

The Suspicion of Eden

By Pastor Kelly Sensenig

Old Uncle Oscar took his first airplane ride. Knowing that he had been somewhat apprehensive about it, his friends were eager to hear how it went. At the first opportunity, they asked him if he enjoyed the flight. "Well," commented Uncle Oscar, "it wasn't as bad as I thought it might be. But I'll tell you this. I never did put all my weight down!"

This is how some Christians take the promises of the Bible. They've never "put all their weight down" on the promises of God's Word. As a result, they are plagued by doubts, fears, and uncertainties. In this study, we want to reflect on how Satan attempts to cast suspicion on God and His truth. Why? So we as Christians don't put all of our weight down and find our complete guidance and provision in God. We want to rediscover how Satan tries to deceive us by creating doubt in our minds regarding God's Word (the truth) and God's character. Satan is a master strategist in leading us away from truth and God through suspicion or doubt. So let's state our proposition clearly. Satan wants us to become suspicious of God and His Word. Genesis chapter three reveals his tactics.

I. The serpent of Eden

Genesis 3:1 says:

"Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made..."

Apparently, Satan entered a serpent (snake) and came before Eve to deceive her. Therefore, historically, it was Satan, appearing as the serpent, which sought to seduce Eve into doubting God and His Word. The serpent that appeared to Eve is later revealed to be none other than Satan himself.

Revelation 12:9

"And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him."

Can this narrative of the serpent deceiving Eve be accepted as factual? The Apostle John believed it was factual (Rev. 12:9; 20:2). The Apostle Paul believed it was factual (2 Cor. 11:3). This is not the only instance of a talking animal in Scripture. God gave a voice to Balaam's donkey to restrain the madness of the prophet (Num. 22), and the Apostle Peter accepted this account as being literal and factual (2 Pet. 2:16). These three apostles were inspired by the Holy Spirit to write as they did. Therefore, to reject the account of the fall as literal is to reject

the inspiration of Holy Scripture. There are allegories in the Bible, but this is not one of them.

Satan's appearance to Eve as a "serpent" speaks of his craftiness and trickery. The Evil One comes to you, as a serpent, in order to try and fool you and get you to sin. He is very subtle and knows what he is doing.

The serpent emphasis of Satan in the Bible speaks of his trickery and deception.

2 Corinthians 11:3

"But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ."

The Bible declares that the serpent "beguiled" or seduced Eve into sin. How did he do it? It was through trickery that he got Eve to sin. This verse verifies that the appearance of Satan as a serpent denotes his "subtilty" (craftiness, trickery, cunningness). This is how he came to Eve and often appears to us today. The devil does not always come to us, as a roaring lion, every time he tempts us (1 Pet. 5:8). He often appears as a serpent (2 Cor. 11:3) that is full of craftiness and trickery.

Many times it's through Satan's "serpent appearances" that he gets us to sin. Satan does not always come with red flashing lights, blowing horns, and waving banners! He often secretly slithers into our lives and begins to work in a subtle way. In Genesis, Satan tried to deceive Eve by appearing as a good messenger. He uses the same tactic on us today. The devil comes to us as an ice-cream man, wearing a white shirt, and he is carrying an ice-cream cone!

This reminds me of the story of the little boy. Alexander was trying to save all the pennies he could in order to buy a baseball bat. But he had a hard struggle. One night when he was saying his prayers, his mother heard him say fervently: "O Lord, please help me save my money for a baseball bat. And, God, don't let the ice-cream man come down this street!"

Yes, Satan can appear as an ice-cream man or an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:13-14). For this reason, many of his temptations appear to be something that are godly, righteous, and even sanctified! Satan gradually gets us to make perverted priorities, or choices, and eventually this breaks us down spiritually.

Charles Spurgeon said:

"It is notable that nearly all the poisonous fungi are scarlet or speckled and the wholesome ones brown or grey, as if to show us that things rising out of darkness and decay are always most deadly when they are well dressed."

Satan appeals to our minds ("so your minds should be corrupted" – 2 Cor. 11:3). He deceives our minds by making sin look like the right path to take. The mind is

the devil's workshop! Satan lights up the path of sin and makes sin appear as something that is right to do and acceptable.

E. M. Bounds once said this of the devil:

"He has access to the minds of men from which he ought forever to be barred. But he has so much of diabolical trickery that he clothes the meanest act with fairest guise, and conceals a world of infamy with beautiful rainbow colourings."

Satan camouflages sin. The crafty serpent makes the path of sin look like the only sensible thing to do. Satan disguises the evil so it cannot be seen! He makes the dark seem light. The devil calls "evil good, and good evil" and puts "darkness for light, and light for darkness" and replaces the "bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!" (Isaiah 5:20). How utterly diabolical and deceptive he is! This is why the believer must be on guard. As Peter warned, "gird up the loins of your mind, be sober ... " (1 Pet. 1:13).

There is no such thing as sanctified sinning! Beware of this. Satan places thoughts in our minds (2 Cor. 11:3), which we think are developed by sanctified reasoning. However, these thoughts really come from Satan. The Evil One comes along and says, "You are saved and have eternal life. It's okay to live the old life just a little bit. You can serve God and get away with some of your old habits. Indulge, but do it moderately, and you will be okay." Satan appears to us and says, "It can't be wrong if it feels so right, no one will know, God made you this way, a little bit is permissible, it won't hurt you, a little trash TV or romance novel won't make you fall, you can stretch the truth in a small way, a little contemporary music won't harm you, everybody is doing it."

But God has a different story. He declares that "All unrighteousness is sin" (1 John 5:17). We can be sure that the devil is at work for the Bible speaks of "the wiles of the devil" (Eph. 6:11) or his schemes, tricks, and crafty techniques. Our problem is this; we are often ignorant of his devices (2 Cor. 2:11) and don't even realize what he is trying to do in our minds, hearts, and with our personal lives.

Someone has said:

"Our adversary is a master strategist, forever fogging up our minds with smokescreens."

This is what Satan is constantly doing as he seeks to cast suspicion upon God Himself and His Word (truth). Martin Luther wrote:

"For still our ancient foe
Doth seek to work us woe;
His craft and power are great,
And, armed with cruel hate,
On earth is not his equal."

The old serpent (Rev. 12:9), Satan, came to Eve in the form of a snake in order to disguise himself and get Eve to fall. He does the same routine on us. My grandpa used to hate snakes. Every time a snake would be seen around the house my grandmother had to kill it. She would get the hoe and chop off its head! We need to remember that God has given us a hoe that we can use to chop off the head of the serpent today and defeat Satan. It's His Word.

Ephesians 6:13 declares:

"Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand."

II. The suspicion of Eden

Let us remember that Satan's kingdom is built on lies, doubt, suspicion, and speculation.

How does Satan create suspicion in our mind?

A. He makes us suspicious of God's Word.

This suspicion is seen in three ways.

1. Satan doubts God's Word.

"Yea hath God said" (Gen. 3:1). This is casting doubt upon God's Word or what God had said to Eve. The devil puts a question mark where God puts a period! He asks, "Is God's Word really true after all? Did God really say what He said? Did God really mean what He said? Did you misunderstand Him? Did you misinterpret what He said? Did you really hear Him properly? Are these verses in the better manuscripts?"

The devil casts doubt on the absolute standard of God's truth. Many times he does this in a subtle way. He sends a message across our mind which goes something like this: "God's word can't be right in this specific area. He must be wrong about this one thing." The Serpent tempts us by saying, "God's Word does not apply to my specific situation in life. God's standard does not apply to the kind of friends I should have, or to the kind of music I should listen to. God's Word can't offer me any help or solution for the situation that I'm facing." Satan casts doubt on God's Word and the application of God's Word to our lives.

G. Campbell Morgan had already enjoyed some success as a preacher by the time he was 19 years old. But then he was attacked by doubts about the Bible. The writings of various scientists and agnostics disturbed him (Charles Darwin, John Tyndall, Thomas Huxley, and Herbert Spencer). As he read their books and listened to debates, Morgan became more and more perplexed. What did he do?

He cancelled all preaching engagements, put all the books in a cupboard and locked the door, and went to the bookstore and bought a new Bible.

Morgan said to himself, "I am no longer sure that this is what my father claims it to be--the Word of God. But of this I am sure. If it be the Word of God, and if I come to it with an unprejudiced and open mind, it will bring assurance to my soul of itself." What was the result? "That Bible found me!" said Morgan. The new assurance in 1883 gave him the motivation for his preaching and teaching ministry. He devoted himself to the study and preaching of God's Word.

Satan wants us to doubt the truth of God's Word through the invasion of secular reasoning and philosophy (1 Tim. 6:20). But the Word of God will stand the test of time. The Bible stands! Therefore, we must stand upon it! Don't allow Satan to cast doubt in your mind regarding the absolute standard of God's Word.

Again, you might be asking yourself these questions: "Does God's Word really apply to my personal situation in life? Is God really commanding me to do this? Is what God said really correct in this particular area? Must I really be submissive or faithful to my husband? Does God expect me to witness to my neighbor? Must I attend church faithfully? Is it really wrong to read this type of literature, have these friends, watch off-color TV shows and movies, or go to this particular place? Does God really condemn my personal habit of using tobacco or my practice of social drinking? Does God really view my decision to dress in this way as being immodest?"

In the back of your mind, Satan wants you to challenge the truth, or the divine standard, so you can sanctify your sin and find approval for your wrongdoing. Satan wants you to doubt God's Word, so in the end, you can be lead away from the truth and what the Lord wants for your life and family.

2. Satan denies God's Word.

Satan said "Ye shall not surely die" (Gen. 3:4). This was a lie. God said that they would die if they ate the forbidden fruit ("thou shalt surely die" – Gen. 2:17). In John 8:44, Jesus declared that the devil "is a liar, and the father of it." So, after Satan casts doubt on God's Word ("Yea, hath God said" - Gen. 3:1), he normally gets us to deny it ("Ye shall not surely die" - Gen. 3:4).

God can have it written down in black and white terms, but it's amazing how Satan can get us away from seeing the absolute standard of truth, and cause us to actually deny it, for the sake of our feelings, friends, desires, and personal wishes. Let us never forget that the Serpent of Eden communicated a revelation that was supposedly superior to the revelation of God ("Ye shall not surely die"). This is the basis of the lie of reincarnation which is widely accepted and condoned today. You will never die. Instead, you will be recycled back to earth in another life form.

A man recently told me that if a person does not fulfill their destiny in this present life that God would send that same person back to earth in another body. This particular man told me that he had lived over in Tibet as another man in a previous life. He also believed that he had been to earth three times possessing bodies of both men and women. "Ye shall not surely die."

Satan denies the truth of God's Word. He comes to us and says, "God's Word is not true after all. There is something better than God's way! There is something better than God's terms. God Word is outdated." Beloved, we cannot afford to follow the mental suggestions of the Serpent. Satan may tempt you to have an affair outside the marriage bond. The devil has a way of getting you to reason that sexual promiscuity is the best path for you to take. He whispers in your ear, "You need happiness, some enjoyment in life, something extra which has been missing. It will be okay, God never said that you can't have a fling now and then, after all, everybody is doing it."

Satan fogs up our mind and gets us to deny what God's Word clearly says.

1 Corinthians 6:18

"Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body."

3. Satan distorts God's Word.

Satan said in Genesis 3:5:

"For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil."

Satan distorted God's truth (what He had said) by editing God's mind and adding to God's Word. This has always been one of his manipulative ploys. The Evil One makes the bold claim that God had forgotten to tell Eve something. God knew something that He did not convey to her. He was hiding something from her which was something that was exciting and good. In essence, the devil came to Eve and said, "God should have told you the whole story, but since He didn't, let me give you the rest of the details and finish the story for you!" So Satan proceeded to distort the truth by adding something to God's Word and editing what He had previously said.

The devil promised Eve that they could "be as gods." This is the New Age Movement teaching and Mormon teaching. Both these cults teach that one can eventually become a god, if not in this life, in the next life. Of course, God never said that Eve would become like a god, if she ate the forbidden fruit, and that she would become as knowledgeable as God Himself. Satan was adding to God's Word. Today, Satan attempts to do the same thing in the realm of our minds. He distorts what God says, by adding to the truth, or editing it in some way, so it becomes more palatable and to our liking. Satan wants to show you another way;

a better and more exciting way! And He does this by editing what God has clearly written and said.

Don't allow the devil to give you his own rendition of God's Word. Satan has a new and improved version that he is constantly trying to sell us. Eve fell for Satan's plan to change God's Word. In fact, after being influenced by the devil, Eve also edited and changed God's Word.

Genesis 3:3

"But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die."

God never said, "Neither shall ye touch it." However, Eve came to this conclusion and gave her own rendition of God's Word. Here is the point; when we begin to try and change what God has said, or clearly means, we will eventually distort God's truth and make it sound overbearing, cruel, and harsh. If the devil can change God's Word in the realm of our thinking, he can effectively get us to change our lives, so we will follow his devilish and destructive ways.

When you fall for Satan's lies (John 8:44), you will find yourself moving away from the absolute standard of God's Word. We must "hold fast (Rev. 3:3) to what God has clearly said and revealed, or as one elderly and godly lady told me, "Stick the stuff." In other words, we must cling to the truth and the clear road revelation or path God has established, or as the Bible declares, "remove not the old landmark" (Prov. 23:10).

Psalm 119:11 gives this wonderful promise:

"Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee."

"Thy Word is a lamp to my feet,
A light to my path always,
To guide and to save me from sin,
And show me the heav'nly way."

B. He makes us suspicious about God's character.

In Genesis chapter three, we discover that Satan also wants us to change our thinking about God's goodness, justice, and His motives. He casts suspicion upon God's righteous actions and conclusions. In short, Satan casts doubt upon God. Since God did not allow Eve to eat of the forbidden fruit, He must be holding out on her and keeping something from her life that she really needed and deserved. The Evil One loves suspicion and doubt. This is especially true in relationship to God and His character.

Satan attacks God's character in two ways:

1. He questions God's goodness.

In the Garden of Eden, Satan questioned the character of God's goodness.

Genesis 3:1

"Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?"

This is also part of the suspicion of Eden. Satan wants us to become suspicious of God's goodness, truth, wisdom, and plan for our lives. He begins to attack God's character, since his main ambition or objective is to dethrone God and magnify himself (Matt. 4:9). Satan wanted Eve to think that God was no longer good to her. Satan asked, "Why didn't God allow you to eat from all the trees?"

We hear similar devilish delusions today: "Why doesn't God allow you to listen to rock music? Why has God told you to not cooperate with ecumenical practices? Did God really say that you should give your money to church every week? Why can't you drink socially? Did God really say you can't have sexual fulfillment outside marriage? Why can't you dress provocatively, tattoo yourself, and live like everyone else in society? Why has God said you cannot marry this unbeliever? Why did God say you can't engage in youthful lusts? Why did God command you to never view certain images on the Internet and TV? Why can't you have some fun now and then?"

It goes on and on! The devil keeps attacking the goodness of God. Satan is a slimy, slithering, and seducing Serpent that wants us to doubt God's goodness. He wants us to think that we are missing out on something that is good, exciting, and beneficial for our lives because of God's narrow and prejudiced mind. Instead of focusing on the abundance of trees God said she could have and enjoy, Satan tried to get Eve to focus on the one tree that she was forbidden to partake of. This is what Satan does to us as well. Satan wants us to lose sight of the good things that God has given to us.

But Psalm 84:11 declares:

"For the Lord God is a sun and shield: the Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly."

Satan's aim is to get us to think that God is withholding something beneficial from our lives or that God has shortchanged us in some way. It's amazing how the Serpent gets us to lose sight of God's goodness and His blessings by focusing our mind or attention on the one thing we are forbidden to have.

I remember seeing a jar full of jelly beans. I happened to notice there was only one black jelly bean in the jar. That one jelly bean stuck out like a sore thumb. Your eyes always focused on that one jelly bean in the jar. In a similar way, Satan got Eve to focus on the one tree that she could not have. She could have all the other trees that a good and gracious God provided for her. But instead of

focusing on all the other trees, Satan got Eve's attention on the one tree she could not have.

I heard of a Christian man who, about six months before retirement, was laid off, and the company finagled it so he lost all of his benefits. He had prayed before this layoff, "God. I want to be a good husband. I want to be a good father. I'm going to go to church. I'm going to spend my life serving you," and six months before retirement, whatever security he had was taken away. Now he says to God, "God, that's not fair!" His heart became bitter against God for allowing such a thing to take place in his life. He began to doubt God's goodness.

The following remarks of Eve will tell us that she bought into Satan's plan which was to cast suspicion upon God's goodness.

Genesis 3:2-3

"And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die."

Satan is a scam artist. Eve's speech shows she is now playing into the serpent's hands by focusing on the very thing that God has forbidden. He tries to manipulative our thinking about God and His goodness by getting us to focus on the very thing that God has withheld from us. Satan's play is simple. If we focus on the thing that God has forbidden, sooner or later, we will take the devil's bait. This is what happened to Eve.

James 1:14

"But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed."

The danger of listening to the voice of the Tempter and following his thoughts is illustrated by R. Spencer Stanhope, in a picture in the Manchester Art Gallery, entitled "Eve." In it he represents the Serpent whispering in her ear while she, listening, plays with the sin within her mind. At the same time, unseen by her, he bends a branch of the tree with a coil of his body. And as Eve dallies with the sin in her mind, an apple drops into her open hand. The lesson is this, when the temptation has been permitted to remain in our mind, or thinking process long enough, the means of gratifying the temptation is close at hand.

We must understand that the number one desire of Satan is to slander God. Satan comes to us and says, "Is God really that good since He will not let you eat of every tree in the garden?" "Is God really good when He says you should never drink alcoholic beverage and have a little fun with the girls or guys now and then?" "Is God really good and just when He allows you to suffer pain and hardships?" "Is God really a loving God when He allows people to starve in other lands?" "Is God fair when He chooses to allow your child to be inflicted with a certain disease and defect?"

This is part of the suspicion of Eden. Satan concludes, "God is holding out on you. God isn't so good after all." Satan is the father of lies (John 8:44). It's Satan who is not good. God is always good!

Psalm 34:8

"O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him."

God is good in the sunshine and the rain. He is good in the ups and downs of life. God is intrinsically good and right in all that He does.

Psalm 145:17

"The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works."

I remember going to a teen fellowship following a church service in Michigan. Several of the teens played a song on the piano and did a masterful job. They went up and down the scale and showed their skill. Afterward, a little girl, approximately seven years of age, wanted to take her turn at the piano. She sat down and began to play, with her two little fingers, an old familiar chorus.

"God is so good,
God is so good,
God is so good,
He's so good to me."

Satan's strategy is to blur our vision of God, His goodness, and His sovereign authority over our lives. He paints God as a mean, unloving, and uncaring God.

Recently, I heard of a man from Jordan, a Christian who came to the United States, who went through seminary and got his doctor's degree in theology. Afterward, both he and his wife went back to Jordan, to their homeland, so they could be missionaries. As a result of the Gulf War and its aftermath, for the first time Jordanian after Jordanian after Jordanian was coming to know Jesus Christ as Savior. The mission field that had been so barren was becoming a tremendous harvest, so much so, that this man and his wife came back to the States to recruit more people and money to help them with the job.

While they were here, his wife went to the doctor and found that her throat was filled with cancer. The man remained in the States trying to see what they can do to keep his wife alive. Meanwhile, there's no one overseas to work with Jordanians. He said, "God, this doesn't make sense. This can't be what You want for our lives. My wife and I have given our lives for Jesus Christ, and our time and energy as well. We've given it all to You. God, it seems that everything should be coming together, instead it's exploding apart. Relationships for which we've sacrificed are breaking up and spiritual jobs to which we've been giving our lives are going out the window."

This man was casting doubt upon God's goodness, ways, and justice in relationship to the events that were occurring in his life. How about us? Perhaps we have doubted God's goodness because of a certain illness that has come into our lives, or some financial difficulty. Satan may be tempting us to doubt God's love and goodness because of some tragedy that has taken place in our family or personal lives.

Satan paints God as a killjoy. He comes to us and says, "Did God say you can't eat of all the trees in the Garden? Are you kidding me?" "Did God say you can't gratify your lust a little bit and enjoy some of the finer things of life?" "Why can't you dress more provocative, after all, you are living in the 21st century?" "Why can't you let down the reins a little bit and have some fun once in a while?"

The devil wants us to think that God is overbearing and overruling. "God never lets you do anything!" Throughout this whole process, Satan gets us to think about ourselves more than God! He sows the seeds of discontentment and ungratefulness and begins moving us in a wrong direction. He does this to draw us away from the blessings of God and His will. Satan wants us to focus on the alleged hindrances, obstacles, and deficiencies of God.

2. He questions God's motives.

Please not again what Satan did to Eve with his serpent-like suggestion.

Genesis 3:5

"For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil."

Satan was implying that God's motives for Eve were not pure. He was keeping Eve from the fruit so that He could still be in charge and remain the only God of the universe. The devil wants us to believe that our obedience to God is best for God, but it's not best for our own personal lives and agenda. So, implying this, the devil was questioning God's motives for giving His commands. Satan comes along and says to you, "God has ulterior motives and He is not really interested in benefitting you. He's only interested in Himself and doesn't want you to advance in life." Satan misrepresents God!

2 Corinthians 10:5 helps us combat wrong thoughts against God:

"Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

The devil's wisdom is always pitted "against the knowledge of God" or the knowledge about God's true character, motives, ways, wisdom, and authority. A deception occurs in our minds and emotions when we believe something that is not true about God's character or what He has said. The believer must be

“increasing in the knowledge of God” (Col. 1:10) so he will not be fooled regarding God’s eternal character, wisdom, love, goodness, and motives behind what He says and does.

Second Corinthians 10:5 reminds us that every believer must bring all his thoughts under Christ’s rule and authority (“bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ”) which involves thinking as Christ would think, desiring what He desires, and bringing our thoughts under His lordship and authority (2 Cor. 10:4-5). How do we do this? How do we place our thoughts under Christ’s authority and rule? In daily living, believers must come to the place where they immediately say, “I give no consent to this thought” and go on with their victorious living. Furthermore, we bring our thoughts under Christ’s authority or rule by replacing the wrong thoughts with the absolute standard of truth. This is accomplished by using the “sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God” (Eph. 6:17). Out with the bad and in with the good!

We are called upon to demolish the wrong thoughts (“Casting down imaginations”) or those intellectually, defiant thoughts that question God’s motives for restricting us in some particular area of life. We must decisively reject the wrong thoughts and agree with God’s Word and thoughts on any given subject (Eph. 6:17). This is how we bring our thoughts under Christ’s “captivity” or rule and “every thought to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor. 10:5). If we don’t follow God’s thoughts, we will end up following the devil’s thoughts, which he has strategically placed within our minds. This is why we need to “gird up the loins of your mind” (1 Pet. 1:13).

Dwight L. Moody said that one of the happiest men he ever knew was a man in Dundee, Scotland, who had fallen and broken his back when a boy of fifteen. He had lain on his bed for forty years and could not be moved without a good deal of pain. Probably not a day had passed in all those years without terrible suffering. But day after day the grace of God had been granted him, and when Mr. Moody was in his room it seemed as if he was as near heaven as he could get on earth.

When Mr. Moody saw him, he thought he must be beyond the reach of the tempter, and he asked him, "Doesn't Satan ever tempt you to doubt God and to think that He is a hard master?" "Oh, yes," he said, "he does try to tempt me. Satan whispers in my ear, 'If God loved you, couldn't He have kept you from breaking your back?'" "And what do you do when Satan tempts you?" "Ah, I just take him to Calvary, and I show him Christ, and I point out those wounds in His hands and feet and side, and say, 'Doesn't He love me?'"

This bedridden saint of God did not have much trouble with doubts; he was too full of the grace, goodness, and love of God.

3. He makes us suspicious about God’s will.

Not only does the devil create suspicion about God's goodness and motives, he also attempts to cast suspicion on God's will for our lives. As we have already seen, the desire of Satan is to slander God. Added to this scheme, would be his plan to cast doubt upon God's purpose and plan for our lives.

Satan comes to us and says, "Is it really God's will to not eat of every tree in the garden?" (Gen. 3:1). Are you sure about this? Is it really God's will that you never reach your full potential to "be as gods" (Gen. 3:5). Are you really convinced about this? Satan places the thought in our mind, "If you stay with the Divine limitations that God has set (God's will), then you will never reach you potential. There's no future for you in God's will. Therefore, you must step out and make something of your life." This is part of the suspicion of Eden, which Satan plants in our minds, so we might stray from God's will and purpose. The devil has a way of fogging up our thinking process and says, "God is holding out on you. He's keeping you from something that is for your own profit. You deserve better. You're not getting what you're really worth."

The satanic conclusion of Genesis 3:5 goes something like this. True satisfaction and enrichment in life is found outside the boundaries of God's will. You can move outside the realm of God's prescribed plan and find greater fulfillment in life and still be spiritual in doing it! Satan gets us to think that we can be disobedient and still be right. In a subtle way, the Evil One gets us to focus on our false need (we need something outside God's will) and then we take the bait and step outside the boundary of God's purpose and what is best for our lives. This is exactly what Eve did.

Satan comes along and says, "You need something better." "You need a new husband that will really meet your needs." "You need to change your manner of dress in order to draw more attention from men." "You need to start using tobacco and alcohol again to help calm your nerves." "You need to drink sociably to feel accepted and find some relief from life's pressures." "You need to get involved with some of the old friends to help you lighten the load." "You need to listen to some of the old music to give you an escape from life's demands." "You need to stay away from church and find more rest, relaxation, and down time." "You need to be free." It goes on and on. Satan is continually trying to create false needs in your heart so that you will act upon them and leave the parameters and safety of God's will. Let us be on guard and not become ignorant of his devices (2 Cor. 2:11).

A little boy learned a lesson from the family dog. His father used to put a bit of meat or biscuit on the floor near the dog and say, "No!" The dog knew he must not touch it. The boy said that he remembered how the dog never looked at the meat or biscuit. The dog seemed to feel that if he looked at the food, the temptation to disobey would be too great, so he always looked steadily at my father's face.

There is a lesson we can learn from this dog. As a believer, we must always look on the Master's face and this will keep us from following the Tempter's voice and allurements. We are advised to keep "looking unto Jesus" (Heb. 12:2), which means we must never stop reminding ourselves of His provision, goodness, fairness, will, and purpose for our lives. If we get our eyes off of Jesus, we will allow the devil to fool us regarding the Lord's purpose and plan for our lives and His personal love and goodness, which He extends toward His saints (Ps. 34:18-19).

Oswald Chambers said:

"When you really see Jesus, I defy you to doubt him."

When we see God in all of His holiness, righteousness, goodness, love, mercy, grace, and fairness, we won't want to step outside His boundaries. We will be encouraged and satisfied to stay within the parameters of His perfect will for our lives. In doing this, we will save ourselves from much heartache and misery.

Where are you at in your personal life as a Christian? Have you been allowing Satan to place thoughts in your mind, which are against God, truth, and His will for your life? Have you allowed the devil to deceive you into thinking that your way is better? If so, you need to destroy these thoughts and replace them with the absolute standard of truth – God's Word. God's Word is true, God is good, His ways are best, His motives are pure, and following His will results in true satisfaction and fulfillment. Any other conclusion or ideas that you might possess about God and your own way in life are compared to wisdom that is "earthly, sensual" and "devilish" (James 3:15).

Do you want to be free from devilish thoughts and the power of sin? There is a way out. You don't have to live in delusion and defeat.

Jesus said in John 8:32:

"And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

