

Genesis 2:7-9,15-17;3:1-7 ⁷ And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being. ⁸ The LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed. ⁹ And out of the ground the LORD God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. ¹⁵ Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it. ¹⁶ And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; ¹⁷ "but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die." ^{3:1} Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?'" ² And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; ³ "but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.'" ⁴ Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. ⁵ "For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." ⁶ So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. ⁷ 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 coverings.

Matthew 4:1-11 Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. ² And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry. ³ Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread." ⁴ But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'" ⁵ Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, ⁶ and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written: 'He shall give His angels charge over you,' and, 'In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone.'" ⁷ Jesus said to him, "It is written again, 'You shall not tempt the LORD your God.'" ⁸ Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. ⁹ And he said to Him, "All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me." ¹⁰ Then Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.'" ¹¹ Then the devil left Him, and behold, angels came and ministered to Him.

Two very different cases of temptation. Or to be more precise, two very similar cases of temptation but two very differing results. One leading humanity into sin generation after generation. Another leading humanity to salvation for all eternity.

First, we find Adam and Eve in the garden. They live in utter perfection. Their every desire is just moments away well within reach. Food plentiful. Companionship ample. Trouble non-existent. They have but one law to follow. Do not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. But then Satan enters. Satan questions God's word, "Did God really forbid you to eat from any tree? Did God really say that you would die? Surely you will not die, but you

will be like God.” Satan’s word vs. God’s Word. Eve fell, Adam followed, and the rest of humanity was doomed by their disobedience.

Next we see Jesus in the desert, living in a place of utter desolation. His every desire far removed from both sight and touch. Food non-existent. Companionship absent. Trouble it seems all round. The weight of keeping the entire law of His Father rests upon on His shoulders. Then Satan Enters. Satan first questions God’s word which He had just spoken at Jesus’ baptism. “If you are the Son of God, make these stones turn to bread.” When that fails, he quotes the Word of God spoken through the prophets. “Throw yourself down and the angels will surely save you.” Finally, he demands direct disobedience to the Word of God proclaimed throughout the Scriptures. “Bow down to me, and everything will be yours.” Satan’s word vs. God’s Word. Jesus stood firm on the Word of God. Redemption followed, and the rest of humanity is saved by His submission.

Adam and Eve had everything and fell. Christ has nothing and stood. What was the difference? Was it simply that in one case it was Adam and Eve and in the other case it was Jesus? Or was there even more to this situation that we can understand that determined the result? For, if it is just that Jesus stood because He was Jesus and Adam and Eve fell because they were human, that leaves us with no real confidence in the face of temptation. For, we are not Jesus, but humans like Adam and Eve. What was it that made Jesus able to stand? And are we able to do as He did and stand as He did in the face of temptation?

The answer is quite simple. What was Jesus’ weapon against the temptations of Satan? Knowledge of and trust in God’s word. Jesus did not just put up His Jesus shield and block the temptations of Satan. Rather, He held fast to the one thing He knew most certain, the Word of God. He knew and trusted God’s Word above all else and stood firm on those words. In fact,

Jesus knew the Word so well that He defeated Satan using only about two chapters of all of the Scripture in His defense.

Have no doubt. The ways in which Satan operates haven't change since the Garden of Eden with Adam and Eve or the wilderness with Jesus. Satan works no different today than he did in those days. First, he first tempts us question God's Word. Then He offers his own false promise of happiness or success if we choose his word over God's Word.

Just think of how Satan has worked in our world today. Satan has asked many people in our world, "Did God really say that any homosexual relationship is wrong? Surely he meant only bad abusive homosexual relationships. Go ahead! Be with whoever you want and you will finally be happy." How many people have fallen for that lie in our culture?

But let not just throw mud at one particular sin in our world. For, it is easy to cast stones at sins with which we do not struggle. But what about those things with which we do struggle? What lies of Satan are we easily tempted to fall for in our lives?

What about the lies we have believed in regards to our own sexuality. Satan loves to ask us, "Did God really say to wait for marriage to experience the gift of sex? Did God really say that we must be careful what we let flash across our eyes on our TVs, computers, and movie screens? Does He really mean that our lips should be completely free from coarse sexual talk? Surely not! Listen to your body's desire and you will be happy. Humans are sexual creatures, it is only natural." How many of us have bought this lie in one way or another at one time or another?

Kids, how many times has Satan whispered in your ears, "Did God really say to honor your father and mother? Did He really mean never to lie to them, and to listen to what they say? You know better. Follow your friends and you will be truly happy." Ever bought into this one?

The list of temptations that Satan loves to throw at us is endless, but his tactics are the same time after time. He attacks God's Word and counters with a promise of his own.

How then is it that we fight the temptations of Satan? We fight them the same way that Jesus fought them. We must know and trust God's Word and use that Word as our weapon. And the great thing is that in our pursuit to know God's Word better, the Holy Spirit will work in us the trust we need to fight Satan's ploys. We do not need to work on trusting God's Word. That is God's work is us. It is He who creates the trust. Our effort need only be directed at knowing God's Word and being in that Word daily.

Not being in the Word leaves us so very vulnerable to temptation. And yet, it seems that that this truth that we should know does not often give way to any action in our lives. The statistics about Bible reading are dismal. Low percentages of Christians, maybe 10 percent or so, are in the Bible daily. Younger generations of Christians are especially prone to not be in the Word regularly outside of church. And men who are to be the spiritual leaders in the home are less likely to read the Word than their female counterparts. And forget about these statistics that look at the church as a whole. We can see the symptoms of spiritual sickness right here. Around one tenth of the people that come to church here on a Sunday come to bible class as well. And I have no idea how many of you open your bibles daily in your homes. But I reckon not as many of us as we should be. Satan loves this situation. He loves it when God's people have no desire to really study God's word. For it makes his job of tempting us to sin so much easier. The less we know, the fewer weapons we have in the fight.

Christian friends, the Christian church's neglect of studying God's word must stop. We must return as churches and as individuals to reading and studying God's word regularly. You and I must do this. We must fall on our knees today and admit to God that we have not been in

His Word as we ought to be. And we must admit that not knowing and trusting the Word has led us into all sort of sinful behaviors. If we do not repent, we will just continue to fall for Satan lies and not receive the blessings which God wishes to give us in His Word. So we must repent and allow that repentance to bear fruits as well. We must not only say that we should be in God's Word more often but take real, tangible steps toward that goal.

For as we are in the Word not only will we be prepared to fight temptation but also have held before us again our Savior. Our Savior that withstood ever temptation perfectly in order that He might remain sinless. Our Savior who remained perfect in order that He might bear our sins instead, yes even our sins of not being in His Word. Dear friends, Jesus has died for you. He has rose for you, and he gives to you this day in this place his forgiveness again in His Word and His Supper. He has forgiven today even for your neglect of His Word. And now He wishes to speak to you daily in His Word in order that He might strengthen your faith in that Word and prepare you for whatever temptations come your way. For as one who has been there in the flesh facing temptation in the wilderness, he knows from experience that those who know and trust God's Word are well prepared to battle with the devil. Yes, God loves to grant His people the victory over Satan He won at the cross not only at the time of our death, but every day of our lives in the face of temptation. If we simply will open His Word, He will give to us that victory. May we in faith do led to do so. Amen