

July 29, 2018
Sunday Morning Service
Series: Luke
Community Baptist Church
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HOW TO BE SUCCESSFUL AGAINST TEMPTATION Luke 4:1-13

It is unlikely that we are going to be assaulted directly by Satan like Jesus was. It is probable that we will be put to the test, tempted to sin by demonic beings. I often refer to them as Satan's minions. Scripture warns us that we are in an ongoing spiritual battle with unseen forces (Ephesians 6:12). Not only is it likely that we will be tempted by these forces, but it is absolutely certain that we will have to do battle with our flesh which is thoroughly saturated with the sin principle which is Satan's character.

We are going to be tempted and tried to commit sin, yea, to live in sin. God warns us to expect temptations, and when the testing comes to realize that whatever test we face, we are not the only one in human history to deal with it. Indeed, *There isn't any temptation that you have experienced which is unusual for humans (1 Corinthians 10:13a GWV).*

Therefore, we must acknowledge the reality that we are going to be tempted to commit sin. And just so we have an idea of what we are up against, God has listed many of these failures so we can identify them and put up resistance. We are not going to be tempted to turn stones into bread or probably not tempted to put God to the test by jumping from the pinnacle of a temple.

However, we are constantly tempted by our flesh toward things like the list of flesh works: *Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these (Galatians 5:19-21).* Or maybe sins like, homosexuality, thievery, greed or swindling (1 Corinthians 6:10). Or as Jesus warned us, *For out of the heart come*

evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander (Matthew 15:19). Or the common sins Paul calls *all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless (Romans 1:29-31).*

And then there are the acceptable sins like, pride (Proverbs 16:18), anger (Matthew 5:22), lust (Matthew 5:28), retaliation (Matthew 5:38), anxiety (Matthew 6:25), worry (Matthew 6:26-34), and unfair judgment (Matthew 7:1).

Suddenly we realize just how common are the sins that are not unusual to the human race. Sins like these examples are so common they are virtually acceptable to the world, expected among normal humans, and many of them are even acceptable to people who claim to be followers of Christ. In the words of James (3:10), *"My brothers, these things ought not to be so."* Okay, but how can we prevent buckling to the temptations of the flesh or of demonic influence? Let's stop to think about how Paul ended the warning that we all face common temptations. *God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it" (1 Corinthians 10:13).*

We know that Jesus was tempted in every area of life in which we face temptation. We also know that He never yielded, never succumbed, never failed, never sinned. How did He do that being human like we are? In our text today we see three particularly grievous temptations hurled against Jesus by none other than the original sinner, liar, false accuser and tempter, Satan. How Jesus responded to these temptations is very instructive. He shows us how to apply the way of escape that our faithful God provides along with testing.

The Setting (vv.1-2).

As God the Son was heading into the most severe testing we can imagine, the Holy Spirit ministered. Luke informed us that *Jesus, was full of the Holy Spirit (v.1a).* Jesus was completely indwelt by the

third member of the Trinity. He, the Holy Spirit, literally came down from heaven in the form of a dove (Luke 3:22). Matthew’s account reveals that the Holy Spirit “*kept on resting on Jesus*” as Matthew utilized the present, passive verb (Matthew 3:16). Thus, like all Christians today, Jesus was characterized as “full” of the Holy Spirit.

Being filled with the Holy Spirit, the Spirit led Jesus. He *returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness (v.1b)*. Jesus, the man, having committed His divine prerogatives to the Father, is now ‘having been led’ (imperfect passive) by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit was leading Him in and around the wilderness.

In that leading, Jesus is found in the wilderness fasting. This was all in preparation for ministry. He was *for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And he ate nothing during those days. And when they were ended, he was hungry (v.2)*. Maybe there is a very telling comparison with Israel’s testing here. Consider the following:

Israel	Jesus
40 years	40 days
in the wilderness	in the wilderness.
other side of Red Sea	other side of Jordan
hungry and complaining	hungry
Tested and failed.	Tested (the result?)

The word translated *tempted* is *peirazo*, which means to tempt in order to sin, fail, or falter. But the same word can also mean to test in order to prove value, fitness, validity. That is how James used the word when he encouraged Christians, *Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds (James 1:2)*. That kind of testing moves us on to spiritual maturity.

Jesus was about to face temptation toward utter failure. That is the way Job was tried. Satan put him to the test desiring for Job to stop trusting God. Likewise, in this case, Satan desired to tempt Jesus to failure.

At the same time though, the Holy Spirit desired to try Jesus in order to prove to Him that He, being the Son of God, has power over sin and temptation. Jesus’s testing proved that He is God the Son and proved that He was indwelt by God the Holy Spirit. Satan was testing whether Jesus would respond as the submissive Son of God or would

step out of submission to the Father. Jesus responded like a man indwelt by the Spirit of God, depending on God’s grace to stand.

It is doubtful Jesus anticipated Satan’s test. Remember that as a human, Jesus was not always aware of the Father’s timing, which timing was revealed to Him along the way. Here was a case of specific timing and specific kind of tests. We, too, know that we will face testing. But we do not know the time or the kind of testing.

This was all part of the various steps that prepared Jesus for ministry. The steps were, baptism, led by the Spirit, fasting unto severe physical hunger, and finally spiritual testing/temptation. Notice that Luke stated that at this point the first three steps “were ended,” speaking of God the Father’s perfect timing for this testing period. The same idea of “planned completion” is found in the Hebrew when God completed His creation. Creation was complete when God the Creator determined it was complete. Which assures us that this test was not accidental, but intentional. It was a matter of bringing about the completion of preparation for ministry. It had to be. The test was eternally huge and significant beyond human comprehension. If Jesus failed like the first Adam did, there would be no redemption available from sin and its consequences.

The Three Tests (vv.3-12).

The first test was whether God the Son could trust God the Father’s provision (vv.3-4). Here is the test: *The devil said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread” (v.3)*. To conclude that Jesus was hungry at this point (v.2) is the greatest of all understatements. How would you feel if you were not allowed to eat between today and August 29? Jesus had to be at the very end of human endurance.

Throughout the rest of this story, Luke used the word *diablos* to refer to Satan. He is the false accuser, the slanderer, the maligner. He loves to tempt us to fail; and when we do, he runs to God and accuses us of being losers. The accuser set up the test with the words, “*If you are the Son of God.*” Once again the **Slanderer** was calling into question God’s authoritative word. If we go back to the beginning of time, we are reminded that God told Adam and Eve not to eat of the tree of knowledge. Satan came along and tempted with

the same kind of question: “*Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’*” (Genesis 3:1b). Unfortunately, Eve’s response was like, “Hmmm. I think that is what He said. But, maybe I’m not exactly sure.”

Now we see a very similar kind of test as Satan questioned Jesus, “Are you really the Son of God?” Isn’t that exactly what God the Father had just said at the baptism? *And the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form, like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, ‘You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased’* (Luke 3:22). The Slanderer, testing Jesus’s certainty that He is the Son of God, proposed to tempt Jesus to use His divine prerogatives to satisfy His physical need. If Jesus could successfully turn a stone into bread, He would prove that He was indeed God’s Son as God had said. Or that was Satan’s proposal.

What could be wrong with proving that Jesus is indeed God’s Son? And if God’s Son, surely God has promised to care for His own Son who He called “Beloved.” Surely, it would be okay to make a little bread to prove how God the Father cares for His Son! Actually, creating bread to assuage hunger would seem like a rather reasonable use of divine power. It would be a very easy test to pass. Just a word. And not just bread, but Jesus could have instantly spoken into existence a large, warm loaf of Italian bread, lightly seasoned with herbs and garlic salt and smothered in melted butter.

This was an especially difficult test because of Jesus’s circumstances. He was literally starved, famished. Quite the contrast to Satan’s testing of the first Adam in an environment of plenty. In a setting of abundant food of all kinds, the first Adam failed to trust God’s promise over his own perceived desires. How will the second Adam respond? Will He stop depending on the Father’s care and timing and take matters into His own hands and become another rebel like the first Adam or like us?

Consider the “way of escape response” Jesus gave for us to follow. *And Jesus answered him, ‘It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone’*” (v.4). Jesus didn’t even address Satan’s argument. He didn’t defend His Sonship. He didn’t defend the Father, assuring Satan that the Father would care for Him.

Jesus went straight to the issue—life is not about “things.” Jesus affirmed that life is really about trusting God’s Word implicitly so

that we do God’s will. Jesus quoted the middle part of Deuteronomy 8:3, where Moses reminded the people, “*And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD*” (Deuteronomy 8:3). Notice in this text that after the prohibition, “*man does not live by bread alone,*” God said through Moses, “*but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.*”

And still life is not about things. Life is still about God’s Word. Either we believe it or we don’t. Either we know what God said and live accordingly or we don’t. Contrast first Adam’s response of failure into sin with the second Adam’s (Jesus) perfect obedience though it conflicted with His natural desires. The first Adam chose not to believe God’s Word. But God the Son had submitted His divine prerogatives to God the Father and had come to earth to do the Father’s will. He understood that it was the Father’s will for Him to be incredibly hungry at the moment.

Jesus, unlike us, did not argue with the Father, question the Father, doubt the Father’s timing and purpose. The big test for us is still whether we will trust God’s Word. When He promises that His grace is sufficient for us, do we believe it? Or do we look for a way to meet our legitimate needs outside His will, in conflict with His rules, His Word?

The second test proposed to Jesus personal gain through false worship (vv.5-8). Here was the test: *And the devil took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, and said to him, ‘To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will. If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours’* (vv.5-7).

The words “*in a moment of time*” is the same as Matthew’s description “*to a very high mountain*” (Matthew 4:8). Both phrases indicate that Satan gave Jesus a vision of the kingdoms. This must have been similar to the way God showed Moses all the area of the Promised Land from Mt. Nebo.

The basis for this test would be in Satan’s claim to have authority over all the kingdoms to dispose of them according to his will. It is true that he is the prince, the authority of the earthly region

(Ephesians 2:2). It is true that the whole world lies under his influence (1 John 5:19). It is true, therefore, that God's people wrestle with Satanic powers in high places (Ephesians 6:12).

But God alone is the King of kings and Lord of Lords. God alone is the sovereign ruler. He holds the hearts of the kings in His hands and turns them according to His will (Proverbs 21:1). He raises up nations and puts down nations according to His will. He will one day destroy the entire earth with all its kingdoms in a fiery conflagration (2 Peter 3:7-10). All of Satan's authority in the world is determined, governed, allowed by, and bounded by God's permission. No, Satan could not ultimately carry out this offer. It was a lie like everything else Satan proposes.

What was the "way of escape" Jesus took this time? It looks quite familiar at this point. *Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve'" (v.8).*

Again, Jesus did not argue whether Satan had the right or authority to offer the kingdoms to a point. Jesus did not argue whether this might actually work. Jesus did not argue whether Satan was a liar. Jesus did not have to wonder if the Father might be willing to consider a compromise. The issue was whether Jesus would worship someone other than God and break the first two commands. That God alone is worthy of our worship is a cut-and-dry command: *"You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them" (Deuteronomy 5:7-9a).*

To what or to whom are you willing to bow in order to gain a bit of temporary earthly pleasure? Americans tend to worship false gods like ease, popularity, acceptance (peer pressure), pleasure, or possessions. Our flesh always drives us to ask, "But what about me?" Jesus showed us how to face temptation by asking, "What about God?"

The third test tempted Jesus to presume on God's promises (vv.9-12). The test: *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'" (vv.9-11).

Let's stop to consider the setting of this test. Satan took Jesus to the pinnacle of the temple either literally or again used a vision to display this spot. Probably it was the latter. There is no indication that this was a public display with onlookers betting whether Jesus would jump. This would have been the southeastern corner of the temple complex. From the top of the wall down to the bottom of the Kidron Valley was about 450 feet. Josephus in his *Antiquities of the Jews* claimed that simply looking over the edge would make people dizzy.

With that in view, Satan offered the test. "If you are God's Son, jump because He has promised to take care of you." I wonder if Satan was not quite sure at this point that he had trapped Jesus. In the previous two tests, Jesus always appealed to the Word of God as His authority. That being true, in this test, Satan would trap Jesus with the very promises of God by quoting Psalm 91:11-12 which reads, *For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways. On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone (Psalm 91:11-12).*

Shouldn't God the Son take God the Father at His Word? This was a lie because, "Doing something independently of God to presume on His care does not prove your loyalty to God." Satan fell into sin from the beginning because he desired to be independent of God. This is the kind of temptation that we all face regularly. We readily admit that God tells us to trust in Him. But we also know that Scripture says, "The Lord helps those who help themselves." Actually that too is a lie. Scripture does not say that anywhere.

What was the "way of escape" Jesus chose? Again, it sounds familiar. *And Jesus answered him, "It is said, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test'" (v.12).* God desires for His children to trust in His promises and teachings. It is a sin to try to force God to prove that He is worthy of being trusted. Therefore, Jesus simply answered again with Scripture. This time Jesus quoted from Deuteronomy 6:16. *"You shall not put the LORD your God to the test, as you tested him at Massah" (Deuteronomy 6:16).* The setting was Massah where the people argued with Moses accusing him of bringing them to the desert to die. God's will was very plain in God's

Word, that He did not take them to the desert to die. The people demanded some kind of proof (i.e. water) that God could be trusted.

By this reply, Jesus articulated that He was not going to engage in a spectacular, but selfish, act in an effort to force the Father to care for Him. By way of illustration, it was actually a sin for Jacob to bargain with God. God had said to Jacob, *“Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land. For I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you”* (Genesis 28:15). Then after this dream, why did Jacob turn right around and try to strike a bargain? *Then Jacob made a vow, saying, “If God will be with me and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and clothing to wear, so that I come again to my father’s house in peace, then the LORD shall be my God”* (Genesis 28:20-21).

This same kind of spiritual immaturity is demonstrated by people who make promises to God while they are facing major surgery, when they have serious accidents, or when they are hunkered down in a foxhole with enemy artillery flying overhead.

The right answer is found with Job: *I will present my argument to God. But in the end, even if God kills me, I will hope in him* (Job 13:15 MPT). Our escape is to first determine if the test is toward selfishness. If our question is, “What do I get out of this?” we are probably on the verge of failing the test. Instead, we need to resort to God’s Word where we are reminded that our response for all we do is, *I can do all things through him who strengthens me* (Philippians 4:13). Or our plan according to God’s will is, *Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths* (Proverbs 3:5-6). Follow Jesus’s example and flee to the way of escape God has already provided—the Word of God.

The Good Conclusion (v.13).

Satan departed. *And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time* (v.13). This result reminds us of God’s command for us to resist the devil and he will flee. Jesus demonstrated for us the truth of James 4:7: *Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from*

you. Satan cannot attack God. That is why he had to ask God’s permission to plague Job.

While the attack is raging, we respond by submitting to God’s Word. Submission to God is almost always a difficult test. Again, it is unlikely that Satan will personally attack us. But it is likely that demons, or the spiritual forces of darkness, will harass us and test us toward falling into sin. It is certain that our flesh will lure us out of submission to God.

When the going gets tough, it is easy to forget Jesus’s example. It is hard to remain submitted to God’s perfect will for us when we face the same problem, same heartache, same physical ailment day after day. It is really hard to remain submitted to God’s will when it appears that His will is incomprehensible.

And when we are favored with victory over temptation, like Jesus experienced, we can be certain that temptation to sin will return. Satan attacked Jesus repeatedly throughout His ministry by using wicked unbelievers. Sometimes after we have gained victory over temptation, a new one shows up. Often the temptation we defeated through faith in God’s Word will come back later to try again.

And God sent angels who ministered. *Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him* (Matthew 4:11). Satan was right, the Father sends His angels to help. Satan tempted Jesus to step out of the Father’s will in order to experience the Father’s care. Jesus tenaciously stayed in the Father’s will and did indeed experience the Father’s care.

In not so bold but similar ways the Heavenly Father also ministers to us. We, too, have the comfort and encouragement of the Holy Spirit. Sometimes God even sees fit to send us angels to minister to us (Hebrews 13:2). God intends for fellow Christians to help us through the times of testing. God always gives us the promises of His Word to help us have victory over temptation.