

OVERCOMING *in* SPIRIT *and* TRUTH

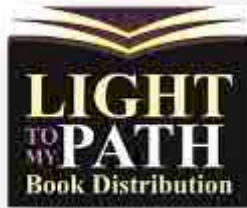


**The Temptation of Jesus
in Luke 4:1-13**

F. WAYNE MAC LEOD

Overcoming Temptation

*How Jesus Overcame the Temptations and
Traps of the Devil in Luke 4:1-13*



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PREFACE

This is a study of the temptation of Jesus as recorded in Luke 4:1-13. There is much more that could be said about these verses and there are many good commentaries on this subject. My purpose here is to get a sense of how Jesus faced the temptations of the devil and to see what lessons we might learn from Him.

There are four things I would like every reader to see from this passage. First, the Lord Jesus, who was fully God, endured the testing of Satan. He humbled Himself and endured this for you and me. If He had to face these temptations and trials at the hand of Satan, we too must also go through them as well. The Christian life is not always a life of ease. Jesus began and ended His ministry under testing and trial.

Second, I would like every reader to see the character of Jesus in this passage. His integrity is without question. In the midst of the fiercest of temptations Jesus held firm to the Father's purpose for His life. He came out of that battle with Satan absolutely pure and undefiled. He is the perfect Saviour who is worthy of all honour and worship.

Third, the Lord Jesus, as the perfect Son of God, knows what it means to be tempted and to suffer trials. He can

identify with our pain and need. He felt what we feel. We can come to Him with confidence that He will understand our pain and temptations as well.

Finally, in those days of testing, Jesus' strength was in the Word of the Father and the Spirit. These same tools are available to us today. The power to overcome is not in naturally us but it is available to all who will trust in God's leading and strength just as Christ did.

This book may not change your life, but I am convinced that it is a tool God can use. Don't just read this book; take the time to reflect on it. Ask the Holy Spirit to take the truth of the Word and apply it to your situation. My prayer is that the truth of Luke 4:1-13 will come alive again and strengthen, encourage and comfort all who take the time to read this commentary. May the Lord be pleased to use this passage of Scripture in your life for His glory.

F. Wayne MacLeod

1

LED BY THE SPIRIT INTO THE DESERT

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the desert, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. (Luke 4:1-2)

The context of Luke 4 is the baptism of the Lord Jesus. This seems clear from Matthew 3:13-4:1:

Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Then John consented. As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." Then Jesus was

led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil.

Notice that Luke 4:1 tells us that Jesus “returned from the Jordan.” It was there at the Jordan River that Jesus had been baptised by John. This would be the beginning of his public ministry.

Something very important happened on the day Jesus was baptised. In Matthew 3:16, we read that as soon as He came out of the water, the Holy Spirit descended on Him like a dove. Notice from Luke 4:1 that Jesus was both “full of the Holy Spirit,” and “led by the Spirit.”

The fullness of the Holy Spirit in Christ was His power for service and obedience. It is true that Jesus was the Son of God, but He still needed to be filled by the Holy Spirit. He did not work independently of the Father or the Holy Spirit. He was perfectly one with them and to accomplish all the Father had given Him to do required the fullness of the Holy Spirit and His power in Christ’s life.

While it is not our purpose in this study to examine the ministry of the Holy Spirit, it may be helpful to say a word about the fullness of the Holy Spirit. What is the fullness of the Holy Spirit? There are likely many different opinions on this subject, but let me explain it in its most basic form. To be full of one thing is to be emptied of something else. In other words, if we are full of the Holy Spirit there is no room for self. This means that there is a surrender of our wills, hearts and lives to the ministry and work of the Holy Spirit. It means that we have yielded our ideas and plans to Him and have committed ourselves to walk in obedience to His will.

The greatest obstacle to ministry and to the character of Christ being revealed in us is ourselves. In our own effort we cannot possibly accomplish or be what God requires, yet so many of us try. Christian ministries are filled with human effort and agendas. What a difference it would make if we were to let the Spirit of God work in us and through us! What difference would it make in our churches if we were willing to die to ourselves and give the Spirit of God full sway? What blessing would be ours if only we would allow Him to fill us by emptying us of ourselves.

Jesus was full of the Holy Spirit. His will was surrendered to the Holy Spirit. His confidence was in the power of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit had full and total control of Christ, His actions, attitudes and words. This is how the Lord Jesus would begin and end His ministry.

Luke 4:1 tells us that not only was Christ full of the Spirit, but He was also led by the Spirit. Notice where the Spirit led Christ in verse 1. He was led by the Spirit into the desert. The desert is a dry and barren place. In this case it was a place of temptation. The word temptation refers to a test or trial. This is what would happen to the Lord in the desert. He would be tested and tried. For forty days He would battle with the devil.

The Spirit of God led Him straight into an intense forty day spiritual battle. As much as we would like to think that when we surrender to the Lord everything will be victory and glory, this passage shows us that surrendering to the Holy Spirit may just as likely cast us into the heat of the battle. This is what happened to Jesus. His ministry began in conflict and would end in death. In it all, He was completely victorious.

For forty days, the Lord Jesus was tempted by the devil in the wilderness. Scripture does not tell us what happened during those forty days. What we do understand from Scripture is what the devil tried to do at the birth and death of the Lord Jesus. In Matthew 2:16, we read how Satan tried to have Herod kill the baby Jesus. When he could not find Him, this evil king ordered that all baby boys under the age of two be killed. This shows us what Satan is capable of doing.

During the ministry of the Lord Jesus on this earth, Satan influenced the religious leaders of the day to crucify Him. We see the soldiers mocking Him by pressing a crown of thorns on His head. We see them beating Him with a whip and nailing Him to a cross. We see the people turning against Him as he hung in agony on that cross. In all this we see the hatred, fierceness and anger of the devil being unleashed on our Savior. While we have no record of what took place in those forty days in the wilderness, we can be sure that those days were very difficult and trying days. The battle that took place in the wilderness for those forty days would have eternal consequences. Satan would have liked nothing better than to destroy the ministry of Christ even before it started.

Notice from verse 1 that it was the Holy Spirit who led Jesus into the desert to be tempted by the devil. Why would the Holy Spirit lead the Lord Jesus into such a place? Luke 4 does not give us an answer. There may be a number of reasons for this. Let me suggest three possible reasons for this time of temptation.

LEARNING OBEDIENCE

Jesus lived on this earth as a man. As a baby, He depended on His mother for food and clothing. As an infant, He needed to learn how to walk and talk, like any other child. As He grew up, He needed to learn about His environment and how to function in society. As a servant of God, He also needed to learn how to walk in obedience to the Father. He faced temptations like all of us and needed to learn how to rely on the strength of the Father to overcome. Hebrews 5:7-8 tells us that although Jesus was the Son of God, He learned obedience through the trials and struggles of this life.

During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered. (Hebrews 5:7-8)

What was true for His life was very likely true in this period of temptation. The word "temptation" here is the same word used for testing. This is what was happening to Jesus in those days. He was being tested. He was learning to walk in absolute victory. He was learning how to face the trials of life and overcome. He was being prepared for the ministry the Father had for Him. If He was going to accomplish this mission, He would need to learn to walk in obedience. He would need to be tried, tested and strengthened through the things He suffered. In all these temptations, the Lord Jesus was learning to rely more fully on the Father and the wisdom of the Holy Spirit.

Being filled with the Spirit does not mean that we no longer have to learn. Jesus was filled with the Spirit, but still

learned obedience through the things He suffered. As Jesus emerged from those forty days of testing in the desert, He was stronger for it. God used what had happened in those days to strengthen Christ and prepare Him for ministry.

What was true for the Lord Jesus is also true for us. We will have to face trials and temptations in this world. God will use those struggles to strengthen us and teach us to walk in obedience and faithfulness. While no testing is pleasant, we can be sure that, in the Lord's hands, it will accomplish its purpose and we will be stronger for it.

PERFECT SACRIFICE

The writer to the Hebrews tells us in Hebrews 2:17-18 that the Lord Jesus was made like us in every way so that he might make atonement for our sins.

For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted. (Hebrews 2:17-18)

Notice that verse 18 tells us that He suffered when He was tempted. He faced every temptation you and I face. He felt all the pain we experience in life. He, too, struggled with His human nature. He represents us perfectly as a high priest because he was like us and understood our struggles. As he laid down His life as a sacrifice, He did so with complete and perfect understanding of our weaknesses. He did so, however, as the only one who had overcome.

He faced all that we face, but was without sin. He was the perfect sacrifice.

Jesus would minister as one who understood our temptations and struggles. He would lay down His life as One who identified perfectly with us. How exciting it is to know that Jesus understands us. His sacrifice was perfect not only because He Himself was perfect but because He understands us and our weaknesses so perfectly yet He overcame.

SYMPATHIZING WITH OUR WEAKNESSES

Not only does Christ's victory over temptation make Him a perfect sacrifice for our sin but it also provides us with a high priest who can sympathize with our weaknesses.

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are--yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. (Hebrews 4:15-16)

Notice the application of this truth in Hebrews 4:16. Because Christ understands our weaknesses, we can approach Him with confidence to find mercy and grace in our time of need. Ever since I was young boy, I struggled with depression and an anxiety disorder. I have come to understand over the years how to deal with this in the Lord's strength so that it is not a hindrance to what God has called me to do. Over the course of my ministry, the Lord has opened doors for me to speak with those who struggle with similar illnesses. I know what they are facing and am able to help them in a way that those who have never faced

these things cannot do. In fact, there are times when people feel free to speak to me about their mental illness because they know that I understand and will be sympathetic.

As Jesus faced the devil's temptations in the wilderness, I am convinced that the Father was preparing Him to minister to you and me in a powerful and compassionate way. His experience with these temptations and struggles enabled Him to identify more fully with us. It is so wonderful to know that we can approach someone who understands exactly what we are feeling.

For forty days, Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, was tempted in the desert by the devil. This was a difficult time for our Lord. We can be sure that the devil unleashed all he could on Him in those days. Satan knew that if he could defeat Jesus in those days, His ministry would be over. Jesus endured and defeated Satan. He now sits in heaven as a perfect high priest praying and interceding for us:

Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them. (Hebrews 7:25)

Day after day, the Lord Jesus cries out to the Father on our behalf. His passion for us and for our victory never ceases. He continues to minister to us in prayer and intercession before the Father. In part, He understands us so perfectly because He was tempted and struggled just as we do. As Jesus embarked on His earthly ministry, these temptations in the wilderness prepared and strengthened Him to be that servant God required Him to be.

For Consideration:

- What does it mean to be full of the Spirit? What are the obstacles to being full of the Spirit?
- Does being full of the Spirit mean that we will be free from all struggle? Where did the Spirit lead Jesus?
- What do you think was the purpose of the temptations of Jesus in Luke 4?
- How has God used trials and testing in your life to strengthen you and enable you to become a more effective minister of the gospel?

For Prayer:

- Ask the Lord to fill you with His Holy Spirit. Take a moment to surrender to Him those things that hinder a fuller experience of God's Spirit in your life.
- Ask the Lord to strengthen you through the things you face in life. Ask God to give you grace to be faithful in suffering so that you can learn all He has for you to learn.
- Thank the Lord Jesus that He understands you so perfectly. Thank Him for being such a perfect sacrifice for your sin. Thank Him that He continues to intercede for you before the Father in heaven.
- Thank the Lord that He is able to use whatever happens to you to strengthen and equip you for deeper intimacy and greater service.

2

HE ATE NOTHING

... He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry. (Luke 4:2b)

In the previous chapter we saw how the Lord Jesus was led into the desert by the Holy Spirit, where he was tempted for a period of forty days. Notice what the last part of verse two tells us:

He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry. (Luke 4:2b)

There are several details we need to understand from this phrase.

First, notice the fact that Jesus was hungry. This is the normal response of the human body to so many days without food. Although Jesus was the Son of God, He was also a human being. He suffered what we suffer and felt the pain we feel. The Lord Jesus dealt with Satan in His human flesh for those forty days, and He was tempted by the same things we are tempted by. The phrase “at the end of

them he was hungry,” is a reminder to us of Christ’s humanity. He wrestled Satan for those forty days in a human body like ours.

Second, verse 2 gives us a sense of the timing of the temptations recorded in Luke 4. We are told that Jesus ate nothing for forty days and at the end, when He was very hungry, the devil came to Him with these final three temptations. It appears from this that the temptations of Luke 4 were not the only temptations Jesus faced in those forty days. They are only part of what took place in this intense battle with the enemy.

It was at this point of physical weakness that Satan came to Him with the first of these three recorded temptations. Satan knows our weaknesses and we can be sure that he will do his utmost to focus on those weaknesses. He waits for the right moment to shoot his arrow. Someone once said that a chain is only as strong as its weakest link. It doesn’t matter how strong all the other links of that chain are; if there is even one weak link in that chain it will break. This is what Satan is looking for. We must strengthen the weakest links of our commitment to the Lord God. We cannot afford to keep any area of our life from being yielded to the Lord and His work.

There is a final point we need to make here about the phrase: “He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry.” This phrase brings up the question: “Why would Jesus eat nothing for all those days? There are many books written on the subject of fasting and it is not our purpose here to deal with this subject in any detail. It may be helpful, however, to say a few things about this as it relates to the context of the passage.

Throughout the history of the church, there have been those who believed that if they wanted to obtain something from the Lord they had to suffer or offer Him something in return. There have been those who have beaten themselves in an effort to convince the Lord that He should forgive them for their sin. Others have inflicted themselves with all kinds of pain in an attempt to get the Lord's attention. Still others have made promises to Him that if He would answer their prayer they would pay Him back by making some tremendous sacrifice or serve Him in a certain way. While admittedly, God does require sacrifice, this is not what fasting is about. We do not have to beat ourselves or cause ourselves physical or emotional pain to obtain the favour of the Lord. He offers his grace to us willingly and freely. We do not have to merit His favour.

As Jesus spent those forty days in the wilderness, He was not fasting to receive God's favour. When He came out of the water after being baptized, the Father spoke the words: "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17). There can be no doubt that the Father's favour was already on Him.

We also need to understand that Jesus did not fast to receive power. Luke 4:1 tells us that when He entered the desert he was full of the Holy Spirit. He already had all the power of God He needed to face the enemy. He did not need to afflict Himself with hunger in order to receive more power.

Why then does Jesus choose not to eat? What is Jesus doing during those forty days in the desert? It seems to me that the Lord Jesus is placing Himself completely in the hands of His Father. For those forty days, He surrendered his body, mind and will to the care of His heavenly Father.

His confidence and trust would be in Him alone for strength and wisdom.

Our normal response when confronted with conflict is to take action. We call on our experience and wisdom. We strengthen our resolve. We reach out to friends or family to stand with us. What does a child do, however, when confronted with something that scares him? Doesn't he run directly to his mother or father and let them care for him? Isn't this what a true faith is all about?

Those forty days of temptation were no doubt very difficult for the Lord Jesus. In light of the intense battle before Him, the Lord Jesus cast Himself completely into the hands of God. He did not concern Himself with what He would eat or any other earthly matter. Like a child, the Lord Jesus clung to His Father, assured of His care and provision in this hour of great need. In this quiet confidence there would be victory. As one arrow after another was shot from Satan's bow, Jesus drew from the strength that was His in His Father. This is a picture of absolute dependence and trust.

There is a time for us to take action. There is also a time for us to cast ourselves on God. There is a time for us to strengthen ourselves and there is also a time for us to refrain from earthly concerns. This was not a time where physical strength was required. The battle before Jesus was a spiritual one, requiring spiritual strength. In those days, the focus of every moment was to rest in the will and care of His Father. It is not surprising that when tempted by Satan, the Lord Jesus would continually seek the will of the Father. Every effort and focus here is on remaining in the arms of the Father and in the centre of His will.

These were days of intense battle with Satan, but we can be assured that they were also days of intense communion with the Father. His “food” in those days was to do the will of the Father. His power to overcome was in His commitment to remaining in the Father. Physical strength was not what was needed. The concern and care of His body was only a distraction.

As I consider these thoughts, today, I ask myself if the source of my strength is in myself or truly in God. Can I cast myself on Him as Jesus did in those days? Can I run to Him like a child runs to their father, trusting Him alone? Are there not times in our lives when we need to run to our Heavenly Father and cling to Him with all our might?

Yes, God has given us His Holy Spirit. He has equipped us and strengthened us for battle. There are times in my life, however, when I still need to run to Him and say: “Father, I need you. I need your strength more than anything else in life right now. I need you to hold onto me and protect me in this storm of life. I’m clinging to You for help.”

I know that Jesus was that Son of God. I know that He was filled with the Spirit of God. I also know, however, that in His moment of deep temptation and grief, He ran to the Father and clung to Him and His will. He depended on His Father for protection. He relied on the Spirit for wisdom. He did not act independently of the Father or the Spirit. In the midst of life’s busyness, Jesus would often spend time alone with the Father (see Matthew 14:23). As He faced His trial and crucifixion, the Lord Jesus wrestled in the Father’s presence, crying out for His will to be done (Matthew 26:42). In those forty days, the Lord Jesus did not eat. This was not His concern. Instead, He cast Himself fully physically, emotionally and spiritually on the Father, seeking His will, guidance and protection.

Consideration:

- Why is it important that we understand that Christ suffered hunger? What does this tell us about Christ and how He faced the temptations of the devil in the desert? What encouragement does this give you?
- Why is it important that we strengthen the weak links in our spiritual chain? How does the devil take advantage of our weaknesses?
- What is the purpose of fasting? How does fasting remind us of the source of our strength?
- Do those who are filled with the Spirit still need to depend on the Father for His protection and strength? Explain.
- How do we know when it is time for us to take action and when it is time for us to run to the Lord and wait on Him?

For Prayer:

- Thank the Lord that He understands what it is like to suffer in His body. Thank Him that He willingly suffered for you.
- Thank the Lord that we know His favour and that we do not have to cause ourselves to suffer in order to know that favour.
- Thank the Lord for the power He gives you through the work of the Holy Spirit in your life.
- Take a moment to thank the Lord that you can run to Him for protection and guidance when the trials of life seem to overwhelm.

3

TURNING A STONE TO BREAD

The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread." Jesus answered, "It is written: `Man does not live on bread alone.'" (Luke 4:3-4)

It was likely after forty days of Jesus' fasting that the devil came to Him with the first of the temptations recorded in Luke 4. Notice that the devil began this temptation with the words: "If you are the Son of God." This tells us something about the devil and his methods.

In the Garden of Eden, when Satan tempted Eve he began his conversation with the words:

"Did God really say, `You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?" (Genesis 3:1)

One of the clear tactics of the enemy is to have us doubt the truth of God's Word and who we are in Christ. This is what he was doing with Jesus in Luke 4:1. "If you are the Son of God," implies that there is doubt about who Jesus really was. Now if there is one thing that is certain, it is that

Satan knew full well that Jesus was the Son of God, and so did his demons. Consider the response of the demons in Mark 3:10-12:

For he had healed many, so that those with diseases were pushing forward to touch him. Whenever the evil spirits saw him, they fell down before him and cried out, "You are the Son of God." But he gave them strict orders not to tell who he was.

The same thing happened in Mark 5:1-7 when Jesus met a man possessed by an evil spirit in the region of the Gerasenes:

They went across the lake to the region of the Gerasenes. When Jesus got out of the boat, a man with an evil spirit came from the tombs to meet him. This man lived in the tombs, and no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain. For he had often been chained hand and foot, but he tore the chains apart and broke the irons on his feet. No one was strong enough to subdue him. Night and day among the tombs and in the hills he would cry out and cut himself with stones. When he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and fell on his knees in front of him. He shouted at the top of his voice, "What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? Swear to God that you won't torture me!"

These evil spirits feared the Lord Jesus. They knew that He was the Son of the Most High God. They knew that they were no match for Him.

As the devil spoke to the Lord Jesus, he knew that He was the Son of God. His intent was to cause Jesus to question

His identity and position. He wanted to introduce doubt into the mind of Christ. We can be sure that the devil will do all he can to cause us to doubt the call of God on our lives. He will seek to keep us from understanding our position and power in Christ. He will question our salvation. He will cause us to wonder about God's love or the authority we have in Christ. He will do everything in his power to introduce doubt about God's Word and its relevance for our lives. Where doubt reigns, faith cannot conquer. This is Satan's intention. He wants to keep us in doubt and fear, for he knows that this will keep us weak and ineffective.

It was in this context that the devil made a suggestion to Jesus. He suggests that if He was the Son of God, He should turn a stone into bread. Let's consider this for a moment. There was nothing wrong with turning a stone into bread. When God made man, He made him from the dust of the ground (Genesis 2:7). When He created woman, He created her from one of Adam's ribs (Genesis 2:21-22). God has every right to change what He has created into something else. There would be no sin in Jesus turning a stone into bread.

Note also that in the ministry of the Lord Jesus, miracles were often used to prove that He was the Son of God. In fact, Jesus pointed to His miracles as a witness to the fact that He was the Son of God. Speaking to the religious leaders of the day who demanded a witness to His claim to be the Son of God, Jesus said:

"I have testimony weightier than that of John. For the very work that the Father has given me to finish, and which I am doing, testifies that the Father has sent me. (John 5:36)

The works that Jesus did testified that He had come from the Father and was sent by the Father.

In Luke 7 we have the story of how John the Baptist sent his disciples to Jesus to ask if He was the One who was to come (the Messiah). Listen to the response of Jesus to John's disciples in Luke 7:21-22:

At that very time Jesus cured many who had diseases, sicknesses and evil spirits, and gave sight to many who were blind. So he replied to the messengers, "Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor.

Notice that Jesus refers to His miracles as proof to John that He was the Son of God who had been promised.

Frustrated with the unbelief of the people of His day, Jesus said in John 10:38:

But if I do it, even though you do not believe me, believe the miracles, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father." (John 10:38)

Notice in all these occasions that the Lord Jesus used His miracles to prove that He was from the Father and that He was the Son of God.

Why does the devil ask Jesus to turn a stone into bread? What sin would Jesus have committed if He had obeyed

this request of the devil? There may be a number of answers for this. Remember, however, that the temptation is prefaced by the phrase: "If you are the Son of God." This is an important phrase.

Satan asked Jesus to turn a stone into bread to prove a point. Consider the context for a moment. The only people present are Satan and Jesus. There was no one else in the desert with them so no one else would have seen the miracle and believed. Satan already knew Jesus was the Son of God. The only reason Jesus would need to perform such a sign would be if He doubted what the Father had told Him after His baptism:

And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." (Matthew 3:17)

Satan was using the physical weakness and hunger of Jesus to test His belief in what the Father had spoken. For forty days He must have clung to those words. As one trial after another afflicted Him, those words were put to the test but they were also His comfort. You can almost hear the devil saying to Jesus: "How can the Father love You if He lets this happen to You? Where is Your Father now that You are in the desert? Are you really sure that You are the Son of God?"

How the devil delights in casting doubt on our position in Christ. How he longs to confuse us and cause us to wonder about God's love and our place in His heart. He will afflict us and try us in an attempt to cause us to question our salvation and our standing in Christ. He will put us in a position where we have the Word of God on the one hand and the trials and struggles of life on the other. Then we will have to make a decision. What will we believe? Will we

believe that these trials prove that God has abandoned us? Will we let the struggles we face cause us to question whether our faith is true? Or will we believe, despite the temptations and trials, what God says. This is what Jesus faced at that time.

After forty days of severe testing, the devil was putting Jesus to the test. Did Jesus still truly believe what the Father said or did He need to prove it by turning a stone into bread. Did He still have confidence in His relationship with the Father after these difficult days? That day Jesus turned to Satan and said: "It is written."

The phrase "it is written" is a powerful one. These are the words that defeated the temptation of the devil. In the midst of this harsh forty days of testing, Jesus turned to the truth of His Father's word. He would not doubt this even for a moment. He did not need to prove He was the Son of God by turning a stone to bread. The truth of God was sufficient.

Can you trust what God says today? All too many people are looking for answers outside of God's Word. They are unwilling to completely trust what God says. This gives the enemy a powerful foothold in their lives. If he can cause us to doubt the Word of God and the importance of what it says, he can cause us to wander and fall into just about any trap.

There is another aspect to this first temptation that we need to consider. We have seen the context of the question as it is prefaced by the phrase "if you are the Son of God." We also now need to see it in the context of the phrase "He was hungry."

The Lord Jesus experienced hunger as we do. Hunger can be a powerful motivation. It can cause people to lie, steal or kill. The Lord Jesus had not eaten for forty days. During those forty days, He had committed Himself and His physical, spiritual and emotional needs to the Father. Now the devil was asking him to cut this time short by turning a stone into bread. He was asking Christ to prove He was the Son of God by taking charge. He may have been saying something like this: "If you are the Son of God, why are you sitting there starving. Why don't you do something about it? Turn that stone into bread and feed yourself. Why should the Son of God go hungry when He has the power to turn stones into bread?"

It is true that the Lord Jesus did have authority over nature. That power, however, was always held in subjection to the will and purpose of the Father and in obedience to the leading of the Spirit. The Spirit of God had led Him into this desert. Immediately after these temptations, the Spirit would lead Him out to the region of Galilee (see Luke 4:14). Christ's desire was to know the leading of the Father and the Spirit. He chose to go hungry rather than to use the power given Him for anything other than the purpose of His Father. That day He made it clear to the devil that "man does not live by bread alone." There were things in life and ministry more important than food and comfort. To do the will and purpose of the Father was of greater importance.

Jesus was the Son of God. He did deserve the best of everything, but more than anything else in life, He wanted to walk in submission to the will and purpose of the Father. This was of much greater importance to Him than His personal comfort. How we need to learn this lesson today. I have met pastors who decide whether they will accept a call to a church only on the basis of how much money they

will get or whether this particular move will further their careers. I have met Christian workers whose greatest desire seems to be the praise of the men and women they serve. I have personally been tempted to “preach to impress” rather than to speak the Word God has put on my heart for His people. Will we use the calling, gifting and authority God has given us for ourselves? God is looking for a people who truly understand that “man does not live by comforts alone.” He is looking for men and women who will commit themselves to follow Him and His Word. Jesus did not use His power for His own comfort here because it was not the timing or leading of the Spirit?

As Jesus faced this first recorded temptation, He was being tempted to doubt the Word God had spoken to Him. He was also being tempted to consider His position as the Son of God to be more a privilege than a responsibility. He was the Son of God and that position was a position of authority and power. This privileged position, however, placed Him under a tremendous responsibility. Never was a responsibility taken more seriously. He denied Himself of all the privileges of the Son of God and submitted completely to the will of the Father. He sacrificed His comforts or the sake of His responsibility. He refused to turn the stone into bread choosing rather to remain in the will of the Father instead.

For Consideration:

- What do you suppose was the sin behind turning a stone into bread?
- Has the enemy ever caused you to doubt your position in Christ, your ministry calling or the leading of the Spirit? Explain.

- Have you ever been tempted to doubt God's Word when things around you have been difficult? Have you ever been tempted to compromise God's Word?
- Have you ever felt the temptation to see your position as more of a privilege than a responsibility? What happens when we become more focused on the privilege of our calling rather than our responsibility?
- Are you willing to sacrifice your personal comforts for the sake of the kingdom of God?
- What does this passage teach us about the importance of submitting ourselves and our gifts to the leading of the Spirit of God? Have you ever been tempted to use your position or gifts in ways the Spirit of God has not led you to use them?

For Prayer:

- Take a moment to thank the Lord for the truth of His Word.
- Ask the Lord to give you strength to be faithful even when things are not going the way you expected.
- Thank the Lord for the privilege of your calling. Ask Him to give you grace to take that calling seriously. Ask Him to give you grace to be faithful to the responsibility He has given you in that call.
- Ask the Lord to forgive you for times when you have not submitted your calling and gifts to the leading of His Spirit. Ask Him to forgive you for using your position to elevate yourself rather than advance His kingdom.

4

LED TO A HIGH PLACE

The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world (Luke 4:5)

In the previous chapter we saw how the devil tried to introduce doubt into the mind of Christ concerning the word God has spoken to Him and His position as the Son of God. He also tried to get Him to use His gifts and privileges as the Son of God for His own purposes. Christ resisted these temptations, choosing rather to walk in obedience to the will and the Word of His Father.

Satan does not give up. Having failed in this attempt, he makes another effort. The enemy is very persistent. Sometimes this persistence works to his advantage. He often wears out the Christian with his constant temptations and trials. Remember that he has already been tempting Jesus for forty days.

In this next temptation, verse 5 tells us that the devil led Christ to a high place and “showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world.” At first glance verse 5 is quite

shocking. It tells us that the devil “led” Christ. The word translated “led” can also mean to take or to bring. We should *not* see in this any submission of Christ to the devil. There is no indication that Jesus even left the desert. The verse goes on to tell us that having “led” Christ to a high place the devil showed him “in an instant” all the kingdoms of the world.” How was it possible to see *all* the kingdoms of the world from a high place? Even more importantly, how could this be done “in an instant”? It appears that what is happening here is that the devil is tempting Christ in a vision.

This vision, however, is much more than a senseless dream we might have at night. In this vision the devil was seeking to make a transaction with Christ. While the events may not have been happening physically, the conversation that took place was indeed very real. Had Christ submitted even in this vision, Satan would have won the battle.

We need to see from this that the devil is able to give us visions and dreams. His battle is not just a physical one. He will do all he can to turn our minds and our hearts away from the Lord Jesus. He will do this even in visions or dreams at night. There are those who say, “It was just a dream, it wasn’t real.” The reality of the matter, however, is that even in dreams the enemy can gain access to our mind and heart. I remember speaking to a friend once who told me that he had to confess to God about a dream he had at night because in it he had surrendered to sin.

Jesus makes it quite clear that sin begins in the heart. Listen to what He tells us in Matthew 5:27-28:

“You have heard that it was said, ‘Do not commit adultery.’ But I tell you that anyone who looks at a

woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. (Matthew 5:27-28)

You don't have to physically sin to be guilty before God. God doesn't see things the way we do. He looks at the motives and intentions of our heart.

When the Lord sent the prophet Samuel to look for a king, the prophet was tempted to look for a person who looked strong and handsome. God didn't care so much about these externals. In 1 Samuel 16:7 He told Samuel:

But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart." (1 Samuel 16:7)

God sees the motives of our hearts. Paul reminded the Corinthian believers that the day would come when God would expose those hidden motives of the heart:

Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men's hearts. At that time each will receive his praise from God. (1 Corinthians 4:5)

Many things can appear to be innocent on the outside but God looks much deeper than this. He searches the motives and intentions of our heart.

All a man's ways seem innocent to him, but motives are weighed by the LORD. (Proverbs 16:2)

As human beings we are focused on what we can see. In the kingdom of God, however, this is not how things work. The attitudes and thoughts of our hearts are important. God will hold us accountable for our motives and the secret lusts of our mind. Transactions with the devil can be made in these secret places when we surrender our minds and hearts to his temptations.

Christ was taken to this high place in a vision. There in that high place, the devil showed Christ all the kingdoms of the world. Likely at that moment, flashing through His mind at lightning fast speed was all the glory, pleasure, riches and power this world had to offer. Would He surrender to all its glitter? Would He, even for a moment, allow his mind and heart to lust after these things?

All who want to walk faithfully with the Lord must begin with the thoughts and motives of their hearts. The Psalmist knew this fully well when he cried out to the Lord in Psalm 139:

Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. (Psalm 139:23-24)

Here was a man who pleaded with God to cleanse his heart and his thoughts. He wanted to be pure from the very core of his being.

Listen to the cry of the Lord God to His people in Jeremiah 4:14:

O Jerusalem, wash the evil from your heart and be saved. How long will you harbor wicked thoughts?

Notice the heart of God for His people to wash evil from their hearts and cast off their wicked thoughts. He saw their heart and the wicked thoughts of their minds. All this was offensive to Him. He longed for His people to be cleansed in their hearts and minds.

In a similar way the Lord, speaking through Isaiah the prophet, pleads with His people to forsake their evil thoughts and turn to Him. He reminds them that their thoughts were not his thoughts.

Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD. (Isaiah 55:7-8)

The battle that is taking place in this second temptation is a battle in the mind of Christ. It is a battle that is waged every day in our lives. Though this battle is not physical in nature it is nonetheless very real. Real transactions take place in the mind. Deals are signed and decisions made in the mind. Nothing is written on paper but commitments are made that will affect the rest of our lives.

What kind of commitments have you made in your mind with Satan? Have you agreed with him to hold a grudge against someone? Have you chosen to never forgive someone who has hurt you? Have you determined that you would always be in control of your destiny? Have you surrendered to lustful thoughts? Have you allowed your heart to be filled with pride? The list goes on. These attitudes are not visible to your friends and loved ones. In some ways, you are not even always aware of them yourself, but they are very real.

The challenge is for us to allow God to examine our hearts and the secret commitments we have made. We need to allow Him to convict us for the sins of our attitudes and thoughts, voluntary or involuntary. This temptation of Christ was in His mind and heart. This is where it began. The surrender of His mind and will in this matter would determine the fate of the universe. To surrender even His thoughts was to fail the test.

For Consideration:

- What do we learn here about the persistence of the devil? Does he give up easily?
- How do we know that the temptation of Jesus here was in a vision? Have you ever been tempted in a dream?
- What is the difference between physical sins and sins of the mind and heart? Do you actually have to sin physically to be guilty?
- How important is it that we confess the sins of our thoughts and attitudes?
- What kind of sinful commitments can be made in the mind and heart without anyone else being aware of it?

For Prayer:

- Ask the Lord to protect you from the persistent attacks of the devil. Ask Him to give you strength to continue resisting him.
- Take a moment to pray that the Lord would protect your mind and heart from sin. Ask Him to search

your thoughts and attitudes and show you if there is any sin you need to deal with and confess.

- Ask the Lord to show you any sinful commitments you have made in your thoughts and heart. Ask Him to help you to break those commitments so that you can honour Him from your heart.

5

WHO WILL YOU WORSHIP?

And he said to him, "I will give you all their authority and splendor, for it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. So if you worship me, it will all be yours." Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.'" (Luke 4:6-8)

In verse 5, we saw how the devil showed Jesus all the kingdoms of the earth. As we continue in verses 6-8 we see the reason behind this. In verse 6, he promised to give all their authority and splendor to Christ if He would bow down and worship him. Let's take a moment to break down verses 6-8 to see what was really happening there.

Notice from verse 6 that the devil promised to give Christ all the authority and splendor of the nations. Remember that he was speaking to the Son of God. He reminded Christ that the reason he could offer these nations to Him was because they had been given to him and that he could give them to anyone he wanted. This merits some careful consideration.

When sin entered the world in the Garden of Eden, the human race gave the devil control. By turning their backs on God, they chose to follow the devil and his ways. When sin entered the world, Satan was set free to do his work. Whole nations were blinded to the truth of their Creator. Even the chosen people of God were held under his influence. They naturally turned against God. In the battle for the souls of men, earth was under Satan's influence. Humankind gave him that control when they turned from their Creator.

In John 12, the Lord Jesus was thinking about His death. While He struggled with the fact that He would have to lay down His life, He prayed that the Father would glorify His name in what was about to happen. Reflecting on what was about to happen, the Lord Jesus said:

Now is the time for judgement on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. (John 12:31)

His death would accomplish two things. First, it would judge the world for the evil of turning from their Creator. Second, it would drive out the "prince of this world." Jesus refers to the devil as the "prince of this world." This shows us that Satan did have authority over the world. He was given that authority when sin entered the world. Christ's death was going to change that. By His death, the Lord Jesus would reclaim the souls of men and women. He would establish a new kingdom over which He would be the undisputed king.

Jesus told His disciples that after His death, He would send the Holy Spirit to them. The Holy Spirit would guide them in how they were to live in the kingdom of God. He

would convince the world of sin, righteousness and judgement.

When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgement: in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me; in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; and in regard to judgement, because the prince of this world now stands condemned. (John 8:8-11)

Under the reign of Satan these principles were ignored. Notice, however that “the prince of this world now stands condemned” (verse 11). Christ’s death judged Satan and held him accountable for his terrible deeds. Notice again the use of the phrase “the prince of this world.” Satan was an evil prince who ruled over the minds and hearts of humankind.

The apostle Paul speaks about the “god of this age” in 2 Corinthians 4:4:

The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

Who is the god of this age? He is none other than the devil. Satan blinds the eyes of unbelievers so they cannot see the light of Christ. He hates the truth and all it stands for. He is described as the “god of this age” because of his control over the minds and hearts of the unbeliever.

What does all this tell us? It tells us that Satan was telling the truth in part. He had been given authority on this earth. Admittedly, he deceived Eve to get that authority but he did have control over the minds and hearts of men and women around the world. They were under his domain. He controlled and manipulated them for his own purposes. This is why the Lord Jesus needed to come. The world was lost in sin and under the control of the devil. It had to be rescued and restored to the Father.

The control of the minds and hearts of the human race was an incredible power. Satan could influence entire nations for his own means. As he stood there before the Lord Jesus, however, he was willing to give it all up if Jesus would simply bow down and worship him as the prince of this world.

There is something very deceptive in this temptation. To defeat Satan and strip him of his power, the Lord Jesus would have to die. This was the sentence of the Father for sin (see Romans 6:23). Jesus' death would pay that penalty. Satan is offering the Lord Jesus an alternative. He is telling him that he would surrender his control of the world if the Lord Jesus would worship him. Satan has no concern for the requirements of God here. He has another way. This way would not require Christ's physical death and the agony it brought. While Satan would surrender his control, our debt to God would not be paid. This world would still be separated from the Father.

Satan delights in giving us shortcuts. He knew that by offering this shortcut to the Lord Jesus, he would defeat the purpose of the Father through Him.

Satan asked that Jesus worship him. Consider the power Satan had at the time. Whole nations were held in darkness. He influenced kings and authorities to do whatever he wanted them to do. We see from the book of Job in the Old Testament how Satan killed Job's entire family and afflicted Job with painful sores. He was the "prince of this world." He was asking the Lord to recognize this authority and power. He was asking Christ to bow down in reverence to him and the authority he had in this world. If Christ did this, Satan gave his word that he would hand over to Him all this authority. We see something of the intense pride and arrogance of Satan in this.

Jesus responded to Satan with a passage of Scripture. He told him that we are to worship the Lord God only (see Deuteronomy 6:13). When offered a choice between power and authority over the entire world and obedience to the Scripture, Christ chose the Scripture. Jesus knew that if He was to truly defeat Satan, he needed to do so in God's way.

Writing to Timothy, the apostle Paul gives this advice:

Similarly, if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not receive the victor's crown unless he competes according to the rules. (2 Timothy 2:5)

Imagine an athlete running a race and instead of staying on the track, he chose to take a shortcut. What would be the result? He would be disqualified from the race for cheating. Christ could not win this battle by cheating. There could be no shortcuts. The race before Him had been marked out clearly. He knew what His Father was asking Him to do. He would not settle for anything less.

How about you today? Will you settle for something less than the perfect will of God for your life? Will you compromise in order to ease the strain? Will you ignore what the Word of God says to reach your goal? There is no victor's crown unless the rules are observed.

Jesus would face the pain and suffering before Him. He would turn His back on the devil's offer. He would not be distracted from the plan God had set out for His life. Absolute obedience was the key to victory. Anything less was defeat.

For Consideration:

- How was authority over this world given to Satan?
- What power does Satan have in this world? Is there evidence of his work around you today?
- What did the death of Christ accomplish? How did it break the power and authority of Satan in this world?
- Satan offered to surrender the control of this world to the Lord Jesus if He would bow down and worship him. How would this solution still leave us in our sin?
- What do we see here about Christ's commitment to the truth of Scripture and to ministering in absolute obedience to the Scripture?
- Have you ever been tempted to compromise and take the shortcuts the devil offers? Explain.
- Have you seen compromises in the lives of believers in your day?

For Prayer:

- Thank the Lord Jesus that He resisted the shortcut offered Him by the devil. Thank Him that He willingly paid the price for your sin.
- Ask the Lord to give you grace to resist the temptations of the devil in your life.
- Ask the Lord to help you to see any areas in your life where you have been compromising. Pray that He would give you a greater commitment to his leading and the truth of His Word.
- Pray for the church of Christ, especially those who are being persecuted and struggling. Ask God to give them an uncompromising faith and commitment to His word.

6

LED TO JERUSALEM

The devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down from here. For it is written: "He will command his angels concerning you to guard you carefully; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone." (Luke 4:9-11)

Luke 4:9-11 describes the third of the recorded temptations of Jesus in the wilderness. Here the devil led Jesus to Jerusalem and had Him stand on the highest point of the temple. He then invited Him to jump off that high point, quoting a passage of Scripture promising that God's angels would watch over Him. Let's take a moment to examine what is taking place in these verses.

Notice that the devil led Jesus to Jerusalem. In the Jewish mind, Jerusalem was considered to be the most holy city. This was where the temple of God was located. People would come from far away to worship the Lord God in this place. This temptation took place in a holy place. Does it surprise you that the devil came to the temple? This would

seem to be the last place he would want to be. In reality, it may be the very first place he wants to be.

As we read the Old and New Testament, it doesn't take long to see that the enemy is often in the midst of God's people causing division and chaos or tempting them to sin and turn from their Lord. His presence is often felt in holy places. On several occasions the prophets of the Old Testament spoke to God's people about the abominations of the holy place. Listen to what the Lord God said to Israel through His servant Jeremiah:

The people of Israel and Judah have provoked me by all the evil they have done--they, their kings and officials, their priests and prophets, the men of Judah and the people of Jerusalem. They turned their backs to me and not their faces; though I taught them again and again, they would not listen or respond to discipline. They set up their abominable idols in the house that bears my Name and defiled it. (Jeremiah 32:32-34)

Notice particularly that the people of God set up abominable idols in the house that bore His name. The holy place was being defiled.

The Lord showed the prophet Ezekiel what was taking place in the temple in Ezekiel 8. While these things were not visible to the human eye, they were not hidden from God. In a vision, the Lord told Ezekiel to dig a hole into the wall of the temple. When he did so he saw a door. The Lord told him to go through that door and see what was really taking place inside.

And he said to me, "Go in and see the wicked and detestable things they are doing here." So I went

in and looked, and I saw portrayed all over the walls all kinds of crawling things and detestable animals and all the idols of the house of Israel. In front of them stood seventy elders of the house of Israel, and Jaazaniah son of Shaphan was standing among them. Each had a censer in his hand, and a fragrant cloud of incense was rising. He said to me, "Son of man, have you seen what the elders of the house of Israel are doing in the darkness, each at the shrine of his own idol? They say, 'The LORD does not see us; the LORD has forsaken the land.'" (Ezekiel 8:9-12)

The temple of God was filled with "wicked and detestable things." The elders of the land were worshipping evil and abominable idols. As you read this passage you cannot help but sense the presence of Satan in this holy place.

God's anger often flared up against His people and their wicked ways. In Ezekiel 9, He called an angel to move through the city of Jerusalem, marking the foreheads of those who grieved over the detestable things that were being done in the city (see Ezekiel 9:3-4). He then called other angels to follow the first and kill those who did not have this mark on their forehead.

Slaughter old men, young men and maidens, women and children, but do not touch anyone who has the mark. Begin at my sanctuary." So they began with the elders who were in front of the temple. (Ezekiel 9:6)

Notice in Ezekiel 9:6 where these angels began their work. They began with the elders who were in the front of the temple. There in the temple were those who no longer

grieved over the wickedness of the land. There in the temple were men and women who were themselves caught up in the abominations of the world. Satan was alive and active in the lives of the elders in the temple.

Later on in the New Testament we see the frustration of the Lord Jesus as He came to the temple only to find that what was supposed to be a house of prayer, had turned into a marketplace.

Jesus entered the temple area and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves. "It is written," he said to them, "'My house will be called a house of prayer,' but you are making it a 'den of robbers.'" (Matthew 21:12-13)

In anger, Jesus overturned the tables, made a whip and drove those men out. The holy place was a battleground. Satan was doing his utmost to turn people away from the Lord God in that place. It should not surprise us today if Satan is doing the same in our worship services, prayer meetings and committee meetings. Satan loves to go to church!

Notice also in this that Satan took Jesus to the highest point of the temple. He brought Him to the very top. There were other high place Satan could have taken Jesus, but he chose the highest point of the temple. There may be a reason for this. Would it surprise you if Satan gave you a high position in your church? Would it surprise you if he made you famous? Would it surprise you if you became more and more important in Christian circles? Satan has no problem giving us a higher or more important position in the church. By putting us in this place, he actually puts

us in a place where our lives become public and any failure or sin has a more destructive impact on the whole church. By giving us a higher position, he also has a means of influencing more people through us.

How easy it is for us to long for those high positions of influence in our church circles. With great responsibility comes great obligation. With great responsibility also comes great temptation. Listen to what the apostle James told his readers in James 3:1:

Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly. (James 3:1)

We can be sure that Satan will do his utmost to cause people in positions of authority to fall. He is not threatened by our position. In fact, those in high positions are often his targets of choice.

Finally, notice that Satan is quite happy to use the Scriptures for his own end. Satan knows what the Scriptures say. In fact, as he tempted Jesus, he quoted a passage from Psalm 91:11-12. Notice what this passage says:

If you make the Most High your dwelling-- even the LORD, who is my refuge-- 10 then no harm will befall you, no disaster will come near your tent. For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. (Psalm 91:9-12)

It is significant that the devil used only the phrase from this passage the suited his purpose. He quoted the part that

speaks about the angels being commanded to guard and protect the servant of God from harm, but failed to include the context of the verses. The passage Satan quoted from Psalm 91 begins by giving the context of the promise. It tells us that if we make the Most High our dwelling then no harm will befall us. Jesus could hardly “make the Most High His dwelling,” by purposely throwing Himself off the temple in obedience to a demonic request. We will examine this more fully in the next chapter. What is important for us to note here is that Satan uses Scripture to tempt the Lord Jesus.

It is quite clear that Satan does not use the Scriptures correctly. By failing to put the verse he quoted in its proper context, Satan was ultimately trying to use Scripture to cause Christ to sin. Throughout the course of history, Satan has been quite successful with this tactic. He has led many to misinterpret and twist the Scriptures to suit their own desires. Under his influence, some have taken passages of Scripture out of context and been led astray. Many cults or sects have begun as a result of the misinterpretation of Scriptures. There are those who preach the Scriptures with no love in their hearts. Their legalistic and heartless application of Scripture has done much to drive people away from God. Satan will not hesitate to use the Scriptures to lead God’s people astray.

What do we learn from all of this? We see how careful we need to be. Satan will often come to church. He will use the Scriptures if they suit his means. He may even encourage your rise in position because he knows that by placing you in that position, your fall will be evident to many.

For Consideration:

- Why is it significant that the temptation of Jesus took place in Jerusalem and in the temple?
- Have you ever seen evidence of the presence of Satan in worship services, prayer meetings or church committee meetings?
- How does a position of high authority make us more vulnerable to temptation? How does the fall of a person in a place of authority affect the church?
- How can the misinterpretation of Scripture be used to justify sin? What is the result of taking Scripture out of its context?

For Prayer:

- Ask the Lord to protect your place of worship from the influence of Satan. Ask Him to give you discernment to recognize the temptations and work of Satan in your midst.
- Ask God to protect those He has put in positions of authority in your place of worship.
- Ask God to give you grace to correctly interpret His Word. Pray for those who preach and teach His Word in your fellowship group. Ask that He would give them grace to apply it in love and truth.

TESTING GOD

Jesus answered, "It says: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" (Luke 4:12)

Having led Jesus to the highest point of the temple, the devil, quoting Psalm 91:11-12, asked Him to jump off so that the word of God would be proven.

"He will command his angels concerning you to guard you carefully; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone" (Luke 4:10-11).

Let's take a moment to consider the nature of this temptation. Satan challenged Jesus on two points here. First, he challenged the love and care of the Father for Him.

As Jesus was being tempted that day, the enemy was challenging the Father's care for Him. Perhaps the devil saying something like this to Jesus: "Do you really believe the Father will care for You? If You jumped off this temple do You really think He would keep You from being harmed?"

We can be sure that as we minister, the devil will also try to get us to question the care of our Heavenly Father. His goal is to distract us. If he can cause us to doubt the provision of our heavenly Father in our time of need, he will cause us to lose hope or to take matters into our own hands instead of trusting God. In the heat of the battle, when everything seems to be going wrong, you will hear the enemy whisper into your ear: "Where is your God? If He truly cared for you, He would not allow you to go through this."

There have been many times in my ministry when I have heard that voice of Satan questioning my faith, challenging the care of my heavenly Father and causing me to worry about His timely provision. If you are sincerely serving the Lord today, you can be sure that the enemy will be seeking to create doubt and discouragement in your life.

There may also be a second challenge in this verse as well. Not only was the devil challenging the care and provision of the heavenly Father, he was also challenging the truth of His word. In reality, he was saying to Jesus: "Psalm 91 says that the Father will send His angels to watch over You and lift You up so that You did not as much as strike Your foot against a stone. Do You really think that is true? What would happen if You jumped off this temple? Do You think the Father would really do as He promised? Do You really think that as You were falling, the angels would rush to Your rescue and pick You up before You hit the ground?" You can sense the challenge of Satan here.

In the battle before us we must be assured of two things. First, we need to be sure of God's love and care for us as we step out to face the enemy. Second, we need to be sure of the truth of His Word as our guide. To doubt either of these is to fail in our mission. How could the Lord Jesus

have accomplished the task before Him if He questioned either His Father's care and love or the truth of His Word? There is much more to be said about this but we must focus on the verse before us.

The natural tendency for us, when we are challenged concerning what we believe, is to try to prove we are right. I have to admit that there have been times I have taken up arms when challenged. Sometimes in doing so, I have fallen into the hands of the enemy. I have felt the need to justify my beliefs or actions to my accuser. I have sometimes become angry or found a bitter or ungodly attitude creep into my life as a result. In seeking to defend what I believed to be true, I have instead given the devil a foothold in my life. When given a foothold, the enemy will quickly sow seeds of anger, resentment and pride. We find ourselves in His trap.

The devil is challenging Jesus here. He is asking Him if He would stake his life on what He believed. While this is a question we all need to ask ourselves, there is something very subtle and evil about what the devil is doing here. He is tempting the Lord Jesus to do something the Father had not asked Him to do. He is asking Jesus to deliberately throw Himself into danger.

In response to this temptation, the Lord Jesus responded with a quote from Deuteronomy 6:16: "Do not test the LORD your God as you did at Massah." The reference to Massah in the original quote gives us the context of the verse. In Exodus 17, the people of God were wandering in the wilderness and had no water to drink. They began to grumble against Moses and demanded to know why he had brought them into the desert to die. Moses brought this complaint to the Lord God and God told him what to do. Moses was to go to a certain rock and strike it with his

rod. When he did so, water would come out of that rock to supply the needs of his people. The place where this incident took place was called Massah and Meribah. "Massah" means "testing." "Meribah" means "quarreling." Deuteronomy 17:7 tells us that the people tested the Lord God by saying: "Is the Lord among us or not?"

And he called the place Massah and Meribah because the Israelites quarreled and because they tested the LORD saying, "Is the LORD among us or not?"

The understanding here is that the people of God doubted God's presence and provision in their time of need. This led them to become angry with Moses. As they quarreled and questioned the Lord's provision and presence, they tested God. They had seen Him do many wonderful things. He had brought the Egyptians to their knees and set them free by a series of miraculous signs. He had opened the sea, providing a way for them to escape on dry land. These were powerful signs.

Israel was testing God by questioning His provision and care. We understand that God is a gracious God, but what keeps Him from giving us what we deserve when we challenge Him and His purpose for our lives? There is an important passage in Romans 1:18-24. Consider what God does in this passage:

The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities--his eternal power and divine nature--have been

clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles. Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. (Romans 1:18-24)

Paul tells us that God had revealed Himself and His purposes to the world. There were men and women, however, who refused to listen to God or respond to the knowledge they had about Him. They "suppressed the truth." They did this by ignoring it and doing what they wanted. They knew about God but refuse to glorify Him or acknowledge Him in their lives. They claimed to be wise, but chose their ways over God's. Their persistence in this and their ultimate refusal to turn to God stirred up His anger. Romans 1:24 tells us that He gave them over to their sinful desires. He turned from them and gave them what they wanted. Ultimately, His blessing was stripped away.

In Acts 5, we have the story of Ananias and Sapphira. They sold their property like the other believers and gave the money to the apostles to distribute to the needs of the poor. They kept a portion for themselves, which in itself was not sin. Not wanting people to see that they kept this portion for themselves, however, they chose to lie about it. The Lord revealed this deceit to Peter, and Ananias was struck dead by the Lord for his deception. Listen to what Peter told his wife Sapphira when she, too, lied about the money they had brought to the apostles:

Peter said to her, "How could you agree to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look! The feet of the men who buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out also." (Acts 5:9)

Notice that Peter tells Sapphira that she was testing the Spirit of the Lord by her lie. Her persistence in the lie angered the Lord and ultimately led to her early death.

The apostle Paul gives us an example of how Israel tested the Lord God. In 1 Corinthians 10:7-10 we read:

Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written: "The people sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in pagan revelry." We should not commit sexual immorality, as some of them did--and in one day twenty-three thousand of them died. We should not test the Lord, as some of them did--and were killed by snakes. And do not grumble, as some of them did--and were killed by the destroying angel. (1 Corinthians 10:7-10)

Notice in verse 9 that Paul speaks about Israel's sin as a testing of the Lord. Many lost their lives because they tested the Lord's holiness and grace by sinning against Him.

The Psalmist speaks about how Israel put the Lord God to the test when she did not remember His power and rebelled against His statutes:

Again and again they put God to the test; they vexed the Holy One of Israel. They did not remember his power--the day he redeemed them from the oppressor, the day he displayed his miraculous

signs in Egypt, his wonders in the region of Zoan. He turned their rivers to blood; they could not drink from their streams. He sent swarms of flies that devoured them, and frogs that devastated them. He gave their crops to the grasshopper, their produce to the locust. He destroyed their vines with hail and their sycamore-figs with sleet. He gave over their cattle to the hail, their livestock to bolts of lightning. He unleashed against them his hot anger, his wrath, indignation and hostility--a band of destroying angels. He prepared a path for his anger; he did not spare them from death but gave them over to the plague. He struck down all the firstborn of Egypt, the firstfruits of manhood in the tents of Ham. But he brought his people out like a flock; he led them like sheep through the desert. He guided them safely, so they were unafraid; but the sea engulfed their enemies. Thus he brought them to the border of his holy land, to the hill country his right hand had taken. He drove out nations before them and allotted their lands to them as an inheritance; he settled the tribes of Israel in their homes. But they put God to the test and rebelled against the Most High; they did not keep his statutes. (Psalm 78:41-56)

There are many ways we can test the Lord God. We test Him by disbelief when there is ample evidence of His power around us. We test Him by persistent sin and rebellion. It is a very dangerous thing to test the Lord God. The examples before us show us that many lost their lives by doing so.

The question we need to answer here in Luke 4:12 is this: How would Jesus have been testing the Father by jumping off the high point of the temple? The answer to this seems

to be in what we have learned about testing in the verses we have examined above.

First, Jesus would have been testing God by doing something he had not been called by God to do. The Father had not asked Jesus to jump off the temple. This was not the will or purpose of the Father for Jesus. I am thankful that the Lord God has protected me even when I have fallen into sin. I praise Him for His grace and forgiveness even when I have wandered from the path He has set out for me. Should I always expect this protection, however, when I deliberately choose to sin and wander from God? We saw in Romans 1 that when the people of Paul's day gave themselves to immorality, God gave them over to their lusts. When Ananias and Sapphira deliberately lied to the church and persisted in that lie, the Lord struck them dead. What assurance do we have that God will always rescue us when, knowing what is right, we deliberately choose to rebel against God? Is God under any obligation to rescue us from our foolish decisions? Jesus knew the foolishness of expecting God's blessing while openly defying Him. Jesus would not test God by jumping from the temple. This was not God's leading or purpose for His life.

Second, remember that Satan was trying to get Jesus to prove the Scripture he quoted was true. Jesus did not need to jump from the temple to prove the Scriptures were true. He believed them because they were the words of His Father. As the Lord Jesus ministered on this earth He was repeatedly angered by those who demanded a sign before believing what He said (see Matthew 12:39; 16:4). What more proof do we need? God's word is all we need. We can rely on what He says. We have no cause to doubt that God will always keep His word.

The writer to the Hebrews describes true faith as the evidence of things not seen?

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. (Hebrews 11:1, KJV)

True faith accepts what it cannot see. It is convinced not because it has proven it but because God has promised it. Our eyes and our senses may deceive us, but God's word will always be true and reliable. There was no need for Jesus to prove the truth of God's word by jumping from the temple. God's word should never have to be proven. To even feel the need to prove it is to doubt its truthfulness. There is nothing more sure than the Word of God. Jesus expressed this in Matthew 24: when he said:

Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away. (Matthew 24:35)

The truth of God's word is more reliable than the heavens and earth. This earth and all we know of it will one day pass away but God's word and His promises will always be true.

Jesus would not perform some cheap trick to prove the reliability of His Father's word. There was no reason to doubt what His Father had spoken. We need this kind of confidence in God's Word today.

For Consideration:

- Have you ever questioned God's care for you or the truth of His Word? Explain.

- What does it mean to test God? Give some Biblical examples of people who tested God? What was the result?
- Do we have a right to expect God's blessing and protection when we are not walking in obedience to Him?
- Do we have any cause to doubt God's word? What does Jesus teach us about the reliability of His Word?
- How would Jesus have been tempting God by jumping from the highest point of the temple?

For Prayer:

- Thank the Lord that His grace covers our sins and failures. Ask Him to help you never to take His grace and protection for granted. Ask Him to teach you to walk in obedience and reverence.
- Ask God to forgive you for times you tested Him by unbelief or by rebellion in your life.
- Thank the Lord for the truth of His Word. Thank Him that it is more certain than the heaven and the earth. Ask Him to give you a greater confidence in this Word.

8

AN OPPORTUNE TIME

When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time. (Luke 4:13)

For forty days the Lord Jesus had been tempted by the devil in the wilderness. During that time He trusted in His Father's purpose and will, successfully defeating the enemy. Despite his best efforts, the devil could not gain a foothold in Jesus' life. Jesus had successfully resisted each one of his temptations.

Notice in verse 13 that when the devil had finished tempting Jesus, he left Him until an opportune time came. Let me make a few points about the devil and his tactics from this verse.

THE DEVIL'S TIME IS LIMITED

The first point we need to see from this verse is that the devil's time is limited. We understand from the context that he had forty days to tempt the Lord Jesus. The number forty occurs very often in Scripture. Speaking about the Lord Jesus, the author of the book of Acts tells us that He

showed Himself for forty days after His resurrection before returning to the Father.

After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God. (Acts 1:5)

The children of Israel spent forty years wandering in the desert before entering the Promised Land (see Acts 7:36).

When God was judging the earth in the book of Genesis, He told Noah that he would send His rain for a period of forty days:

Seven days from now I will send rain on the earth for forty days and forty nights, and I will wipe from the face of the earth every living creature I have made." (Genesis 7:4)

God called Moses up to the mountain where he would give him the Ten Commandments. Moses stayed in the presence of the Lord God for forty days without eating.

Moses was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights without eating bread or drinking water. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant--the Ten Commandments. Exodus 34:28)

I draw attention to these verses for a reason. Forty days of temptation by the devil was not just a random number. It was the number of days the Father gave to Satan to tempt

the Lord. Satan's time was limited. After these events Jesus would be led away from the desert into His ministry. Satan was not permitted to go beyond his time.

Revelation 12:12 gives us a picture of the devil as he lashes out with all his fury because he knows his time is limited.

Therefore rejoice, you heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has gone down to you! He is filled with fury, because he knows that his time is short."
(Revelation 12:12)

The devil is not in control of his time. God has set a limit on what he can do and for how long he can do it. In the case of Jesus in the wilderness, Satan's time was up and he was forced to leave. It should encourage us that the Lord God remains in control even when trials take place in our lives.

THE DEVIL DOESN'T GIVE UP

The second detail we need to see from verse 13 is that, while the devil's time was limited, he did not give up. The verse tells us that he left Jesus but waited for a more opportune time. He would continue to tempt and test Jesus throughout His ministry.

The devil would influence the religious leader of the day to challenge Jesus and what He was teaching. They often came to him looking for a way to test him or kill Him. You can be sure that the devil was behind this. In fact, Jesus makes this quite clear when He told the religious leaders that their father was the devil and they were doing his will:

You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies. (John 8:44)

Sometimes the crowds surrounded Jesus and his disciples, taking up their time and energy. Sometimes they didn't even have time to eat. False accusations filled the air concerning Jesus and His ministry.

Then Jesus entered a house, and again a crowd gathered, so that he and his disciples were not even able to eat. When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, "He is out of his mind." And the teachers of the law who came down from Jerusalem said, "He is possessed by Beelzebub! By the prince of demons he is driving out demons." (Mark 3:20-22)

When you read Mark 3:20-22 it is not difficult to see the influence of Satan. Jesus and His disciples didn't have time to eat. His family accused him of being "out of His mind." The religious leaders claimed He was possessed by a demon. All these things were from the devil.

Even among His own disciples, we see how on one occasion Peter challenged Jesus' need to go to the cross. The response of Jesus to Peter that day is surprising:

Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. "Never, Lord!" he said. "This shall never happen to you!" Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you

do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men." (Matthew 16:22-23)

Notice how Jesus addressed Satan while looking at Peter. Here again we see how the enemy was using Peter's words to tempt Jesus.

In Luke 22:3-4 Satan entered Judas and had him betray the Lord Jesus to the religious leaders:

Then Satan entered Judas, called Iscariot, one of the Twelve. And Judas went to the chief priests and the officers of the temple guard and discussed with them how he might betray Jesus. (Luke 22:3-4)

Satan did not admit defeat. He left Jesus in the wilderness but he would not stop tempting him. To the very end of time, Satan will be active, seeking to destroy and hinder the work of Christ in this world. We dare not let down our guard.

THE DEVIL IS WATCHING

Notice finally in this passage that the devil was watching for an "opportune time" (NIV). The word used here is the Greek word "kairos." This word refers to a "season," a "set or proper time," or "an opportunity." The idea is that the devil was looking for the right moment to attack.

We can be sure that Satan was tracking Christ's movements. He would use every opportunity he could to shoot arrows of temptation at Him. This would come through the words spoken by people to Him, through the crowd that flocked around Him, and even in quiet moments alone with

His disciples. Wherever there was an opportunity to shoot his arrows, Satan would take advantage of that moment.

What is true of the Lord Jesus is true for us as well. We can be sure that the devil is watching for an opportune moment to shoot his arrow at us. In an unguarded moment, we will feel the sting of that arrow striking our mind or our body. In an instant, when we are least expecting it, that arrow will come flying directly at us. It might come in a moment of great ministry success or in a time of deep trial. What we can say is that Satan and his angels are always looking for the right moment to bring us down. How we need the protection of the Father in these times. How we need to cling to Him for guidance and direction.

For Consideration:

- Is the devil truly in control? How does the Lord God limit his activities?
- What comfort do you find in the fact that Satan is limited by God?
- What do we learn in this chapter about the persistence of Satan? Though he knows he is defeated, does he give up?
- What are some ways in which Satan can attack? Do you see evidence of his work in your society or in your church group?
- Are there any unguarded areas of your life where Satan can attack?

For Prayer:

- Thank the Lord that He is in ultimate control of the events of our lives and that even Satan must surrender to Him.
- Ask the Lord to show you any unguarded areas of your life where you are open to the attack of the enemy.
- Ask God to protect you in the area of your strengths for even here the enemy is able to attack.
- Ask the Lord to give you His wisdom and guidance as you live each day. Ask for protection from the ongoing temptations of the enemy.
- Are there any particular areas where the enemy attacks you? Surrender these areas of your life over to the Lord God and His purpose. Ask God to keep you faithful in these particular areas.

9

SPIRIT AND TRUTH

In this final chapter I would like, by way of summary, to look at how the Lord Jesus overcame the temptations of the devil in the wilderness. Christ's victory over the devil in Luke 4:1-13 came as a result of two very important principles. First, He was led by the Spirit and second, He was guided by the Word. These two principles are so simple that they are easy to overlook, but they are the source of Christ's strength and victory. They will be our source of victory as well if we follow His example. Let's take a moment to consider these principles as they are seen in the passage.

LED BY THE SPIRIT

Notice how the story of Jesus' temptation begins:

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the desert, 2 where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry. (Luke 4:1-2)

It is not my intention to repeat what we have already considered in these two verses. What is important, however, is that we note two things in these verses:

- Jesus was full of the Holy Spirit
- Jesus was led by the Spirit

These two statements tell us something about how Jesus faced the temptations of the devil over those forty days.

First, He was full of the Holy Spirit. We have already discussed the fact that to be full of the Spirit is to be emptied of ourselves. Jesus willingly surrendered his life, allowing the Holy Spirit to be Lord in His life. His motives, thoughts and actions were submissive to the Spirit. The fullness that came from this surrender to the Spirit of God was a powerful tool against the enemy.

If we are to have any victory over the temptations of the devil, we too must know this fullness of the Spirit which comes from surrender. Our lives are the battle ground of the devil. Every day he seeks to conquer more and more territory in our lives. How do we deal with these attacks? We do so by surrendering our lives to the Spirit of God. We give God the right to our lives and die to those rights ourselves. We invite the Spirit to have full control over every hill, valley, cave and crevice of our mind and will. We invite Him to fill every corner with His light and surrender to His absolute control.

Jesus faced the temptations in the desert full of the Holy Spirit. He went into the desert with a mind and will surrendered and controlled by the Spirit of God. The presence of God's Spirit was evident in every corner of His life. If we

are to conquer the enemy and be victorious over his temptations, we must settle this matter first. Will we surrender our lives, minds, wills and emotions to the Holy Spirit? Will we invite Him to be Lord over every aspect of our lives, walking in obedience to His will and purpose? As long as there are areas that remain unconquered by the Spirit, the devil will have a foothold in our lives.

Second, notice that Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert. Jesus did not take matters into His own hands here. He was walking in obedience to the leading of the Spirit. Have you ever felt that gentle nudge of the Spirit warning you not to say or do something? There have been times I felt that nudge and ignored it. Perhaps you are in a ministry to which you have never been called? Maybe you ignored the prompting of the Spirit and got involved with a person who is having a bad influence on your life. How important it is to train our ears to hear the leading of the Spirit. He will lead us to where He needs us to be. He will show us what we need to see. He will warn of danger. He will guide us into truth.

Jesus was in the wilderness by the will of the Spirit. Being led by the Spirit does not mean that we will never be tempted. This is clear from Luke 4:1-13. Being led by the Spirit, however, is the means by which we can find our way through the valleys of life. The Spirit of God will lead us into the path of victory. He will warn us, convict us and give us the discernment necessary to walk in the victory God intends. Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert. He would be guided by the Spirit through that same desert as He listened and walked in obedience.

If we want to be victorious over the temptations of the devil, we need to be filled with the Spirit and walk in obedience to His leading. This means surrendering our lives and wills

to the Spirit of God and giving Him the right to every part of us. It means dying to ourselves and committing our lives to walk in obedience to His Word and leading.

GUIDED BY THE WORD

The second great reason for Jesus victory over the temptations of the enemy in those forty days can be found on three occasions in this passage. When tempted to turn a stone into bread, the Lord responded: "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone'" (verse 4). When the devil brought Him to a high place and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world, Jesus responded: "It is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve Him only'" (verse 8). Finally when tempted by the devil to jump off the highest point of the temple, Jesus replied: "It says: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test'" (verse 12). Notice the common theme in all these verses. Every time the devil tempted the Lord Jesus, He returned to the Scriptures to see what they had to say.

Jesus was guided by His knowledge of the Scriptures. When Satan took the Scriptures out of context, Jesus saw it immediately. He had enough knowledge of the Scriptures to know the purpose of the Father in the temptations He faced. He chose to walk in obedience to what those Scriptures taught.

In our day, there is a real temptation to ignore the Scriptures. We make decisions based on what we feel appropriate for the occasion. Satan loves to have us find our own way. He will present very logical arguments to us. He will reason with us. He will show us a "better way." He will provide us with programs and techniques. Many fall into this trap. In this Bible teaching ministry I have often been frus-

trated by the understanding that I can explain the principles of Scripture but people will still look for some other way. It is as if we feel that the Scriptures are outdated and no longer apply to our churches. We don't seem to have confidence in the clear and simple teaching of Scripture. Sometimes, we actually have more confidence in our own programmes than we do in the Scriptures themselves. Does this not come from Satan?

At times we twist or select Scriptures to suit our needs. Isn't that what Satan did in the Garden of Eden with Eve when he challenged what God said (see Genesis 3:1)? Isn't that what he did when he tempted Jesus by quoting a Scripture in an attempt to get Him to jump off the temple? The devil will twist Scriptures in an attempt to make them say whatever he wants them to say. He will tell us that the Scriptures reflected the ancient cultures of the day but do not speak to our modern culture and the issues of our day. I have met people who quote certain passages of Scripture while ignoring others. They do so to justify their actions. They may quote verses on the love and forgiveness of God while ignoring passages dealing with judgement or personal holiness. We can justify almost any sin by twisting the Scriptures to say what they were never intended to say.

Sometimes I don't understand God's purpose. I know, however, that He does know what He is doing. I choose to walk in obedience to His revealed Word.

The Word of God, as recorded in the Bible, is a guide for us in the path of life. It reveals God's heart and purpose. While our culture changes, God doesn't, nor do His purposes. The Scriptures reveal the heart of God for our lives. The principles taught in Scripture are as valid and applicable today as they have always been. How sad it is to see

Christians looking for a solution to the church's problems outside of Scripture. We ignore the Scriptures to our peril.

When Jesus was faced with the temptations of the devil, He had two tools at His disposal. He had the Spirit of God who filled and led Him. He also had the truth of Scriptures hidden in His heart. These two tools together defeated Satan. These tools are at our disposal as well. The same Spirit who filled and led Jesus will fill and lead us. The same Scriptures that guided Jesus are available to us. The Spirit and the truth of God's Word will bring victory over any temptation the enemy can throw at us. May God teach us how to walk in the filling and leading of His Spirit and in obedience to the truth of His Scripture. Then, and only then, can we know the fullness of victory.

For Consideration:

- What does it mean to be filled with the Holy Spirit?
- How does the Holy Spirit give us victory in times of temptation?
- What role do the Scriptures play in giving us victory over the temptations of the devil?
- Have you ever seen believers twist or ignore the Word of God? What is the result?

For Prayer:

- Ask God to give you a heart to surrender all to the Spirit of God and His leading in your life.
- Thank the Lord that He never changes. Thank Him that His Word is as true today as it has always been.

- Ask the Lord to teach you to recognize the prompting and leading of the Holy Spirit.
- Ask the Lord to give you a greater hunger for the Word of God and the truth it teaches. Ask Him to give you more grace to trust what He says in His Word, even when you don't understand it.

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