

It makes no difference whether it is sexual desire... or ambition... or vanity... or desire for revenge... or greed for money... temptation is a universal human affliction. ... (And) in order for temptation to work in us... our *joy in the Lord* has to be **extinguished**. Each and every time we succumb to temptation... we have *replaced* our joy in God – with *seeking a joy* in His **creation**. God becomes unreal to us... (He loses all reality)... and only *the desire for His creation* is real.

When Satan wants to tempt us... he doesn't fill us with a *hatred* of God. No. Instead... he inspires a *forgetfulness* of God. By doing that... (all at once) a smoldering fire is kindled... a slumbering inclination is awakened with irresistible power.

Satan's basic strategy is to make us believe that God is not trustworthy. The basic lie is that we cannot trust God. ... This primal mistrust in the goodness of God is behind every problem that you and I experience. (Our basic sin against God is mistrust.) ... The devil hints that God is withholding something from us and he suggests ways in which we can *take care of ourselves* and get what is our due.

In the temptations we read about in today's passage... Jesus is wrestling with this age-old issue. ... Will He trust God... or will He give in to the easy successes promised by the devil?

Luke 4:1-13

In the first temptation the devil suggests Jesus will die if He doesn't eat. He must take care of Himself. The devil is still tempting us all in this area. The old maxim "*If you don't take care of yourself, no one else will*" or "*God helps*

those who help themselves...” is an effective tool of Satan. ... The devil is saying to you and to me all the time: “*Listen, take care of number one.*”

(Here is what is so wrong with it): That undermines our belief that we belong to God and that He can take care of us. We can begin to take care of ourselves in all sorts of ways — physically... financially... even sexually. The devil is telling the single... the widowed... those in unfulfilling marriages - that sexual frustration is old-fashioned. “*Get with it...*” he says. “*Take care of yourself. Meet your own needs... You really don’t need God!*”

Consider with me (please) four phases of temptation. (These four phases are common whenever you or I are tempted.)

1. **The Appeal**: Something appears to be fulfilling that is outside of God’s provision.
2. **The Struggle**: Tension builds between the appeal of sin and belief in God’s goodness. (*How can God be good – if He withholds THIS from me?*) ... Now... if we don’t think of God (if we forget about Him) there isn’t much struggle at all. Phase 2 is very brief.
3. **The Response**: A decision is made either to seek fulfillment apart from God or to wait on God.
4. **The Aftermath**: The consequences of sin brings despair; but the fruit of obedience brings multiple blessings.

We see these in our passage today... in the temptations of Christ. Satan was trying to get Jesus to ignore God the Father’s way... (for doing ministry.)

Jesus had just had the experience of having God affirm who He actually was. (In last week’s passage... we saw how God the Father affirmed Jesus as the Messiah... with an audible voice from Heaven... after Jesus was

baptized.) ... So Jesus was clear about His mission as the Messiah... but now He had to deal with the question of strategy. ... Being who He was... (called to redeem and reconcile a fallen world)... how would He go about it? This is the whole focus of the temptations — the *how* of Jesus' ministry.

Twice (we are about to see in our passage) Satan will introduce his temptations by saying “*Since you are the Son of God... do this... do that...*”) ... Satan tried to influence Christ's reconciliation of the world as the Son of God – just as Satan will do to any of us... when we decide to answer God's call to serve Him in any ministry.

So my first point is that once you decide that you will do some kind of ministry (perhaps witness to a friend or neighbor... or work with kids at the church... or serve on a board...) **BE AWARE** that Satan may try to influence you through temptation. (And) please notice how very subtle his temptations are... (they are very subtle) – but extremely destructive! ... This will be abundantly clear in our passage.

Luke 4:1

The double reference to the Spirit is the prominent feature of Luke's introduction to the temptations. Jesus was full of the Holy Spirit and was led into the wilderness by the Spirit. Such an emphasis makes clear that Jesus' being exposed to temptation was not his fault in any way. Rather... this withdrawal was a direct result of God's leading.

The Bible states that Jesus was filled with the Spirit of God. ... Instead of using the word “led” - in Gospel writer **Mark's** account of this same story... Mark used the word “drove” (Mark 1:12.) The Holy Spirit (very purposely) drove Christ into the wilderness to be tempted.

The fact that the Holy Spirit led (or drove) Jesus speaks of the fact that what Jesus would encounter in the wilderness was part of God's appointment for Him. ... God had a purpose for Jesus to go into the wilderness. This appointment with His trial and testing (this battle of the wills)... was very important and urgent - as indicated by Mark's use of the word "drove."

Just as God the Father appointed this testing for His own Son... the Lord sometimes appoints troubles... testings... and trials for us. You can be obedient to the Lord and His will... **but still face trials and temptations**. It is not a sin to be tempted... but it is a sin to yield to it. ... When facing trials... first make sure you haven't brought them on yourself through sin or unwise choices. ... If you find no sin to confess... or unwise behavior to change... then ask God to strengthen you for your test. ... Finally... be careful to follow faithfully wherever the Holy Spirit leads you.

What is the meaning of temptation? ... The word *tempt* has a twofold meaning. To tempt means "*to incite and entice to evil,*" and it means "*to seduce.*" ... But the word also has a second meaning.

Genesis 22:1 tells us that "... God tested Abraham ..." God also *tested* or proved Israel for forty years in the wilderness. ... All new articles are tested. For example... tires and automobiles are tested. The public needs to be shown what their quality is. ... On television commercials... the manufacturers show you the new model car and drive it through purgatory to show you the amount of punishment it can take. ... Everything is tested... in order to show that you can trust that it won't fail you.

When we look at Jesus... we find that the testing of Jesus was planned by the Lord to give the Devil a huge defeat – **and**... to prove to us that Jesus was more powerful than anything that Satan could offer Him. I will come back to this... but first let me say: When God tests us... it is so that we can know the strength of our faith. ... (Will we hold-up when it is challenged... or do we need it to be stronger?) ... Before our car is allowed to drive over a new bridge on the interstate... that bridge is tested and tested by engineers... so we can **know** it is going to hold up.

But unlike our testing... Christ's victory over all the temptations He faced... was not for HIS Own benefit. It enables **us** to know that we can depend on Him. (We know **His** quality!) The writer of Hebrews picks up on this:

Hebrews 2:17-18 (ESV)

¹⁷ Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. ¹⁸ For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

Hebrews 4:15 (ESV)

¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.

There are several preliminary considerations we need to have in mind as we look at the testing of our Lord. Twice in verse 1... we are told that Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit. ... (Think of it!) Jesus (Himself) needed to be filled with the Spirit in order to meet the temptation. ... So... Believer(!) you and I better not try to face the temptations of this world in our own strength. In Romans 7:21 Paul tells us, “*So then I find it to be law that when I want to*

do right, evil lies close at hand...” Haven’t you found that to be true?
It is very important that we heed what Galatians 5:16 tells us:

Galatians 5:16 (ESV)

¹⁶ *But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.*

Luke 4:2-4

Turning stones to bread wouldn’t cause anyone any harm. It merely called upon Jesus to satisfy normal physical needs. What could be wrong with that?

The temptation appeared innocent... but it was in fact a spiritual temptation to sin... because as the incarnate Son... Christ had come to do the will of the Father and nothing else. ... He had followed the Father’s will in obeying the Spirit’s impulse to fast in the wilderness... and now in His hunger... the Father had not seen fit to provide Him with the needed food. ... We can almost hear the Devil’s voice:

“Look at You! You are *famished*... You are down to skin and bones... and You are hungry... starving in fact. ... Listen to me... and You can have instant *sustenance*. ... Now then... You claim to be God, then behave like it. Turn this stone to bread.”

It was a temptation for Him to forget that He came to do the will of the Father... and to use His power (apart from God the Father.) ... It would have been as easy for Him to turn a stone into bread... as it was for Him to turn water into wine.

But Jesus knew that He was in the center of God’s will. He had been led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness. He had been *led* into this long fast... and He had no word from God to break it.

Jesus answered him, “*It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God*”. ... That was it! ... His life was not run by circumstances (no matter how demanding.) It was run by the Word of God. He would terminate His fast when God **said** to end it. ... He had not come into this world to die of starvation in a desert. ... And He refused to take matters into His own hand.

But as Jesus reflected on his hungry plight... he recalled Exodus 16 and Deuteronomy 8... which record how Israel had been hungry (albeit not desperately hungry)... and grumbled against the Lord for the stew-pots of Egypt — and how God chose to meet their desires with quail and manna that He then supplied for forty years.

Though the manna was on the ground... it still was a test of faith for the people. They had to believe that God’s Word was trustworthy for their existence. ... If it was not God’s will for them to live they certainly would have died. Therefore they did not live by bread alone.

Likewise **Jesus** (knowing God’s Word) knew of the plan which was before Him and was trusting in the Father and His Word for sustenance. Jesus knew He would not die in the wilderness.

God can support His people with extraordinary means. He can even... if He so wishes... make man live **by just speaking a word**. ... He did that for the Children of Israel with manna and quail. ... So Jesus answered the devil with a quotation from Deuteronomy 8:3: “*It is written, ‘Man does not live on bread alone’.*” In Deuteronomy the full quotation says, “*Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.*”

In essence... by alluding to Deuteronomy Jesus was saying, *“I will not complain. Neither will I take matters into my own hands. My Father has not willed to immediately provide Me with bread. But He will not let me die. I will trust Him and the power of His word.”* ... In doing this Jesus demonstrated that no need (no matter how desperate-looking) would ever drive Him to draw back from trusting God’s sufficient and trustworthy Word.

(Folks!) This is spiritual dynamite! ... The temptation was real. Jesus was a real man. He was desperately famished. He knew He was the Son of God. He knew He could meet His need in a millisecond. But Jesus was an obedient son... and the Father’s word could sustain Him and was His priority.

There is also personal wisdom here for us. ... Our temptation may not be to turn stones into bread. The impossible does not tempt us. ... However... rather than trusting God the Father... we regularly yield to the temptation to go beyond the parameters of God’s Word... to satisfy our personal needs or desires. ... We attempt to help God give us our due... perhaps even engaging in “sanctified deception” (like: *“God helps those who help themselves”* ... or *“The end justifies the means... It is OK to venture away from what you know is the will of God – if your ambition is a worthy goal..”*) No! All of that is sanctified deception! ... **[P A U S E]** ...

We are too often over-reachers. ... We promote ourselves because we are sure God will **not** do it. We scheme and plan for our well-being... assuming that God does not care or maybe does not know our needs. We refuse to live “on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.”

Jesus would later say:

“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?” (Matthew 6:25–27)

When I think of that passage... a poem comes to mind. ... I love this poem... which I think I have quoted here before...

*Said the robin to the sparrow:
“I should really like to know
Why these anxious human beings
Rush about and worry so.”
Said the sparrow to the robin:
“Friend, I think that it must be
That they have no heavenly Father,
Such as cares for you and me.”*

Luke 4:5-8

Again we can detect the Devil’s voice:

“Look at You!” Satan might well have said, “You not only are famished but also *have failed*. Here You are, thirty years of age, and You are still known as ‘the carpenter’s son.’ Now here’s my offer. Do as I say, and You shall have instant *sovereignty*. Your great talents deserve a world arena. Worship me—and I’ll set You on the throne of the world. You can have the crown without the cross. The world needs a king like You! Tiberius and his like will never amount to much. But You! Think how You could improve the world if all of its potential and people were Yours to command!”

Satan offered Jesus a shortcut to power. Glory without Gethsemane. The temptation was to receive supreme power over the world without first suffering on behalf of humanity. The only condition: “*Worship before me.*”

... He suggested a mere... momentary act... but one with eternal consequences.

God's pattern is to start with suffering and end with glory (1 Peter 5:10), while Satan's pattern is to start with glory and end with suffering.

1 Peter 5:10 (ESV)

¹⁰ And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.

Satan wants us to sacrifice the eternal for the temporary and take the "easy way". ... There are no "shortcuts" in the Christian life... and there is no easy way to spiritual victory and maturity. ... If the perfect Son of God had to hang on a cross before He could sit on the throne... then His disciples should not expect an easier way of life.

John 15:20 (ESV)

²⁰ Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you.

The response of Jesus (according to verse 8) again referred to Moses. ... In the passage He quotes (Deut. 6:13)... Moses warned the people about their attitude when they finally were to get into the land and achieve some glory and dominion. The temptation for them would be to praise themselves and forget to worship God. **Jesus...** by quoting the verse... showed that He would not make that mistake. ... He would give **God** the credit and not take it for Himself. ... He would not fail as Israel had failed.

Luke 4:9-12

Again we read between the lines:

“Look at You!” we can hear the tempter say. “You are forgotten. True, there was a flurry of interest in You at the time of Your birth, but that was a long time ago. Most of those people are dead. And You are forgotten by all. You are a nobody. Even Your own brothers don’t really know You. Is Your name known in the Sanhedrin? Is there anyone in Athens or Rome to speak for You? You are at the prime of life, and time has passed You by. Who trumpets Your name—John the Baptist? He’ll be dead before long, as You very well know, then You will be forgotten indeed. As for the Jewish establishment, they’ll kill You if they get half a chance. I’ll see to that. But if You go on being forgotten, who will care? However, do as I say, and You can have instant success. You want to quote the Bible? Very well, let me remind You of Psalm 91. There! Now You have a verse of Scripture to do something spectacular. Do as I say, and an hour from now You’ll be the talk of Jerusalem.”

In the third and last temptation... the devil offered Jesus a strategy for popularity. Give the crowd something spectacular... he suggested. Throw yourself off the highest place in the temple... down four hundred feet or more into the Kidron Valley. ... When you land unscathed... people will be dazzled... and you’ll be famous.

Having seen Jesus vanquish the first two temptations by quoting Scripture... Satan now quotes it himself... for his own purposes. ... Psalm 91 (from which the devil quoted) was a famous Wisdom Psalm that celebrated Jehovah’s defense of the faithful... for whom he provides angelic protection.

By urging Jesus to jump... Satan was trying to take advantage of Jesus’ twice-voiced determination to trust and obey God’s Word — *“You are committed to obeying God’s Word, so obey this!”*

What Satan also appealed to was the fact that many Jews of that day expected prophets to do extraordinary feats. ... There may even have been a messianic overtone in Satan's challenge because a later Rabbinic saying read:

"Our teachers have taught, when the King, the Messiah, reveals himself, he will come and stand on the roof of the Temple" (Pesiqta rabbati).

Add to this the tendency of the godly to be attracted by the challenge to "step out in faith" and you can feel the tug of the temptation. In fact, refusal or even hesitancy in such situations could appear to be a lack of faith.

It was a powerful... beguiling temptation. Satan was saying (in effect):

"In the first temptations you have shown your trust in God's Word. You are a faithful man—Psalm 91 is you! This is what the people are looking for in a Messiah. You are a man of faith, aren't you? Just jump, and the whole world will see who you really are!"

Really?

Jesus thought otherwise. He knew that he had no word from the Father directing Him to leap off the temple. He again recognized that as God's Son He must never do anything in His own power... because that would be putting God to the test.

Jesus responded by again quoting from Deuteronomy... this time 6:16: It says: *'Do not put the Lord your God to the test'.* ... Even the very highest and best ends do not justify operating contrary to God's will.

Years before, the Israelites tested God by complaining about his provision when God provided water by having Moses strike a rock. *"And he called the place Massah and Meribah because the Israelites quarreled and*

because they tested the LORD saying, 'Is the LORD among us or not?' (Exodus 17:7). Their disgraceful... faithless actions brought inevitable action by God. ... The message is clear: do not attempt to force God to act.

This message is essential for us today. Willful diving into a marital relationship that does not have the approval of God's Word... or misapplying Scripture... then crying out for God to catch us before we hit bottom... rationalizing it by saying:

"If this works... God will receive great glory... just think of the souls that will be saved... God... you have to be in this — you just have to!"

– is rationalized DISobedience. True... God specializes in picking up the pieces... but we must not test Him through rationalized disobedience.

When a child of God is in the will of God... he/she can claim the Father's protection and care. ... But if he/she willfully gets into trouble and expects God to rescue them... then they are tempting God. ... (LISTEN!) We tempt God whenever we try to "force" Him (or dare Him) to act contrary to His Word. ... It is a dangerous thing to try God's patience... even though He is indeed long-suffering and gracious.

Luke 4:13

Jesus came out of the wilderness a victor... but Satan did not give up. He watched for other opportunities to tempt the Savior away from the Father's will. ... Let us be as watchful after the victory as before the battle.

Why was Jesus Christ tempted? ... To demonstrate that you and I have a sinless Savior. He is sinless... impeccable... and able to save. He proved that all power had been given to Him. ... He is a friend Who understands us

and is able to sympathize with us. ... We need to KNOW that He is a Savior like that! ... John writes:

1 John 2:1-2 (ESV)

¹ My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. ² He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

The Lord Jesus can be depended upon in every circumstance of life.

Have you given your life to the Lord? Have you determined that you will serve Him in some sort of ministry? ... (Then LISTEN TO ME!) Temptation is coming. This is a fact. But we need not surrender to it. Though alone we are weak... in Christ we are strong. Though Satan may attack us in various ways... the Holy Spirit is never caught by surprise. ... And even when the devil pummels us again and again and again... God has promised to never leave us or forsake us (Heb. 13:5).