

The Temptations of Jesus - Part 2

Luke

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Bible Text: Luke 4:1-13

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Luke chapter four is where we are again this evening, if you would turn there, please. Luke chapter four.

If I sound a little stuffy tonight, I am. I have been fighting it all day, taken every pill known to man that wouldn't make me sleepy and it is still not working. So Luke four verses one through 13.

And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And he ate nothing during those days. And when they were ended, he was hungry.

The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread."

And Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone.'"

And the devil took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, and said to him, "To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will. If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours."

And Jesus answered him, "It is written,
" 'You shall worship the Lord your God,
and him only shall you serve.'"

And he took him to Jerusalem and set him 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,

" 'He will command his angels concerning you,
to guard you,'

and

“ ‘On their hands they will bear you up,
lest you strike your foot against a stone.’ ”

And Jesus answered him, “It is said, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’ ”

And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time.¹

Let’s ask God’s blessing on our time tonight.

Father, thank you for the privilege it is to be with my brother and sisters. Thank you for the Church. We thank you, Lord, for our church, but we also thank you that we belong to the Church if we know your Son. We are grateful for everything you are doing in our lives here and now, but we look forward to the day when we will see our Savior face to face. And, Lord, until that day, help us to be faithful. Help us to serve you wholeheartedly. Help us, Lord, to live every day with an eternal point of view focused on your Son. Lord, these are important things we are learning about from your Word and I pray that tonight you would help us to give you our full attention, your Word our full attention. We ask you to teach us. I am so grateful, Lord, that your work goes beyond my work and I just pray that even tonight, Lord, you would work in a way that goes far beyond my own and you would deal with hearts in this place. I pray for people here tonight who don’t know Jesus and I ask that you would save them. Lord, we long to see people saved. We long to see people brought into your family. We ask you, because you alone, Lord, save and so we look to you and ask you for these things. And we ask for all of this in the name of our Savior Jesus and for his sake. Amen.

Well, this morning we began looking at this passage. We took sort of a big picture view of it. And we talked about the uniqueness of the temptations of our Lord and then we also talked about the commonness of the temptations of our Lord. We noted that the three temptations that we read about in Luke four really represent a climax, because the Bible tells us in verse two that for 40 days he was being tempted by the devil. And so these really are the climactic temptations of 40 days of testing.

One of the things I want us to bear in mind is this is really sort of a battle scene. There is battle that is to be done in this world. Obviously our Lord’s temptation was unique. He is the Son of God. In fact, I would once again draw your attention to the fact that the first temptation that is offered to him here in verse three, the devil says to him:

“If you are the Son of God...”²

¹ Luke 4:1-13.

² Luke 4:3.

And then when you look at the last temptation that is mentioned here, if you look down to verse nine he says:

“And he took him to Jerusalem and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, ‘If you are the Son of God...’”³

So the devil is very aware of what is going on here. He is tempting the Son of God. And what is at stake is our salvation. Christ had to live for us before he died for us. He had to be obedient in all things to be qualified to save us from our sins. So he is being tested and he passed those tests. But this is a battle that is going on. And I mention this because, as I said this morning, Christ not only saved us by his life and his death and his resurrection, but now he serves as the model for us in terms of our own walk. We are to be imitators of Christ. He is the model for us in terms of how to deal with temptation. And I want us to be aware that we are fighting a battle in this world.

It is not accidental that Paul uses soldier imagery to talk about what it means to be faithful to Christ. Be a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

Folks, we have to fight for the atmosphere of our hearts. We have to fight for the purity of our minds. We have to fight for the purity of our lives. We have to understand we are in a spiritual battle. We are to put on the whole armor of God, right? We are to put on the whole armor of God that we might be able to stand firm, that we might be able to withstand the enemy.

So we just need to bring that mindset with us when we come to a passage like this and we think about how it applies to our lives. Lord, how can I be faithful in the midst of this struggle called sanctification that I am experiencing and living out right here in this sinful world.

Well, tonight I said we are going to come back and look at it in more detail, and we are. We are going to look at the setting for the temptation and then we are going to look at the substance of the temptations. But before we do that, I just want to answer a couple of questions that were raised to me after there sermon this morning.

I don't want to do this very often, but one of the good things about coming back to the same text on Sunday evening is if people have questions, I can answer them on Sunday evening based upon the sermon from Sunday morning. And I just sort of figure that if one person has a question, probably more than one person has a question. So maybe this will help someone else besides the people who asked this morning.

One question that was raised is this. If every temptation of the believer is regulated by God so that obedience is possible for us at every temptation—we saw that in 1 Corinthians 10:31 this morning—then is perfection theoretically possible? I mean, if we say that God is regulating our temptations, he doesn't allow us to be tempted beyond what we are able, beyond our ability and with every temptation he leaves us a way of

³ Luke 4:9.

escape and we have everything in Christ Jesus necessary for life and godliness so that we can pass those tests, then are we not practically standing on the same ground, say, as Wesleyans who would teach the possibility of some sort of sinless perfection on this side of glorification?

Well, my answer to that is I really don't care whether it is theoretically possible or not. It is experientially impossible. And we know that from Scripture. In fact, I would say it is not even theoretically possible for this reason, because we know that we still have indwelling sin in us. And that indwelling sin is so inexhaustibly deep and broad in our lives that unfortunately contrary to our desires we stumble in many ways the book of James says. In fact, one of the ways that you answer a question like that is you just compare Scripture with Scripture. And the book of 1 John teaches us that if anyone says that he is without sin or that he is sinless, that he hasn't sinned or that he is without sin right now, John writes that person is a liar and doesn't know God at all.

But what we can affirm and what we must affirm is that obedience in any given situation, any given temptation is possible so that we get rid of this notion that our sin is some other person's fault or our sin can be explained and justified by our circumstances, what we are going through, how tired we are, we have had a bad week, the way someone treated us. We have got to recognize that no matter what the circumstance is, we have everything necessary in the Lord Jesus Christ to pass that test, to obey the Lord in that situation. And I trust and I know from Scripture if you are saved that is your desire, isn't it? We want to please the Lord. Deep down that is the constant desire of the believer. We want to please him.

I think a great example of this is Job. Can you see how God regulated the trials that Job went through? God brought him up, didn't he? He says to Satan:

“Have you considered my servant Job?”⁴

Satan asks permission to do certain things. God regulates those things. He only gives permission for Satan to go so far. As you know, Job lost everything: children, wealth, everything but his wife and she said:

“Curse God and die.”⁵

So she was a blessing. Lost everything and in Job 1:22 the Bible says this:

“In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrong.”⁶

That is a great testimony, isn't it?

Job 2:10, when his wife did say, “Curse God and die:”

⁴ Job 1:8.

⁵ Job 2:9.

⁶ Job 1:22.

“But he said to her, ‘You speak as one of the foolish women would speak. Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil?’ In all this Job did not sin with his lips.”⁷

So there he is passing those tests and yet, was he sinless? No, you get to the end of the book of Job and what do you discover? He still has some areas where the Lord is ready to reprove him and instruct him and correct him.

1 John 1:8:

“If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.”⁸

And that is why as believers we have to live every part of our life from the standpoint of the cross. We must understand that Jesus is our righteousness and apart from his perfect righteousness, we would not be accepted by God. We are not saved by our obedience. And so we serve the Lord and we strive for obedience. If you want to say it, we strive for perfection. We strive for perfect obedience, but from the standpoint of one who knows that my righteousness is found in Christ, from the standpoint of a forgiven person. Now I pursue holiness. That is the way we need to look at it.

A second question that was raised is this. If Christ was impeccable, if Christ did not have the capacity to sin—and I argued for that this morning if you were here—well, the question is this. Then how were the temptations real? I mean, if Jesus doesn’t have the possibility of sinning, because he is not just the Son of Man, he is also the Son of God, he is not just a person with a human nature. He is a person with a divine nature at the same time, if he is not capable of sinning, well, then how are the temptations real?

And I want to answer that in a few ways. First of all, folks, temptation doesn’t have to find a point of desire in its object in order for it to really be temptation. Let me say that again. Temptation doesn’t have to find a point of desire in the one it is being offered to in order for it to really be temptation.

What we do sometimes is we have gotten accustomed to using that English word “tempt” to think of desire, right? I am tempted to have the piece of cake. What do we mean by that? I want it. And so we think about temptation and we think, well, now, look. If the person doesn't want what is being offered, is it really temptation?

Well, from the standpoint of how the Bible describes temptation and what Satan is doing, the answer to that question is yes. It can really be temptation even when what is being offered doesn’t find a point of desire in the person to whom it is being offered.

Here is the illustration I gave to the person who asked this this morning. I don’t know about you, but I think most of us have a like least favorite food. Does everybody here

⁷ Job 2:10.

⁸ 1 John 1:8.

have a least favorite food? I mean, it offers no desire to you whatsoever. For me, cottage cheese. Offer me cottage cheese, it is ok. You can have it all.

Now if all of the sudden, imagine this, if all of the sudden the US government said, “Well, cottage cheese, we have discovered cottage cheese is dangerous, it is now illegal, you cannot have it,” and there was a cottage cheese pusher who came to me and said, “Hey, I have got some cottage cheese. You can have it.” All right?

Now he is offering me something illegal. It is a real offer, but guess what? I don’t want it. Now that is a real temptation, but it finds no point of desire in me. It doesn’t attract me at all.

So here is Jesus he does not have the sinful flesh that we have. He does not have a sin principle working in him. He is the perfect, pure, holy Son of God. He does not take pleasure in sin. So when sin is offered to him, it finds no attraction in the Son of God.

John 14:30 Jesus said this:

“Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me.”⁹

He has no power over me, but why? Because he finds nothing in me that he can attract.

Now that does not mean—this is where we have to be careful—that does not mean that these temptations did not have a powerful affect on Jesus in terms of his human nature. In fact, in Matthew’s account of this series of temptations the Bible tells us in Matthew 4:11 that after Satan departed, it says this:

“Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him.”¹⁰

So obviously there is some sort of affect of this that the angels of the Lord would be sent to minister to the Son of God after this temptation. And we read Matthew 26:39, for example, where it says this, Jesus in the garden.

“And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, ‘My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.’”¹¹

And so there he is acknowledging in his human nature, his sinless human nature, the difficulty of his cross work, his calling, his redemptive mission.

“...let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.”¹²

⁹ John 14:30.

¹⁰ Mathew 4:11.

¹¹ Matthew 26:39.

¹² Ibid.

And so the Son of God is perfectly submissive to the Father, wholly desiring to do the will of the Father and in that sense of the joy set before him endured the cross.

But to think that these temptations represented no difficulty, you see him in this entirely without passion sort of posture and it has no effect on him, I don't believe that that would be an accurate reading of all of these passages.

So let's look at the setting for these temptations tonight. First, verses one and two.

And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And he ate nothing during those days. And when they were ended, he was hungry.¹³

Now just very quickly there are six things I want you to observe. We always begin with just observation, don't we? So six things I want you to observe about the setting. One, he has experience where we are sort of alerted to the fact that this is coming off of a high point in his life, the beginning point of his ministry, because we are told in verse one he has returned from the Jordan.

Now what happened at the Jordan? Well, he was baptized. The heavens were open. The Spirit descended, the voice from heaven. So this is following that. We are told in verse one he is full of the Spirit. And, verse one, he was led by the Spirit in the wilderness. The idea is there throughout the wilderness. He is led about in the wilderness.

He is in the wilderness. This is the third thing I want you to note. He is in the wilderness. So this is a solitary trial that he is about to face. There are no observers. This is Jesus and the enemy. This is Jesus and the tempter. In fact, the only way that the writers of Scripture could know about this and record it is if this came from Jesus or was just directly revealed by the Spirit of God, because there was no one else there.

He is being tempted. I have noted this for you already a couple of times, verse two.

“...for forty days, being tempted by the devil.”¹⁴

And he has been fasting.

“And he ate nothing during those days.”¹⁵

Wow. That is 40 days of fasting.

And then finally note he is now hungry.

¹³ Luke 4:1-2.

¹⁴ Luke 4:2.

¹⁵ Ibid.

“And when they were ended, he was hungry.”¹⁶

There is the humanity of our Lord. There are the real human desires of the body. He needs food. He is hungry.

Now there is really just one main point I want you to note from the setting and that is I just want you to note, well, actually a couple of things. One, I want you to note that temptation is not something that happens in our lives necessarily because we have wandered off the path. Here is Jesus full of the Spirit, led by the Spirit, devoted to the Father which is obvious from the fasting that he is doing and yet right in the center of the will of God, the Son of God meets with these temptations, ongoing temptations. And so I want to prepare you. I know you know this, but I just want to say it and prepare you. As you walk with Christ, as you live an obedient life, as you walk in the Word of God, as you are led by the Spirit, you will still meet with temptations. They are not what we find out of the will of God. They are what we discover as well when we are right in the middle of the will of God.

A second thing I know you know, but I want to note it. It obviously is not a sin to be tempted. It is not a sin when Satan puts an offer in front of you. It is not a sin when there is a suggestion that here is a way wherein you should disobey God. And, in fact, it is not a sin for there to be even something within us that for a time, for a moment is drawn out towards that offer that is being made to us, so long as we don't accept it and act on it.

I don't know for certain, but I have to think just in the human bodily desires of Jesus the thought of satisfying his hunger was attractive, but not in the way that it was being put to him, not in a way that would have violated the will of God. So in whatever desires Jesus could have known that were not sinful desires, there could have been an attraction to what was being offered, but there was no sin that was committed.

Do you know you are not responsible for every thought that runs through your head? I thought Charles Haddon Spurgeon put it very well many years ago back in the 1800s when he said, “I cannot help the birds flying over my head, but I don't have to let them nest in my hair.”

And so there can be all sorts of thoughts that run through our minds, but where they become sin is when we grab hold of them and cherish them and believe them and act on them.

Now let's look at the substance of the temptations.

Verse three.

“The devil said to him, ‘If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread.’ And Jesus answered him...”¹⁷

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Luke 4:3-4.

And, by the way, Luke is more specific there. The other account said the stones. But here we learn that there was a specific... I mean there as some specificity to this. Command that this stone become bread.

“And Jesus answered him, ‘It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone.’”¹⁸

And Jesus answered him, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone.’”

And the devil took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, and said to him, “To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will. If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours.”

And Jesus answered him, “It is written,
“ ‘You shall worship the Lord your God,
and him only shall you serve.’”

And he took him to Jerusalem and set him 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,

“ ‘He will command his angels concerning you,
to guard you,’

and

“ ‘On their hands they will bear you up,
lest you strike your foot against a stone.’”

And Jesus answered him, “It is said, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’”¹⁹

First major heading as we think about the substance of these temptations. I want you to notice with me that Satan’s approach has not changed. Ok? I am going to try to show you his approach here, but then I want us to sort of stand away from it and realize his approach has not changed. It is the very same way that the powers of darkness bring temptations our way in our day.

Notice some of his strategies. First of all and, by the way, the apostle Paul wrote:

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Luke 4:4-12.

“...we are not ignorant of his designs.”²⁰

Well, how are we not ignorant of his schemes? Scripture. We learn something about his schemes from Scripture as well as from experience over time which Paul certainly had.

What are some of his strategies? Well, one, he strikes at strategic moments. Jesus is coming off of this high point and humanly speaking when you come off of some great moment in your life and then, especially, you think about 40 days in the wilderness and you think about fasting for 40 days, now he is physically exhausted. There is no better moment for Satan to strike than in a moment like that. And you go throughout the pages of Scripture and you see this sort of pattern again and again. How often it is that after some great victory there is a fall. Or on the opposite end of the spectrum, after some great failure there is the temptation to go even deeper into something that is wrong.

And I say to you that you are going to face temptations on both of those ends of the spectrum. That doesn't change the fact that you are going to be tempted. It doesn't change the fact that you have everything you need to pass those tests. But there is something to be said for being aware, for being alert. We are told again and again be alert.

But when I think about the low points I think about, for example, 2 Corinthians chapter two. I want you to look there if you would for just a moment. 2 Corinthians chapter two. I tend to believe that the man being spoken of in 2 Corinthians here was the man who was mentioned in 1 Corinthians who was sinning. Can't know for certain, but I tend to lean that direction. What we do know is the man spoken of in 2 Corinthians has repented. But now Paul is concerned about something after he has repented.

Verse five of chapter two.

“Now if anyone has caused pain, he has caused it not to me, but in some measure—not to put it too severely—to all of you.”²¹

Whatever has happened has required Paul's forgiveness, but Paul says, “You know what? That is really not the biggest thing in my mind. It is what has happened with the church. If he has caused me pain, it is about the pain he has caused all of you.”

Verse six.

“For such a one, this punishment by the majority is enough.”²²

Ok, the Church has taken action. He says, “That is enough.”

Verse seven.’

²⁰ 2 Corinthians 2:11.

²¹ 2 Corinthians 2:5.

²² 2 Corinthians 2:6.

“...so you should rather turn to forgive and comfort him, or he may be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow.”²³

Did you know that even repentance can represent an opportunity for Satan where he can take godly sorrow and seize upon a moment if we are not alert and turn it into something that is worldly sorrow and destructive for us?

Verse eight.

So I beg you to reaffirm your love for him. For this is why I wrote, that I might test you and know whether you are obedient in everything. Anyone whom you forgive, I also forgive. What I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, has been for your sake in the presence of Christ, so that we would not be outwitted by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his designs.²⁴

We know how he works.

You think about Elijah, right? He runs from Jezebel and then he finds himself in the throes of depression and he wants to die. Well, what had just happened before that? The showdown with the prophets of Baal where fire had come down from heaven and consumed the sacrifice after they had poured water all over it. I mean, God had demonstrated his power, his faithfulness to this prophet in unmistakable terms and a woman says, a wicked queen, as it were, says, “I am going to kill you.” And he is afraid and he runs. And he feels like he is the only one left who is still serving the Lord. And God tells him, “Listen. I have reserved thousands who haven’t bowed the knee. I have kept them for myself.”

So we see examples of someone coming off some sort of high point and they fall subject to temptation. We see a warning here about someone coming off a low point, as it were. They have sinned. Now they have been disciplined by the church. They have repented. They have sought forgiveness. But beware lest there be excessive sorrow.

He strikes at strategic moments.

You know, this helped me personally. For years and years and years I wanted to quit on Monday. I am just telling you. That is the truth. For years Monday was the worst day of my week. In fact, I take a supposed day off on Friday, but it used to be on Monday. Do you know why I quit taking it on Monday? Because if I am going to feel awful, I don’t want to feel awful on my day off. And so Mondays were rough for me.

But guess what helped me? Is to realize that my entire week builds towards Sunday. I am tired at the end of Sunday and just being alert to the fact that the enemy wants to take

²³ 2 Corinthians 2:7.

²⁴ 2 Corinthians 2:8-11.

advantage of all of that work and my weariness has helped me immensely and I can say, “Thanks be to God I really don’t struggle that way much any more.”

Now if any man things he stands, right, let him take heed lest he fall. If tomorrow I am in the throes of depression, you will know what happened, all right? But he strikes at strategic moments.

Second, he attacks—here is his strategy—he attacks at our most vulnerable points. The hunger of Jesus is his first temptation. And then—and I don’t pretend to be able to capture the meaning of what Jesus was meaning when he said, “Father if it be possible, let this cup pass from me,” but there was the expectation of the awfulness of bearing the wrath of God for sin. This is the sinless Son of God who is going to become our sin sacrifice, who is going to bear the wrath of God for us, who is going to cry out at one point:

“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”²⁵

And in his humanness that was an awful thought for our Savior. So that when Satan comes to him and offers him a cross less kingdom, he is attacking at what he believes to be our Savior’s most vulnerable point.

Third, in terms of his strategies, he offers a short cut to what God has promised. This is what he does in the temptation regarding the kingdoms. Verse five

“And the devil took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time.”²⁶

How did he do that? I don’t know. Was it some sort of powerful ability to transport Jesus in a moment of time or was it something in the mind? Was it some sort of vision? Was it some sort of imagery that was given to Christ? I don’t know, but I know this. The Bible tells us in a moment of time he showed him all the kingdoms of the world.

...and said to him, “To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will. If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours.”²⁷

And the idea there is literally if you will bend your knee to me and acknowledge my authority, it will all be yours.

Well, folks, listen. Is Christ going to inherit the kingdoms of the earth? Is he going to be the King of kings and the Lord of lords? Yes, yes, but not without the passion, not without the cross, not without the suffering, not without death on a cross. And then resurrection.

²⁵ Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34.

²⁶ Luke 4:5.

²⁷ Luke 4:6-7.

Well, Satan what is he offering? He is offering a shortcut, a way that is painless, a way that is without cost in terms of how he would present it.

This is not unusual, is it, on the pages of God's Word. Abraham, Genesis 15, is given a covenant by God. God promises that in his offspring the whole world is going to be blessed.

"Look up at the stars, Abraham. This is what your offspring is going to be like."

And in chapter 16 of Genesis his wife comes to him.

"The Lord has not given me a child. Why don't we do this? Why don't you go into my handmaid. Take her as your wife. Maybe the Lord will give us offspring that way."

What does Abraham do? He listens to the voice of his wife, because from his vantage point what God had promised must have seemed humanly impossible. So we will help God out. Maybe God's way is going to be our way. And, sure enough, he goes in to her and a child is conceived. What is his name? Ishmael. How has that worked out?

Generation, generation, generation, generation of conflict in the Middle East and all of that flowing out of that decision, that sinful decision made by Abraham and Sarah.

And I can't tell you in shepherding people how many times over all these years I have talked to people who are convinced they are doing the right thing when, in reality, what they are doing is trying to short cut God's plans. This is what Satan offers. He offers shortcuts.

The fourth thing he does in terms of strategy, he twists Scripture, which is exactly what he does with Psalm 91:11-12. The first two temptations Jesus mentions Scripture, so on the third one Satan says, "Well, let me use Scripture."

for it is written,

" 'He will command his angels concerning you,
to guard you,'

and

" 'On their hands they will bear you up,
lest you strike your foot against a stone.'"²⁸

Messianic psalm that speaks of the Father's protection for the Messiah, his Son. And Satan quotes that and says, "Now why don't we go ahead and reveal who you are, by the working of such a miracle? You know you are safe. You know what the Scripture promises."

²⁸ Luke 4:10-11.

And so how does Jesus correct him? He quotes Scripture back to him that puts that Scripture in its proper context and shows the wrongness of what Satan is saying.

But he hasn't stopped doing this. He twists Scripture. And, again, how many times do people come with sin that they have already chosen, sin that they have envisioned and they are trying to quote Scripture to justify their behavior or to justify their thinking or to justify their choices? Where are those suggestions coming from that they would use Scripture to try to justify their sin?

Well, it comes from the flesh, but it also comes from the enemy.

There is a fifth thing Satan does in terms of strategies. He inflates his claims and he diminishes God's truth. You can go all the way back to the first temptation, Adam and Eve. And what is Satan doing? He is mocking the warnings that God gave to Adam and Eve. Has God really said...?

So Satan takes the truth and he mocks it, but then he takes his lies and he blows these lies up so that if there is any sliver of truth in it, it is conflated to the point that it is a lie.

For example, is it true to say that Satan is the ruler of this world in some sense? Yes. Yes, he rules over the evil world system that is present throughout this planet. And there is no doubt that he has been given a measure of freedom by God so that he is at work behind, at times, behind world rulers. That is why we believe Isaiah 14 is speaking of the Babylonian king is actually also a statement about Satan himself. The same is found in the book of Ezekiel. I think there are some indications that we don't have time to deal with it tonight.

And, by the way, that is the only place in Scripture where he is referred to as Lucifer. It is the Latin word for a star of the morning or bright star or light bearer.

But the idea is this. When he says to Jesus... look at what he says again regarding the kingdoms. He says, verse five:

And the devil took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, and said to him, "To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will."²⁹

Well, that may be true in some measure, but that is not true in an ultimate way, because the Bible also teaches us that God rules over all things. He raises up one ruler. He puts down another. That is the lesson that Nebuchadnezzar had to learn when he looked out at all that he had done. He said, "Look at what my hand has done." And God reduced him to the status of a beast until he gave him his right mind back. And then he came to see that it is God who puts someone on a throne and can take them off.

²⁹ Luke 4:5-6.

In fact, the Bible says a king's heart is like a channel of water in the hand of God. He turns it wherever he wants.

When Satan wanted to attack Job, he had to ask permission. So the idea that he has this full liberty to give to whomever he wants anything he wants is just not accurate. He is a liar and the father of all lies.

The sixth thing I want you to notice about his strategies, he uses the mind and the imagination. He appeals to the to the imaginations of men. Whether you believe that he took Jesus there physically and showed him these things, because he not only showed him all the kingdoms, verse nine says he took him to Jerusalem and set him on the pinnacle of the temple, the highest point of the temple complex. Whether you believe he did that physically or he gave him a view of it, either way, what is he doing? There is this vision of something. There is this view of it. And it is amazing what Satan does in the imaginations of people and the imaginations that he gives them are wicked imaginations, false imaginations, lying imaginations.

If I can just ditch my wife and marry this person, oh, won't my life be wonderful? And a person begins to hold on to that thought and they begin to envision what it would be like and their imaginations begin to operate and before they know it, they have taken the steps down to the grave, because that is what the book of Proverbs says that is. You follow the adulterous woman, you end up in the grave. You won't know it until an arrow has pierced through your liver and ruined your life, but all these imaginations you are being given, they are lies. They are false. But this is what he does. He plays with the imaginations of men.

How do we keep our sanity? God's Word. How do we know what is true? God's Word. God's Word.

Oh, if I just had more money. Oh, if I just had this. Could you just imagine if we had this? Whether you are talking about material things or relationships or achievements and honors and whatever it is that he holds out before your imagination and makes it seem so wonderful that you might even be willing to violate God's will to get it, realize this is how he works. He is a liar.

So his approach has not changed.

The second thing I want you to notice about the substance of these temptations. His approach has not changed. Second, his arguments have not changed. What is he arguing for in these three temptations? Well, in the first one he is arguing for Jesus to doubt the love of God. You are the Son of God. Should you be without? You are the Son of God. Should you be hungry? You are the Son of God, do you not have the power in an instant to satisfy your hunger? You are hungry. I mean, let's solve that problem.

But notice how Jesus answers him.

“Man shall not live by bread alone.”³⁰

Well, what does man live on? Every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. That is, there is food for the soul that isn't food. It is doing the will of God. God supplies in ways that we can never supply for ourselves and what we need to do is trust his provision and not try to be our own providers in a way that would lead us into sin.

Does God really love you, given the circumstances you are in? Does God really love you given what you may not have, what you may be without right now? Are you willing to violate God will and his Word in order to provide for yourself?

Someone says, “Well, I want to be married and here I am. I am 22 years old and I am not married yet, 22 whole years old and I am not married yet. And so you know what? I know the Bible teaches that I am not to be unequally yoked. And I know that I ought not to have a desire for someone who is not a believer and I know that it ought not just to be someone who is a believer in word, but someone who is a believer in deed. And I know what the Bible teaches about these things, but, you know? What if I never get married? God, don't you love me? Don't you know where I am at? Don't you know I am lonely? Maybe I ought to do some evangelistic dating.”

And down the path we go. He argues for us to doubt the love of God.

Second, he argues for us to doubt the plan of God. Does the Father...did the Father already have a plan for giving all the kingdoms of the world to his Son? Yes, it was a plan that involved his death, his resurrection, his ascension and one day all of these things being entrusted to his Son finally.

Satan argues for a short route, a painless way. And so what we do sometimes we say, “Oh, I know what the Bible teaches. This is the plan of God. I am going not pursue the will of God.” And then it doesn't seem to be working out the way that we think it ought to work out. And Satan comes to us and he offers us all sorts of alternatives to just trusting the plan of God.

By the way, folks, the plan of God is his glory. It is his glory. And if you have any other motive than that, you are going to miss the mark. This is how Paul was able to be content with much and be content with little.

Third, he argues for us to trust in presumptuous ways. Well, if God has promised that you won't be harmed, in Psalm 91 verses 11 and 12, if God has promised that, let's find out.

And how does Jesus answer him?

“You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.”³¹

³⁰ Luke 4:4.

Presumption is different than trust. Do you recognize the difference? Do you know what it means to presume upon the Lord? The idea, well, God will forgive me anyway. I mean some of the things we have even talked about tonight, you know, I know I am not supposed to be in that relationship, but do you know what? God has been merciful to others and God may well be merciful to me. So let me pursue this, because, after all, I am already forgiven. And God is sovereign, isn't he? And he is working all things together for the good, isn't he?

That is a sinful way of thinking. That is a dangerous way of thinking. That is presumption.

So his approach hasn't changed. His arguments haven't changed.

Third, the way to combat him hasn't changed. How does Jesus combat him? We looked at it this morning. I won't spend much time here, but one, he is full of the Spirit. We are told that that is how we overcome the deeds of the flesh.

Paul writes:

“But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.”³²

We have got to be filled with the Spirit. There is submission to God. This is how we are filled with the Spirit as believers. There is submission to the Father's will. There must be a resistance. We saw that from the book of James this morning.

Resist the devil. How do you resist him? Firm in your faith. You see, resistance is one of faith. We resist him by believing God. And we believe God as we believe Scripture. So Satan comes to us with these offers or his forces come to us with these offers and what do we do? We have to say no to those offers. That is resistance. We say no to those offers as we submit ourselves to God and believe what the Bible says. We believe God's Word. That is how we do warfare when it comes to the battles with temptation. We put on the whole armor of God.

Just study Ephesians and see what that armor consists of. And it all has to do with the things of truth, a breastplate of righteousness, the helmet of salvation, feet shod with the preparation of the good news of peace, a sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God and on it goes.

The way to combat him hasn't changed. Here is the Son of God doing battle and passing the test in the very same way that we are called to do it. Full of the Spirit, submitted to the Father, resisting the devil, firm in our faith, quoting Scripture.

³¹ Luke 4:12.

³² Galatians 5:16.

Which gets to the last thought tonight and that is this. The outcome hasn't changed. How does this end? Verse 13.

“And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time.”³³

What does the enemy do? He probes at multiple points. Let's probe this avenue. Well, he didn't give into that. He resisted me there. Let's probe another avenue. Well, he resisted me there. Let's probe another avenue.

He is going to strike at multiple angles, but eventually because he is not sovereign, he must leave. But know this. James tells us that if we resist the devil, submit ourselves therefore unto God and resist the devil, he will flee from us, but know this. Until God wraps this thing all up, he just leaves for a time. He just leaves for another opportune moment. He is not finished.

This is why we are to live our lives alertly.

1 Peter 5:8.

“Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.”³⁴

Be sober minded. Be serious about the things of God. Folks, if there is nothing else you take away from today, I pray you take this away. This battle is a serious one.

Be sober minded and be watchful. Be alert. Don't just sort of sloth your way through life. Don't just sort of live your life as though nothing spiritual is going on around you. Be alert.

Know something about his schemes. Study the Word of God. Did the enemy, in fact, did the tempter return in the case of Jesus? Do we see him showing up again?

Well, just one example, Mark 8:31. The Bible says this.

“And he [Jesus] began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again. And he said this plainly.”³⁵

“Guys, I am going to the cross.”

That is what he is telling them.

³³ Luke 4:13.

³⁴ 1 Peter 5:8.

³⁵ Mark 8:31-32.

“But I am not going to stay in the grave. Three days later I am going to be raised from the dead.”

He said this plainly, the Bible says.

“And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.”³⁶

“Oh, Jesus, you are not going to die. This is not going to happen to you.”

“But turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, ‘Get behind me, Satan!’”³⁷

Was Peter a devil? No. Was Peter a redeemed man? Did he have a genuine faith in Jesus? Don't forget. Peter also said, you know, “Who do men say that I am, Peter? Who do you say that I am?”

“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

“Flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, Peter, but my Father who is in heaven.”

Yeah, Peter had divine insight, but at this moment he was being used as a mouthpiece for Satan. Jesus says this:

“For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.”³⁸

“What you have just said represents how you would want it to be, but it doesn't represent what God has ordained it to be.”

And that is our battle, isn't it? Every day. Are we setting our minds on the things of God or on the things of man, how we would want it to be, or how God has ordained it to be?

Aren't you grateful that Jesus passed the test? Aren't you grateful that our Savior was, indeed, the holy spotless Lamb of God? Aren't you grateful that he is our salvation? Because how many in this room have failed the tests? And if not for him we would have perished.

We are saved by his life, by his death, by his resurrection. We live our lives from the standpoint of the cross. But as we pursue what is now the desire we have in our new nature, because we are new people, as we pursue obedience to God and a life that pleases God, let us learn from the example of our Savior. Let us be aware of our enemy and his strategies and let us rely on our God, not upon ourselves and let us rest in his Word and walk in that safe place that is the Word of God.

³⁶ Mark 8:32.

³⁷ Mark 8:33.

³⁸ Ibid.

And all God's people would say amen.

Let's pray together.

Father in heaven, when I look at my Savior's strength, I see my own weakness, but when I look at my Savior's victory I see my own failures. When I see his perfect obedience I see the many ways and the many times when I stumble. And I am so grateful that I am not saved by myself, but I am saved by him. And yet, Lord, our hearts cry out for with the desire to live lives that please you, to pass the tests that we face, to come through those temptations offered by the enemy in such a way that we don't yield to them, but we yield ourselves to you and we obey you. And so, Lord, apply this to us in the way that only your Spirit can so that it benefits us, so that we are edified by what we have heard today, so that we will walk in that way that can only be explained by you and we ask you for this in Jesus' name. Amen.