

Such Indulgence (Part 2) (Genesis 3:1-7)
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We began last week a sermon series on the amazing indulgence of God. We talked about how God created everything in the Garden of Eden just to show his “excessive leniency, generosity and consideration” toward the people He loved. Let’s keep looking today at how He indulges us, even after sinning.

In Genesis 3, after God has given the “world” to Adam and Eve, the serpent (Satan) comes onto the scene to cause them to question God’s intentions. The wording of this dialogue is important. In 3:1, the serpent asks Eve, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden?’” God said that “all kinds of trees,” or *every* tree in the garden was made for them to eat freely, meaning that they were made especially for man. Satan makes all the trees prohibited and ignores the word “freely.” He calls into question God’s character; and Eve, confused, replies, “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’” Like the serpent, Eve omits that God provided *every* tree for them to eat, and she omits *freely*. And she even adds to God’s prohibition, saying that she could not touch the forbidden fruit. The serpent got Eve to question God’s character, to forget the extent of His indulgence and to exaggerate the extent of His prohibition. God, to Eve, is now a strict God ready to punish.

Then the serpent says in 3:4, “You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” Not only is God overly strict, according to Satan, but also a selfish liar bent on preserving His uniqueness and withholding what is good from man, and Eve believes it. The woman, already sold on the serpent’s lies, sees that the fruit was “good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom.” Yet according to chapter 2, all the trees had fruit good for food and pleasing to the eye (2:9), such that the forbidden fruit was nothing special. Yet Eve’s gaze was fixed on the one fruit she could not have instead of all the others. In our own lives, when we forget God’s indulgence and focus on his prohibitions, when we question His heart, that is when Satan wins. Trials may tempt us to question if God is really so good. But despite what our circumstances may tell us, the Word of God tells us that God is always good and He always indulges us.

After Adam and Eve did the only possible sin, God still indulges them in the midst of

punishment. First, He confronts them with gentleness. In verse 9, God walks in the garden and asks, “Where are you?” He doesn’t angrily demand that the culprits show themselves, but calls out in gentleness.

Secondly, God, in the midst of punishment, promises salvation. In verse 18, He says to the serpent, “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.” This is a messianic prophecy: Satan will wound Jesus Christ, but Jesus will destroy Satan. Satan thought he won against Adam and Eve, but God promises that they will triumph over the serpent. Even in our sin, God still demonstrated His tremendous love toward us.

Thirdly, God made garments for Adam and Eve. This is the first time an animal is killed, and God does it for their sake, because He loves them more than the animal. And lastly, God prohibited them, in verse 22-24, from eating from the tree of life. He put cherubim with a flaming sword to guard it. Although this may have seen like a harsh punishment (to banish them from the Garden), in reality this was an act of indulgent grace, for eternal life in man’s fallen state would have been terrible. By eating the fruit, Adam and Eve broke their relationship with God, with each other, and with all creation. They introduced pain and suffering into the world. If they were allowed to eat of the tree of life, they would suffer in this broken state forever, never attaining reconciliation with God and each other. God withheld eternal life only because it was better for man not to suffer forever, and He promised a better eternity to come. Even in prohibition, God indulges us, looking after our own good. Satan may try to tempt us to question God’s intentions and His heart, but the Bible tells us that even when we sinned, God had such indulgence for us. How could we ever question God’s heart, knowing what He has done for us? We cannot!