

Beacons of the Bible

Eve

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"When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and ate, and gave also to her husband with her, and he ate." Genesis 3:6

Eve stands on a dark pinnacle. She is the first to sin. Thus she poisons the spring of all following life--and plants upon earth the tree upon which humanity hangs, as a blighted branch. Such is her sad pre-eminence.

Who has not shudderingly pondered the fruits of her transgression! It slew innocence--banished peace--cut all the roots of happiness--expelled God from the heart. It opened wide the floodgates of guilt and fear. It brought in an accusing mind, and a gnawing conscience, and foreboding tremblings. It gave being to tears, and sighs, and groans, and pains, and anguish, and all the tribes of misery. Death, and the curse, and hell blackened in its rear.

Believer, never contemplate this ruin without adoring God for its far more exceeding reparation. Sin came. Jesus follows to take it all away. Life died within man's soul. Jesus appears a quickening Spirit, and now your life is hidden with Christ in God. The torch of creature-righteousness expired. The Sun of Righteousness arises with healing in His wings.--Mal. 4:2. Do you bewail the loss? No, rather rejoice for the infinity of gain.

But still it is our wisdom often to mark the story of Eve's fall. The cases differ. But in this mirror we should see ourselves.

Her nature was pure holiness. Each inward impulse was God-ward. To bask in His smile--to joy in His fellowship--to taste His goodness was her full delight. She had no native will to stray. In us the inborn bias is all downward. The tide of inclination rushes strongly towards evil. Our nature has no heart for God.

Her temptation was wholly from without. The devil came. He put forth all his subtlety to beguile. She listened, and she was beguiled. In us there is a brood of hellish desires. The Tempter knocks. They traitorously invite him to come in.

Such is the difference. But still there is sad sameness. The Tempter is the self-same person. His quiver holds the self-same shafts. As he assailed Eve, so he assails each one of her descendants. It is therefore the path of safety to study well his arts and ways. Intelligence of an opponent's warfare is a good shield. Forewarning is a bulwark of defense. Observers of a beacon escape the peril. The mariner, acquainted with the chart, steers from the rocks and shoals.

Eve was vanquished by three crafty thrusts. Three poisoned arrows gave the deadly wounds. The flesh was seduced to lust--the eyes to long--and pride to covet. The forbidden fruit was exhibited first, as good for food--next, as pleasant to the eyes--then, as desirable to make one wise.

Now, just as in the acorn, the monarch of the forest lives; as a small seed contains the planks for mansions, ships, and mighty works--so, in the earliest temptation there lies the embryo of sin's whole progeny. All Satan's efforts, which have been or shall be, are varied aspects of his first art. The plan of all his after-schemes is wrapped in Eden's plot. He always triumphs by the development of a stratagem here shadowed out. As then, so now, his victims fall through the flesh, the eye, or pride.

1. The FLESH is mighty to corrupt the inner man.

Its doors are countless. Its casements are seldom closed. Through these there is quick access to the heart. It also is our encompassing mantle. We cannot escape its close embrace. We never move but in its company. There is no time, when it is absent. Hence its prodigious power.

Eve shows how easily it yields. In the happy garden there was all abundance to gratify the palate. Countless trees presented all deliciousness. A rich banquet of delights was spread. One only fruit was banned. Eve was slyly led to gaze upon it. Then carnal longings arose. In appearance it was "good for food." The appetite desired. She extended her hand. She touched. She plucked. She tasted. She ate. God had forbidden--but the flesh broke down the barrier. The peril of transgression was terrific; but fear vanished before this craving. The lust burst all restraints. The devil moved the flesh, and so enchained his captive.

He thus discovered the weakness of the fleshy tenement. He saw an opening so ready to admit his wily steps. He found a latchet yielding to his touch. Thus experienced, he has ever wrought soul-havoc through the flesh. Whoever lived too high--too low--for these sad baits! Consult the annals of the world. In almost every page foul falls proclaim the deathful work of sensual allurements. On all sides there are plains strewn with the slain. If we ask, "Who slew all these?" the reply is at hand. The devil spread some carnal indulgence. The fruit seemed good to give a momentary delight. The victims took the cup, and drank the

draught of death.

When years of conquest had rolled on, plumed with large triumphs, he meets the God-man, Jesus. Here was the first in human nature, unsoiled by his touch. Amazed--perplexed--but hopeful still, he gathers all his might for a vast effort. He finds the object of his hate weak through long fasting--alone--disconsolate--in cheerless gloom. The opportunity is most favorable. All things around concur to promise victory. He takes the shaft, by which Eve, innocent, and full of every enjoyment, fell. Surely Jesus, worn out--weary--sad--will not withstand. The enticing suggestion is whispered, "If you are the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." Matt. 4:3. The flesh craves--to satisfy it how easy!--One word brings full supply--food comes at your bidding, and fainting nature will revive. The arrow wings its harmless way. Jesus opposes the sword of the Spirit. "It is written," shatters the attack.

There is then no *necessity* in flesh to yield. Proneness to totter is not inability to stand. Slippery ground cannot compel a fall. There is one, whom the lust of the flesh could not seduce.

Believer, adore this vanquisher of that foul destroyer. Clinging to His side, take courage. This lust is not insuperable. He can enable you by His grace. He can put within you the power of His Spirit. He can bear you in His arms, above each snare. Be not dismayed by fast-falling showers of vile suggestions. Doubtless he, who subdued Eve, hopes to subdue you. He, who dared to solicit Jesus, fears not to tempt you. But the temptation is not sin--the whizzing of the arrow is not a wound. A conqueror is ready to make you more than conqueror.

But you must be skilled to use the sword, so mighty in the hands of Jesus. By the breath of His omnipotence He could have swept the Tempter to perdition. But He resists as man, with a weapon always within each man's reach. Learn well, then, the contents of your Bible. Apply them well, and then the foe will quickly fly.

But perhaps *accusing memory* tells of many falls. The flesh has often sold you unto sin. You tremblingly inquire, 'Can these deep wounds be healed? Can pardon pass by such offences?' Jesus again presents Himself. He is the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness. Here is the only cure. But it is all-sufficient. *Pile all the sins, which flesh has ever sinned, they vanish in this stream! Wash and be whiter than the whitest snow.*

2. The EYE is also an inlet of solicitations.

Eve warns again. She fixed her eyes upon the fruit, and soon its beauty put forth fearful fascination. The attraction strengthened. Resistance melted, as snow before the sun. The enchanting appearance bewitched. The outward show injected sparks of longing. The fire kindled. The bait was taken. The eye

betrayed. Sinlessness perished.

The devil thus found another crevice in our battlements and cruelly he has used the entrance. He discovered his advantages through the eye. And no opportunity has he ever lost.

From that day he has been diligent to exhibit fascinating scenes, to gild externals with bewitching beauty, and to lead through them into sin's vilest paths.

The baits of this class are indeed countless. The catalogue contains each object of our sight. Here shine the pomp and splendor and parade of life--the gold--the silver--the sparkling jewel, and the brilliant gem. Here glitter all the decorations of elaborate skill--all the possessions, which money can procure--all costly foods--luscious feasts--splendid banquets, and intoxicating bowls. Here dazzle the showy equipage, and the gay attire. But while the roll is too vast to unfold, Satan knows all, and knows well how to use. He fans the desire to possess. He silences the timid scruple, and lulls the warning conscience. He suggests many means to snatch the dazzling prize. None of our race escape this trial. The monarch and the noble covet more exalted splendor. The poor man in his lowly hut looks enviously on some better lot. To every eye something pleasant is attractively presented. And then the seed of craving ripens into crime. Quickly the hand seizes what the eye loves. Where is the child of man uninjured through this organ! It seldom opens, but temptations press through to our hurt.

Behold again the second Adam. The devil, failing to allure the flesh turns to the eye. He "takes him up into an exceeding high mountain and *shows* him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them." Matt. 4:8. What mind can picture such a scene! In panoramic circle all beauties and splendors pass in review. All in earth, brilliant to attract, strong to allure, glitter in loveliest garb. All magnificence is expanded, as in a map, lit up in the sweetest charms. All attractions are accumulated in one mass. If the eye of Jesus can lust, the flame will kindle now. When the whole lies at his feet, the Tempter thus solicits. "All these things will I give You, if You will fall down and worship me." Matt. 4:9. A little act of fleeting homage makes you full possessor of this treasury of delights. The dreadful blasphemy recoils. Jesus again displays the sword of the Spirit. Again the Word of God prevails. The devil shrinks back startled--affrighted--foiled--baffled--defeated.

Believer, rejoice, again I say, rejoice, in your all-conquering Lord. Grasp Him tightly with the hand of faith. Then you rise above your foe. Then the lust of the eyes will cease to lust. Indeed His glories will so eclipse all other view, that earth's best beauty will appear a blank.

But you have often yielded. Like Achan, you have touched the accursed spoils. Desire has entered through the lattice of your eye. It has found lodgment in your heart, and slimed the inner man. You are defiled. How can peace be regained?

Rejoice again. For every sinner's every need there is a full supply in Jesus. He has a remedy for every wound. There is balm in our Gilead. There is a physician there. His blood sprinkled on the conscience calms all aching. Plead it in faith, and all the sinful offspring of eye-lust lose their condemning power.

3. There is another broad road open for temptation's feet. It is the desire to be great--the ambition to be distinguished--the lust of admiration.

The Spirit names it, "The pride of life." 1 John 2:16. This net too was first spread in Eden. The devil showed the fruit--and whispered, that the taste would enlarge the faculties--give nobler wings to intellect--communicate new stores of knowledge. While she beheld, the poisonous thought took root, the tree is "to be desired to make one wise."

But was not her intelligence enough? She knew God. In that knowledge is the joy of joys, and life for evermore. Can more be gained?--But she heard of enlightened eyes--of being "as gods"--of growth in mental power. Ambition kindled. She coveted the deceptive boon. She lusted and plucked. What is her new discovery! *She went down into the school of evil to learn experimental lessons of disgrace and shame.* From being tempted she became a tempter. She found that she was naked and was afraid. Such is the wisdom which disobedience earns.

Satan triumphs--and the triumph teaches him again, where the heart's citadel is very weak. He clearly sees what an ally he has in the PRIDE of life. Through all time he has used this power--alas! with what success! Eternity will terribly exhibit the millions upon millions slain through this lust.

This net is very wide. Its meshes are the countless modes by which conceit is gratified and vanity excited. Ah! how he casts it now! How he flatters reason! How he persuades the puny intellect that it can soar above our Bible-heights! How he encourages our childish fancies to sit in judgment on the truths of God! His honied bait now is, Be wise--be wiser yet--break from the trammels of poor Scripture-thoughts. Mount into brighter light. Leave to superstition's babes the teaching of that antiquated Book. Cast away the twilight candle of by-gone times. Kindle your torch at reason's sun. He shows a tree laden with poisonous berries, and whispers, that it is desirable "to make one wise." His silly victims eat--and deeper darkness fits them for the blackness of perdition's cells.

It cannot be, that holding such a weapon, he will fail to use it against Jesus. The flesh refused lust--the eye was blind to godless desires--will not the pride of life beguile? This only hope remains. The trial shall be made. Out of the multitudinous temptations thronging this class, *vain-glory* is selected. Jesus is borne to the pinnacle of the Temple. The thought is presented, what admiration will applaud, if you descend, as on expanded wings, unhurt! Fruitless also is this

last attempt. The second Adam again wields the sword of the Spirit. Again the Tempter quails. One in human form mightily escapes--gloriously subdues.

Thus in *Eden* we see the devil's triple art and full success--and in the *wilderness* his full defeat. In the one we learn his master-wiles--how strong! almost invincible! In the other we behold them as flimsy threads and crumbling reeds.

Believer, shaped in iniquity, conceived in sin, you have daily cause to mourn Eve's fall. One with Jesus, you have more cause to glory in His victory. Let then your life be lively praise. Realize your gospel-state. As *child of corruption* you always totter on temptation's ground. As *child of God* in Christ your feet are on a rock of triumphs. The threefold implements of hell will surely all assail you. But Jesus leads you to a conqueror's crown. He gives you the sword of the Spirit, and the shield of faith, and the helmet of salvation. In Him boldly go forward. In Him you shall beat back the lust of the flesh--the lust of the eyes--and the pride of life. And yet a little while, reigning on the heights of glory, you shall see the legions of evil cast into their own pit.

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