Genesis 3:5

> (5) For 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."
> ***New King James Version***

The Devil asserted that by taking of the Tree of the *Knowledge* of Good and Evil, human eyes would be opened—implying wisdom and enlightenment—to allow a person to know good and evil as God does. Immediately, Satan places the emphasis on *knowing*, but it is contrasted with *living* eternally. Satan proposes that mankind should be like God in taking to himself the knowledge—the definition—of what is right and wrong, asserting that this is a good thing! In contrast, the Tree of Life represents a way of living in which the meaning of good and evil already exists, and eternal life involves submitting through the Holy Spirit to that definition and the Sovereign who is its source.

Likewise, the Gnostics are those who *know*—who pursue mystical knowledge that they believe holds the key to eternal life through advancing beyond the physical and into the spiritual realm. Gnostics believed the key to eternal life was contained in right interpretation—knowledge—of those esoteric sayings.

The book of Revelation expounds on the Tree of Life in two places:

> · To *him who overcomes* I will give to eat from the *tree of life*, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God. (Revelation 2:7)
>
> · Blessed are *those who do His commandments*, that they may have the right to the *tree of life*, and may enter through the gates into [New Jerusalem]. (Revelation 22:14)

The Tree of Life, then, is associated with a *way* of life—one that requires overcoming (growth against a standard of righteousness) and keeping (doing) God's commandments. The only ones who are allowed to partake of the Tree of Life are those who have changed themselves (with God's help, by His Spirit) to begin living in the same manner as He does. To those who submit to His standard of righteousness, then, He grants life that is both endless and of the same quality that He enjoys.

Satan, though, in addition to casting doubt on what God plainly says, and implying that God is unfair by withholding good things, offers a shortcut. He says, "You do not need to follow God's way, for it is obviously unfair and far too stringent. You can follow your *own* way. You can take knowledge to yourself of what is good and what is evil. You can be just like God in determining what is right and wrong." Adam and Eve took the bait, and ever since, man has rejected God's standard of righteousness in favor of his own.

This heresy is easily seen in the antinomianism (literally, "against law") of the Gnostics, who may not have been against *every* law, but were certainly against any law that impinged upon *their* standard of conduct. Thus the ascetic Gnostics who grieved the Christians in Colossae held to manmade regulations of "do not touch, do not taste, do not handle" (Colossians 2:20-21), while rejecting the command to "rejoice" with food and drink during the God-ordained festivals. Similarly, mainstream Christianity will (rightly) use portions of Leviticus and Deuteronomy to point out God's abhorrence of abortion and homosexuality, but will claim that the same law is "done away" when it comes to the Sabbath and holy days. They have taken to themselves the knowledge of what is good and what is evil, establishing their own standard of righteousness.

A core issue of the Bible is whether we submit to God's governance or try to form a government based on our own perception of what is good or what works. God's way results in eternal life, but it comes with the obligation to submit ourselves to God. It requires keeping all of His commandments and overcoming our human weaknesses that do not rise to that standard. Satan, conversely, seeks to persuade us to do our own thing and to usurp God's prerogative in defining right living. He encourages us to be enlightened, to have our eyes opened, by doubting God and rejecting His way.

— David C. Grabbe

To learn more, see:
Whatever Happened to Gnosticism? Part Three: Satan's Three Heresies

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