

SERMON NOTES

From *In Touch With Dr. Charles Stanley*



The Great Deception

KEY PASSAGE: Genesis 3:1-6 | SUPPORTING SCRIPTURES: Genesis 2:16-17 | Ezekiel 18:4
Romans 6:23 | Revelation 12:9

► SUMMARY

One of the most important lessons God has for us is found in the first book of the Bible.

After the account of God's creation in Genesis, we then get a description of the great deception that has affected every human being from that time forward. When Satan deceived Eve, and both she and Adam disobeyed God, sin entered the world, and we've been dealing with the consequences ever since.

► SERMON POINTS

To deceive means to lie, mislead, misinform, and lead astray. This is the method Satan used to drag the entire human race into sin, and he continues to use this tactic by convincing us of one basic idea.

The Great Deception: We can sin without consequences.

God had given Adam and Eve a clear command, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die" (Gen. 2:16-17). The account in Genesis 3:1-6 bears witness to the fact that no matter what anyone else says, no one can sin without suffering the consequences.

The Tempter

"Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made." (Gen. 3:1). This serpent was not like the snakes we know today because it probably stood erect and may even have been attractive since Eve was not

repulsed when it started a conversation with her. Only after it was cursed by God for its part in the fall of mankind was it condemned to crawl on its belly in the dust.

This was a creature God allowed in the Garden to test Adam and Eve, and he's still around today. His goal was to convince Eve that what God had said was incorrect. He's identified in Revelation 12:9 as "the great dragon" and "the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world." Neither his goal nor his tactics have changed. He's opposed to God and continually lies, trying to deceive mankind into believing that there are no consequences for sin.

The Temptation

In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve had everything they needed or could possibly want. There was only one restriction given by God, and that's exactly what the devil focused upon when he asked Eve, "Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?'" (Gen. 3:1). Eve answered, "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, or you will die'" (vv. 2-3). The devil wanted her to desire what she didn't have.

Then Satan directly contradicted the Lord, saying, "You surely will not die!" (v. 4) and pointed out something else Eve lacked. "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" (v. 5). As she started considering the forbidden tree, Eve noticed it was "good for food" and "a delight to the eyes" and "desirable to make one wise" (v. 6). Satan uses the same approach today trying to get us to focus on what we don't have but would like to possess. He

wants us to doubt what God has said in His Word and desire an experience that will stimulate and satisfy our senses. This is why some people pick and choose what they want to believe in the Bible. They want a loving God but not one who restricts them in any way or warns them about the consequences of disobedience.

The Tactics

Satan's deception is progressive in nature.

- **Doubt.** First of all, he led Eve to question God's word.
- **Denial.** Doubt leads to the denial of truth.
- **Deception.** Once we deny the truth of God's Word, we are headed for full blown deception regarding His nature and commands.
- **Disobedience.** Next, we do what God has forbidden because we don't believe Him.
- **Destruction.** Finally, we suffer the destructive consequences of sin because of our disobedience.

Satan masks his deceptions in beautiful packaging that appeals to our natural senses and desires. He promises that there will be no repercussions for indulging in sinful practices that God clearly says will end in destruction. Before yielding to the devil's temptations, we should always consider the consequences that will inevitably follow.

The last thing Satan wants us to think about is the devastating outcome of sin. That's why he tempts us to minimize our sin by claiming that nobody's perfect or that we just made a mistake. We've also fallen for his deception when we only focus on the goodness of God and not on His righteousness and holiness, which require that consequences follow sin.

When the Holy Spirit controls our lives, He reminds us of the painful outcome of disobedience because He's both the giver of truth and our protector. People who are living righteously and obediently before God can recognize sin and deception and know what is right and wrong.

God's Word leads us into truth and warns us of the self-destructive and harmful nature of sin. The Lord's commands are not harsh but loving. He knows we're fighting a spiritual war against Satan, and He wants to protect us from the damage that disobedience and sin will wreak in our lives. Our obedience to God and His Word is our protection and a witness to those around us.

Any form of disobedience in our lives results in static in our souls, a feeling of distance that, if not corrected, leads to separation and spiritual decline until eventually our spirit becomes hardened to the things of God. At this point the Lord may use calamity to bring us back into fellowship with Him.

The Tragedy

Adam and Eve's story began with perfection and ended in tragedy.

- They heard God's truth but listened to Satan.
- Their innocence was turned to shame.
- They experienced the guilt, shame, and fear of sin.
- They blamed others for their sin.
- They experienced God's judgment and their own extreme loss.
 - They lost their innocence.
 - They lost their relationship with God.
 - They lost their perfect home in the Garden.
 - All humanity became sinful.
 - Pain, suffering, hardship, shame, and loss entered the world.

► RESPONSE

- How has Satan tried to tempt you by shifting your focus?
- What consequences of sin have you experienced that will remind you of the danger of going down that path again?
- Why is it so important not to take that first step into sin? How have you seen one sin open the door to more sins and disastrous consequences?

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