

- ***READ Ephesians 6:10-12*** While we might not fully comprehend the full picture that Paul is painting for us with his words in this text, I do believe we can safely say that one of the battlegrounds in which this war is waging is our minds. There are efforts being put forth by both sides to influence the way that we see and perceive this world that we live in. On one hand, we have God who it is said of that He cannot tell a lie. **(Hebrews 6:18)** If we believe in the legitimacy and accuracy of the Bible then we would have to be consistent in accepting that God is seeking to enlighten us to see the world as it truly is. On the other hand, we have Satan of whom it is said in **John 8:44**, *"He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he tells a lie, he speaks from his own nature, because he is a liar and the father of lies."*
- The battle lines have clearly been drawn in our minds. We have God who seeks to have us perceive the world for what it truly is while Satan seeks to deceive us into believing and perceiving an altered reality. This evening, we are going to begin in **Genesis 2 & 3** by looking at the reality that God first creates, how Satan sought to alter that reality, and God's response to the actions of the serpent, woman, and man. We will then compare the reality that God has us living in and the one that Satan seeks to deceive us into seeing as we live in this world.

I. Genesis 1-3 Case Study:

A. God establishes His desired reality.

1. Genesis 1 details the order of God's creation of the material world, and the end of the chapter details these wonderful words, *"God saw all that He had made, and it was very good indeed."* **(Genesis 1:31)** The reality that God created for this world was one where everything was very good, and it was very good because it existed in its purest form as designed by a good and pure God.
2. The focal point of this creation was the man and woman, Adam and Eve. Up throughout the first five days God saw everything as being good. There was nothing wrong with it being good, but it wasn't until God's greatest creation of Adam and Eve that was God willing to say that everything was very good. These last creations of day six were special and set apart from everything else because they were created in God's very own image. **(Genesis 1:26,27)**
3. Because of their special nature, God had a special relationship with them and elevated them to a special level over the entire earth. Adam and Eve were to rule over the entire earth, to multiply, and subdue everything within it. **(1:28)** Then they were placed in the Garden of Eden to be the rulers and caretakers over it. **(2:8)** Everything was created for their good consumption except for the one tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This tree was off limits to the man and his wife for God decreed that *"on the day you eat from it, you will certainly die."* **(Genesis 2:17)**
4. The reality of man's existence had been clearly laid out for them. They were created as the head over the entire earth. They were to subdue it and take any of the plants for food except for the single tree that was forbidden. God was even so caring as to warn them exactly what would happen if they disobeyed and took of the tree's fruit. Their reality had been established.

B. The serpent deceives Eve into embracing an altered reality.

1. And yet, Satan wasn't content with allowing men to live in this reality that God had set forth for them. Instead, Jesus's words from **John 8** are seen in action as the serpent goes to Eve and tries to alter the words that God had spoken to her and her husband by creating doubt within her mind. *"Did God really say, 'You can't eat from any tree in the garden'?"* **(Genesis 3:1)** To Eve's credit, she initially rejects the words of the serpent by accurately affirming what God had stated to her. She simply repeats back to the serpent what was told to her by God. *"We may eat the fruit from the trees in the garden. But about the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden, God said, 'You must not eat it or touch it, or you will die.'"* **(Genesis 3:2,3)**
2. Of course, the cunning serpent wasn't going to give up that easily. So, he then scales up his deception by straight up denying what God had told to Eve. *"No! You will not die," the serpent said to the woman. 'In fact, God knows that when you eat it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, known good and evil.'"* **(Genesis 3:5)** Unfortunately, we know that the words of the serpent had a profound impact upon the thinking of Eve for she began to see the tree in a different way than she had in the past.

3. Whereas in the past she might have seen the tree as a source of fear...she now saw the tree and its fruit as being something to be desired. ***"The woman saw that the tree was good for food and delightful to look at, and it was desirable for obtaining wisdom."** (Genesis 3:6)* The serpent knew exactly what needed to be said in order for the perception of Eve to be changed. She began to see the tree and its fruit in a very different manner. Her perception of reality was altered, and it led her to taking of the tree's fruit, eating it, and sharing with her husband. Upon them eating of the fruit and breaking God's command, their eyes were opened to their nakedness and they sought to hide themselves before God. At this point, their realities had truly been altered beyond what God had originally created.
- C. The sin of Adam & Eve forces God to establish a new reality.**
1. With the guilt of sin now upon their shoulders, Adam and Eve felt true embarrassment and sought to hide themselves from God. God surely knew what had taken place, and yet He goes about His business as usual. He calls for Adam and Eve to come into His presence. They are unable to come before Him because of their shame for what they have done, and after playing the blame game for a little while, God hands down what would be their new reality.
 2. He begins with the serpent and curses him to a lowly position amongst animals. He would move on his belly for the rest of his life. Speaking in a messianic sense, God states that there would be great hostility between the serpent and woman. The serpent would strike the heel of her offspring but her offspring would land a crushing blow to the serpent's head. **(Genesis 3:14,15)**
 3. The woman was punished by having her baby labor pains greatly increased along with her assuming a submissive role to her husband. The man was also greatly punished by having to learn to work hard to produce sustenance for his family. The work would be painful and difficult work because of the thorns and thistles. The man would sweat for his food and eventually he would return to the ground from where he had come. **(Genesis 3:17-19)**
 4. The last shifts in their reality was them being clothed for the first time **(Genesis 3:21)**, and then they are expelled from the garden never to return again. **(Genesis 3:22-24)** Their new reality that was a result of God having to compensate for their failures in sinning consisted of a life full of pain and difficulties that would eventually end in death. This is such a far cry from the life that they had in the garden that can cause us to feel bad for Adam and Eve. And yet, we need to recognize that the reality that we live in is a result of what they did on that day.

II. Our God-Given Reality

A. This world has been defiled by sin.

1. Paul does a really excellent job of painting the picture of the reality that we live in because of sin being present in the world. As he is teaching the brethren in Rome through the letter we refer to as Romans, we find Paul describing the world in a pretty graphically negative way. In **Romans 3:9-18** we read, ***"What then? Are we any better off? Not at all! For we have already charged that both Jews and Gentiles are all under sin, as it is written: There is no one righteous, not even one. There is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God. All have turned away; all alike have become worthless. There is no one who does what is good, not even one. Their throat is an open grave; they deceive with their tongues. Vipers' venom is under their lips. Their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood; ruin and wretchedness are in their paths, and the path of peace they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes."***
2. I don't know about you, but this a pretty grim way of seeing the world, and yet Paul would go on to speak as to why this is the reality that we find ourselves in. He speaks to the cause of the world being in this condition. In **Romans 5:12-14** Paul states, ***"Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, in this way death spread to all people, because all sinned. In fact, sin was in the world before the law, but sin is not charged to a person's account when there is no law. Nevertheless, death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who did not sin in the likeness of Adam's transgression. He is a type of the Coming One."***

3. The main subject at hand is concerning the Law and whether or not it is still the standard by which men are convicted of their sin, but this text shows us that sin was a reality even before the Law was a reality among God's people. Sin was present before the Law, during the Law, and it continues to be a reality in this world because of the heavily wicked influence that Satan has in this world. This world is his *"domain of darkness"* (**Colossians 1:13**) in which *"the god of this age has blinded the minds of the unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ."* (**II Corinthians 4:4**) This understanding of the reality of this world surely is grim, but we must not ignore what God provides for us as a means of escape.
- B. We can be purified from sin in Christ.**
1. Back in **Romans 5**, we read that though sin and its corruptive nature is a reality in this world, God had prepared a plan in which Satan and his influences would be defeated. What is written in **Romans 5:6-11** is the fulfillment of the Messianic prophecy of **Genesis 3:15** for it speaks of the Christ coming and dying for the ungodly so that they might have hope of the forgiveness of their sins. Even though the sinful are helpless enemies of God, He proved His overwhelming love by sending His son to die for us. Through this sacrifice, we can be reconciled back to God.
 2. It is in **Romans 6:1-18** that we come to understand exactly what must take place in order for one to be freed from sin and made alive to Christ Jesus. *"Therefore we were buried with Him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the father, so we too may walk in newness of life...For we know that our old self was crucified with Him so that the body ruled by sin might be rendered powerless so that we may no longer be enslaved to sin, since a person who has died is freed from sin...so, you too consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, so that you obey its desires...For sin will not rule over you, because you are not under law but under grace...But thanks be to God that, although you used to be slaves of sin, you obey from the heart that pattern of teaching to which you were handed over, and having been set free from sin, you became enslaved to righteousness."* This entire section make it absolutely clear that though we live in a reality where sin tempts us on every side...we can be purified and forgiven through Christ. And possibly best yet, we now have hope for the future.
- C. We can have hope of eternity with God through Jesus.**
1. As we continue on in **Romans 6:19-23**, we see that Paul is using this earthly analogy to help us understand the relationship between us, sin, God, and who we choose to obey. His point is that whoever we choose to obey will be one to whom we belong. If we choose impurity then we will only continue down the road of impurity which will lead to eternal death.
 2. However, if we choose to give ourselves over to righteousness, then we will be put on a path which will lead to our sanctification. This being set free from sin will allow for God to now work within and through us so that we might learn to be a set apart and sacrificed people. While the road of sin leads to death, Paul joyously proclaims the outcome of our sanctification as eternal life with Christ Jesus our Lord! Though the reality we live in is stained with sin and Satan's influences, we should be so thankful to God for the forgiveness and hope that comes through faith in His Son. This is the picture of the true reality in which we find ourselves in this life.

III. Satan's Deceived & Altered Reality

A. We are able to create this world as the ultimate paradise for happiness.

1. Though God's true reality paints this world as a temporary place that is broken and nothing compared to the glorious home that waits for the faithful in eternity, Satan would rather deceive us into believing that it is this world and this life that ought to be our ultimate goal. He would love nothing more than for us to desire this world to the point of completely neglecting the life to come. He would want for us to build up this world as if it is our final destination.
2. There are a number of secular songs that have lyrics that point to the idea that this earth can be made just as good as heaven, but one that really hits on this idea is Kane Brown's "Heaven." In this song he sings, *"Everybody's talking about heaven like they just can't wait to go saying how it's gonna be so good, so beautiful. Lying next to you, in this bed with you, I ain't convinced cause I don't know how, I don't know how heaven, heaven could be better than this."*

3. While I certainly love my wife and am thankful for the love that we share, I would be a fool to think that simply lying in a bed next to my significant other even begins to compare to the reality which will be an eternal home in the presence of our heavenly Father. And yet, that is exactly what Satan wants for us to think. He wants for us to get so wrapped up in the affairs of this world that we forget about its broken nature and that it is only temporary. He would much rather deceive us into believing that we must make the most out of our earthly existence or we will die in regret of not making the most of the years that we lived upon this earth.
4. Satan wants us to see this life as the pinnacle of our existence so that we get so wrapped up in it that we completely neglect the will of God in our lives. He wants this life to be so comfortable that we fail to recognize that something far greater is waiting for us on the other side. I am convinced that God created a difficult reality for Adam and everyone else to come because He wanted to remind us of the consequences of sin and that this world isn't all that there is to our existence. But the invention of so many conveniences, though appreciated, may have the negative impact upon us that we have forgotten that this world is not our home. We might not always see it in those terms, but we must not fall into Satan's trap of thinking that this earth and everything that comes with it is everything we need to be happy.

B. Sinful living is fulfilled living.

1. When we look around us, what is the image most often put in our faces as being the picturesque fulfilled life? It is people who are pursuing whatever it is that their hearts desire to their hearts content. It is a picture of people with the perfect jobs, families, health, and wealth.
2. Now, there is nothing wrong with those things when they come as blessings from God and we recognize them as such. However, there is much wrong when we give every ounce of our being to obtain these things to the neglect of our faith and obedience to Christ. Satan simply wants to deceive us into thinking that this selfish sinful lifestyle is perfectly acceptable because it leaves us feeling happy and fulfilled. If we fall into this sort of mentality then we are in danger of realizing the truth of **Luke 9:25**.

C. Godly living is wasteful living.

1. Conversely, who are the people that are most often painted as being the group that enjoys life the least? Is it not those who are religious and striving to live faithful lives before God? Are we not often painted as sticks in the mud who never get to have fun or enjoy everything that life has to offer? If the world wants to find someone who is letting the enjoyment of life pass them by then they are going to find a Christian who forgoes earthly pleasure for the hope of something they believe is coming in the future that will be so much better.
2. Yet, we have seen this type of story played out for us in Scripture, and the end results were quite flip-flopped. In **Luke 16:19-26**, we read of a rich man who seems to have fallen for the deception altered reality of Satan. He lived without any cares in the world because he had everything that life could offer. On the other hand, there was the man Lazarus who was a poor man with nothing to his name. He was keenly aware of the broken nature of this world.
3. Upon the deaths of both of these men, the rich man was sentenced to torment in Hades while Lazarus was carried to be in the arms of Abraham in comfort. Though the rich man had thought that he had everything he needed in this life, he quickly realized that it did nothing for his life in eternity. Whereas Lazarus was willing to suffer temporarily in this life in order to achieve glory in the next life. Satan would try to deceive us into not recognizing this as the realities of this world, but we must not allow ourselves to be fooled as Eve was in the very beginning.

Therefore, the decision stands before us. Whose reality will we embrace? Will we understand the broken nature of this world and find our salvation and hope in Jesus, or will we forgo eternal bliss in order to find temporary joy and satisfaction? May these thoughts be upon our minds this week, and may they help us as we are presented with decisions that have an impact on our standing before Jesus. May we not fall for Satan's altered reality, but may our minds stay clear and may we embrace the true reality of the world that God has placed us in. Yes, this world is broken, but we can find healing and hope in Jesus.