

THE CHRIST-CENTERED LIFE

Temptation

Matthew 4:1-11

INTRODUCTION: God sent Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted!

Why? For us!

Just baptized. Pronounced Lamb of God. Holy Spirit descended bodily on Him like a dove. Father said, "You are my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

So the Spirit leads Jesus away from the Jordan River, away from the crowd and out further in the wilderness alone. And what happens?

Matthew 4:1 NKJV Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

It seems that Jesus knew the reason for He prepared for it by fasting.

Matthew 4:2 NKJV And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry.

Fasting builds your spiritual strength but diminishes your physical and emotional strength.

And that is when the devil himself came to Him.

As we begin, let us remember our purpose –

- To learn from Christ
- To learn to trust Him
- To learn how to be like Him

In a moment, Jesus went from the peak of spirituality to the precipice of temptation.

Now, I did not say Jesus fell down the precipice into the pit of sin. He did not. He resisted. He had victory over temptation. But He did stand on the brink where He could have fallen.

And let me warn us all not to easily dismiss this account with Jesus and Satan by saying, "Well Jesus did not sin because He was God." No, my friend, that viewpoint does violence to the text and to the testimony of Scripture in that tells us Jesus was tempted as we are. **Hebrews 4:15 NKJV** For we do not have a High Priest who cannot

sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all *points* tempted as we are, yet without sin.

That means that there was the real opportunity to sin. Otherwise, this incident is a sham and the testimony of Hebrews is a lie. But it is neither a sham nor a lie. Jesus was tempted to the utmost and while He could have yielded to sin, He did not. Therefore, whatever it was that helped Jesus in His humanity to have victory over sin can also help me and it can help you.

And we need it! Like Jesus, **Oftentimes our moments of greatest vulnerability come after a season of spiritual victory.**

So let us look at how Jesus battled against temptation and won!

Matthew 4:3-11 NKJV 3 Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread."

4 But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.' "

5 Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, 6 and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written:

'He shall give His angels charge over you,'

and,

'In *their* hands they shall bear you up,
Lest you dash your foot against a stone.' "

7 Jesus said to him, "It is written again, 'You shall not tempt the LORD your God.' "

8 Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. 9 And he said to Him, "All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me."

10 Then Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.' "

11 Then the devil left Him, and behold, angels came and ministered to Him.

The first thing we see is

WE HAVE VICTORY OVER TEMPTATION AS WE USE THE WORD OF GOD.

- **Every temptation Satan threw at Jesus, Jesus met by quoting the Word of God.**

The devil said, "If You are the Son of God, command these stone to become bread."

Jesus said, "It is written, '*Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.*'"

Satan took Jesus up to pinnacle of the temple, the highest point on the temple, and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written: '*He shall give His angels charge over you, and, In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone.*' "

Jesus said to him, "It is written, 'You shall not tempt the LORD your God.' "

Then the devil showed Jesus all the kingdoms of the world and their glory and said to Him, "All these things I will give You, If You will worship me."

Then Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! For it is written, '*You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.*' "

- **The devil said, ...**
- **Jesus responded with, "But here is what God says."**
- I remind you **Jesus knew the Word of God.** He could quote it. He did not have to pull out a concordance or topical Bible to find what He needed. He did not have to call up His search engine on His smartphone.
 - This kind of ready knowledge of the Scriptures comes by frequent reading and habitual study of the Bible.
 - Parents, Dads, two things you can do that will help your children navigate the tempestuous times in which they do, and will, live:
 - Sunday Morning Bible Study and Worship
 - Wednesday Evening Book 66
 - If we know the Word of God, we will not have to wonder whether something is wrong when Satan brings temptation.

Psalm 119:105 NKJV Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path.
 - But a flashlight does not help us in the dark if it is at home on the closet shelf.
- **Quoting, believing, and applying the appropriate portion of God's Word effectively resists the devil.**

And the Bible says, in **James 4:7 NKJV "... Resist the devil and he will flee from you."**

In Jesus handling of the second temptation, we learn ...

VICTORY COMES AS WE TRUST RATHER THAN TEST THE LORD.

Satan took Jesus up to pinnacle of the temple, the highest point on the temple, and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written: *'He shall give His angels charge over you, and, In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone.'*"

Jesus said to him, "It is written, 'You shall not tempt the LORD your God.'"

- **Notice that the devil can use Scripture also. Actually, he misuses Scripture. When Satan quoted Psalm 91:11-12, he left out a part.**

Psalm 91:11-12 NKJV 11 For He shall give His angels charge over you, To keep you in all your ways. 12 In *their* hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone.

- The devil did not want to remind Christ that what the Father had promised was to keep Him in all His ways, aiding Him to do what He had been sent to do. So he left that part out.
- The devil wanted Jesus to test God rather than to simply trust God. He was saying,
 - "Now that you have become a man, see if the Father will really keep His promises.
 - Check Him out.
 - See if He cares now that You are here on this dusty earth."
- Jesus again responds from Scripture. "You shall not tempt the Lord your God."
- **The devil often tries to get us to test God rather than trust Him.**
 - It is the devil who prompts our mind to think, "If God really loved me, He would not make me go through this."
 - Satan sometimes is the source of our prayer when we say, "God, if You are real and You really love me then solve this problem in my life this exact way."
 - It is the devil who tempts us to pray ...
 - God if You are real, get me this job.
 - God if You love me, get me out of this job and into a better one.

- God if You are real, fix my husband.
- God if You love me, give me a husband.
- Whereas God teaches us through the Word to pray,
 - “God You are real! I know You love me, enough that Jesus would even die for me.
 - And I trust You. Even in the midst of this sorrow and pain and trouble, I trust You.
 - Now Father I ask You to work things in my life for my good and Your glory.”
 - Lord if You see this is the right job for me, give it to me.
 - If you want me in a different job, You open the door and guide me.
 - My husband (wife) belongs to You; You make him what You want him to be.
 - Lord if You want me to have a husband, You give me the man You have picked, but I trust in You and I am content in You.”

In the third temptation we see ...

VICTORY COMES AS WE ANCHOR OUR LIVES IN WORSHIP AND SERVICE.

- **Satan’s third temptation was for Jesus to take the easy road.**
 - Both Jesus and Satan knew that God had told the prophets
 - Jesus would pay the price for sin on the cross.
 - He would be raised and exalted as King of Kings.
 - He would one day return to earth and rule the nations. Every knee would bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.
 - The temptation was, “Look Jesus, see the kingdoms of the earth. Go ahead and rule as the Father has said. I will not contest You for them, and You can skip the cross. Just bow down and worship me, and it’s all Yours without the pain.”

- **Jesus responded with the formula for eternal success in whatever God has given us to do: “Worship the Lord your God and Him only shall you serve!”**
- **One of the best insulators you can put around your life to shield you from the seductions of Satan is to be totally sold out to God!**
 - When you live to worship and serve the Lord, everything else is a distant second place at best.
 - What can Satan seduce you with that will take you out of fellowship with God if that is what you want most is to worship and serve the Lord?
 - But if we want pleasure most and the things of God second, we are easily led astray by the promise of pleasure.
 - If we want riches most, then the offer of wealth by the evil one will take us off the Master’s road.
 - If popularity and the approval of man is what we really desire, then the prospect of it if we do the bidding of the evil one is a hard thing to refuse.
- **This principle is so true that you can use it as a test. How susceptible are you to temptations?**
 - Do you often yield? Does Satan usually win?
 - If yes, then you are not thoroughly sold out to the Lord. There are other things in this world and in this life that are more important to you than God. I am not saying you are not saved, but you are not totally committed.
 - Satan has found your weak point, and until you remove that point of weakness, he will continue to attack you in it.

CONCLUSION: All of us have to battle against temptations.

- 1. Let us hide more and more of God’s Word in our hearts to be ready to resist him.**
- 2. Let us determine to trust Him, no matter what. Confident that He is real. Convinced that He loves us.**
- 3. Let us sell out to God, seeking to worship and serve Him more than anything else in life.**