

## ***“Anatomy of Temptation”***

“If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it,” someone once said. It is a popular cliché that we have all used many times over. It refers to the fact that if something is successfully working right and consistently yielding the desired results then there is absolutely no reason to change a thing. In fact, any attempt to adjust or improve your system or routine can hinder or even halt the success. So it is better to leave well enough alone. This philosophy is practiced by our enemy, Satan, when it comes to matters of temptation. He has a tried and true strategy that he is aware that has worked from day one and will continue to work until the last days. He is the master tempter and any attempt to withstand his attacks without the empowerment of the Holy Spirit will be futile. This is why we read in James 4:7, “Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” Notice that it says to first “submit yourselves to God” and then resist. This is because without His empowering, we do not stand a chance. However, before I continue, let me digress to cover a few poignant points about temptation.

First, temptation packs its bag and moves in permanently the moment that you hang the sign on your doorpost that you have accepted Jesus Christ as Lord. Irregardless of how many forms and degrees of temptation that can be conjured up, it will always accompany the follower of Jesus. It is an ongoing, lifetime experience. If Jesus Himself, was tempted by the Satan, then no other Christian is absolved from such treatment. Temptation, like our enemy, is subtle, spiteful and very daring, and its purpose is to cause you to sin against God as well as disgrace and distress you. However, temptation is not a sin but merely an aggravating affliction. It becomes a sin when we yield to it (James 1:13-15). The anatomy of temptation has been the same since its master designer first introduced it to Eve in the Garden of Eden and launched it against Jesus in the desert. If you and I can understand this anatomy then we will be better equipped to recognize the temptation, its basis and then resist or ward off the attack.

Temptation appeals to comfort, prestige, and/or power. Behind these three basic human desires lies the anatomy of temptation that is routinely exploited by our adversary for our destruction. First, there is the human desire to be comfortable, to feel better, to have pain removed or pleasure increased. This desire appeals to our flesh because we are carnally-minded and our flesh is weak. This is where our enemy knows that we are most weak: *in the flesh*. That is why his first temptation of Jesus was with food (Matt 4:3). He knew Jesus was hungry and he appealed to His desire for comfort. The enemy knows that the desire to please and appease our flesh is a powerful arsenal in his attacks. This explains why so many struggle with sexual sin. It is the satisfying of the fleshly desires that brings comfort, all be it, for a moment. Secondly, is the appeal for prestige which can bring with it a deadly mix of pride and presumption. After all, isn’t it prestigious to say that we are associated with this organization, or that company, or those people? Our enemy knows this and will use it when tempting us to become so consumed with pride and pursuit for prestige, equality, and recognition that we compromise our values. This was his tactic when he tempted Jesus to test God by jumping off the highest point of the temple (Matt 4:5) or when he appealed to Eve’s desire for knowledge and equality by questioning whether she heard right from God about abstaining from the fruit from the Tree of Life (Gen 3:4). Lastly is his understanding that many humans are driven by the desire to influence, to control, or be in positions of power and authority. This would explain why he tried on Jesus the same appeal that he also tried on Eve: the appeal for power. There have been countless who have fallen into temptation because of an unhealthy and warped pursuit for fame and fortune. The enemy is keenly aware that he can alienate one from God if he can tempt him/her with enough power, resources, and means that they do not feel the need for God. After all, they have everything they could ever want so why bother with God?

Temptation has not had any reason to be revised or restructured because it continues to work in the lives of Christians today. The tactics have not changed at all due to the success ratio that it can boast of. This does not mean that “...we are not unaware of Satan’s schemes” (2 Cor 2:11), however, by drawing closer to the One that gives us wisdom and strength, we will be better at resisting the onslaught by recognizing the anatomy of temptation.”

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