

Temptations

by John McGregor

The sermon explores the nature of temptation and how the evil one seeks to undermine our faith in God's promises, but provides us with insights and tools to overcome temptation through trusting in God's power and promises.

Duration: 38:38

Scripture: Deuteronomy 6:16, Psalm 37:4, Psalm 91:11-12, Matthew 4:4, Mark 12:30, Luke 4:1-13, John 10:10

Topics: "Temptations"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of taking a stand for Christ and not succumbing to worldly temptations. He highlights how Satan tries to blind people from the truth and prevent them from understanding the gospel. The preacher also discusses the need to delight in the Lord and trust in His promises. He addresses how Satan questions our understanding of God's Word and tries to undermine our needs and relationship with God. Overall, the sermon encourages believers to stay strong in their faith and rely on the power of the Holy Spirit to overcome temptation.

Transcript

Where is Jordan? Come and join me for a moment, would you? Those who are regular know I do things spontaneously from time to time, and Jordan is feeling rather worried at the moment, but he really doesn't need to. I just wanted to take a moment. Could we just measure off for a moment? I think it's important to recognize milestones in people's lives, and I do believe that he has reached a milestone in life.

You are taller than the senior pastor. Yeah, well done. So do remember, though, it's not hard to be taller than the senior pastor.

We want to just mention a couple of things. That Thanksgiving offering, you just be sure to mark on your checks and so on for the Thanksgiving offering for missions, and we haven't made it a special effort, but we're just leaving it between you and God, and you know it's important to reach people around the world, and then I will be on vacation this next week, and you know it's a wonderful job. You just work 30 minutes on Sunday morning, and you get all this time off, so it's good.

It's good, but Pastor Brad is here, and he's got good broad shoulders and does a wonderful, wonderful job. What a privilege it is to work with him. This week he said something remarkable.

He does often, but it struck me that it tied in so well with what I was studying in preparation for the message. He said, you know, it struck me that a Christian is the only one that has an enemy. Other situations don't have an enemy, and of course this morning we want to look at the Gospel of Luke chapter 4 and the first 13 verses, which speak about the temptation of Jesus, and our thoughts this morning are indeed entitled, If a Message on Temptation.

So beginning in Luke's Gospel chapter 4 and verse 1, it says, And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness for 40 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 will give it to whom I will. If you then will worship me, it will all be yours.

And Jesus answered, 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. Father, thank you for your word, and we pray that you would feed our hungry hearts from it this morning, and that you would quench our thirst for a touch from you. That you, Father, in the power of your Spirit would take this your word and cause it to live in our hearts and to strengthen us in these days.

In Jesus' name we pray, amen. Every incident in the life of Jesus is something that will be a part of the life of a follower of Jesus. And so when you think about the situations that we read in the Gospel of Luke and the other Gospels, these are things that you and I are going to encounter, and temptation is one of those things, isn't it? Romeo Dallaire, Canadian general who led the NATO forces in Rwanda, said that one day when he was in a meeting he felt as if he was in the presence of absolute evil.

And our world sometimes wants to dispute that there's no such thing as evil, but you know there is, and there's something within us called a human conscience, and we know what is right and what is wrong instinctively in some areas at least, and we know that it is wrong, it is evil to do some things. And you think about Jesus facing this temptation. This is a remarkable, remarkable piece of Scripture, and I say that because it shows to us the conflict in an open way between the Lord Jesus and the one who is called the Evil One.

And it's one of those few passages that shows us directly the conflict that goes on as we see the life and the work of Jesus progressing on this earth. So as we consider this passage this morning, I want us just to take notice and walk through the Scriptures, and usually when we look at this kind of text, we think about the fact that there are three temptations, and Jesus gives the answer the same way in all three, that he uses the Word of God to refute those attacks and temptations of the Evil One. This morning I'd like to just approach the subject from a little bit different area.

And you know, sometimes when I talk to people, they feel that when they're tempted, it must be because they're a very bad person, and that nobody else could be tempted like this, because, you know, it's just me, and it's who I am, and God's upset with me, or something of that nature. But notice with me where this text begins. In verse 1, it says that Jesus, full of the Spirit--that's the Holy Spirit--led by the Holy Spirit, goes out into this wilderness place and faces this six weeks of temptation.

Now we are seeing the culmination of that in our text, but I want you just to keep in your mind that Jesus was not a bad person nor an evil person. He is the Son of God, filled with the Spirit of God, and yet he encounters this kind of thing. And so we can set aside the idea that temptation only happens to people who are evil and bad.

And so then, as we walk on through this, what we're going to see, I believe, is that there are a series of lies, and temptation is really all about lies, and we live in a world that is full so often of lies. So here in this text, as we walk through it, we could simply say that because Jesus was tempted in every way, he knows how to help us when we are tempted. It teaches us that in the book of Hebrews, and we could embrace that and be strengthened by that.

I want you to go a bit deeper than that this morning, and just think with me as we consider how this unfolds and unpackages. It provides for us insights and tools to be able to deal with temptation as it comes to you and me. And the good news is, there's nobody in here this morning who hasn't faced temptation in one way, shape, or form.

So very quickly this morning, let me just outline four things in this text. First of all, notice with me that the evil one questions position. He questions our position.

If you belong to Christ, your position is going to be questioned. He questions the position of Jesus, if you are the Son of God. And you know, if you read in the Gospel of Mark and in the first chapter, one of the things that happens as Jesus encounters an evil spirit is the spirit cries out, you are the Son of God! It's not an if.

He is the Son of God. He is the Savior of the world. He is the only one that we can come to who fully understands the struggle that we have with the flesh and the world and those things around us, and who can save us from sin and self and Satan.

He is the only one who can do that, because he is the only one who is both God and man. He questions that position. He attacks that position.

And you'll notice that every attack begins with the word if. If. It seeds doubts and fears and struggles and lies.

And this is what I really want us to zero in on this morning. He questions our position, if we are in Christ. Why do Christians face temptation? It tests our sincerity.

That's one reason. And as we see temptation come, it also tests our faith. We have to trust God and believe him to carry us through it.

And as temptations come, it also tests our love. You shall love the Lord your God with seventy-five percent of your heart, soul, mind, and strength. Now let me just take a moment and introduce someone to you.

Sir, would you just stand for a moment? This is the Reverend John McGregor. Is what I said true, sir? Yes. Okay.

It's not 75 percent. No, it's all. It's all.

He's a good Alliance pastor. He knows what the Bible says. Thank you.

With all your heart and soul and mind and strength. All of it. And you see, sometimes temptation also tests our patience, because we wait upon God and trust him to deliver us.

It allows us to find victory in our walk, because when through his grace and by his Spirit we overcome temptation, there is that sense of yes! It's like my little friend Bill McLeod. He said that when he was asked to preach his first sermon, he went in fear and trembling, and he preached a whole chapter because he thought he wouldn't run out of things if he did the whole chapter. But he said when it was over walking down the street, he found himself saying, Lord, we did it! What was the temptation in Bill's life? You're not in a position to do this.

But by the grace of God and the strength and equipping of God, he did. And God brought him to that place of victory. And it brings God great glory, because he defeats the lies of the devil through feeble people just like you and me.

Whoa! Ah, I really want to do it, so I'm just going to do it. Sorry. Sometimes, you know, we want to run away from it.

In fact, often we would love to run away from it. Can we run away from it? Will solitude prevent it? Sometimes people have become monks and gone away to become more holy alone. Will that prevent temptation? Jesus is alone in the wilderness, and it is here that this fierce temptation comes.

What about if we just fast and pray? Maybe that will eliminate it, but Jesus has been fasting and praying for forty days. You see, it's something that we're going to bump into, and it's something that God wants to use. But the evil one will question our position, and it always begins with this question and this word, if.

Oh, how subtle. Just if. Now, I know that nobody would be guilty at Glencairn Alliance Church of using that word.

But you know, once in a while when you listen to conversations, you hear people say things like, if you loved me. What is that? It's kind of manipulating the thing, isn't it? And oh, how the evil one is a master at manipulating. He wanted Jesus to doubt, and he wants the same from you and me.

He always attacks at the vulnerable spot, and he wants to make us orphans robbed of a position in Christ that the Lord has given to us if we have come to him for salvation. Let me just quickly slip over to Galatians 3 and 26. Galatians chapter 3 and verse 26.

Here's what it says. For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ, in Christ, children of God.

Isn't that what John 1 12 says as well? But as many as received him to them, he gave the power to become the children or sons of God, even to those who believe in his name. See the subtlety of this attack? Just questioning the position. Secondly, he questions our needs.

As you look at how Jesus faces this, the Savior's needs then come into question in verse 3 in our text. In Luke chapter 4, command the stones to become bread. Oh, you're hungry.

You have a need. Command the stones to become bread. And he's really saying, listen, you're alone.

You're in the desert. Would a father really leave a child alone in the desert? If he cared about you, would you be left alone like that? And, you know, he's really saying, hey, you're with the wild beasts. If God really loved you, if you were really the Son of God, would that be true? I mean, we have some philosophy here in North America that says if you come to Jesus you'll just be rich and everything will be perfect.

But that's not what the Bible teaches. Oh, you're hungry. Would a loving father permit you to be hungry? You see, what he is doing is he is looking at the need, and he is seeking to place doubt about how the Father cares for the Son of God and for you and I as children of God.

You just look at him and his work, and you see his personality, and you see how he has knowledge and feeling and absolute evil, and you look and you see his character. Let me just quickly for time's sake give you some text. You can look them up later.

In John chapter 8 verse 44, Jesus said about his character, he's a liar. He said in Revelation 12 verse 9, he's a deceiver. Not just somebody who tells lies, but who deceives.

He said in Revelation 12 and 10, an accuser. Back in John 8 44, Jesus said not only is he a liar, but he's a murderer. Well, and in 2 Thessalonians 2 and verses 3 and 4, he's a usurper, and a usurper is somebody who takes something that doesn't belong to them.

Where's that iPhone? What? You see, I would usurp his iPhone, but he just did something that is the center core of what I'm trying to communicate to you in the message this morning. There comes a time when you have to take your position, and you have to say, no, I belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to me, and I will not go that road. He has power.

In 2 Corinthians 4 and verse 4, it tells us that he blinds. That is to say, he shuts our eyes or covers things up so that we cannot see the truth. And you might have tried to share the gospel of Christ with someone, and they say, well, I just don't get it.

That's because there's someone who blinds our eyes. I lived with that as that young person who was involved in terrorism. I was blind, full of hatred, full of bitterness, full of anger.

And it came when the Holy Spirit touched my life through the witness of someone sharing the gospel with me that Christ is a Savior, mighty indeed, and can give not just whitewash for the outside, but a complete transformation from the inside to make us new creatures in Christ. And when I came to that, I was no longer blind to the fact. I was able to know that this God who loves me sent his Son to die for me so that I could have this life and walk with him, and you can too.

In Luke 13 and 16, it tells us that it's said of the devil that he not only blinds, but he binds. That is to say, he'll tie you up. He loves to tie things up and create bondage, and it's often bondage to the flesh and the things of the flesh.

We see exactly what he's trying to do here in the life of Jesus. But, oh dear friends, do we ever stop and come to the place of recognizing that if you are in Christ Jesus, you have an enemy. He wants to blind you

and bind you, and he loves to cause us to lose victory and everything else that he can take.

He will take it. In Luke 11, 20 to 22, it tells us that he enslaves. But, oh, I thank God that he is limited.

He is a long ways from the omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent God. He is a long ways from the Lord Jesus, who has all power and authority on heaven and on earth, as Matthew 28, 18 says. Notice that he attacks the flesh.

You can get a lawful thing in an unlawful way, Jesus. He says, you don't need to wait. Fill the need.

You're hungry. Fill the need. It's wrong for you to have a need.

But the answer is that there's something more important than the flesh. The answer is that we need Christ, and we need his fullness. Thirdly, we see that he questions our desire.

In verses 5 through 8 in our text, every temptation is a probe into our desires. This is what brought Adam and Eve into sin in the first place. Look at that.

That looks so good. Wouldn't you like some of that? Oh, you know, did God really say that? What's he doing? He's probing the desire. What is it that we desire? And Jesus is being tempted with authority here in this latter part of the text, isn't he? Take a shortcut.

Surely it doesn't matter how you get there as long as you get there. Ah, isn't this the kind of thing that we face every day in the world that we live in? Take a shortcut. It's easier.

Go the easy way. You don't have to go to the cross, but Jesus wouldn't take the easy way, because the easy way is not the way of total victory over sin. The easy way is not the way to the place of peace and strength and power.

And doesn't it come to each of us, there's an easier way than dying to self? Goodness me, got to be an easier way, Pastor Brad. He says, no. Let's check it out with the other theologian over here.

Pastor, is there an easier way? In Luke 9, 23, Jesus said, if anyone wants to follow me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. It's not about the easy way. It's about the way of walking in the truth and in the power of God and in the strength of God.

Here are three lies that the devil is seeking to tell Jesus about desire. I can make it easy for you. Oh, easy.

Great. Lie number two, hey, just this one time. Lie number three, all power is mine, you know.

I can do anything. I can give it to anybody. Nowhere in Scripture does it say that that power was given to him.

But time after time, it says that that power rests in the authority of God, the Father God, the Son and God, the Holy Spirit. Jesus is being tempted with allegiance, just a temporary change of allegiance. Isn't this what gets us in trouble? Just this one time.

I mean, I don't even know why I did it, but there it is. Who are we to desire? Psalm 73 verse 25 says, I have no one in heaven but you, and there is no one that I desire on earth besides you. That's who we are to desire, him and him alone.

Who are we to delight in? Psalm 37 verse 4 says, Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart. What a powerful promise. Delight in him, and he will give the desires of the heart.

There comes that time when, just as Pastor Brad did about his phone, and he wouldn't give it to me, we have to stand on the rock and say no to this tyrant. Enough! Especially when we know what is right. And Jesus, of course, says it is written.

That personal knowledge of the Word of God is so necessary. It's time for John to quit, so lastly let me just say he questions our understanding of God's Word and promise in verses 9 through 13. He says, hey, jump off the top of this.

The Bible promises angels will grab you. In other words, will just reverse the whole thing of gravity for you. Go ahead and jump off.

Prove it. Show those angels. If you are the Son of God, prove it.

John 10 verse 10 says that you came to bring life and abundantly. Prove it! That's exactly what the devil is saying to Jesus in this text. And there's such a breakthrough in verse 13.

Let me just read it as I come to word a close. And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time. There's victory and peace and assurance.

It's not the end of temptation, but it's broken. And the Lord has dismissed him, as it were, at that point. Our greatest desire in looking back through life, what will it be? When we look back and we say, I wish I'd spent less time on this and more time on this.

What will it be? Will it be, oh, I wish I knew the Word of God. I wish I had that close walk with Jesus. What will it be? I love what Joshua, a great and godly man, says in the Bible.

In Joshua 22, 14, he says this, I am going the way of all the earth. In other words, he's saying, you know what? The gray hair has turned white, and the years are growing short, and the time is growing short with it. I am going the way of all the earth.

But, he said, there has not failed you one of the things that God said that he would do for you. What a statement at the end of life to say that in walking with Christ and finding victory, even through those times of temptation and struggle and difficulty and toil, there is a God who in his faithfulness didn't fail to produce one of the things that he promised, not one. Oh, how we need to stand firm upon the rock.

But, you know, sometimes we're not even conscious of the battle, because I think so often the evil one loves to lull us to sleep and just keep things quiet. And the church in the Western world is fast becoming a museum rather than a mission. I have a friend who pastors in Ontario.

He's not an Alliance pastor, but I've forgiven him. He's an Irishman called Billy Wright, and I was with Bill and Norma one time for meetings in their church there in Lindsay. And he told me one night when they came home, he said, our son Phil, the police were scared of him.

When Phil was around, the police were scared. They wouldn't come unless in strong numbers. They were so afraid of this young man who was deep into drugs and deep into everything that you can imagine.

He said, I came home one night to find my son had taken a knife or a razor and just slit his wrists. He said, there's a pool of blood, an unbelievable pool of blood. He said, I gathered up that boy, and I said, God, don't let my son die! Phil today is the countrywide representative for the Evangelical Covenant churches in Canada.

Why? Because a Christian dad could see the fight. He said to me, John, you should have been there when Phil walked into the police station, and the sergeant is backing away from him, and Phil is saying, I just come to tell you that I've come to know Jesus, and it's going to be different. The world is full of temptations.

Life is full of temptations. We can persecute and hurt each other. We can struggle with difficult situations, and what we really need is this same Jesus.

He's the overcomer. We need him. So we've been looking at the questions that the evil one asked Jesus, and could I just finish by asking you a question? Have you believed his lies about yourself? About God? About your marriage? About your life? About your home? About his church? You've been tormented with the past because of the lies that come? He's a liar, and you can come to the cross this morning, or this afternoon, since the preacher's been long-winded.

You can come to the cross and find peace, and surrender, and victory, and joy. He'll question your position. He'll question your need.

He'll question your desire. He'll question your knowledge of the promises of God, but the Spirit of God in his strength and power answers every question. Let's bow together in prayer.

Father, we thank you for your word this morning, and we thank you, Lord Jesus, that you have walked before us in every conceivable area and way of life, and yet you have done it without sin. And so we thank you that we can come to you, the sinless one, this day and find peace, and salvation, and truth. Enough truth to heal our hurts, enough truth to mend our difficulties, and we thank you for the cross.

It's not the easy way, but it is the only way. And, O Spirit of the living God, would you continue to speak to our hearts, and be the after speaker long after this meeting is closed in prayer. May you, Lord God, continue to bring to us the fact that in every temptation there is victory in Jesus, and it is found at the foot of the cross in surrender to him.

As someone here this morning, under the sound of my voice, and your life is cloudy and hurting, and you're tempted to quit, you're tempted to give up on things, you're tempted to walk away or run away this morning, don't do it. Come and stand to Christ. He will meet that need.

He will fill the desire that's in your heart. So let's stand together as we conclude our time this morning, and we'll just continue in prayer as we're standing. When I give this last prayer, we'll ask our elders and wives to come to the front and be available to pray.

Now you must make a choice, my dear friends. You can choose to go on out from here, and that's your choice, or you can choose to come to the cross and do some business with Jesus, and he'll be so welcoming and so affirming and touch your life. So, my dear friends, although I'll be gone this next week, I'll be praying for you through the week and seeking the face of God for us as his people.

I receive the Lord's benediction. For now we commit you unto him that is able to keep you from falling and to present you faultless before his presence with exceeding joy. To the only wise God, our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever.

Go in his grace and serve him this week.

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