

TRINITY

BIBLE CHURCH DALLAS

The Sermon

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Luke 4:1-4

"War in the Wilderness"

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TRANSCRIPT

So, we're in Luke chapter 4, and I want to read verses 1-13. I'll just tell you, I'm only going to get through verse 4, and the reason is I left on purpose my notes for verses 5-13 at home, okay; otherwise, you would be ordering lunch up here, and so we will complete it next week. But this is the temptation of Christ. The title of this is, "The War in the Wilderness."

I want to begin reading in verse 1: "Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led around by the Spirit in the wilderness for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And He ate nothing during those days, and when they had ended, He became hungry. And the devil said to Him, 'If You are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread.' And Jesus answered him, 'It is written, "Man shall not live on bread alone.'"

"And he" - the devil - "led Him up and showed Him all of the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said to Him, 'I will give You all this domain and its glory; for it has been handed over to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. Therefore if You worship before me, it shall all be Yours.' Jesus answered him, 'It is written, "You shall worship the Lord your God and serve Him only.'"

"And he" - the devil - "led Him to Jerusalem and had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, 'If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down from here; for it is written,' - and the devil now quotes Scripture - "He will command His angels concerning You to guard You," and, "On their hands they will bear You up, so that You will not strike Your foot against a stone."

"And Jesus answered and said to him, 'It is said, "You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'" When the devil had finished every temptation, he left Him until" - oh, he'll be back - "until an opportune time." This is the reading of God's inspired and inherent word. Let's go to Him now in prayer.

[Prayer] Father, it is only right for us to turn our hearts to You now, having heard Your word read to our ears. And we need You now by Your Holy Spirit to take the word that has been read into our ears and to bring it into our hearts and to permeate the entirety of our being with Your word. Fill us with truth this day, and flood our hearts with sound teaching. And I pray that we will worship You only and that we will live on the word of God and we will not put You to a test. So, as You are in our midst this morning, I pray now that Your word would be in our midst and the very epicenter of our soul. Work now for good, in Jesus' name. Amen. [end]

In these verses that I have just read, we see the temptation of Christ in the wilderness, and this is but one account of a longstanding warfare that has been going on between God and Satan. The warfare began in heaven before the fall of Adam, and the devil was once the highest angel in all of glory. He was the archangel. His name was Lucifer, son of the morning, and he was gifted by God with extraordinary powers of leadership and an intellectual genius; hence, he was over all of the other myriads and myriads of angels that were in heaven, until one day, pride was found in the heart of Lucifer.

We don't know how it came, it's the mystery of iniquity, it's the mystery of evil and sin, but it was conceived in Lucifer's soul. He was so close to the

throne of God that he became jealous and he wanted to receive the worship that was coming to God. He wanted to be the center of heaven. In fact, he rose himself above God and said, "I will, I will, I will," and he was so persuasive with stunning brilliance and powers of communication that he was able to persuade a third of the angels who were in the very presence of God to join in his rebellion and to join in his coup. That's how persuasive the devil is, that he could convince a third of the angels who were in the immediate presence of God to forsake God and to join up with him. And so God who is holy and God who is righteous obviously could not tolerate a rival in His presence, and cast the devil – at this point, Lucifer – cast Lucifer down to this earth; and a third of the angels fell, and those angelic beings are now demon spirits. And Satan has set up shop here upon this earth, and he is highly organized. And there is a hierarchy of demonic spirits and they're well-organized with strategic assignments.

And God created Adam and Eve, and the devil came slithering onto the page of human history and tempted and lured Eve, and then Adam. And Adam was easy prey for the devil; and Adam sinned, and it threw the whole human race into a state of condemnation under God, because what Adam did affected the entire human race that was yet to be born, and the conflict was on, the war was on, and it will escalate all the way to the time of the second coming of Jesus Christ, and it will become more and more intense as the end of the age approaches.

And as we read through the Old Testament, the curtain is pulled back ever so often and we are allowed to see this invisible war that takes place between God and Satan. And we come to the book of Job, which may have been the first book in the Bible to be written. He was a contemporary of Abraham; preceded Moses, who wrote Genesis through Deuteronomy. And we see that in heaven – and this is another mystery – that the devil was able to approach God in heaven. And God initiated and said, "Have you considered My servant job? There's none like him on the face of the earth. He fears Me. He's blameless and upright in all of his ways."

And Satan, who is so shrewd, who is so cunning, the temptation with Adam was, "You're holding out with Adam. You're not good enough to Adam."

Now Adam had been given the entire planet by himself to cultivate. The whole world was a garden, and there was just one tree, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, that God said, "You may not eat from," and that was the goodness of God, "so that you would not know evil." And the devil seduced him and enticed him and lured him and tempted him until Adam ate from that tree. What was the temptation? "God's not being good to you." Are you kidding me? God couldn't have been any more gracious to Adam.

But now with Job, the devil says the opposite, he plays the other angle. He says, "You're too good to Job, that's why he worships You. If You take away all of his blessings and You take away his family, he'll curse You to your face." And so the devil is coming at it from every angle in every direction.

And we read later in Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28 how the devil is the power behind wicked kings, using them like puppets: the king of Babylon, Isaiah 14; the king of Tyre, Ezekiel 28. And the devil is the mastermind behind evil kings, polluting their thinking and inciting their hatred to create murder and to kill untold numbers. Oh, this warfare between God and Satan, it goes down through the ages.

We come to even the birth of Christ. And though Satan is not mentioned, per se; nevertheless, he's lurking behind the scenes and pulling the levers, and Herod says that "I want every baby boy two years and younger to be murdered." Who do you think is inciting that? John 8:44, "He is a murderer and was a murderer from the beginning." That was the devil.

And so we come now to this temptation account of Christ in the wilderness. This is just an extended warfare. This is one more battle to be fought between God and Satan, between heaven and hell, between good and evil. And that's precisely where we find ourselves today, on the battlefield in the midst of spiritual warfare. And so as we look at this account, it is a real devil bringing real temptation against Christ, because if he can seduce Christ to sin just one time, just one sin, then Jesus will be disqualified from

going to the cross and being a sinless Savior who could bear the sins of His people upon that cursed tree. This is a strategic moment for the devil, really, to derail the train before it even gets out of the station. At the very outset of Jesus' public ministry, if the devil can pull down Christ now at this time, there will be no salvation, and you and I will be doomed eternally forever.

All the chips are on the table in this temptation account. We learn so much, in fact, it will take us two Sundays to be able to walk through because there's so much meat on the bone here, there's so much truth that's packed into this narrative. We learn a lot about Christ here, that He is the sinless Son of God, that He is an impeccable Savior, that He is able to resist the advances of Satan. And He is the second Adam who succeeds in a wilderness, where the first Adam failed in a garden. And Jesus, by His triumph here in the wilderness, will be on the path to the cross without sin to be able to be our Savior.

We learn a lot about the devil here, that he is the adversary of the Son of God and of all the sons and daughters of God. You have a real foe, you have an enemy who wants to take you down as well, just like he attempts to take down Christ. And we learn a lot about spiritual warfare here - and we'll talk about this as we look at this passage. But we will see that one of the chief assault weapons in the arsenal of the devil is temptation. And we'll learn a lot about temptation, just how the devil works - how he worked in this situation, how he works in your life as well. So let's walk through this passage. And just to put you at ease, we're only going to go through verse 4.

So, as we begin, starting in verse 1, I want you to note, first, "The war begun. The war begun." And what I want you to see, that as soon as Jesus puts one step forward in His public ministry, He meets the devil head on.

So, verse 1 begins, "Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit." Now stop right there. Jesus was anointed with the Holy Spirit in the River Jordan at the time of His baptism. Why was He? Because He carried out His ministry, not in His

deity, He carried it out in His sinless humanity. And in His sinless humanity, He had limitations. He became physically weak. He became tired. He needed to eat, He needed to drink, He needed to sleep. He had limited knowledge within His humanity. He did not even know the hour of His return while He was here upon the earth.

No, He needs the Holy Spirit's ministry in His life within His sinless humanity. He would even perform His miracles in His sinless humanity, just like the apostles would perform miracles by the power of the Holy Spirit in their humanity. And just like some of the prophets perform miracles, it was by the power of the Spirit. And so the Lord Jesus Christ needed the fullness of the Holy Spirit to be upon Him in order for Him to carry out the mission that the Father had given to Him.

We read, as He was full of the Holy Spirit, verse 1, "He returned from the Jordan." He returned home to Nazareth, which is to the north and to the west, which Nazareth was His hometown was in Galilee. And then we read, "and He was led around by the Spirit in the wilderness." This wilderness is the wilderness of Judea. It's a bleak, barren place. It's desolate. filled with wild animals. No humans live there, no humans could survive and live there. It's out of the public eye. It's an isolated place. And He is led there by the Holy Spirit.

Jesus, again, in His sinless humanity must have the direction and the guidance of the Holy Spirit upon His life to be almost like a compass to point Him where He is to be and where He is to go. And Luke wants us to know as he writes this, as Jesus now is about to be confronted by the devil, that Jesus is here by divine appointment. He is here within the will of God. And there are times in your spiritual life and in my spiritual life where we are led into a place where we are stepping into intense spiritual warfare, not because we're outside of the will of God, but because we are actually in the will of God, and it is a time for us to be advanced to the front lines of spiritual warfare. And it is also a time for us to be tested in our faith to see what we have been learning, has it been incorporated into our lives. And so Jesus is led into the wilderness to be confronted by the devil, but He is led

there by the Spirit of God who knows exactly what is around the corner and what awaits Him. And Jesus is here by divine assignment.

And we read in verse 2, "for forty days." Forty days. It's a concentrated time of prayer and fasting before Jesus will begin His public ministry of preaching and performing miracles and doing good and works of kindness. It's a period of time for Him to draw near to the Father in communion and in prayer and to meditate upon Scripture, and for Jesus to be strengthened within His humanity before He launches out now for the next three years that will take Him all the way to the cross. This is an important time for Jesus.

When I graduated from seminary many years ago, 1980, the Lord sent me to Fayetteville, Arkansas, where the University of Arkansas is, and I was the college pastor for kind of a large, thriving Baptist church. And when I arrived I found out the church had planned a Bible conference, and there was a very well-noted international author and preacher who was coming to preach. His name was J. Oswald Sanders who wrote the classic, *Spiritual Leadership*. And the pastor assigned me to take care of him. I was to go to the airport, pick him up, drive him to his hotel, take him wherever he needed to go, take him to meals, drive him back to the airport when the time came. And it was a privilege just to be with this dear saint who was in his elderly years but still full of wisdom and power and Scripture.

And so I remember, I asked him, "Talk to me about as you travel so much." He's from New Zealand. "And you're – so many different time zones in so many different cities and so many different churches and so many different conferences. I mean, how do you maintain just your walk with the Lord, and how do you maintain your prayer life, because you're waking up at different hours wherever you are, and there's no consistent schedule and routine." And I remember he told me. He said, "Steve, before I leave New Zealand and go off on a two-month preaching tour, I spend an extended period of time with the Lord to store up my heart and store up my soul knowing that once I'm on the road that my time will be very thin."

That's exactly what Jesus is doing here. He's about to begin His three-year journey to the cross. It will be demanding. It will be met with all kinds of resistance and difficulty and challenges. And so He needs this forty-day period of time to deepen and draw closer to His Father in heaven. And we read, "for forty days, being tempted by the devil." That's important because we understand that the temptation was not just the three temptations that will follow, He was tempted by the devil for the entirety of the forty days. It was a nonstop barrage of the devil throwing all of the arsenal of hell that he could at the Lord Jesus Christ trying to take Him down before He even starts His public ministry. This is one strategic moment.

"And being tempted," the verb tense here indicates that it is for the entirety of the forty days. And so this "being tempted" means He's being lured by Satan, enticed by Satan, seduced by Satan to depart from the path marked out for Him by the Father and to lead Him away from dependence upon the Father. "To be tempted," the word actually means "a bait and switch deception."

A hunter would go hunting for an animal for a prey, and he would put out a bait. He would put out some meat, he would put out some water to lure in the animal that he wants to capture. And it is the bait that lures in the animal; and once the animal comes in, he can throw a net around him, he can lasso him, he could have dug out a pit and he falls down into the pit. But it is the bait that is so successful. Fishermen do the same. If they just toss out a hook, no fish is going to just bite the hook. You've got to put a worm on it. You've got to put some kind of an insect on it that covers up the hook, and all the fish can see is the bait, and it draws in the fish, and when it chomps onto that worm, the fish had no idea that there is a hook in there. And now he's going to be caught, and now he's going to be fried. I'm funny even when I don't mean to be funny.

And that's what the devil is doing here. He's got some bait. "You're the Son of God. Oh, You're the Son of God. I have kingdoms for You. I've got the whole world for You. But You can't see the hook. You can't see the devastation and the death and the destruction that comes with biting that bait." That's what temptation is, and that's the temptation that's going to

come to you. It's not the hook; you can't see the hook. It's the bait to dangle in front of you what you desire. And the devil is stunningly brilliant and he knows where the chinks in the armor are.

So, we continue in verse 2: "And He" - Jesus - "ate nothing during those days." The reason He ate nothing is He is fasting and He is denying Himself bodily pleasures to seek spiritual power with single-mindedness upon God. So blocking out everything so that with myopic vision as though seeing through a keyhole, He is seeking the Lord, and meditating on Scripture, and praying, and worshipping His Father.

And at the end of verse 2, "and when they had ended," - when the forty days had ended - "He became hungry." Of course, He did. This is part of His humanity. This is part of His sinless humanity. He became hungry just like you and I would become hungry if we just missed one meal. And Jesus has missed forty days of meals. He's famished. He is starving. And this is a very vulnerable moment for the Lord Jesus Christ. This is what the last three words of verse 13 say: this is "an opportune time." This is a strategic moment to ambush the Lord Jesus Christ and to take Him down. And in spiritual warfare, the devil knows there are opportune times and there are times that are not as opportune. And he knows when to set his traps: when we are most vulnerable.

And Jesus is most vulnerable here. He's a real man. He's all alone by Himself. There are no crowds around Him to see what decision He'll make in response to the temptations. There are no disciples here. He's by Himself. He's hungry. He, no doubt, is thirsty. He's tired. He's weary. He's had no place to sleep. And we are most vulnerable when we are hungry and tired and weak and sleep-deprived. This is a vulnerable moment for Jesus. And He has also just come from the Jordan River previously where He has heard the voice of the Father in heaven say, "This is My beloved Son in whom I'm well-pleased." When we have times of great spiritual victory, like that was in the Jordan River, we are most susceptible to defeat because we're cruising on past blessing and we're not as dependent, and our antennas is not as up, and we tend to feel more bulletproof.

And, further, He is about to start His public ministry. And so if there's ever a time in which Jesus is looking ahead and not in the present, it would be now. This is how shrewd the devil is. He picks his spot. He knows how to set the ambush. He knows when you and I are most vulnerable to be susceptible to his temptations. And that's exactly what is taking place here.

And we also learn from this it is not a sin to be tempted. Jesus was without sin, and yet He was tempted for forty days and forty nights. The sin is to give in to the temptation. The sin is to bite the bait and not swim away and not go in another direction away from the nets that would catch us. There's an old saying, "You cannot keep the birds of the air from flying overhead, but you can sure keep them from building a nest in your hair." And so the point is clear: in order to escape temptation, you would have to leave this planet. There's temptation everywhere, around every corner. And that is why we need to learn something from this passage about the wiles of the devil.

Well, that's the war begun in verses 1 and 2. I want you to see now, second, "The wickedness unleashed," in verses 3-12. And in these verses, these next ten verses, we have the three final climactic temptations that are thrown by the devil at the Lord Jesus Christ. And each one is designed to set the bait, to set the hook, to lure the Son of God into sin. Each one is crafted by the devil with sinister brilliance to seduce Jesus into sin. And he comes about it from every different direction.

There are three temptations that will follow. The first is the temptation in verse 3, to compromise His priorities; and the second is found in verses 5-7, it's to compromise His worship; and then the third temptation will come in verses 9 and 10, it is to compromise the Scripture. And those are the three same fiery arrows that the devil has in his bow and has pulled the string and has aimed at you and me. These are three of his choicest arrows of temptation.

And these three temptations will come in three different locations. You will note in verse 3, the first temptation is in the wilderness; the second temptation, in verses 5-7, is on top of a mountain; and the third temptation

takes place, in verses 9 and 10, in Jerusalem on top of the temple. I mean, the devil is so cunning and he is so shrewd, and he's coming at the Lord Jesus Christ from every angle, both in what the temptation is and where the temptation will take place. Listen, he's smarter than anyone in this room today. He's less than God, but he's more than you and me. And we are no match for the devil apart from having on the full armor of God, Ephesians 6:10-17.

So, let's walk through this first temptation. In verse 3, "The devil said to Him." The devil can talk. The devil can speak. The devil knows what to say. The devil knows how to say it. The devil is very cunning. And as I've already said, stunningly brilliant. In Ephesians 6:11, we read, "the schemes of the devil." The word "schemes" means "craftiness," "deceit," "shrewdness," "trickery," "cunning." He's the master of the shell game. You have no idea under which shell the temptation is.

"And so the devil said to Him," – and here now is the first temptation, it is the temptation to compromise His priorities. So we read in the middle of verse 3 – "If you are the Son of God." Do you see how innocent this starts out? It starts out not with a lie, but with the truth. He is such a good salesman. He knows how to establish common ground. He knows how to start out getting you to agree with him to buy in on what he's saying. He doesn't start with false doctrine, he doesn't start with a lie, he doesn't start with an error. The suspect would never buy into that. But if I start with a truth and I can get you to nod your head yes to me, in just a moment you're going to be eating out of my hand. This is how cunning the devil is.

"If You are the Son of God," can be translated, "Since You are the Son of God." And this is just a repeating of what took place in chapter 3, verse 22. Jesus in the River Jordan, the heavens open up and the voice from the Father says, "You are My beloved Son. This is My beloved Son." In a sense, all the devil is doing is repeating what God has already said. That's what makes this so deceptive.

"If You are the Son of God, just like God says You are, tell this stone to become bread." This temptation is so subtle that you and I cannot even see it initially. I've looked at this all week. It's not a sin to eat bread. In fact, Jesus told us to pray, in Matthew 6, "Give us this day our daily bread." We are commanded to pray for daily bread. It's not a sin to eat food, to eat bread. And it's not a sin for Jesus to perform a miracle. He will perform many miracles. As I told you a couple of weeks ago, there probably was not even a person who was left in Israel, certainly in Galilee, who had any ailments, as He went from city to city and town to town healing the sick.

What is the rock inside the snowball here? What is the hook inside the bait here? "Tell this stone to become bread." What's so seductive about that? This temptation is for Jesus to elevate His physical needs above His spiritual needs. The temptation was to divert Jesus away from fellowship with the Father and communion with the Father, to divert Him away from prayer and meditating upon Scripture to focus upon a growling stomach. And the temptation to Jesus is simply, "You need physical food more than You need spiritual food. You need bread more than You need the Bible. You need to feed Your stomach, not feed Your soul." The temptation is so subtle, but it is to flip and to invert the priorities of the Lord Jesus Christ, who would say in Matthew 6:33, "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these other things will be added unto you."

Satan will tempt you and me in this very same way to elevate our physical needs above our spiritual needs, to elevate all these other things above seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. This temptation will take many different forms. There may be a job offer from another city where you'll make more bread, but to unplug from a place where you're being given the Bible. And in your mind to justify this, "Oh, I can provide for my family more now. I can provide for my church more now. I can do so much better if I just take this other job and move across the country where there's not a bible-preaching church," where there's not a tight fellowship and communion like a person would have sitting under the preaching of the word of God where they are. And that bait that is being dangled in front of you is more bread, which leads to less Bible.

Or, the temptation may be you have a high school student. It's time to decide where they're going to go to college. And your student, your son or daughter is offered a full scholarship at some prestigious college, at Harvard, some hell hole - and that's being nice - where you have to be a plagiarist in order to become the president. I'm sorry, I'm just a truth-teller, just a truth-teller. But there's no bible-preaching church around Cambridge, Massachusetts. The temptation is to lure for more bread at the end of this education; and in the process, you lose your soul. No, this is a real temptation. This does not mean that anytime someone transfers one job to another that that's wrong. But it does mean you need to have discernment, and you need to have understanding of what's going on here.

And so this temptation is so subtle. In fact, as you look at it in your Bible, it's hard to initially see where is the temptation. That's how subtle it is. That's how camouflaged it is. That's how much the hook is covered over with the bait. But look at verse 4: "And Jesus answered him." Jesus saw right through it. Jesus had x-ray vision, not in His deity, but He was operating in His humanity. And how could Jesus discern what is going on? And He will say, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God." How does He see it? It is the ministry of the Holy Spirit and the knowledge of the word of God. The Spirit of God, the word of God; and those two always work in tandem together. The Spirit never works independent of the word, and the word never has success independent of the Spirit. Spirit and word together.

The prophet Isaiah foretold this. Isaiah 11:2 speaks of the Messiah who is to come. This is 700 years before the coming of Christ: "The Spirit of the Lord will rest on Him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and strength, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord." What is wisdom? Wisdom is knowing how to take the knowledge of the truth that you have and how to apply it and how to live it. Knowledge by itself is no good if it's not married to and in tandem with wisdom to know how to live the knowledge that I have.

This Spirit, the Spirit of the Lord, will rest upon Jesus, this spirit of wisdom, and He will be given God-given ability to take the knowledge of

the Scripture that He is meditating upon and know how to apply it in real-life situations; and this is as real life of a situation as He could possibly be in, and understanding. "The Spirit of the Lord will rest on Him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding." With understanding, He has penetrating insight into real-life situations to know where the danger is and to detect the temptation. This is how Jesus is able to cut to the chase and immediately respond and detect what you and I could not initially see.

So, this is what Jesus says in verse 4, "It is written." His appeal is to the written word of God. He doesn't quote some life experience. He doesn't quote some story that He heard. He doesn't quote or say, "Well, I had this vision," or, "I had this dream," none of that nonsense. "It is written." The written word of God is a lamp unto His feet and a light unto His path. And he has a specific text, a specific passage. He now quotes Deuteronomy 8:3. And, by the way, Jesus quoted more from the book of Deuteronomy than any other book in the Old Testament. He had mastered the book of Deuteronomy, which is a series of sermons. It's like a Bible conference. It's four sermons by Moses before they will cross Jordan and enter into the Promised Land, before he'll go up into the mountain and die. He reissues the law. That's what Deuteronomy means, the second giving of the law that he had originally given in the book of Exodus.

So, Jesus quotes Deuteronomy 8:3, "Man shall not live on bread alone," – we know from Matthew He quotes the rest of this verse – "but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God." Jesus puts up this strong defense and He repels the advancement of the devil onto His turf and He resists the temptation by quoting the Scripture.

Now, it's more than just quoting the words of the text, it's obeying the Scripture. It's not just to put these words into the air and the devil run away. That's not even worthy for me to comment on. No. Instead, Jesus owns this passage, this truth. He lives this truth. He is obeying this truth. This truth is at the very center of His being. He has His priorities right: "Man shall not live by bread alone," – in other words, seek physical fulfillment and satisfaction – "but by every word that proceeds out of the

mouth of God." By this, Jesus is elevating the Bible above bread. He is elevating the Scripture above His stomach. His priorities are spot on.

Now, I want to give you just four quick things about this and then we'll wrap this up. Number One: "Jesus quotes one specific verse to repel this temptation." He doesn't throw the whole Bible at the devil. There is one text, there is one verse that addresses specifically this one temptation, and Jesus pulls this out of the back of His mind as He's been studying Scripture and He uses this specific text to resist this specific temptation. That's how you and I must resist temptation. We just can't quote John 3:16 at every temptation that's thrown at us, you know. That's going to be a dull butter knife. That's not going to be a sharp two-edged sword to resist this temptation. It's got to match up. And so that's why even this verse, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God," that's not what He says for the second temptation, that's not what He says for the third temptation. That would miss the mark. That would be an arrow that doesn't hit the target. No, it's this text to resist this temptation.

Second thing: "This quoting of this verse presupposes the vast wealth of Bible knowledge that Jesus had." He's out here in the wilderness. He doesn't have a cell phone to go look it up in the *MacArthur Study Bible*. He doesn't have a library behind Him. He has stockpiled scripture upon scripture upon scripture. He's been doing this since His childhood, and He is able now to pull out of the treasure house of His accumulated scripture knowledge just the right passage to repel this temptation. That's why it's so important for you to master the word of God, to know the Bible, or you're going to be in spiritual warfare with both hands tied behind your back. You're not going to be able to resist the temptation when it comes. You have to know the word of God.

Third thing: "It is the Holy Spirit who enabled Jesus to pull just the right Scripture." The Holy Spirit was upon Him, the Holy Spirit was operative in His life, and the Holy Spirit was leading Him and guiding Him. We saw that in verse 1. And it is the Holy Spirit who leads and guides Jesus to use just the right Scripture for just the right temptation.

It's interesting, in Ephesians 6 it talks about putting on the full armor of God: gird your loins with truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the helmet of salvation, shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace. But he builds and builds and builds, Paul does, probably looking at a Roman soldier who has on each piece of this armor as he's in prison, until he comes to the last piece, which is the only offensive piece, everything else is defensive: "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."

When it says, "the sword of the Spirit," it means the sword that's come from the Spirit, and it's not referring to the doctrine of divine inspiration of Scripture - that's 2 Timothy 3:16 - it's referring to the sword which is the word of God that comes from the Spirit as though the Spirit puts it into your hand and gives you just the right scripture, brings it to the forefront of your mind. I mean, how many times have you been witnessing to someone, and in the course of that testimony for Christ there flashes to the front of your mind a verse that is just perfect to continue the witness to that person? Where did that verse come from? It's the sword of the Spirit.

And there are times when I'm preaching, even this morning, and as I'm going through this passage, there are other verses that are coming to my mind and being put into my hand and to the forefront of my mind. That is the ministry of the Holy Spirit. And that's the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the life of Jesus here. He knows just which passage to use because He's filled with the Spirit. You and I need to be filled with the Spirit, even for parents to know how to shepherd their children, as life is unfolding in the very moment that something transpires, and you've got to address this. You don't have notes, you hadn't had time to think about it. How do you know what to say? The Spirit of God must pull it from the back of your mind.

Now understand this, the Holy Spirit will never give you a verse that you have not already studied. It will never be an existential, "This is just being dropped out of heaven, I've never even seen this verse, never thought about this verse; next thing I know, it's on the tip of my tongue." That's silly. No, the only verse you're going to use is a verse you've studied and analyzed

and maybe meditated upon, maybe even memorized, and it's just stuck there in the back wall of your mind until the right time.

Sometimes when I'm up here preaching and I'll have a flash of a thought and there will be a verse that will come to the forefront of my mind and I will just quote it and it will come out in King James Version. I don't even own a King James Bible. All right, I have one, because I heard a sermon 50 years ago by a man who preached out of a King James Bible, and it's just still stuck in my head and it comes out, "Thee and Thou." That's how God needs to work in your life. You need to be saturated with Scripture, you need to be saturated with the Holy Spirit, and for God to arm you for battle in spiritual warfare.

And the last thing I would point out to you, and then we'll close this, is just how powerful the word of God is. It is a superior weapon in the hand of every Christian that is able to overcome every temptation and every confrontation that we would have with the forces of darkness. It is a superior weapon that in the hand of a Spirit-filled believer leads to spiritual victory and triumph.

Psalm 119, verses 9 and 11, "How shall a young man keep his way pure? How shall an old man keep his way pure? How shall a young woman or an old woman keep her way pure? By keeping it according to Your word." Verse 11, "Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You." The power of the word of God hidden in the heart of a believer is effective and superior to overcome temptation.

Now, next week we're going to look at the next two temptations, and I want to finish this out with you. But as I bring this to a conclusion, hear me. In this world, there are only two sides. There's God's side and there's the devil's side. There's heaven and hell. There's light and darkness. There's not a third category. There's not a fourth category. And you need to look into your own heart and ask yourself, "What side am I on?"

When we came into this world, we entered this world on the devil's side. We were born in sin. We were born spiritually dead in trespasses and sin. And there must come a time in your life when you come to that realization that you have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, the wages of sin is death, and there is only one Savior and His name is Jesus Christ, and you must surrender and commit your life to Him. You must believe upon Him. And in that moment when you are converted to Christ, you change sides, and you're no longer on the devil's side, now you are on God's side.

And I must tell you the truth. As long as you stay on the devil's side, you are with death and destruction and, ultimately, eternal punishment. But on God's side, there is life, there is joy, there is peace, there's forgiveness of sin, there's the righteousness of God that gives us a right standing before Him. There's no reason in the world for you to stay on this side, you must come to God's side, and the only way you can cross over is through the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father but through Me." There is no other way to come to God but to come through faith in Jesus Christ. He is the only Savior of sinners. And by His victory that He has secured even here in this wilderness, it's a part of the greater victory that He has won for us over the devil.

So come to Christ. There is no reason to stay where you are. Come to Christ by faith, believe in Him, submit your life to Him, and He will give you the greatest blessings that you would ever know, which is forgiveness of your sin, and clothe you with His perfect righteousness. He would come live inside of you. He would give you a new life. And one day when you die, He's been preparing a place for you.

If He created this whole universe in six days, how glorious must be your mansion in heaven if he's been working on it for 2,000 years, His Father's house. And you may come to the Father's house, but only if you believe in this Christ who won a great victory in His battle against Satan. And this is only the precursor for the greatest victory He will win one day at the cross. May God give His victory to you, but you must receive it by faith.

[Prayer] Father, thank You for this passage, this temptation which is so real. We all find ourselves in the midst of this spiritual warfare. Give us discernment. Give us understanding. Give us wisdom. Increase our knowledge of the truth of Your word. Help us to overcome temptation when it comes to us. Bless Your people here. We already are anticipating next Sunday in the continuation of this temptation account. So until then, keep us strong and secure in Christ, in Jesus' name. Amen. [End]

The closing benediction is from 2 Corinthians 13:14. It is my desire for you, even as it was Paul's desire for the church in Corinth: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all."