

Luke 4:1-13

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, ² where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry. ³ The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread." ⁴ Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone.'" ⁵ The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. ⁶ And he said to him, "I will give you all their authority and splendor; it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. If you worship me, it will all be yours." ⁸ Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.'" The devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down from here. ¹⁰ For it is written: "'He will command his angels concerning you to guard you carefully; ¹¹ they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'" ¹² Jesus answered, "It is said: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" ¹³ When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time.

Introduction

Are you a sports fan? If so, do you regularly check out the wins and losses for your favorite league or team? What if God regularly published a win/loss column for temptations in your life? God demands in his law that the win column should be 100% and the losses 0%. He says, "**Be holy for I the Lord your God am holy.**" This means all wins and no losses. Don't we have to admit, "I don't even come close"? We fail. The comforting truth is: Jesus didn't. We see that in our gospel today. "**We fail; Jesus Didn't.**"

The Reality of Evil

There are those in our modern secular culture who believe that humans and science either have or will have the answer to everything including evil. "Good breeding, good parenting, good education, good health care, good psychology, good jobs, and good pay and evil will go away.

But this account reminds that there is a spiritual side to evil. Angels whom God created to be holy and serve him, under the leadership of the devil (accuser), rebelled against God. God removed them from his presence and imprisoned them in a confinement of darkness, hopelessness, and hatred of God and good. They are confined, yet they can roam about. One of them, the devil, did in this account. So evil is not just a social issue, it is spiritual and tied to the devil and to the sinful nature that we inherited from the fall.

The "Good Enough" Fallacy

This account also debunks the thinking of many that if one lives a good enough life, trusts in God enough, and prays enough, they will have a good life. But here we have Jesus. He did lead a good life – a perfect life. He deserved a pass from hardship and suffering. Yet, here he is, the sinless Son of God, being led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness where he is without food and other creature comforts. He who is without sin is tempted by the devil. The thinking that good living always makes for a good life is not always true. Jesus is proof of this!

1st Temptation

So here is Jesus in the wilderness. He has been fasting for 40 days probably to show self-denial and dedication to his Father. The devil comes to Jesus and says, "**If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.**"

The devil is not all-knowing but is an excellent observer and predictor of human nature. He sees weaknesses and quickly develops plans for attack. His attack plan here is two-pronged. Physically he hits Jesus in what Satan hopes is a potential weakness - his hunger. If he can get Jesus to give up on trusting that God will care for his needs at the right time and right way, Satan will have ended Jesus' mission of saving the world. The same thing is true if the other prong of his attack works. That is where Satan tries to sow seeds of dissatisfaction. It's as if the

devil is saying, "If you are really the Son of God should you be in such lowly, despicable circumstances? If you are the Son of God, shouldn't you be better off than this? Do something about it."

Doesn't Satan try this same thing with you and me? Have you found yourself thinking, "If you are a child of God, should you really be lying in a hospital bed feeling pain? Should you have to be struggling to make a living? Should you have to put up with the problems and pressures of life that you feel? Shouldn't your life be without struggles and sacrifices." This is the devil working in cahoots with our sinful natures to get us to sin against God by making God seem uncaring and even wrong.

In defense Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 8:3, "**It is written, 'Man shall not live on bread alone.'**" Matthew records that Jesus added, "... but on every word that comes out of the mouth of God." Jesus' weapon is God's Word. While a person needs to physically eat, spiritual and eternal life come only through God and His Word. Jesus' defense worked. Satan gave up on this track of attack. But he continued with another.

2nd Temptation

"The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. ⁶ And he said to him, "I will give you all their authority and splendor; it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. If you worship me, it will all be yours."

This temptation shows the power of Satan for deception. Supernaturally the devil displayed the kingdoms of the world. He then wrongly gives the impression that this is all his to give. While he rules over the sinful influences in the world, he is still subject to the limits God places on him and the world is ultimately God's. Satan also indicates to Jesus that he can resume his position of co-ruler of the universe which he set aside as Savior of the world, if Jesus will bow down and worship him - no muss, no fuss - no suffering and no dying. Satan is saying, "Jesus I have a short-cut back to glory for you. But you must worship me."

This shows us how Satan will try to convince us that self-centeredness, greed, and sinful short-cuts will get us ahead. He will tempt us to think, "Do whatever you have to make life easier for yourself, even if it means following my way and forsaking God. You'll be better off in the end."

Jesus' defense to Satan's attack is again to quote Scripture: ⁸ **Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.'** Jesus emphasizes that there is only one true God whom people are to worship and serve. This is the only God who has salvation from sin and its curse. This is the only God who can give true peace, power and eternal life. It's as if Jesus is saying, "Don't even bother with worshiping money, people, places or other things. They can't save you. They can't give you eternal life. They don't love you. They don't deserve your worship or service. Only God does." Jesus' defense worked again.

3rd Temptation

But Satan wasn't done. **"The devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down from here. ¹⁰ For it is written: "'He will command his angels concerning you to guard you carefully; ¹¹ they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'"**

There is a similarity between this attack and the first. Satan again tries to sow seeds of doubt in Jesus' mind about his identity. "Are you really God's Son. You don't look like God's Son. Prove it. And this is how you can prove it - throw yourself down and let God take care of you." Satan is like an Olympic diver who does a dive with a couple of flips and follows it up with the same dive but with a new twist. The new twist in this attack is that Satan quotes Scripture, specifically Psalm 91:11,12. But he misapplies it. Because God promises that his angels will protect his people, Satan wanted Jesus to think that this was true even if it involved needlessly and recklessly endangered his life.

Do you see just how dangerous the devil is? The devil tries to lead us to believe that because we have forgiveness, it doesn't matter if we sin; that because we have protection, we can be reckless; that because God provides, we can poorly manage what he gives us; or, because we have faith, we can never lose it. Satan, himself or through others, will misquote or misapply scripture to lead us away from God. False teaching without God's Word is dangerous, but false teaching using scripture is much more so.

To defend himself Jesus shot back at Satan with God's Word, **"It is said: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'**" His point was: "Even though God graciously promises things, do not sinfully assume that God will protect and provide for you no matter what you think, say or do. Forgiveness is not a license to sin. Just because you have received the gift of faith through the means of grace, do not think that you can read, hear or take part in any teaching or practice that deviates from my word and you will never harm or lose your faith." This kind of thinking doesn't glorify God. It isn't good for God's people. Such sin may eventually end up in believers' harm and even death, as well as their eternal destruction. Jesus' defense worked. Satan gave up, but only for a while.

The Devil Is Done for Now

"When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time." These were not the only temptations Jesus faced. They are a sampling of what Jesus went through in our behalf to be tempted in every way as we have and yet to be without sin (Hebrews 4). But it shows that the devil would continue to tempt Jesus hoping to make God's plan of salvation fail.

Take-homes

Obviously, this account shows how dirty and deceptive the devil really is. He doesn't give up and will try anything to get us to sin.

But the real take-homes have to do with Jesus. Go back to the win-loss column. While in reality we fail all the time when it comes to succumbing to temptation and the win-loss column is not 100%, in Christ it is. As Paul wrote to the Corinthians, he spoke of **"...Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption (1Co1:30)."** As he wrote to the Romans, **"The words "it was credited to him" were written not for him alone,²⁴ but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness—for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead."** So, through faith in Jesus the win-loss column when it comes to temptation is Wins – 100%; Losses – 0%.

The other important take-home is the importance of using God's word to ward off the devil's attack. If God's word was good enough for the Son of God to use in facing temptation, why should we use anything less? Weekly worship, Bible classes, personal Bible study, family devotions, memorizing Bible verses, take time and effort. But look at Jesus and the results. God's word works in rebuffing the devil. Let it work in your lives. Amen.