring you into all that God has planned for you.
Living for Him this day and always, then forever in His presence.
It don't get no better than that!