

09.25.24

Genesis
Chapter 3 - God's Grace Questioned
The Treachery of Selfish Ambition (vs. 4-5)

My wife informed me today that Chuck Swindall was retiring. I remember going to Chuck's church when it was in Fullerton, just down the street from Biola. I think in October he hits 90 years old, but I think he's continuing his radio show. So, that's good. I myself am preparing as well to release things. I told my wife, I said, "I remember watching my dad when he was teaching me how to drive, and he seemed uncomfortable. So, as time went on, we would go on little family trips and I think the last family trip that I went on with them, I was 17, and I said, "Dad, won't you let me drive?" Wow, it was hard for him to give up that wheel, but he let me drive. I just don't think he enjoyed the trip. It's hard letting go of the steering wheel, isn't it? I mean, you're so used to driving. So, the Lord's teaching me how to do that.

We're now in Genesis 3, and as we come to this passage, we're reminded of not only the subtlety of sin, but we're reminded of the treachery that oftentimes come from our own selfish ambition. Our perception is that somebody made a sin, i.e. through temptation or "the devil made me do it," "the serpent made me do it." However you want to frame that, but the truth is we're tempted by our own lusts.

If you don't know the passage very well, just mark off to the side, James 1:14, because it's very clear within that particular verse that the reason why you sin is by your own lust inside of you. What temptation does or what the serpent does, or what we would perceive this evil force does through temptation, is he reveals what's in our hearts. People oftentimes wonder, "Well, why have a serpent? Why have one to tempt me?" Because he draws out the reality that you would keep suppressed in your own heart.

So, the very phrase if you look at Genesis 3:1, reads this way,

"Now the serpent was more crafty..."

And we talked about this last week, but I just want to reiterate the word "*ārûm*" makes mention of "laying bare." So, what craftiness does is it reveals things that are hidden, and this is what the serpent does. He begins to reveal the things that have been hidden in our hearts, so that when Eve sins, it's not the serpent that made her do it. He was deceptive, there's no doubt about it, as Corinthians so aptly puts it in 2 Corinthians 11, "as the serpent deceived Eve." He's

very deceptive, but the deception came because of her desires. You're not going to be deceived if you have the right desires. If your heart is right it's impossible. But when our heart is not right, we can lie to ourselves. I would say the wonderful thing about the temptation is it reveals what we've been wrestling with all along because you have to remember God's wanting genuineness, and though we might say with our lips, "We love You. We want to follow You. We want to obey You." You know, "This people honor me with their lips, but their heart is far from me." What is God telling us?

So, it is necessary that these things be revealed, and oftentimes you read passages such as in 1 Peter, and then in James 1 which says that this testing that comes in is like fire that brings forth gold. God is bringing us through the times of testing. Hardship as well is a kind of testing as well as temptation. The words "testing" and "temptation" are actually interchangeable, and it is the same word. So, a lot depends on your response. If in fact you're drawn to do whatever you're led to do, and it's wrong, that's a temptation. If in fact you're not, it's to test and God is purifying us through this. It's also revealing our desire to follow Him. So, praise God for the testing. Praise God for even the temptation. As James would say, you ought to consider it all joy when you have these things come in your life because it tests your faith.

Once again, to show you the passage in 1 Peter. I like the way that Peter puts it, because there's this sense of realization that through these trials and tribulations and difficult times, God is really revealing the proof of real. "Is this real gold or fool's gold?" Basically.

(1 Peter 1:3) "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

(1 Peter 1:4) to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away..."

In other words, we're going for the real; something that will last, right?

"... reserved in heaven for you,

(1 Peter 1:5) who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

(1 Peter 1:6) In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials,

(1 Peter 1:7) so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

(1 Peter 1:8) and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory,

(1 Peter 1:9) obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls."

So, the legitimacy of your faith is really being tested. When you think of the legitimacy of your faith, the question fundamentally that God is asking is, "Do you love Me?" And we go, "Sure. You know we love You." And He goes, "Do you love Me more than these?" And you start seeing the temptations come in. We might even say, "Well, You know I love You." He goes, "Let's see." And as those temptations start coming, they begin to reveal our hearts, and our hope is that the genuineness comes out as well.

So, we come to this passage and just a good reminder, as we've been going through the Book of Genesis, it's clear that God has been clearly gracious, and it is His grace that is overflowing in creation in Chapter 1. So, you see the grace of God in creation all through the chapter. What's interesting is that every time God is mentioned in Chapter 1, it is "*Elohim*," which is referencing His great power, His great strength. You think of somebody that's literally omnipotent, of all power, and what does He do? He creates good things. So, in everything that He's creating, you see God's grace and His great power and His great strength and his Great Majesty, and we're reminded of that.

We take a turn in Chapter 2 because it then goes into this sense of personal relationship with God. Just to let you see this, if you look in verses 4 and 5, when God is mentioned, it is "*Y^hōvâ 'ēlōhîm*," "LORD God," do you see that? It's every time He's mentioned now in Chapter 2.

So, verse 7, then, "*Y^hōvâ 'ēlōhîm*".

Verse 8, "*Y^hōvâ 'ēlōhîm*".

Verse 9, "*Y^hōvâ 'ēlōhîm*".

Verse 15, "LORD God," once again, "*Y^hōvâ 'ēlōhîm*".

In Chapter 2, it's "*Y^hōvâ 'ēlōhîm*". Now, what that means is, and what we know about the name "*Y^hōvâ*" is that you go into the time in which Moses was leaving for the Exodus or getting ready, God was preparing him. When God comes before him, he goes, "You're telling me to do certain things, I don't even know Your name." And God goes, "I'm going to tell you My name." So, within that particular passage, God calls Himself "*hāyâ*" or "Yahweh." In the passage, the "I AM," the only uncaused cause, the self-existent One, but more specifically, when He uses this name, it is His name personal. So, what He's saying, "You get to know My name."

When you read in John 15, when Jesus turns His disciples, He says, "You used to be kind of like servants, but now you're My friends. Now, I'm going to tell you everything." So, when God revealed to Moses His name, that was God being the covenant God, the God of relationship with His people.

So, all the way through Genesis 2, the reason why His name is mentioned this way is because God is becoming personal to man and everything that He's doing in Chapter 2 is in a personal relationship with man, whether it's the forming of the dust, the breathing in the nostrils; whether it is the bringing him in the garden and letting him till, it's all for the relationship, giving him the woman, encouraging the relationship for him to have with the woman as well. You see God in a very, very personal position with Adam. So, that's what's being emphasized in Chapter 2.

So, what we have in Chapter 1 is God's grace in creation; His great power. You can see His grace in creating great things and good things.

Then in Chapter 2, we see God's grace toward man specifically because once again, man becomes the focus and the relationship with man becomes the focus of that particular chapter.

When we come into Chapter 3, the whole battle is, will man receive this grace or will man question God's grace even after seeing His goodness and after seeing His personal relationship with man? The answer is, he will question it. I think this is what makes everything so horrific. We think in terms of sin in the sense of sin is something that God punishes me for, instead of thinking sin is something you do against God who loves you. Why would you be so hostile towards the One that loves you? Why would you not care for Him? As much as He's done for you, why would you not love Him? Why would you not be loyal to Him? Why would you not trust Him? That's bizarre when you think about it, and it is the most horrific thing that we could do. It's literally like somebody coming in that loves you so much and they buy you a gift and you grab the gift, you open the gift, and you say, "I don't want to have anything to do with you." And you start focusing your whole attention on the gift. As Romans says, we love the creation rather than the Creator, and it's just the hostility of man in doing this. This is inside of us and it's because of pride. So, as we looked at last week, the subtlety of sin and how pride so easily comes in, and it's a hidden thing. We don't want to admit it, but God's going to reveal the heart. As Hebrew says, He lays all things bare, right? Once again, there is a purpose in the temptation, and it is to reveal.

We now come to this passage and once again, the serpent is at the focus as the serpent was last week. We looked at the beginning in which he was "more crafty," and then by simply asking a question, he begins to stir certain thoughts into the mind. You see the woman is vulnerable for a number of reasons. I thought Talan brought out an interesting point last week. He goes,

“She hadn't received the command personally herself.” Adam had received the command not to touch or not to partake of that particular tree. Then, she added to it, but I think there is a part of that where she might have felt inferior in the sense of her husband was privy to information and he handed it down to her, so she must be inferior. So, if you're feeling inferior, then the serpent is going to play on the fact of what you're feeling. So, once again, I believe that these are all hidden emotions; as James would so clearly put it, we're tempted by our own lusts. So, that's already there. You have these feelings, but they start coming out as certain questions are being asked, and I know we want to blame everybody else.

So once again, this verse that we're going to be looking at this week starts off,

(Genesis 3:4) “The serpent said to the woman...”

Genesis 3:1 starts off, “Now, the serpent was more crafty.”

And then as it goes to the next sentence,

“And he said to the woman...” So, we're having two times that he's talking to the woman, or we see this conversation beginning, and in both cases the reference is made to the serpent. I just want to emphasize as well, once again, the definition of “serpent.” The word that is used in the text is really describing the character of the serpent. In fact, his name means “hissing one” which sort of makes a lot of sense really, because you see the kind of subterfuge that is there as well as that Jeremiah actually refers to the fact that even the way that he goes through the grass or whatever, we call it a snake in the grass, you can hear sort of like a rustling, but nothing loud, just kind of sneaky; something going by. So, “*nāḥāš*” is the word that is being used within the text and actually the root word is emphasizing “whisperer.” It's where we get the word “divination” which is conjuring up. So that you go to these religions that conjure up, maybe necromancy, calling up the dead, and they're kind of called whispers; calling up the dead. Proverbs reminds us that somebody whispering, is there something attractive about it? If you're yelling, people are trying to put you out, but you start whispering, people are starting to lean over trying to find out what's being said. It must be pretty important if somebody's whispering. So, part of the allurements is through the whispering. The way that he's talking to the woman, I actually believe is a sense of just whispering in her ear. It's not pushy, it's “she's the one in charge.” Basically, he's coming from this angle, “You're the one in charge. I'm going to ask you. You know, I'm thinking God said this.” “No, no, He didn't say that.” She's going, “Ok, let me teach you. Let me tell you what He's saying. He says don't even touch it.” Of course, she's going a little bit further, but hey, she's the expert, right? So, she's feeling pretty good about herself. I mean, she's taking the bait throughout, but this is already in her heart. So, we have this whisperer, this conjuring up.

It is interesting, if you look with me in 1 Samuel 15. Once again, there are certain passages that most of us are pretty familiar with when we think of Saul in particular, which was that king that the people wanted, and God gave them their wish. In this particular chapter, Samuel had told Saul, "You need to destroy the Amalekites," and he tells them the reason why. Because when the children of Israel came out of Egypt, the Amalekites were taking advantage of them and were attacking them, and God says for that they need to be destroyed. So, he sends Saul out, and he goes, "Now, here's the deal, utterly destroy every single one of them." He's very clear in what he tells him to do. So, Saul goes out and he goes, "You know, I kind of like the king. I'm going to spare Agag," which is the king, and they have some pretty nice things. So, he's going to spare some sheep and some other things. The people felt like that was a good idea, too. So, it was kind of a cooperative thing that they did together, and they began to hide things, of course. When it comes right down to it, Saul blames the people and says that he had nothing to do with it. It was their fault. The point is that he doesn't do what God told him to do.

(1 Samuel 15:9) "But Saul and the people spared Agag and the best of the sheep, the oxen, the fatlings, the lambs, and all that was good, and were not willing to destroy them utterly..."

They were not willing to do what God told them to do.

Now, when Samuel comes, he goes, "Saul, you didn't do what God told you to do." Of course, Saul goes, "Yes, I did" which is what most of us do when we're caught.

(1 Samuel 15:15) "Saul said, 'They have brought them from the Amalekites, for the people spared the best of the sheep and oxen, to sacrifice to the LORD..."

"We're just thinking of You, God. We were taking these things in so that we could worship You in a greater way."

(1 Samuel 15:17) "Samuel said, 'Is it not true, though you were little in your own eyes, you were made the head of the tribes of Israel? And the LORD anointed you king over Israel,

(1 Samuel 15:18) and the LORD sent you on a mission, and said, 'Go and utterly destroy the sinners, the Amalekites, and fight against them until they are exterminated.'"

Now, you can't get any clearer than that. I know some people might start going in the realm of, "What do you actually mean by "destroy"? I don't know." But anyway, "utterly destroy" is pretty descriptive.

(1 Samuel 15:19) "'Why then did you not obey the voice of the LORD, but rushed upon the spoil and did what was evil in the sight of the LORD?"

(1 Samuel 15:20) Then Saul said to Samuel, "I did obey the voice of the LORD, and went on the mission on which the LORD sent me, and have brought back Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites."

I mean, he even admits that he did something that God told him not to, but he thinks that's probably ok because his perception is, "I think I know what God really meant by that." You know how you read a particular passage, and it doesn't settle right with you at first, and you go, "I don't think God really meant that. This is what He really meant." So, you begin to explain it. I mean, this is how we get all kinds of strange doctrines, because people start going into that realm; instead of just saying, "What does it say?" They go, "This is what I'd like it to say." And then they go from there. They begin to twist it. So, he says basically, "I know what God meant to say. He meant to say, 'Spare Agag, and you know, why don't you keep some of the sheep and we can have a sacrifice and it'll be unto Me, and everybody will be happy.'" Well, it's absolutely not what God said.

(1 Samuel 15:21) "But the people..."

Here again, he throws the people under the bus.

"But the people took some of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the choicest of the things devoted to destruction, to sacrifice to the LORD your God at Gilgal."

(1 Samuel 15:22) Samuel said..."

And this is the key point that I want to emphasize,

"... Has the LORD as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices

As in obeying the voice of the LORD?

Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice,

And to heed than the fat of rams.

(1 Samuel 15:23) "For rebellion is as the sin of divination..."

Did you see that? What is rebellion? It's as the sin of divination. Now, the "divination," and as we're going back, it comes from that root word of the serpent. In which there is a sense of conjuring up; a sense of, "I know what's best." If you think about divination, or more specifically, prognosticators, we used to have a place off Beach Blvd called "Madam Palm," and you could have your palm read or whatever. I guess there are a lot of things that you could have read. I don't know, but I never went. She always had some pretty nice used cars. I never could understand what the connection was there. Anyway, there are people that are out there, whether it's the horoscope or whatever, but they're prognosticators; they're diviners so to speak. They're basically telling you your future. The point is that they know something. That's

why people go to them is because the perception is they know something. So, this picture of a serpent whispering, and that sense of divination is like one saying, "I know what's going to happen."

The passage that we're looking at in particular is in the sequential imperfect, which seems to convey that all of this is kind of a setup with a cumulative effect. He starts off with a basic question, "Did God say...?" And now we come into the passage in which he goes, "Let me tell you what God meant by that." And he becomes a prognosticator. He becomes somebody that gives you insight into the mind of God. Think about that. Wow. So, the magnificent and interesting passage within this text. So, the serpent just said this one simple phrase here in Genesis 3:4, "The serpent said to the woman," is bringing that sense of there really is an influence that is drawing upon her lust and her desires, and just the fact that he's whispering it. The text basically reads as an infinite absolute, which means that when he says, if you look at the phrase here in verse 4,

"The serpent said to the woman, "You surely will not die!""

There is this sense of certainty with intensity. The fact that it's in the imperfect is telling us that he's probably saying this over and over again. So, "You surely shall not die. You surely shall not die. You surely shall not die." Quite a conjurer, isn't he? He's prognosticating something that he doesn't know anything about. He doesn't know the future. He doesn't know what God is thinking, and this is one of the great crimes within the texts, because he'll ultimately say in verse 5,

"For God knows..."

What do you know what God knows? How do you know what He's thinking? You couldn't possibly know what He thinks. There are so many voices out there that are telling us that they know what our future holds; they know everything about what is important. They're whispering sometimes in our ear; they're luring us; they're telling us that they can prognosticate the future. In fact, most of what we buy is in perception of the future; what the future may hold. Instead of resting in the One who holds the future, we're more concerned about knowing everything. Then, in the pursuit of knowing everything, we reject the One who controls it, and that's part of the treachery, because part of the lust of our hearts is that we're wanting control and we're wanting knowledge more than we're wanting a relationship. It's all about the present, it's not about the relationship.

So, the passage reads this way in verse 4,

"The serpent said to the woman, "You surely will not die!

(Genesis 3:5) "For God knows..."

That he would even think in those terms. I was thinking about the passage in Isaiah, that fundamentally says in Chapter 55, His ways are higher than ours, as high as the heavens are above the earth. I mean, how could you know the thoughts of God?

1 Corinthians 2 will emphasize that as well. "Who knows the mind of God?" It just asks the question. It is examining.

If you look with me in Isaiah 40, it makes reference to that as well. I like this particular chapter, especially because it starts off with God desiring to comfort His people, and you can't think of a more wonderful message than that. Then, you have this wonderful picture of the prophecy of John the Baptist coming in verse 3 and the voice of one crying in the wilderness, "Make straight the ways of the Lord." And you can hear God calling and beckoning and reminding us that all flesh is like grass. "So, come to me. I'm the answer to your problems."

But if you'll drop on down to verse 12, it reads this way as it begins to describe God,

(Isaiah 40:12) "Who has measured the waters in the hollow of His hand..."

What he's talking about clearly, in this passage is that His measurements are too vast for us to even imagine. I mean, to imagine that He can measure the waters in His hand is beyond our way of thinking.

"... And marked off the heavens by the span..."

Yeah, a span is basically from thumb to small finger. I mean, who would measure the heavens with the smallest source of measurement? It was basically half a cubit, and a cubit was like from your hand to the elbow, but when he's talking about the fact that He takes the heavens, and He measures them, he's saying that He's very detailed in measuring something that goes beyond our imagination. It's hard to think that way.

"... And calculated the dust of the earth by the measure,
And weighed the mountains in a balance
And the hills in a pair of scales?"

Verse 13 is actually going to unite these thoughts together with this.

"Who has directed the Spirit of the LORD..."

Now, the word that he uses there for "directed" is "*tākan*," which interestingly enough, if you back up into verse 12, "marked off" is the same word, "*tākan*". That's measuring.

So, when he says in verse 13, "Who has directed," what he's saying is "Who has measured?" Now, the question that he's asking is, "Who has weighed out, who could convey equally, in an equal measure what God is saying?" In other words, as accurate as God is in everything that He

says, could you then explain in a way that would equally describe exactly what He said with the comprehension of why He said it?" Can you measure that out equally to what He says? The answer, of course, is absolutely not. The big problem is that we're so arrogant in which we oftentimes go into the realm of, "I know what God was saying." And I tell you, I keep pulling myself back. I'm like Isaiah, I stand before God and I go, "Ok. I put my hand over my mouth because I have no idea what I'm talking about." And that's why, to me, it's very important you don't add to it; you don't take away from it. What does it say? Just simply, what does it say? Because adding to it is divination. It's the spirit of rebellion. It's you saying, "I know what He's thinking. I can see things that You can't." That's you rebelling against God. "God, whatever You say. I'm not going to turn to the right. I'm not going to turn to the left. It's what You say, I'm going to do that."

I was talking to somebody this last week, not somebody that goes to the church. Usually, when I give an example, it's not somebody that goes to the church. So, just relax. They were talking about something, and I said, "That's not what it says at all." And I said, "Where you're coming from is just humanistic speculation." And I said, "It's a travesty." I didn't hear from him after that, but I told Connie that I couldn't let that pass. The imagination was going into a realm in which it was saying things that were just not true about God. I mean, there are certain times where we would like to make God look nicer in a particular passage. Have you ever had that feeling? So, you're reading the passage, and it says, "And God chopped off all their heads," and you're going to go, "He didn't really mean to chop off the heads. It was an accident or something like that." But it's those passages, like in Romans 9 where it says, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated." You're going, "Well, that's kind of a relative word, "hated."" What does it say? Once you find yourself trying to explain God, you become a diviner.

So, Isaiah says,

(Isaiah 40:13) "Who has directed the Spirit of the LORD,
Or as His counselor has informed Him?"

God seems to know what He's talking about. Are you going to then reinterpret these things? You better be just. You better weigh it properly because His way of thinking goes far beyond our imagination and the things that He weighs out, you could never take in all of the things that are involved in his decisions. You couldn't know them. I mean one, you couldn't know all the contingencies that could exist, and you can't know the future. You can't know how it affects every person in the room. You can't know any of those things. The fundamental point is, you better be accurate if you're going to speak for God.

The horrible thing in all of this is that the serpent is saying, "I know what God's thinking." And he doesn't. You go back to the passage, in which he throws out not only that he knows what

God is thinking, and not only in the sense that he seems to be very belligerent and very confident in the fact that, "I know you're not going to die." How can you know that you're not going to die? God said that you were going to die. "In the day that you do this, you will surely die." And the serpent says, "You shall not surely die." It's one of the things we've been reading, in particular in Galatians 1, when Paul says, "If any man preaches to you another gospel." You know, you start changing these words.

I think of 2 Peter 2:1, where he talks about those that come in introducing destructive heresies. Just to let you know, a heresy is something that comes in that causes divisions, and more specifically, it's an opinion with a different aim than God's. So, oftentimes, heresies come within the church in which the goal isn't to glorify God, it's to accomplish something else. So, the person comes in and it causes division because it's not the same goal as God's. That's a heresy. So, Peter talks about those that come in and what you read within this passage is basically the beginning of a heresy, in which the serpent is coming in and he goes, "God doesn't think this way. God is actually coming to a different way of thinking because of you." Now, the word that he uses for "knows" within the text seems to have this conveyance of "by virtue of God observing something, now He's coming up with something," which is really against His character because God is absolute. So, He doesn't change, but the serpent is trying to convey that God is changeable by virtue of what you're doing. "You have more control on God than you think you do" is kind of the signal that he's sending. Did you notice that all through Chapter 2, it was "*Yahweh 'Ēlōhîm*"? How is the serpent introducing Him? "God." He's going to keep Him as generic as he can and he's going to keep Him as common as he can because the more common you can make God and the more generic you can make Him, the less important He is. If you can in any way convey that He's not a personal God, He's not a loving God, all the better. It's in our hearts.

When you think of that passage in Matthew 24, where the guy comes in, and the master has given all the ones the different things to do and finally he's coming back and he's saying, "What did you do with what I gave you?" And the last one goes, "I knew you to be hard. I knew you to be unforgiving. I knew you to be treacherous. I knew you to be difficult. I knew you to be stingy." However, he was nothing like that, but that's how he perceived him. By virtue of perceiving him that way, that's how he responded.

(Genesis 3:5) "For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened..."

The word "eat" is emphasizing a consuming. A bizarre statement, but actually kind of pans out in our way of thinking, I would say, by virtue of us consuming, we seem to think that we're going to find satisfaction. We actually think we're going to find fulfillment. We think we're going to become a better person by virtue of consuming. It doesn't make any sense, I know, but it began in the garden. You have to ask yourself, "Now, why in the world would people think that

by consuming their desires they're going to find fulfillment?" The word is "consumed." So, "I'm going to find satisfaction in consuming." It really begins the whole process of our thinking in a very twisted way.

If you look with me in Hosea 7, it gives this bizarre way of thinking, if I can once again put it that way. This small book is referring to Israel in particular, that, by virtue of them going after their own desires, and of course Hosea is this interesting picture of marrying a woman that was going to be harlot, and he was going to have to buy her back. It's an interesting picture of God forgiving, but it's also a picture of the treachery of man, in which it's all about his selfish desires, in spite of the fact that God is loving and has given him everything; cares for him. So, you come to Hosea 7, and he begins to describe them as those (Hosea 7:1) that deal falsely and they're bandits. They're thieves that steal. They raid. They take advantage of people. They don't consider the wickedness in their hearts. People start going into the realm of wickedness, and before long, they're so callous. I mean, if you were to say, "Don't you know that's hurting somebody?" It's just like, "So?" There's just no concern.

(Hosea 7:2) "And they do not consider in their hearts
That I remember all their wickedness..."

(Hosea 7:3) "With their wickedness they make the king glad..."

Obviously, people are having fun by the things that they do. "If we're having fun and people are laughing, it couldn't be all bad. Even if people are getting hurt, at least we're having fun."

(Hosea 7:4) "They are all adulterers..."

And he begins to give this interesting picture of,

"Like an oven heated by the baker..."

(Hosea 7:5) "...He stretched out his hand with scoffers,

(Hosea 7:6) For their hearts are like an oven..."

This is kind of putting us into the realm of consuming, which I guess is what I'm trying to bring it to.

"For their hearts are like an oven
As they approach their plotting;
Their anger smolders all night,
In the morning it burns like a flaming fire."

Now, what you have is a picture of something consuming, and the picture in the text is anger consuming. It consumes them at night and then it wants to consume the people that it hates in the morning. It's just a consuming thing.

(Hosea 7:7) "All of them are hot like an oven,
And they consume their rulers..."

"Consume." See the word there? That's the same word as "eat," in the phrase, "In the day that you eat." So fundamentally, what the serpent is saying is that "In the day you consume, you'll be like God. In the day that you go after the desires of your heart, the cravings of your heart, you'll be like God." In other words, you actually find fulfillment and you acquire it by consuming, which is really once again, a very twisted thing. "You're going to find you'll be great by tearing down others; by actual oppression and slander of others, you'll lift yourself up. You consume them, you'll be a better person for it." And I think the world has pretty much found this to be the very thing that they go after. I mean, "How do I get worth? How do I get value? How is it I get satisfaction and fulfillment? It comes from feeding my desires. The more I feed my desires, the more fulfillment I have." And "God knows this, and He knows that in the day that you do this, this is what's going to happen."

James 4:3 reads this way,

"You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures."

It's just the heart of man, and the thought is, "Who cares who might get hurt? Who cares what my actions might do? I'm hungry, and I want something. If I want something, it doesn't matter to me who I hurt to get it." Now, what man and woman are not considering in this particular passage, is how it hurts God. I think that oftentimes, when we read this passage, our thought is not how it hurts God, but "Wow, is she in trouble," or "Look what happened to her," and "It's such a horrible thing that happened to her." The horrible thing is what happened to God. As Ephesians 4:30 says, don't grieve the Holy Spirit. We're going, "Ok, "grieve the Holy Spirit," so what?" And that shows the coldness of our heart, because we're thinking, "All I want is what I want, and I could care less about how it affects Him." God has demonstrated His grace from creation to the intricacies of His caring for man and giving him the best; breathing his life within him, and all man can say is, "I just want more." God is revealing the heart. Our mind goes into a place in which we actually begin to think that maybe God is as twisted as we are. Maybe God is trying to take advantage of us like we're wanting to take advantage of Him. The serpent kind of throws that in, "God knows. He's working through this and He's going, 'You know, I really don't want him to have everything because that's mine, and I want to hold back'" and you know, "I would hold back. So, maybe God's holding back." And we begin to think of Him in that way.

We read that wonderful passage in John 14 where Jesus says, "I go to prepare a place for you." And Philip comes, and he goes, "If you could just show us the Father, then then we'll know what You're really like." He goes, "Have I been with you so long, that you have no idea what I'm like? Have I been with you all this time, and you don't know Me?"

2 Thessalonians 1:8 says that you and I will be separated from God because we did not know Him.

Matthew 7 says the day is going to come when we're going to say, "Lord, Lord." And He's going to say, "I don't know you." But really, as He's explaining this, He's going, "Because you didn't know Me. I mean, you had no desire to do the things that I asked you to do."

John tells us in John 7 that one of the ways that we can know God is by doing His will. Who wants to do His will? We have our own agenda. We have our own thing that we're pursuing after. You know, the Lord teaches us a lot in the setting that He places us in. Have you noticed that? So, He gives us certain things to do at certain times in our life. I've had the privilege of being with my folks in these latter years. My folks were with us two years off and on in the fall and the winter before they came down to move in with us, and now my mother has been this November, four years with us. I'm just so thankful that the Lord has given me the time. There have been moments, a number of them, in which I've been able to have some good talks with my mother, as I was able to with my father as well. From time to time, I sense that she's maybe wrestling with depression or something, and from time to time, she'll actually just come out and tell me, "I'm depressed." I think one of the frustrating things that she has to contend with is, and she tells me, "I can't do anything." And we talked about her praying and playing as unto the Lord, and she says, "thank you" for that, but it's still a struggle. I mean, we all have these struggles. So, some nights before she goes to bed, I'll hug her out in the family room, and I'll turn around, and she's on her scooter, so she's scooted off into the bedroom and she's out of here. Then other times, it's an unction; I just feel like I need to go in and tuck my mom in. I have those nights pretty frequently, but almost every time I go in, she'll say something like, "I was praying for you to come in," or she'll say something like, "I needed you to come in tonight" or something like that. So, the other night I had come in and I was talking to her, and she was feeling pretty low. She said to me, "You're not going to kick me out of the house, are you?" I looked and I said, "Mom, why would I kick you out of the house?" "I don't know. I might do something that upsets you, or I might do something." And I said, "Mom, you don't know me by now?" I think of the treachery sometimes in which we doubt God; we doubt His goodness; we doubt His love for us. In defense of my mom, a lot of this is sometimes she doesn't even know who I am. She thinks I'm her brother sometimes. She does really well, but there are moments she has.

We come before God, and we doubt His goodness. I mean, if you think about this particular passage, it's literally the woman doubting His goodness, "He's really not thinking of your best." The serpent is saying, "I know how God thinks." And we run through in our imagination how we think God thinks. "Oh, He's really mad at me now. He's never going to forgive me now." Have you not read Scripture? He longs to be gracious to you. He is faithful and just to forgive you. I mean, the heart of God is so not like us.

I think one of the things that Hosea is saying is that "Ephraim, you consume people, and you consume after your own desire and your whole thoughts and your whole way of thinking is, 'Yeah, but I want it. So, it really doesn't matter what anybody else thinks.'" And God goes, "But I'm not like that." As you read in Hosea, it's interesting, you go into Chapter 8 and the words that he uses, "You sow to the wind, and because of this you're going to be swallowed up." So, it's a picture of them consuming, and because they consume, they're going to be consumed by others.

(Hosea 8:7) "For they sow the wind
And they reap the whirlwind.
The standing grain has no heads;
It yields no grain.
Should it yield, strangers would swallow it up.

(Hosea 8:8) Israel is swallowed up;
They are now among the nations..."

In other words, the point is, "Everybody else is consuming; everybody else is just looking out for themselves. You're just like them. I called you to be different. I called you to be one who blesses nations, and now you just consume. That's all you do, and you consume with your own lust." So, he begins to convey this.

If you go a little bit further in Hosea, I think it's one of the most touching passages in all of Scripture because you can hear the heart of God, and He fundamentally says, "From a child I loved you. I mean, have I ever not loved you?" Sometimes, we as parents have to kind of remind our kids, "Have I ever not loved you? Has there ever been anything that I've done that was really done out of selfishness. Didn't I do these for you?" So, God is reminding them of this Hosea 11:1,

"When Israel was a youth I loved him,
And out of Egypt I called My son.

(Hosea 11:2) The more they called them,
The more they went from them..."

In other words, they listen to others, they listen to the idols, they listen to the worship of other gods.

(Hosea 11:5) “They will not return to the land of Egypt;
But Assyria—he will be their king
Because they refused to return to Me.”

(Hosea 11:7) “So My people are bent on turning from Me.
Though they call them to the One on high,
None at all exalts Him.

(Hosea 11:8) How can I give you up, O Ephraim? ...”

Oh, God's going to treat you just like you treated Him, right? So, Jesus gets on the cross and you nailed Him there. I can hear Him saying, “Father, forgive them.” And I'm going, “You're nothing like me, are You?” You think you know how God thinks? You have no idea. I mean, everything that God has done is for your good and because He loves you. You have no idea how much He loves you. It goes beyond our imagination.

“How can I give you up, O Ephraim?
How can I surrender you, O Israel?
How can I make you like Admah?
How can I treat you like Zeboiim?
My heart is turned over within Me,
All My compassions are kindled.

(Hosea 11:9) I will not execute My fierce anger;
I will not destroy Ephraim again.
For I am God and not man...”

“I'm not like you. You don't know Me.” I can just hear God going, “You think you know Me? You don't know Me.” I can't speak for Him because I have no idea what He's really like. That's why it's so important to come to Christ because it's really through Christ, as John tells us in John 1:18 that he explains Him. If I try to figure Him out in my own head, I'm always going to come out wrong, but if I always go back to who Christ is, I get a really clear picture of who He is, and it begins to draw me and help me see things clearly.

In this particular passage, God is just reminding us, “You have no idea what I'm like, and I'm not like you.” The treachery of this particular passage is that we're willing to give up all relationships for a moment of pleasure. Think about how many people have literally surrendered the greatest relationship they can have for the moment of pleasure. I think Hebrews uses the word, “the passing pleasures of sin.” It doesn't say there's no pleasure, it's

just really fleeting. But by faith Moses believed God and it was like with Abraham, it was counted unto him as righteousness. There is a treachery that we go through, and the simplicity of that treachery is that we're just being led by that one desire at that one moment instead of thinking this is a relationship that is worth investing in. We'll leave it at that.

Closing Prayer:

Father, we give You thanks for Your lovingkindness to us. Lord, we know that You love us; You would never leave us; You'd never forsake us. We would leave You; we wouldn't be faithful to You. There's something in our heart that goes, "Well, maybe You're like us." You're not.

I'd like you take this moment and just examine your own heart. How do you view God? How do you see Him responding to something? What do you imagine He's thinking? The right answer is, you have no idea until you sit down with Jesus; until you sit down at the foot of the cross. It's only there that you begin to get a clear picture. I'm asking you not to go beyond what God says, but just simply trust completely in Him. I'm asking you not to let anything come between this relationship, not even a moment of pleasure. Quit listening to the voices that seem to pontificate that they know everything. They know exactly how things are going to turn out. They have no idea. God loves you. Do exactly what He says. Trust Him all the way. A peace that passes all understanding will guard your heart and your mind in Christ Jesus. Father, we give You thanks for Your love in Jesus' name. Amen.