Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Crisis of Temptation, Part 2
Scripture: Matthew 4:1-11
Code: 2192

Matthew chapter 4 is our text for tonight in our continuing study of Matthew. And we are examining this wonderful passage, verses 1 to 11, that deals with the temptation of our Lord Jesus Christ. Matthew 4:1 to 11.

Throughout the history of man, he has fought relentlessly against the reality of temptation. There's never been an era of man's history when temptation was not a problem. Polemon, A.D. 450, wrote of his own personal struggle. He said this: "Fly from all occasions of temptation, if still tempted fly further still; if there is no escape possible then have done with running away and show a bold face and take the two-edged sword of the Spirit. Some temptations must be taken by the throat, as David killed the lion; others must be stifled, as David hugged the bear to death. Some you had better keep to yourselves and don't give them air; shut them up as a scorpion in a bottle. Scorpions in such confinement die soon but if allowed out for a crawl and then put back into the bottle and corked down they will live a long while and give you trouble. Keep the cork on your temptations, and they'll die of themselves."

So even in 450 A.D. they were trying to cork their temptations; that's been part of man’s life. Augustine, one of the Christian Fathers, before his conversion lived with an ill woman, and sometime after she accosted him as usual, and by that the writer means an evil woman. He ran away as fast as he could run from this evil woman of his past, and she ran after him screaming, “Why runnest thou away? It is I.” And he answered, “I run away because I am not I anymore. I am a new man.” The, from the least to the greatest, men have struggled with the reality of temptation.

An ancient writer records the following: St. Benedict sought an increase of grace and exemption from temptation by wearing a rough hair shirt - some of you with Catholic backgrounds can relate to this kind of thing - and living as he did for three years in a desolate cave beyond the reach of man, he isolated himself and wore this hairy shirt to irritate his skin, his scanty food was let down to him at the end of a cord, and even there, says the writer, temptations beset him. The memory of a beautiful woman he had met haunted him continually, and it so impressed St. Benedict that he was on the point of leaving his seclusion to chase that woman. Near his grotto was a clump of thorns and briars. Having undressed, he threw himself among them and rolled about until his nude body was covered

with bleeding wounds, and this he continued until the infernal fire was extinguished forever. The battle of temptation.

Another ancient writer records: St. Marcion, a monk of Caesarea, was greatly tempted to commit vile sin, when just at the point to yield he thrust his limbs into a fire, and said, “O Marcion, how feels this fire to thee now? Yet it is not comparable to that which will consume the sinner.” And thus he conquered. Afterward he resolved to find a place where temptation could not so readily reach him, so he found an island off the coast on which there was a cave. Here he lived with all the advantages of solitude for six years, and then temptation came to him again and he fled to escape it. Fruitless task. The only refuge from temptation is the grave.

Jovinian the heretic, whom St. Jerome opposed, would needs think or at least say that after baptism no man is ever again not tempted by the devil. Not only is a man not overcome, but after baptism, said Jovinian, he is never tempted. But, said Jerome, baptism does not drown the devil. He's right. Man has always struggled with temptation. We know it from the Old Testament; we know it from the New Testament.

And I just gave you some illustrations of the time between the New Testament and the present, some of the greatest of the saints realized the reality of temptation that faces every believer, and the battle rages today. But God has given us a wonderful plan for victory. In fact, as you recall in our study of 1 Corinthians we came to chapter 10 and verse 13, and we read there the wonderful truth that "there is no temptation that has taken you but such as is” - What? – “common to man." They've all been there; it's part and parcel of human existence. "But God is faithful, who will not permit you to be tempted above that you are able; but will with the temptation also make” - What? – “a way of escape, that you may be able to bear it." God has designed that there be a way of escape. Temptation is gonna happen. And remember last time we saw that the word *peirasmos* is really a neutral word? God allows it as a test; Satan wants to turn it into an illicit temptation. There's going to be those kinds of things; we are going to fall into those kind of circumstances where there'll be testings, and Satan will endeavor to twist them into temptations. Maybe it's a financial setback, maybe it's a change in plans, maybe it's mistreatment by somebody, maybe it's ah, somebody's death. Maybe it's a problem in your home or your family that appears to have no solution. Maybe it's a, a good deal that tempts you to do what is wrong. Maybe it's a persecution or a deprivation or an occasion, ah, to be with sinful people - or a man or a lady who attracts your, your baser nature. Or maybe it's somebody who has something you wish you had. Whatever it is, life is just jammed full of testing grounds. And as we take them as a test, and as we endure them as a test, and as we find the way of escape that God has provided, we go through victoriously. But as Satan twists it to a temptation, and we succumb to the temptation, we fall to sin; we lose the victory.

And so there are tests - all around us - tests provided for us by God, and then pushed into temptations by the evil one, to drive us to internalize the test, to kindle lust about the test, which generates sin. Everybody has to deal with it, "such as is common to man; but God is faithful." And God has provided, says 1 Corinthians 10:13, “an *ekbasis*,” “an out,” literally. In fact, it has a definite article, “*the* out,” “*the* way out.” There is a way of victory. There is a way to go right through a temptation. There is a way to bear the temptation, to win in the temptation. And that is, of course, to respond in obedience to God and to fight temptation in the only way that it could ever be fought, and that is the way it was fought by the Lord Jesus Christ. If you want to know how to handle temptation, you've got to learn your lesson from Christ, because He is the only one who ever lived on the face of the earth who was able to take temptation right to its limit and never internalize it, never let it kindle lust, never let it become sin. He knows how to handle every temptation, every category of temptation. He is the one who shows us the way through. He is the one who shows us victory. He is the only one who can give that victory to us. So we're looking then at His temptation, not with a historic perspective, but with a present perspective. Not to find out - Isn't it interesting how He did it? - but look how He did it and how it can be applied to how we must face the reality of temptation.

Now in Matthew's particular viewpoint here, he is presenting the temptation of Christ really for two reasons. And the first reason is that it is necessary to demonstrate that Jesus is the King, that He is the ultimate King, that He is the all, ah, glorious King; that He is the King of all other kings by showing that He has the ability to resist the only other dominion, the only other great ruler in the universe, Satan himself. So if Satan is defeated by Christ, then Christ is established as the King of kings, the ultimate monarch, the great Ruler, the ultimate Lord, the supreme One. And that's Matthew's point, since Matthew is always concerned with presenting Jesus as King, he here wants to show Jesus in conflict with the other great monarch in the universe, to show that Jesus defeats him, that Jesus has control over him, that he is nothing but a, but a subject, to Christ's power and authority. And so the test first of all comes, ah, to prove the royalty of Christ, to prove the deity of Christ, to affirm that He is the King. Secondly, I believe it is included in the Word of God as a demonstration of victory over sin, to show how the believer is to tackle the situation of *peirasmos*, testing and temptation.

Now, there are three things that we looked at here, that we sug-gested to you: the preparation, the temptation, and the triumph. Re-mind yourselves of the preparation; and we saw that in verses 1 to 3. Let's look at it. Immediately after His baptism, "Jesus was led up by the spirit into the wilderness to be tested by the devil." Of course the test was from God, the temptation part was from the devil. "And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward hungry. And when the tempter came to him" - now stop right there. Ah, down through 3a we have basically the preparation, and I suggested to you several weeks ago that it was immediately after His baptism. And there's a spiritual

principle there to keep in mind, that it is immediately after the high points of our life that Satan sometimes hits us with the greatest attacks. And the principle is this: “let him that thinks he stands take heed” - What? – “lest he fall.” It is when we feel the most secure that we become the most vulnerable.

So it was immediately after His baptism. That was the time - and we're looking now at the preparation - the time immediately after His baptism. The purpose? Satan wanted to seduce Christ to commit sin. And if he could get Christ to submit to sin and to commit an act of sin, he would then thwart the entire plan of God, right? He would destroy it all, because the world needed a savior, and the Savior the world needed had to be a sinless Savior. And if he could get, ah, Christ to succumb to sin, then the plan of God was destroyed. So it was an effort to overthrow the Messiah; that was the purpose.

The place. We saw that - the wilderness. Difficult circumstances; a desolate, barren, lonely area inhabited by wild beasts. The plan - to attack Christ at the point of His strength and to push Him over the edge of His strength, into sin. Christ did have the ability to make stones into bread, and He did have a right to eat. After all He was the Son of God - push Him to take that right. Even though He had it He would be acting against the will of God. Christ did have the right to be acknowledged the Messiah, so have Him dive off the temple and make a big, popular appeal and get His right to messiahship the wrong way, rather than God's way. Christ did have the right to all the kingdoms of the world, so give them to Him if He bows down to Satan. You see, in each case, Satan tempted Christ, consonant with a right that He had and a power that He had. He always tempts us where we are capable, where we are - where, where it is possible to fall and where we are strong, and that's the subtlety of it. And so we saw then the preparation.

Now let's go to the temptation itself, and see how Satan approached Him. First of all, verses 3 and 4, there were three aspects to the temptation. We'll see the significance of that as we go. The first temptation begins in verse 3, "And when the tempter came to him, he said, ‘If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.’ But he answered and said, ‘It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.’" **[**“If,” notice it? The first word Satan said, “if,” the doubt. Satan's ever present if, always there. So he tempted Eve, so he tempted Christ, so he tempts us. He always begins by trying to create doubt about the reality of the divine standard. He doesn't say, “You are the Son of God” right out. He says, “if you are,” implying that there needs to be the proving of it. If he can create doubt about the reality of the standard, doubt about the authority figure involved, he can lessen the concern of the one being tempted. So he tempts us with his evil whispers, breathing doubt into our souls, doubts about who we are in Christ, doubts about the veracity of God's revelation, doubts about God's power, doubts about God's love, doubts about our conversion – “If thou be a child of God.” Doubts about our inabilities, doubts about

our strengths. He suggests again and again the terrible “if” - harassing the soul of a man with fear, with perplexing doubt.

He knew Jesus was God's Son, and Jesus knew Jesus was God's Son, but that didn't stop Satan from starting with “if.” Always questioning, always wanting to plant doubt. As we study the book of Ephesians you'll see that one of the armor pieces of the Christian is the helmet of salvation. In, ah, Thessalonians Paul says there, he gives us the full title of it: "The helmet of the hope of salvation." And one of the crushing things that Satan wants to do is smash the believer in the head with doubt, and it is the helmet of the hope of salvation that thwarts that doubt. In other words, the confidence that our salvation is secure. That's an ever-present attack of Satan.

Now look at the temptation itself, “make stones into bread.”**]** Now some people say this is purely a temptation of the flesh. Back in verse 2 it says, after forty days and forty nights of fasting He hungered. And in a sense it is true, that the flesh is involved, that Jesus was really hungry. After forty days and forty nights His body craves food. But beyond that there is far more to this temptation than purely feeding His body; it's never that simple. It was not only a temptation of the flesh, for if it was a temptation of the flesh, in what sense is it a temptation? What's wrong with eating? My word, if he's simply saying to Him, “I'm tempting You to make bread and eat,” what's wrong with that? He's just fasted forty days and forty nights; He certainly has a right to eat. You see, there's really no temptation there. The temptation is based upon His physical need, but the temp-tation is not simply to make bread so that He can eat.

There's an-other way to look at it. Satan's temptation might have been worded like this: “Has God said, ‘Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.’ Did, did He say that at Your baptism forty days ago? Did God say you were His beloved Son in whom He was well pleased, and now He's leaving You out here to starve to death? Why should You starve in the wilderness when You have the power as God's Son to turn the stones to bread? Did not history justify such a temptation? Had not God given His people manna in the wilderness, and they were less than Christ? Had not God said, ‘I will rain bread from heaven for you?’ Had not Isaiah said that Israel shall not hunger, that Israel shall not thirst? God fed His people in the wilderness by frequent miracles. May not His own Son work one miracle when He is hungry? It seems of such little consequence, if God is so well-pleased, if God is so concerned. If You are embarking on Your ministry, You must have this, You must have Your physical needs supplied. What would become of God's plan for Israel if the people died in the wilderness? What would become of God's plan for the world if You died out here, starving for want of food?”

Now listen, I'm saying all of that to say this: the point of the temptation was not in feeding His hunger, but in the suggestion that His hunger was incompatible with His being the Son of God. In other words, Satan was saying, “You better second guess God. God's not fulfilling His part of the deal.” It was ah, an urging on Satan's part for Jesus to sweep aside every human want by a divine act. And it was a temptation to, to really exercise personal selfish authority to do what would satisfy His own wants because He believed God had let Him down. “Why are You hungry? You're the Son of God. If You're the Son of God, You shouldn't be hungry. Make these stones into bread, take a little right to Yourself, grab a little of the authority that's Yours. You're too dignified for this thing. If God isn't gonna meet Your need, You take it Yourself. You were born in a stable, but You're the Son of God. Hurried off to Egypt for fear of Herod's wrath, You're the Son of God. A carpenter's roof supplied You with a home, and in the obscurity of a despicable town called Nazareth You spent thirty years. Is that fitting for the Son of God? The voice of God comes from heaven, ‘This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.’ Listen Jesus, You've suffered enough indignity. You've suffered enough. You're the Son of God, now grab some satisfaction. You have a right to it. You linger for weeks here in the desert, wandering among wild beasts and craggy rocks, unhonored, unattended, unpitied, ready to starve. Is this befitting the Son of God? If You are the Son of God, then take Your prerogatives.”

You wanna know somethin'? The crowd said the same thing at the cross. “If You're the Son of God, get off that cross. If You're the Son of God, what are You doin' up there?” Remember that? You hear that voice of Satan, don't ya? “You're a Christian. You deserve better than this. Get it your way. Don't wait for God; He hasn't delivered.” You see, it was a wicked attempt to cause the Last Adam to fail where the first Adam - Adam had failed with a food issue. You see, the first Adam blew it with the apple, and Satan wanted the Last Adam to blow it with the bread. But the temptation was far beyond that. The point of Satan was this: he wanted to make Jesus distrust the Father's care. He wanted to destroy the Son's confidence in the Father.

Now there's no sin in satisfying hunger, none at all. When I'm hungry, I get somethin’ to eat, unless for some purpose I've withdrawn myself from food. There's nothing wrong with that; that isn't the sin. Listen, in Hebrews 10:8 the words of Jesus are recorded and these are the words He said: "Lo, I come, O God" - don't ever forget it - "to do thy will." To succumb to Satan's temptation would be to distrust God. Jesus in the garden, sweating, as it were, great drops of blood, prayed a prayer, "O Father, let this cup pass from me.” “Father, this is not something I would choose; this is not something I would want.” And I'm sure right there the test was going on, and Satan was trying to turn it again into a temptation for Him to, to say to Himself, “Why am I doing this? I don't deserve to die like this.” And yet Jesus burst out finally in a victorious statement. He said, "Not my will but” - What? – “thine be done." Listen, Jesus had given Himself to the Father's will. He said it again and again in His life, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me. I do what the Father tells Me to do. I have come, O God, to

do thy will." And it was the basis of that absolute trust that Satan was trying shatter.

And you know what he would have done? He would have put an irreparable rift in the Trinity, you see that? I mean, this was an incredible shot, to fracture the very nature of God Almighty. Well, Jesus reflects His attitude in the reply in verse 4, "But he answered and said, ‘It is written’" - and you're gonna find that every time He answered; He answered with the same beginning, “it is written.” He knew what David knew, "Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not” - What? – “sin against thee." "It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.’" You are better off, He says, to obey God and to depend on God and to wait for God's sustenance than to grab some satisfaction in this physical world. He relied on Scripture, “it is written.” And He quotes Deuteronomy 8:3, Deuteronomy 8:3, "Man sha11 not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God." That text in Deuteronomy 8 pictures Moses. Moses is reminding Israel of God's tender care for His people during the wilderness journeys. And we could paraphrase, ah, what Moses is saying, as saying, ah, similarly here. You don't need to mistrust God; you don't need to gripe; you don't need to complain. God is gonna take care of you; God is gonna supply for you. You don't need to be complaining and worrying about getting your satisfaction. You live by God's Word and God will honor your obedience and take care of your needs. That's what Jesus was saying. A man is better off to obey the Word of God and then count on the wonderful, providential sustenance of God than he is to let his own desire and lust cause him to grab satisfaction that he knows is against the will of God because he thinks he deserves it. Oh, we get that temptation a lot. We could paraphrase it this way: “Satan,” Jesus says, “you are proceeding on a false assumption, and that false assumption is that for a man, in order to appease hunger and stay alive, he's gotta have bread. That is wrong. Over against this erroneous idea I now declare to you that it is not bread, but it is the creative, energizing, sustaining power of God that is the only real source of any man’s existence.” He's right.

Listen, you can't say, says James, today I'll do this and tomorrow I'll do this. You don't know anything about tomorrow. Your life is a vapor that appears for a little time and vanishes away. You could be dead in the morning. The only thing that keeps you alive is the sustaining power of God, not your bread. “And so,” says the Lord, “I will affirm My absolute confidence in the Father's care, and I will never bend to ful-fill My own satisfaction at the expense of disobedience or distrust.” He knows that God wills that He live, and so He says if God wills that I live, God wills that I accomplish the plan, then God will pro-vide sustenance. And oh, did God ever provide it. You'll see that at the end - a feast like you couldn't believe.

The principle then - lis-ten - the principle of His life must be the principle of my life, and it is this. Listen people, the governing motive of my life is to do only the will of God and believe Him for all the

benefits. You wanna hear it another way? Matthew 6:33, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and" - What? – "all these things shall be added unto you." Why would you worry about what you shall eat or what you shall wear or what you shall drink? If God clothes the grass of the field, is He gonna take care of you? If He takes care of the birds, is He gonna take care of you? If He takes care of the lilies of the field, is He gonna take care of you? Don't you ever bypass a true principle of righteousness to get something you think you want. You have just vio-lated the one God who grants you any existence at all; keep it in mind.

In fact in 1 John chapter 5 it says that there are some people apparently who are so busy violating the will of God to get their own satisfaction that God takes away their existence and they die. There were some people in the Corinthian church who were getting their sat-isfaction alright. They were gluttonous at the table of the Lord, and they were into a drunkenness at the table of the Lord, and they were perhaps even committing sexual immorality at the love feast; and Paul says to them, because of this some of you are weak and sickly and some of you are dead. It is God who gives you life; it is God who keeps you alive, not your food. And so says our Lord Jesus, man lives by God's Word and obedience to God's Word, not by his self-designed satisfaction as an act of disobedience. Jesus knew that the Father had told Him to wait for the Father's provision. It's easy when you're in business to fall into this. You say, "Boy, if I, I need this for my business. If I just snitch a little bit on this deal, I'll close this deal, and it'll be a real big deal." You know what you've just done? You have lived by bread alone, and you've just forfeited the blessing of God who alone grants life and existence and blessing. And by the way, who owns everything in the world anyway? That's the principle. The only governing motive for life is to do the will of God, and when you do that you can leave the residual to Him; He'll take care of it.

Well, Satan is pretty subtle, so he moves to a second temptation. So, he says, "You're gonna trust God, are ya? Wonderful! You're gonna trust God. You're not gonna usurp a little of Your own authority. You're not gonna bypass the issue of obedience. You're not, ah, you're not gonna grab your satisfaction. You really trust God, do You? Well prove it." Verse 5, "Then the devil takes him up into the holy city [Jerusalem] and sets him on a pinnacle of the temple and says unto him, 'If thou be the Son of God' - and if You're going to trust God so wonderfully as You said – 'then cast yourself down; for it is written.'" How interesting. Now who's quoting Scripture? The devil. By the way, he misquotes the verse. Aren't ya glad? And for his own ends. "It is written, 'he shall give his angels charge concerning thee, and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.'"

"You're big on the Bible, and You're big on believing God. Hey, here's one God said; try it and prove it." Pretty subtle, right? "You wanna trust God? Here's a great opportunity. Do a swan dive off the

pinnacle of the temple. See if He catches Ya and gives Ya a nice soft landing. And by the way, in case You're wonder-ing whether that's His will, it says it in the Bible." Oouuu, what subtlety. Satan is quoting the Bible. He's quoting Psalm 91, verses 11 and 12.

Now let me talk about this a minute. The devil again in-sinuates doubt. Apparently he can't stand to admit the truth about Christ. He wants Christ to force the issue and to prove it; so he wants Him to commit a sin. So verse 5, he takes Him up into this place in Jerusalem on the pinnacle of the temple. Now we don't exactly where it is; but, most people feel that on the Kidron Valley - which was east - in the, in the great temple - Herod's great temple - there was a royal portico. The Kidron Valley, ah, looking, ah; if this is the west and this is the east, it just drops, and the temple ground is right here; it's just a sheer drop, ah, at some point as much as 450 feet, straight down. And ah historians tell us that there was a roof edge over Herod's royal portico that stuck out over the precipice. And it would be a dizzy height. Josephus says it's a dizzy height of 450 feet. And, by the way, tradition tells us that the, the Lord's brother, James, who was the head of the Jerusalem church, ah, was finally martyred by being thrown off that porch. And so it perhaps is there, and there Satan and Jesus are, and I don't know how they got transported there but they did. And, and they're looking over and Satan says, "You gonna trust God? You're just gonna let God take care of everything, aren't ya? You're gonna have God take care of the whole thing, then jump. After all He says He's not gonna let Ya dash Your foot against a stone. If You'll not prove Your messiahship by working a miracle to save Yourself, then why don't Ya let God prove You're a Messiah by doing a miracle Himself? If God's the One You're concerned about, let Him do it."

Now listen, if the sin of the first temptation is in doing it Himself against God's will, now He can eliminate that problem. Now He has to let God do it. "Alright, Lord, I'm just gonna depend on You. I'm just gonna" - and you know what? This is the opposite problem; this is the tension, see? We say, "Well, okay, ah, I'm not gonna bypass God. I'm just gonna let God provide my food. I'm just gonna let God take care of everything, just gonna seek the kingdom and, ah, God will take care of everything. And then I'm just gonna put God to the test. So I'm gonna go out and sit in the desert, and I'm just gonna say, 'God, I'm just trusting You for Matthew 6:33. I'm gonna read my Bible here; drop some food on me; prove Yourself.'" Now in a sense that's what's happening, that's the, the style of the thing.

He's eliminated the problem in the first temptation, and He's offered this option: "If you be the Son of God, cast yourself down; for it is written." This is worse; this is the worst temptation. Here's a double sin. The sin really doesn't trust God in the right way, but more than that, it is the sin of presuming on God. You're testing God. In the first temptation, a peril existed. In the second one, you create the peril. Here you say, "God, here I g-o-o-o-o; catch me." And the psalmist said, "Lord, keep thy servant back from" – What kind of sin? – "presumptuous sin." And Jesus quotes Deuteronomy 6:16, "Jesus

said to him, ‘It is written again, Thou shalt not put the Lord, thy God, to the test.’" You don't do that to God. My, so prodigious a sign as bailing right off the top of the temple and, and just settling down a nice soft landing like some kind of a comic book superman; it would have been enough to convince everybody. But this was the Messiah. I mean, that kind of stuff was really amazing. I mean, after all Malachi said, "The Lord whom you seek shall suddenly come to his temple." And that would have been it. You wanna know something interesting? William Barcley suggests that this was the very method of false messiah's who were continually popping up. They tried to, ah, to prove their messiahship by some heroic thing, some fantastic act at the temple.

For example Theudas, ah, met the people at the temple, led them all out and promised that he was gonna split the waters of the Jordan River. Well, he didn't. And then there was a famous Egyptian pretender, who said that he would lay flat the walls of Jerusalem. And then there was Simon Magus, and you know what tradition tells, that Simon Magus tried this - splat. It was a terrific dive and it was a rotten landing. These pretenders were forever trying to offer sensational appeals to the people to get instant public acceptance so that they would be thought of as the messiah. Is this what He wanted, is this what God wanted? Did God expect His Messiah to pull off some fantastic stunt, some magic trick - not so.

You read in Isaiah chapter 53 that there was no beauty in Him, no comeliness, that He was despised, that He was rejected, that He was a man of sorrows, that He was acquainted with grief, that He was rejected by His people, that He was led as a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before her shearers is dumb. So He opened not His mouth; He was taken from judgment. You read all about His arrival, and it's all a negative, sad tragedy. That was never God's plan - no big, glamorous, hot-shot routine.

Public acceptance is never the proof of *anything*, never. And John 1 tells us He came not for popularity but He came to be hated, despised, rejected, and killed. John says, "He came unto his own, his own received him not." Had He fallen to this temptation He would have perverted His reason for coming. He would have perverted everything; He would have fouled up the whole plan of God. You're not to tempt God with your own plans. Jesus refused and there are at least two good reasons, perhaps more.

First of all, the one who seeks to attract man by providing them with sensations has embarked upon a procedure which never has an end, alright? If you're gonna win the world by sensation, you better have a better trick tomorrow. It's the law of diminishing returns. To retain His power He would have had to produce greater and greater sensations, and this year’s sensations would have been next

year’s bore. His followers would have been lovers of sensation and not lovers of God. And it's exactly what they wanted, because in John 6, when He went up to the mountain and He fed them, they went across the sea and they were all there – Remember? - the next morning, and He said, "You seek me, not for the word that I teach, but for” – What? – “the food." You know what they thought up there? They thought this guy’s the greatest guy to come down the pike ever, folks - free food. We got a welfare state you won't believe. He makes food; He creates food - free food. And they followed Him all over for the free food. If you want to attract people on that basis that - you'll have to just keep it up. And the day you don't come through with the goods is the day they all bail out.

Secondly, Jesus knew that you never use God's power to test God. You don't go against what you know is God's will and God's plan - to put pressure on God to force Him to take care of you. There's no good seeing how far you can go with God. There's no sense putting your-self deliberately into a threatening situation; no sense in living recklessly, living needlessly, and then expecting God to get you out of it. It's amazing some people go down the road of temptation. They get involved, ah, sort of into some temptation and almost into some sin, and they say, “God, get me outta this!” Or else later on they blame God, right? Like Adam. You know, when the Lord confronted Adam who he blamed? He didn't blame Eve; no, no. He said this: ah, God says to him, “Adam, wh, wh, whadid ya do that for?” And Adam said, "The woman thou gavest me. I didn't, I didn't even know what a woman was. I woke up and I was married. You could have picked anyone. Why her?” He was blaming God; he wasn't blaming his wife. And isn't that the temptation? “God, You, why didn't You get me outta that?” God expects man, especially the Son of Man, to take risks in order to be true to Him, but risks, risks - listen to this - risks connected with His will, not risks connected with my prestige, understand that? I don't push God to get my prestige.

Faith which depends on signs and sensations isn't faith; it's doubt looking for proof. If faith can't believe without sensation, it's not faith at all. Jesus refused the way of sensation, for it was the people's way, it was the wrong way, it was the way to failure. And to long for the sensation, and to long for the thing that's visible, and to long for the big miracle, and the big sign, and the big act, is nothing but masked doubt. Not trusting God. And so Jesus said there's no sense in testing God. You wanna know why? You know why there's no sense in testing God? Because there's nothin' to - What? - there's nothin' to prove; it's already proven. You don't need in your life to say, “Alright God, I don't know whether You're for real, so I'm gonna get myself in this mess and You get me out and show me You're for real.” Listen, God has already proven Him-self real, right? Don't you put God to the test. You might jump and He just might not catch ya. Jesus knew that had He tested God He would have perverted the plan of God.

You know, I've heard people say, some, ah, I've heard people in church work say, “Well, you know, we're - we don't have the money, but we're going into this great new build-ing program. We're going to build this great place, and we're putting God to the test, see, to see if He will prove Himself faithful.” And they lead a whole bunch of people off the end of a pier. It, it's a bad thing to test God. Trust the Father, Jesus says; He's been proven. You've gotta keep the tension, people, see, between, uhm, not grabbing satisfaction and, and, and trusting that God will provide, and yet not shoving God to the place where you don't even use the means of grace available. For example, the guy who's the deadbeat, who says, “Well, I don't see any reason to work if God's gonna provide.” See, now you're testing God. Because God has said in His Word, “If you don't work, you don't” - What? – “eat.” One way He provides is through you working. So you can't bypass the means of grace and then expect God to be put to the test; that's a sin. So the tempter was defeated the second time. Jesus said trust the Father, do only His will, and take every means of grace to respond to His will.

And now the devil drops the mask and stakes everything on one, final, desperate attempt to achieve his goal. The third temptation, verse 8, "Again the devil takes him into an exceedingly high mountain and shows him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them. And he said to him, ‘All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.’" Now I'm tellin' ya, the devil pretty soon plays out his hand and the real ugliness of the rotten character comes out, and I know he heard that, and I'm glad. Or if he didn't, somebody'll report to him. He always plays out his hand. You know he can't be subtle all the time. He finally says, “What I really want is for You to worship me!!” That's the whole deal. That's the bottom line of the whole thing. Don't you see, that's the whole problem when he left heaven the first time, wasn't it? He couldn't stand bein' second string to the Trinity; couldn't handle it. And here he is; that's his big issue.

Verse 8, the devil takes Him into an exceedingly high mountain, shows Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them. I don't know what they saw - Egypt, with its pyramids, and the great sphinx, and the buildings, and the treasures. Greece, Athens, Corinth with all their splendor; Rome, the mistress of the world. And I don't know how far and, and what mirac-ulous accommodation was provided so that they could see the kingdoms of the world, but they saw them, and you know something? Ah, Satan says, “All these will I give You.” And, and, and Jesus deserved them, and they were gonna be His, and He really should have had them, and it all sounded so right.

So first of all he tempts Him whether He's gonna trust the Father's will. Then he tempts Him to presume on the Father's will, and now he says, “How about this, I'll even give Ya the Father's will.” But not by the Father's means, see; there's always a catch. Psalm 2:8 God said, "Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost part of the earth for thy possession." Psalm 2:8 was the promise of the Father to the Son that He was to have. But Satan says,

“Compromise and get it my way,” see. Christ can have it all and it was, it must have been a legiti-mate test because it would have meant bypassing what great event? The cross, the death that had been pictured in His baptism. He wouldn't have to be the sin offering to get the kingdoms of the world. He could just have all of it turned over to Him, but He would have to sell His soul to Satan. Instead of the long, bitter road to the throne, just one short bow and He'd get it. He could rule at once - no shame; no glory; no hatred; no persecution; no animosity; no bitterness; no, no buffeting, spitting, crucifying - none of that. He could have it. Just what Satan told Eve, "You shall be as God."

“Don't put your demands so high,” Satan says to us. “I mean, I'll give ya what ya want. You want, you want a nice home, you want a nice car, you want happiness, you want money, you want these things? Don't seek first the kingdom of God and get 'em His way. Do it my way; I'll give the same stuff to ya. God wants you to be prosperous; I'll make you prosperous. Don't put your demands so high, wink a little at evil. Turn your head a little at questionable things, follow the people.”

The temptation was to advance by retreating, to change the world by becoming like the world. And oh, strong temptation. Easily winning the world, but not God's way. In fact, as I thought about it, it would be nothing more than Christ playing the role of antichrist. It would be the Lamb becoming the beast. And Satan would succeed in having his world ruler and wouldn't even have to wait till the Tribulation. But once more our Lord gave a swift and decisive answer from Deuteronomy. The loyal servant of God makes no deals with Satan. And at the end of verse 10 He says, "It is written, ‘Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.’" “Him only.” He would never, ever compromise the single most important reality in all of the universe: that God and God alone is to be worshiped. Really Satan was saying, the end justifies the means, wasn't he? “You get what you want. What's the matter how you get it?” Satan comes at us like that. He suggests that in the world of commerce, the world of society, the world of politics, we can be somebody, we can get what we want, we can have what we need, we can fulfill our lusts, we can fulfill our desires, we can have our pride fed - fantasies fulfilled. All we have to do is compromise and just go the world’s way, and seek to be so popular on their terms, and seek to do their sins, and get their happiness and their material things and we'll get it all! And we forget that God says He’ll give it all to us, right? People, don't forget this, that in the kingdom that Jesus has prepared for His people, the whole world will be yours, you understand that? And in the eternal state of the new heavens and the new earth, all of the possessions of the universe will be yours. But don't seek to gain it sinfully. If you want happiness, let God give you happiness. Don't seek it at the, at the expense of an immoral love affair. If you want, ah, comfort, let God make you comfortable. Don't seek to gain money to be rich to buy comfort, you see. And you see how Satan twists everything? Receive it on God's terms.

So, what are the lessons that we see here? Satan will tempt us, first, to distrust the providential care of God. “Take up your own problems, get your own answers, solve your own struggles, grab your own satisfaction, get happiness your own way.” And then he will tempt us to presume in a wanton appeal to God's care. And you know some-thing, people? Every time you sin, you are really presuming on God's forgiveness, aren't ya? You're saying, “God will forgive me. God will, God wil1 take care of me. I'm under the blood. I'm safe, saved. Salvation forever. I'm okay.” You're presuming on God. Don't tempt God; that's sin.

Thirdly, Satan will tempt you to fulfill your ambition for yourself, his way. Remember James and John? They sent their mother to Jesus, ah, “Jesus, my two boys would like to sit on the right and left hand in the kingdom.” Oh, that is so ugly, isn't it? Listen, the Lord's gonna to give them a place of rulership in the kingdom in His good time. They don't need to seek it by personal ambition.

No, listen. Those are the three areas that Satan always attacks. First of all, distrusting the providential care of God, then presuming on God by a wanton appeal to His existent grace, and thirdly, temptation to use your own ambition to fulfill the goals that God has already promised you, but on your terms. You're gonna fulfill 'em in a wrong manner.

Now in this temptation, who do we turn to? We turn to Christ and we see the victory. We keep our eyes on the Master “who was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.” Satan always comes in the same areas.

Now let me show you something. Turn to 1 John, chapter 2, as we come to a conclusion, and verse 15. Boy, time has really gone fast. First John 2:15; now I wanna to show you something. “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." Now watch verse 16; here are the three areas of temptation. "For all that is in the world," - Here it is. Here's the sum of it all, the sum of the whole deal. - "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes," - And what's the third one? - "the pride of life."

First thing, Satan comes to Jesus and he says, “You're hungry. Grab some satisfaction, fulfill the hunger, the desire.” What is that? “The lust of” – What? – “the flesh.” “The lust of the flesh.” And then he takes Him to the pinnacle of the temple and he says, “Throw Yourself down. Throw Yourself down. You'll be a hero. You'll have instant prestige. You'll really be some-body.” What's that? “Pride of life.” Then he shows Him the kingdoms of the world. “See all that You can see. Look at all that beauty. Look at all that grandeur. Bow down to me and I'll give it to ya.” What's that? “Lust of the eyes.”

You see, the temptations go beyond the flesh and the eyes and the pride. They're deep and they're subtle, and they're twisted and perverted, and hidden and disguised. But it's those three avenues that are always used. Satan is like an enemy with only three points of attack, that's it.

Well, let's look at the triumph. What happened after this? This is great, and we'll close briefly ’cause this is simple. Verse 10, "Then said Jesus unto him, ‘Be gone, Satan.’" Get outta here; I like that. Satan had exhausted his avenues. He'd fired from the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life. He tried to get Him first of all to, to mistrust God, and then if He was gonna trust God to presume on God, and then if He was gonna trust God all the way out, to take what God was gonna give Him by compromise, and everything failed. And Jesus says, “Now you get outta here. I took it all. I went through every bit of it, and I stood on the Word of God. I will trust God. I will not presume on God. I will take all of God's good gifts in God's good time by God's good means, and I will never compromise. Get outta here. Be gone!”

Now he's not defeated, he just leaves. He comes back later, again and again, and is finally defeated at the cross. The temptation failed but the test succeeded. He is a worthy king. In the temptations it was clear He was a perfect man. He never succumbed, a King indeed. And look what happened - I love this - verse 11, "And then the devil left him." Aren't ya glad? Boy, when Jesus sends the devil away, he goes. I imagine he was hoppin' too.? “And, behold, angels came and ministered to him." Listen, everything that the Father had promised Him - He came - you know what I believe these angels brought? Food, for one thing. For another thing, worship. He could have gotten food His own way. He could have gotten worship by jumping off the temple. And I imagine they rein-forced the fact that He was an obedient Son in whom the Father was well pleased and that one day that which He had been promised by Satan would be His. Angels came. You know they spent a lot of time with Him. They were there at His birth; all during His earthly life they protected Him. He said He could have called twelve legions of ’em if He wanted to. They were there at His resurrection, announcing it. They'll be there at His second coming, and here they are taking care of Him. Listen, the angels care for Christ.

Now let me suggest in closing some key things to remember. Watch for temptation at the high points of your spiritual life, or when you just embark on the beginning of a new ministry. It's in the exhilaration of those moments that Satan wants to knock you down. No sooner was Christ out of the water of baptism than He was in the fire of temptation. So David after his anointing was hunted as a partridge upon the mountains. Israel was no sooner out of Egypt then Pharaoh began to run after them. Hezekiah no sooner had left the solemn Passover than Sennacherib came against him. St.

Paul was assaulted with a vile temptation after the abundance of his revela-tions. Christ teaches us after the forgiveness of sins to look immediately for the temptation and to pray against them. While Jacob would be Laban's drudge and packhorse all was well, but once he began to flee, he makes after him with all his might. All was fine at Ephesus before Paul came, and then there arose no small stir. All the while our Savior was in His father's shop, everything was fine. As long as He was working with the carpenter's tools it was fine. Satan didn't trouble Him, but when He embarked upon a ministry that's when it hit.

Secondly, be careful of times of weakness and times when you're in evil surroundings. Jesus was in the wilderness and He was weak, and Satan came. Thirdly, watch for your strengths, for they're the things Satan likes to push into sin. Fourth, watch for the subtlety of temptation, and see in all of it Satan's overthrow of Christ. And I would sum it up by saying be alert. The Lord said to the church at Sardis, watch, watch, watch, said Jesus, and mark and pray "lest you" - What? – "enter into temptation." Watch and then pray. Finally, know the Word. The Word is the sword; the Word is the sword.

I really believe, people, that as we face temptation day by day, temptation is like, um, it's like rocks in shallow water. These jagged rocks stick out of the waves, and they want to rip and shred the ship. But as we focus on Christ, in His temptation, and as we watch, and as we pray, and as we feed on the Word, the tide comes in, and it's God's tide and the water gets deep and the ship just goes right across the top. Well, let's pray.

Father, we've just really touched this broad subject, and yet we feel like we've come into the holy of holies because we've entered into the, the secret struggle of Jesus that only would have been known to us if He had revealed it, for no apostle was there, no Bible writer was there. Thank You, Father, that He wanted us to know this, so that we would know that there's a way out, and the way out is to trust You. And the way out is to know Your Word and to hold onto it. And the way out is to pray even as Jesus spent no doubt those forty days and forty nights in prayer. So must we pray, so must we watch, so must we know the Word, in order that we may know the way of escape.

Thank You, thank You for the, the tremendous insight given us by our Lord in His temptation. Father, my prayer for these people as it is for my own self is that I may behold the Master's face and find that in the loveliness of the Master any thought of a temptation is removed, in the wonder of the face of Jesus Christ nothing else appeals, nothing else entices, nothing else allures, because He is so wondrous, so fair, so lovely, so enchanting, so captivating. May we so see the wonderful Christ that all the things that Satan would pass before our fancy are obliterated, and may we so trust the power

and the promise of God that we wait for all good things in Your good time and not seek them in our own ways. And so You give us joy and You give us satisfaction on every level. You make us to know that as we seek You we'll be that self-actualized, that person with purpose and meaning and sense of value. And we'll praise You and thank You in Christ's name, Amen.

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