

The Anatomy Of Temptation – Genesis 3:1-7

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Anatomy

1. Most young people who enter the medical field do so out of a desire to help the ill.
2. One of the earliest courses those training to be doctors or nurses have to take is *anatomy*.
 - a. learning the parts of the body is crucial to the practice of medicine
 - b. so they study diagrams and charts.
 - c. they commit to memory the various parts of the body and how they all work.
3. Disease occurs when parts of the body fail to function as they're supposed to.
4. That's when the doctor or nurse steps in – calling up out of their memory the various symptoms of different illnesses and then isolating the cause and applying the proper treatment.
5. Without a thorough understanding of *human anatomy*, they would be helpless.

B. Spiritual Anatomy

1. Just as physical disease attacks the body, there's spiritual disease that has attacked the spirit and soul of the human race; we call it sin.
2. And just as doctors have to know *anatomy* if they're to bring healing to the body, so we need to understand the anatomy of *temptation* if we're to bring healing to the soul.

C. Doctor Visit

1. A year ago I had a blood test and found my cholesterol level was high.
2. The doctor told me to tighten up on my diet and then return for another blood test in a few months.
3. I did, and the levels had come down to an acceptable range.
4. By altering my lifestyle slightly, I was able to increase my overall health.

5. And so it goes in the realm of the spirit.
6. Just as our choices affect our *physical* health – so they affect our *spiritual* health.

D. Today

1. Today we'll be taking a look at the first temptation.
2. We'll see in it the very same pattern and trap Satan lays for us when we're tempted.
3. We'll also see how we can *escape* and find healing from the spiritual disease of sin.
4. Since we're going to be seeing specific steps to take in resisting temptation today, I want to encourage you to take notes.
 - a. as we learn each step, I'll identify them.
 - b. and at points we'll *summarize* so we can make sure we're getting them down.

II. TEXT

A. V. 1

¹Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, “Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden’?”

1. This passage is *packed* with interesting insights – we'll *unpack* it this coming Wednesday.
2. For now – notice that the serpent is *cunning*.
 - a. Satan comes to Eve with an *agenda*.
 - b. he has a plan, a strategy; to tear her away from her relationship with God.
 - c. as we read on, we find that he makes her a *fantastic promise* – but it's a lie.
3. All temptation is just that - part of a satanic strategy to tear us away from God.
 - a. of course the devil is far too cunning not to hide his *ultimate* goal.
 - b. no, he dangles the promise of some *pleasure* before us and distracts us from ever asking the question –
 - c. “Why?” And “What's the end of choosing this and going in this

- direction?”
- d. “Where will this ultimately lead me?”
4. The first thing we need to understand about temptation is that the devil is *cunning* and skilled in the art of deception.
- a. don’t forget, he has at least 6,000 years of experience in tempting man.
 - b. he’s studied humans for a long time and knows what’s effective.
 - c. he’s an excellent fisherman who knows what bait works at what time.
 - d. but his goal is not to feed us bait – his goal is to hook us and reel us in.
5. One of the main truths we need to keep front and center is that all his cunning has one objective – and that is to destroy us by destroying our relationship with God.

1 • The devil is cunning: Remember His goal – YOUR DESTRUCTION!

6. Look here; in his cunning –
- . . . he said to the woman, “Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden’?”**
- a. the first thing Satan does is question Eve’s understanding of God’s Word.
 - b. “Has God really said”
7. What was God’s command?
- a. we find it in 2:16 & 17
- 16 And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; ¹⁷but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”**
- b. the command is simple and straight-forward –
 - c. they were permitted to eat of all the trees, *every tree*, save one.
 - d. the consequences of eating of that forbidden tree were clearly spelled out - death!
8. But when Satan comes to Eve, the first phase of his attack is to question her understanding of God’s Word.
9. There are some important truths for us to glean from this:
- a. first – take careful note of who the devil approached here – Eve!

- 1) in ch. 2, who did God speak the original command to?
Adam, *before* the creation of Eve.
- 2) who had Eve learned the command from? Adam!
- 3) she had only learned the command second-hand, from the lips of Adam
- 4) it appears she had not gone to the Lord to hear it directly from Him.
- 5) friends – pastors & bible teachers play an important role in our lives, but they can never substitute for the role of the Holy Spirit in teaching us God’s truth.
 - a) I’ve had the privilege of sitting under some of the most anointed bible teaching on the planet today.
 - b) but nothing comes close to sitting alone with an open Bible and an open heart and hearing the sweet voice of the Spirit of God speaking His Word directly to me!
- 6) listen, just as God told the children of Israel during the Exodus to rise each morning and gather the *fresh* manna, so He bids us to come directly to Him each day and take from Him the Bread of Life.
- 7) we cannot live our spiritual lives through others; God has no grandchildren, only children.
- 8) if you want to defeat temptation then you must begin by hearing from God.
- 9) this is why I so often urge you to spend time later on Sundays, or even right after the service just sitting in your seat meditating on what you’ve heard.
 - a) take what you hear in this pulpit to the Lord and ask Him to speak it directly into your soul.
 - b) pour back over the passage we’ve studied together and let the Holy Spirit implant it in you.

2 • Don’t let your faith be second-hand: hear from God.

- 10) that leads us to the next truth we glean from this –
- b. Satan questioned Eve’s *understanding* of God’s Word.
 - 1) he asked, “Has God *really* said”
 - 2) because her knowledge of God’s word was only second-hand the question could be raised on whether or not she really understood it.
 - 3) maybe God *meant* something *different* than what she’d heard

from Adam.

- 4) suddenly now there was a question in Eve's mind – did she really know God's Word?
- 5) could it be that there was some slant or nuance to the command that had escaped her?
- 6) oh friends, the devil is so cunning; what he did with Eve he does with us when we're tempted.
- 7) we know what's being offered is off-limits; and yet we start playing a mental game that looks for loopholes and excuses in God's Word.
 - a) we think to ourselves – “I don't really think the command applies to me at this point.”
 - b) or - “If God had known about me and my situation, then He'd have made an exception. In fact, I'm sure there's got to be an exception to my case in there some where.”
- 8) whether these are our thoughts or some others – the devil's whole aim at this point is to muddy our understanding of God's word – to put it in doubt.
- 9) he did it to Eve, he does it to us.
- 10) the way we resist him is by *simply* standing on the truth!
 - a) it's crucial we all understand this – when it comes to the central and important issues of the faith, God has made them so simple even a *child* can understand them!
 - b) holiness & purity are God's will for all people so He's made it so that His commands mean what they say and say what they mean.
 - c) when tempted the best way to respond is to simply hold forth the truth;
 - d) even to the point of quoting God's Word out loud!
 - e) isn't that what Jesus did?
 -) when the devil tempted him in the wilderness,
 -) all three times Jesus's immediate reply was, “It is written!”
 -) when the devil quoted scripture *back* at Jesus, twisting it into something other than what it meant, Jesus just fired back another passage that undid the devil's distortion.

3 • Satan will seek to cloud your understanding of God's Word.

Stand on the Truth.

c. let's recap the steps to overcoming temptation we've seen so far; there are 3 of them -

- 1 • The devil is cunning: Remember His goal – YOUR DESTRUCTION!
- 2 • Don't let your faith be second-hand: hear from God.
- 3 • Satan will seek to cloud your understanding of God's Word. Stand on the Truth.

d. another important insight from v. 1 is that the devil approached Eve *when she was alone*.

- 1) Adam isn't mentioned; it appears Eve was by herself when Satan approached her
- 2) this is one of his consistent tactics; to attack when we're by ourselves.
- 3) you'll remember from our study last week that God created Adam & Eve to be one;
- 4) companionship was central to their relationship; yet here they are apart.
- 5) Satan saw this an opportune moment to tempt Eve.
- 6) the lesson for us is to realize *the importance* of fellowship with those we're supposed to be in relationship with.
- 7) I've noticed that those who consistently struggle with sin are usually the same ones whose commitment to fellowship is flaky.
 - a) there are short stints when they attend every service we have,
 - b) and during that time they do really well and make solid progress
 - c) but then they stop coming and after a couple months call the office asking for help out of some bad situation they've gotten into because they yielded to temptation.
 - d) charting back over the past, they admit that the temptation came when they were out of fellowship and weak.
 - e) remember, the devil is cunning and experienced at spiritual battle.
 -) he knows well the old principle of "divide & conquer"
 -) we need to learn the principle of the "buddy-system."

[explain]

8) when you're being tempted – take stock of where you are – are you alone?

a) it isn't enough to just be physically present with others

b) what's crucial is *spiritual connection* and fellowship with other believers who can encourage you and help you resist.

4 • Satan usually attacks us when we're spiritually alone. Stay connected to God's people.

B. Vs. 2-3

²And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; ³but of the fruit of the tree which *is* in the midst of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.’”

1. Satan questioned what God had said; Eve repeats what she'd heard.
2. She gets it right, right up to the end, then she adds something.
 - a. God had told Adam not to eat of the forbidden tree;
 - b. He never said anything about *touching* it!
3. This may seem like a petty point, but it isn't.
4. It's fine if Adam and Eve wanted to set their own guidelines for behavior, but they must not confuse their personal decisions and convictions with the Word of God.
5. God had told them not to eat.
 - a. it seems that in their zeal to obey God they had set a fence even farther back,
 - b. they made a rule that would ensure they never ate.
 - c. they said, “Let's not even *touch* the tree, that way we don't have to worry about eating it.”
 - d. but then they erred – they elevated their *own rule* to the status of the Command of God.
 - e. in Eve's mind, the command not to eat now included not even touching the tree.
 - f. there was a confusion between God's will and her own convictions.
 - g. and so we see the birth of *legalism* – of religion.
6. The word *religion* comes from a word which means “to bind.”

- a. religion is the binding of sacred duty on man so that he might meet God's approval.
 - b. religion is man's *response* to the revelation of God.
 - c. but all too often religion goes way beyond what God intends and sets up a false standard of righteousness.
 - d. it binds such a heavy burden of duty on people it clouds the joy and freedom God intends.
7. There's nothing wrong in having personal convictions about how to obey God.
8. The problem arises when I start demanding that *you* live by *my* convictions.
- a. someone sees Paul's command in Romans 12:2 which says "Do not be conformed to this world."
 - 1) and for them that means to avoid any movie not rated "G".
 - 2) *they* need to live by that conviction – but they cannot elevate it to the level of the Word of God and demand that *everyone else* live by the same rule.
 - b. in the not too distant past right here in our County, to be godly and shun the world meant no dancing, women couldn't wear pants or make-up; going to a drive-in movie was considered utterly taboo; roller-skating & bowling were off-limits.
 - c. some of us remember the days when going to church meant dressing up; wearing blue-jeans to church was considered a grave moral sin.
9. Listen, I need to be understood clearly on this point –
- a. there's nothing wrong with having personal convictions about how to obey the Lord!
 - b. it's good to set up fences well back from the place of temptation and sin.
 - c. but we must never confuse those convictions and our personal resolutions with the command and word of God.
 - d. we can hold them dear to ourselves but must not put them on others.
 - e. that's legalism!
10. The error Eve made was to confuse her convictions with God's will.
11. When satan saw this confusion, he saw an open door through which to bring her down.

12. And that is precisely what legalism always does – it clouds God’s will with man’s intentions.
- a. and it ends up distorting God’s plan to *bless* man.
 - b. the *blessing* gets lost in the binding; in all the rules and regulations that get added by man on top of God’s command.

5 • Don’t equate your convictions with God’s Word. Why becomes clear as we look on . . .

13. When we take a look at the original commandment of God we see that what He intended was blessing, not burden. Ch. 2 -

16 And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat;

- a. is this bondage or freedom?
- b. does this look like God is placing *narrow boundaries* around man or *opening wide* the field of life?
- c. God said to man, indeed the COMMAND was – “Of *every* tree of the garden you may freely eat.”
- d. please don’t miss this – God wills *freedom*, not bondage for us.
 - 1) He longs to see us blessed.
 - 2) His will is life and joy and only goodness forever!
- e. so in order to safeguard that freedom and increase our joy, He warns us off that which will *limit and thwart* it -

17 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”

- f. God first *declares* freedom, then follows it with a *warning* –
 - g. keep your freedom by not partaking of that which will bring you into bondage and snuff out your life.
14. There was one thing, just one solitary prohibition – don’t eat of that one tree.
15. Adam and Eve had complete freedom, except in that one thing.
16. And what did satan have them focus on;
- a. the freedom God had given them, the goodness they enjoyed,
 - b. or the one thing God prohibited so they could *remain* free and blessed?
17. The devil cunningly drew Eve’s attention to the one thing that was prohibited.

18. And by doing so, he cast God in a negative light. Look at v. 4 –

C. Vs. 4-5

⁴Then the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. ⁵For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

1. God had placed a ban on the fruit of the tree because of the *danger* it presented.
2. Satan assigns a totally different motive to God.
 - a. he says God forbade them from eating because it would give Adam and Eve something good God *wanted to keep for Himself*.
 - b. now, this was nothing less than a flat out lie!
3. We see here another consistent tactic of the devil in tempting us.
4. Satan slanders God and labels Him a Cosmic Killjoy.
 - a. he delights in picturing God as some doddering old fuddy-duddy who sits on a white throne rocker in heaven,
 - b. listening for any report of anyone having fun on earth -
 - c. and when He discovers it – He sends down a thunderous “Thou shalt not have fun.”
5. The contemporary, popular image of *Satan* is the cosmopolitan, slick, educated, refined, and elegant man of the world while God is a wrinkled, out of date, irrelevant and powerless deity whose time has passed.
6. In tempting us, satan first slanders God by saying He’s trying to keep some good thing from us, thus impugning God’s love and wisdom,
7. And at the same time Satan claims he’s looking out for our best interest. Where God has kept us from good, he’s going to open it to us.
8. But it’s all a lie! Satan’s a liar, just as Jesus 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 speaks a lie, he speaks from his own *resources*, for he is a liar and the father of it.

9. Satan's deceit had one aim – to kill Eve.
 - a. Jesus said he was a murderer from the beginning because *from* the beginning his goal was to destroy her by tearing her away from her relationship with God.
 - b. the devil has assigned a evil motive to God – but in fact it was the devil whose motive was evil

6 • The devil slanders God in order to make temptation more appealing. Never doubt the goodness of God.

10. Now that satan has spun his web of deceit, he sits back to see what Eve will do.
11. What she should have done was called out, “Adam honey! Would you come here sweetie. Listen to what the serpent just told me. What do you think of that?”
 - a. she ought to have stood on God's Word and the truth of His goodness and rejected the lies.
 - b. she should have fled the place of temptation - instead, she pondered it!

D. Vs. 6-7

⁶So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make *one* wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. ⁷Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.

1. Wait a minute! *Where* is she? She's standing in front of the tree!
2. She's *looking* at the forbidden fruit – she's mulling over the options.
3. Instead of categorically rejecting temptation, she's *considering* it.
4. Friends – don't play chicken with temptation.
 - a. if you struggle with alcohol, don't wander by the bar.
 - 1) for years Irish pubs would gather up the dregs from the kegs and the spilled beer from the night before and throw it on the sidewalk in front of the pub at 4:45 PM
 - 2) they did this because at 5, the factories would let out and the workers would walk home

- 3) passing by the front of the bar they would smell the beer and get that irresistible urge to drink.
- 4) the world is crafty and the devil is cunning
- 5) flee the place, the scene of temptation!
- b. if you struggle with lust, put a filter on your internet browser.
- c. if gambling presents a danger to your soul – stay out of Vegas!
- 5. Eve pulled up in front of the tree and began to weigh her options. Foolish!
- 6. Whatever the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was; by the way no where does it say it was an apple tree, whatever it was – it had fruit on it that looked like good eatin’.
- 7. It was shapely and well formed, and satan had said that it would make her wiser than she already was.
- 8. So she made a decision and stretched out her hand and took hold of one of the fruit.
- 9. What happened? Nothing! Because at this point, she hadn’t violated God’s command.
- 10. She’d only crossed the line she’d set for herself which was to not touch the fruit.
 - a. but now that she’d already trampled her own convictions about obeying God,
 - b. she developed some *momentum* in moving toward deeper error.

7 • Don’t entertain temptation. Reject it quickly!

RECAP the last 4 –

- 4 • Satan usually attacks us when we’re spiritually alone. Stay connected to God’s people.
- 5 • Don’t equate your convictions with God’s Word.
- 6 • The devil slanders God in order to make temptation more appealing. Never doubt the goodness of God.
- 7 • Don’t entertain temptation. Reject it quickly!

- 11. See friends – here’s the danger in not dealing with temptation with quick and speedy rejection.
 - a. if we linger in the place of temptation
 - b. weigh the options of temptation
 - c. gaze at and consider the sin
 - d. compromise and trample our convictions –
 - e. then we weaken and sacrifice our moral will
- 12. That’s what Eve did, and the result was inevitable – she put the

fruit to her lips and bit.

13. Then she found Adam and gave him some – he ate.
14. And much to their horror, just as the devil had said, their eyes were opened and they knew evil!
15. The problem was, in the very moment of knowing it, they *regretted* their choice.

III. CONCLUSION

A. Knowledge of Evil

1. There are some things it would be better we did not know.
2. It would be better if we didn't know how to make biological and chemical weapons.
3. It would be better if we didn't know how to make a nuclear bomb.
4. It would be far better if no one had every thought of slavery, or child abuse, or any of the dozens of sexual perversions that destroy thousands of lives every year.
5. There are many in this room this morning who would do just about anything to go back in time and undo some of their choices so they could erase the knowledge of evil that now haunts them.
6. But oh how the devil dangled the promise of knowledge and fulfillment before them when they first tasted of that temptation.
7. All of us have ratified, repeated, and endorsed Adam and Eve's choice.
8. We've all eaten of some forbidden tree, and so we've all suffered the same judgment – death, spiritual death.
9. Thank God that in His love and mercy He provided another tree – the Cross of Jesus Christ!
10. The blood of Christ washes away the bitterness of the fruit of sin.
11. Every person in this room this morning is defined by the choice of one of two trees;
 - a. the tree of the knowledge of good and evil -
 - b. or the tree of life – the cross of Christ.
12. Which tree identifies you?