

“Trust in the Lord”

August 28, 2022
Matthew 4:1-11

I. Introduction

Before we consider what is called Jesus’ temptation in the wilderness, we need to consider the word “tempt.” James 1:13 says, “**When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me."** For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone.” But then there is the first verse of today’s Scripture: “**Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil.**” The Greek word used here is **πειράζω** (peiradzo) and it means “to test.” Whether testing is for good or for evil depends on the intent of the one giving the test. For example, if General Motors reports about tests on one of their new vehicles, the purpose is to demonstrate the positive features of that car. However, if Consumer’s Report or Toyota were to run tests on the same car, they would be looking for its bad or negative points. In Scripture, if the testing is an enticement to do evil, the word is usually translated by a form of the word “tempt.”

In today’s Scripture, Satan wanted to get Jesus to disobey God and sin, i.e., to show His bad points or weaknesses. On the other hand, God wanted to demonstrate Jesus’ sinlessness and worthiness. This is God’s plan for all of His children. When Christians are tempted by Satan, God can use it for their good and His glory. **Turn to James 1:2-4.** This was God’s plan and purpose for Jesus’ temptations—to use Satan’s enticements to show His Son’s holiness and worthiness to be the Savior of the world—Jesus was the sinless Lamb of God. Whether testing is by God’s initiative or is sent by Satan, God will always use it to produce good in us when we, like Jesus, meet the test in the power of the Holy Spirit. **Romans 8:28** says, “**And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.**” Matthew began with the timing of the temptation by Satan.

II. The Timing

One of the paradoxes of life seems to be that after a victory or mountain top experience, temptation often comes. That’s why Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 10:12**, “**If you think you are standing**

firm, be careful that you don't fall!” When we have succeeded in something difficult or important, we are often tempted to think about how powerful or great or intelligent we are. Pride is more than ready to take over at a moment’s notice. When we are successful, we feel that we are unbeatable, and we let down our guard. That’s when temptation comes, and if we aren’t ready, we will fall. For example, do you remember the prophet Elijah and the contest with the 450 prophets of Baal? After winning the contest, God then answered Elijah’s prayer to send rain. Elijah had two great victories—he definitely had a mountain top experience. But do you know what happened next? Turn to 1 Kings 19:1-3. Elijah took his eyes off of God, looked only at himself, and fled in fear.

Jesus had just had a mountaintop experience—He had been anointed by the Holy Spirit; God had spoken from heaven calling Jesus, “My son, whom I love, with him I am well pleased” (Matt.3:17). No sooner had Jesus experienced the first great **testimony** to His ministry than He faced the first great **test** of His ministry. Writing of this, Mark 1:12 says, “The Spirit immediately drove him into the wilderness.” After waiting 30 silent years, Jesus was ready to begin the work He had come to do. But before He could even start, the devil tried to stop Him.

The 1st Adam met Satan in the Garden of Eden where he had everything he needed. That Adam lost the battle and plunged humanity into sin and death. Jesus, who is called the last Adam or the 2nd Adam in 1 Corinthians 15:45, met Satan in the desert after fasting for 40 days—to put it mildly, He was hungry. Unlike the 1st Adam, Jesus won this battle and all the rest that Satan sent throughout Jesus’ 3-year ministry. This culminated with victory on the cross. Colossians 2:15 says, “And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.”

III. The Testing

As well as demonstrating His sinlessness, experiencing the temptations—the testings—prepared Jesus to be our sympathetic High Priest. Turn to Hebrews 4:14-16. Jesus understands what we are going through—He’s been there. He faced His temptations in His humanity; as a man. His first words to Satan were “Man shall not live by bread alone.” Jesus’ temptations were real and like all temptations, they

involved the will. By the way, notice that being tempted is not a sin—sin occurs when one yields to temptation, as [James 1:15](#) says, “**After desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin.**”

A. The 1st Temptation. All we know about Jesus’ 40 days in the wilderness is that as [Luke 4:2](#) says, “**He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry.**” Satan’s 1st temptation tried to take advantage of Jesus’ hunger. Satan’s test involved God’s will versus Jesus’ will and love of self.

In so many words, the devil said, “*Since you are God’s beloved Son, why are you hungry? If He really loved You, He wouldn’t let you starve to death. Go ahead, you are the Messiah, make Your own food. You deserve it.*” If Jesus had made the stones into bread, He would have been doubting God’s word and His love. Jesus would have been working independently of the Father; He wouldn’t be doing what the Father wanted. Jesus had come to live a truly human life—not creating food for Himself whenever He wanted. As Jesus said in [John 6:38](#), “**I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me.**” He came to obey the Father and to do otherwise was to sin.

Jesus, obviously, had it within His power to perform such a miracle. Later, he miraculously multiplied loaves and fishes to feed over 5000 men one time and over 4000 people a second time. But it was not God’s will for Him to acquire food miraculously here for Himself. Jesus had come to live a truly human life, one that goes through the normal means of acquiring food. For Jesus to turn stones into bread would lead Jesus out of the Father’s will for Jesus’ life on earth and He would sin.

Satan was trying to break Jesus’ trust and submission to God through His physical cravings; to put His physical needs before His spiritual needs. But Jesus quoted [Deuteronomy 8:3](#), “**Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.**” Jesus was saying that it is better to obey God and depend on Him, waiting on His provisions, than to grab satisfaction for ourselves where and when we want. Like Jesus, we must put our trust in God. In [Philippians 4:19](#) Paul wrote, “**My God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.**” Like Jesus, the purposes and intentions of our lives should only be the purposes and intentions of God; above all else, God’s will must come first in our lives.

B. The 2nd Temptation. Having failed to get Jesus to use His divine powers to serve His own self-interests and thus sin against the will of the Father, Satan then tempted Jesus to put the love and power of the Father to a test. Twisting it a little, Satan even used Scripture to try to prove his point. Once again paraphrasing Satan: *“If You really believe the Scriptures, jump from this high point. Let’s see if the Father really cares for You. Go ahead, prove it!”*

Jesus saw through this, too. This was testing God. This time He quoted **Deuteronomy 6:16**, “**Do not put the Lord your God to the test.**” No matter how noble or important a reason may be—to test God is to doubt Him, and to doubt God, i.e., not trusting Him, is sin. When we risk our prestige, our money, our lives, our families, or anything else to fulfill the Lord’s calling, we can rest in His care for all that we need. But when we take risks simply to fulfill our own ambitions or to put God to the test, we are sinning and then we have no promise from Him to keep us safe. Once again Satan was unsuccessful.

C. The 3rd Temptation. So, Satan made one last attempt. He said, *“It seems that God, whose Son You claim to be, has abandoned You. He won’t or can’t feed You or even protect You. But if You bow to me, I will take care of You. I will give You all this—all the kingdoms of the earth—right now.”* But Jesus knew that He had to suffer and die before He would be raised to glory. Satan was saying that if Jesus would bow down just once, He would be able to enjoy all the glory without suffering. Jesus could by-pass all the pain and suffering, He could by-pass God’s will and rule now.

Now Jesus lost patience with Satan. Satan has overstepped his authority. Jesus commanded him to leave. There was no debate about whether or not Satan was capable of making this claim; Jesus just answered him a third time with Scripture. Words that leave no doubt about what should be done. Jesus replied with **Deuteronomy 6:13** “**Fear the Lord your God, serve Him only.**” Satan had said nothing about service, but Jesus knew that whatever we worship, we will serve. Worship and service go together.

IV. The Triumph

In His hungry and tired condition, Jesus hadn’t failed. He didn’t sin. Satan’s temptations had failed. God’s testing had succeeded—Jesus was triumphant; He passed the tests with flying colors.

Jesus' response had been the same all along—"I trust the Father. I will do His will. I will accept His gifts from His hand, in His own way, and in His own time." Satan was defeated but, as we see throughout the Gospels, he didn't stop tempting Jesus. Winning a victory over Satan and his temptations doesn't guarantee freedom from further temptation. If anything, it just makes Satan try harder.

After Satan left, angels came. The Father acknowledged Jesus' worthiness not only in words but by sending angels to minister to Him. In [Matthew 26:53](#) Jesus said that He could have called for "more than 12 legions of angels" but instead He waited for His Father to send them in His Father's time.

After Jesus had defeated Satan, He was ready to begin His ministry. He had proved Himself to be the perfect King who is worthy of our respect and our obedience. Just as He was obedient, He can expect us to be obedient with His help. [Hebrews 2:18](#) says, "Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted." [1 Corinthians 10:13](#) reminds us, "No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it."

V. Conclusion:

Turn to [1 John 2:15-17](#). These are the 3 main ways temptations come to us—those who grew up with the KJV know them as: lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, pride of life. Or to put them a different way: cravings for physical pleasure, cravings for everything we see, pride in everything we have and do. Satan uses the same kind of arguments today as he did 2000 years ago: "If you are a child of God, where is all the bounty? If you are a child of God, why doesn't He take care of you? Why does He make you suffer?"

Satan suggests that the world of business, the world of fame, or the world of whatever your heart desires can be yours—if only we would listen to him. We can get what we want, we can fulfill our lusts and our fantasies; we can be somebody. All we must do to get those things of the world is to go after them in the way of the world—Satan's way.

He tempts each one of us with words like: “*Why set your standards so high? What’s the use? You can get what you want by cutting a corner here; shading the truth there. Why wait for your heavenly reward when you can have what you want now? No one will know.*” When we set our hearts on money, prestige, popularity, power, or selfish happiness, we are doing exactly what Satan wanted Jesus to do—put self first and God last. Self-will is really Satan’s will and is therefore the opposite of God’s will.

Satan is a master counterfeiter. He appears to offer what seems to be the same as what God offers, and his price seems to be much cheaper. “*God wants you to prosper, doesn’t He?*” Satan asks. “*Well, I’ll give you prosperity a lot sooner and for a lot less. Just turn your head a little at questionable practices. Give in once in a while; don’t be such a prude; don’t fight everyone. That’s the way to success.*” The basic argument is always a form of the idea that the end justifies the means. But compromising truth—misusing Scripture—is never right. And if it’s not right, it is sin.

When Jesus was tempted, He didn’t argue with Satan or try to rationalize what was happening. He quoted Scripture. When we are tempted, we need to quote Scripture and go to God. [James 4:7](#) says, “**Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.**” As [Ephesians 6:17](#) reminds us, “**Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.**” David wrote in [Psalm 37:1](#), “**Do not fret because of evil men or be envious of those who do wrong.**” Rather, as [Philippians 4:12](#) says, “**My God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus**”—just look at what He did for Elijah or the children of Israel or Paul just to name a few.

When temptations come, and they will come—don’t look at the temptation but look at Jesus Christ. Keep your eyes on His example and do what He did. Look at the ways He was tempted and at the way He resisted and learn from Him. As [Hebrews 12:2](#) says, “**Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.**” “**Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight**” ([Prov. 3:5-6](#)) .

KEEP YOUR EYES ON JESU AND TRUST IN THE LORD!