



Introduction:

Most of us have done something and in hindsight said, “Why did I do that?” So, why do we get ourselves into bondage to sin? Why do we manifest certain destructive patterns of behavior? It is because of temptation. “Temptation” is defined as “that which is presented to the mind as an inducement to evil.” One question that many people deal with is the concept of evil. Many question the existence of God based on such an idea. Therefore, it is vital to the testimony and character of our God that one understand the origin and source of evil. James 1:13-14 clearly dispels any teaching that evil inflicted upon humanity is orchestrated by God. However, Ezekiel 28:15 describes the creation of Lucifer, who we now know as Satan, and it states that God created him with perfection, but then something happened that disrupted what God intended. It says that he, Lucifer, was good until iniquity (sin, evil, wickedness, etc.) was found in him. God’s Word reveals that evil originated in the heart of the one we now know as Satan. Therefore, Satan is the author of evil (1 Thessalonians 3:5; Ephesians 6:11; 1 Corinthians 7:5; 1 Peter 5:8). This world, since the fall of man, has been controlled by Satan and will continue to be until God the Father sends Christ back to rule and reign (Acts 1:6-7; 3:20-21; Revelation 20:1-6). But until that time, Satan is in control, and as long as he has dominion, temptation will be present upon the earth. Christ, the Son of God, experienced it while on earth. And if we are going to have victory like Christ, we must first understand the nature of temptation.

The Focus:

- **Every believer must understand the nature of temptation.**

In our text, Satan tries to tempt Christ three times. With each attempt, Satan was unsuccessful at bringing Christ to succumb to the temptation. Satan’s thought was to get Christ to consider and ultimately concede on just one of them. If Satan was successful, Christ would then be a sinner, and therefore He would be unfit to be man’s substitution for sin. Interestingly, there are three different types of temptations in this world that correspond with the nature of mankind – spirit, soul, and body (1 Thessalonians 5:23). Obviously, Paul believed that temptations could happen at each level.

Man is a trichotomy because we are made in the image of God (Genesis 1:27). Each aspect of who we are can be tempted. There are temptations that deal with the body – fleshly desires that don’t honor God, but simply gratify the evil passions of our flesh. There are temptations that deal with the soul – they deal with our will, our ability to make choices and decisions, and are designed to lead us away from God’s will. Those temptations provide us the opportunity to make decisions, and if we make the wrong decision, it is because we based it on our own will and chose to walk by sight, not by faith in God’s Word. There are temptations that deal with the spirit – our inner man that is supposed to connect with God and worship Him. These temptations deal with replacing the worship of God with other things. This causes us to have a lack humility and dependence on God. Worshiping the things of and in this world cause us to

depend on something other than God, which brings a false sense of joy and satisfaction in this life.

This threefold nature of temptation is explained in 1 John 2:16. The lust of the flesh, which corresponds to the body. The lust of the eyes, which corresponds with the soul. The eyes are the gateway to the soul which influence the mind and thoughts. The pride of life, which corresponds with the spirit. This is where we say (or our actions show), "I don't really need God or need to worship Him. I can find fulfillment elsewhere." We face temptations in all three areas. The Bible, in Hebrews 4:15, informs us that Christ was tempted "*in all points*" like we are, yet "*without sin.*" This doesn't mean that Christ faced every conceivable temptation in the world (there are many). This is referring to the threefold nature of temptation. There are several different forms that those temptations can take, but there are only three roots, and Christ was tempted in all three. Therefore, knowing that Christ was tempted, we can be sure that we will face similar temptation today.

Response to the Sermon:

I think one of the greatest things, regarding the mental stability of a believer, is to understand temptation. One's understanding of sin and temptation can greatly alter or hinder your perception of God and the world. God's Word is so rich. God never leaves us in the dark; He never leaves us to wonder about the truth of His Word and the reliability of His character. The Bible reveals the battle plan of Satan. God gives us a clear understanding of how our enemy operates and how we are to successfully overcome his "*devices*" (2 Corinthians 2:11). Take some time to study, in God's Word, the ways of our enemy, Satan. Read about how different men and women of God withstood the adversity of Satan. Obviously, the ultimate achievement was accomplished by Christ in the desert (Matthew 4:1-11). Knowing the character of our God will help you understand how we are to live, and knowing the character of Satan will help you understand what to look out for in this life.

Bible Study Thoughts & Questions:

Mankind fell prey to all three roots of temptation, but Christ conquered all three of them. Let's compare Adam and Christ: Adam was tempted in a beautiful garden, but Christ was tempted in a lonely wilderness. Adam was at his best when tempted, but Christ was hungry. Adam was the king of the old creation, but Christ is King of a new creation. Adam sinned and lost his dominion over the earth, but Christ obeyed and will ultimately regain total dominion over the earth. Adam fell to temptation and was defeated – therefore, he brought death to humanity. But Christ was tempted and victorious – He brought life to all who will trust in Him. Satan's temptations succeeded in bringing about the fall of the first man (first Adam), but they failed with the Son of man (the last Adam).

According to James 1:13-15, what are some principles that we learn about God and man? How do these principles and perceptions affect our view of God and life?

The fall of man is recorded in Genesis 3. With what is known of Satan and his trickery, what is his initial tactic to seeing us ultimately give in to sin (Genesis 3:1; Matthew 4:3)?

Application Questions:

Since sin was born in the heart of Satan (Ezekiel 28:15), he has done his best to develop a plan of evil and policies for his evil system (Ephesians 2:2).

Where do the different sources of temptation come from (Matthew 22:18; 26:41; Luke 20:23; John 8:6; 1 Corinthians 7:5; 1 Thessalonians 3:5; James 1:13-14; 1 Timothy 6:9)?

Knowing that temptations are prevalent on the earth, how should we safeguard our homes to protect against the schemes and trickery of Satan?

Why is it so important in understanding temptation to safeguard against it? What can happen as a result if we don't?

Prayer:

- Pray to put on the whole armor of God to be able to stand against Satan (Ephesians 6:11).
- Pray to recognize the temptations of this world (1 John 2:16).
- Pray to keep our faith simple and grounded in Christ (2 Corinthians 11:3).



Introduction:

Satan is the grand schemer. I believe that he knows his demise, therefore, he is looking to see who he can bring with him to the place that was created for him and his fallen cohorts (1 Peter 5:8; Matthew 25:41). Satan attacked Christ in three different locations and with three different temptations. Geography is no deterrent to the devil. You can be tempted anywhere and at any time. Until Satan is deposed and Christ is ruling upon His throne (Revelation 20:1-6), we are in Satan's world system, and no matter where we go or live, we are going to encounter temptations. However, today we can have victory over Satan – his snares and traps (Romans 8:37; 2 Corinthians 2:11). If we will yield our hearts to the reign of Christ, we can experience the victory that comes by being in Christ and yielding to the leading of the Spirit of God (Colossians 3:15-16; Romans 6:12-22). Remember, Satan's temptations stem from three roots – the lust of the flesh (body), the lust of the eyes (soul), and the pride of life (spirit) (1 John 2:16). Although Adam and Eve failed the temptations of Satan, Christ was victorious (Matthew 4:1-11)! And if we know Him, we too can overcome temptation. We don't have to be slaves to sin.

The Focus:

- **Every believer can overcome temptation. How?**
 - **By recognizing the temptations Satan uses.**
 - **Fulfill your fleshly desires.**

Satan attacks where there is a fleshly weakness. Like in the case of Christ, He was hungry after having not eaten for 40 days and nights (vs. 2). As a man, Christ got tired, hungry, and weak like everybody else. Notice in verse three how Satan tried to take advantage of Christ when He was at His weakest. The Bible says that Satan *"came to him."* When we are physically weak, we are vulnerable and easy prey to Satan. Satan loves to bring temptations when we are tired, hungry, sick, in pain, etc. And as a believer, we would be wise to remember that this is a scheme of the devil. We should never make big decisions when we are tired and weary. You will usually regret it later. Satan entices most people to quit when they are tired and exhausted. The Bible says that Christ was led into the wilderness (desert) by the Spirit. Christ would be tested and tried for the ministry that God desired for Him to fulfill. After 40 days of fasting, Satan came in to get Christ to sin, which would have disqualified Him from being able to pay mankind's sin debt. The first temptation used to get Jesus to falter was to command some stones to turn to bread.

Satan, indicating that the Father had been unreasonable to lead Him into the desert and leave him without any provision of food, began to provoke Jesus. Satan's main ploy is to cast doubt in one's mind. So what did he say to try to get Jesus to doubt? Satan said, "If you are the Son of God..." But wasn't this already declared to be true? Absolutely! Right before Christ was led into the desert, God declared it – *"And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased"* (Matthew 3:17). Therefore, Christ could rest in the fact that He was the Son of God. However, Satan wanted Jesus to fail. Christ chose to yield to the Father's will. If Christ would have performed the miracle, Christ would have been acting outside the will of

God. Therefore, if Christ would have given in, it would have been sin. What trust and faith Jesus exhibited in the Father! Christ knew that God provides and sustains us when we need it. Therefore, it seems true that Christ would have had the attitude, "If the Father thinks that I should go without food, I'll not eat to be aligned with His desire." What's so amazing about this part of the story is that Christ's ministry would be filled with miracles, according to God's will, but at the moment He was challenged by Satan, He refused to do one because it was something that would not have honored or glorified God.

So what was Christ's rebuttal? How did He respond to Satan's subtlety? He quoted Deuteronomy 8:3. What's so interesting about that is the verse He stated is from the passage when Israel was wandering in the desert and was hungry. Like Israel, Christ would have to be fully persuaded in His mind that survival in this life is not just by consuming things for our physical nourishment, but also for our spiritual well-being. God's Word is life. When Israel waited, they were supernaturally fed by God's provision of angel food – "*manna*" (Psalm 78:24-25). After the other temptation Jesus would endure, He too was given food from heaven (vs. 11). Christ's response was strong because it was anchored in truth. Christ was informing Satan that His life was found in the Father – His Words and will. Christ submitted Himself to the authority of God, as should we. We must endeavor, as Christ did, to live in obedience to God's Word, depending on Him for wisdom to overcome the thoughts and ways of this world (Colossians 2:6-8).

Response to the Sermon:

The understanding of a thing brings enlightenment. Knowing the story of God's Word provides an understanding, a worldview. A worldview is like a filter, it allows things in or keeps them out. It is with this understanding that we formulate our beliefs and values that are then revealed by our behavior. Do you know God's story? Do you know how the world was and why it exists as it does today? Do you know the plan of God for the future? Do you know how Jesus became the bridge for mankind to be reconciled to God? Knowing these things will better allow you to live as God desires. One such aspect is understanding temptation and how we can overcome it as God desires. The greatest weapon against Satan and his world system is God's Word (vs. 4, 7, 10; Ephesians 6:17). What are you doing to keep your weapon sharp? What are you doing on a daily basis to ensure you are fit to use your weapon?

Bible Study Thoughts & Questions:

Satan is the ultimate deceiver. As followers of Christ, we must be vigilant in every situation to see the way Satan could get an advantage of us. Let's examine the verse and passage that Christ quoted to see if we can gain any insight about temptation.

According to Deuteronomy 8:2, what three things are determined based on being tried or tempted, and what do they reveal?

According to Deuteronomy 8:2, what does temptation reveal regarding our relationship with God? After we go through a temptation, how should we assess our response?

As we go through different trials and temptations, what should the result be from what we learn (Deuteronomy 8:3)? What should we do with this understanding, and how should it affect us?

How much of God's Word is relevant and useful in our lives (Deuteronomy 8:3)? Why is this important?

Application Questions:

If we are going to overcome temptation, we must follow some practical principles that we can apply and employ. Part of knowing the story of God and His Word is knowing about Satan – his plan and policies of evil. We need to remember that Satan always questions truth. He did it with Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:1), and he did it with Christ (Matthew 4:3). Because he questions truth, he questions reason. Therefore, he is getting people to debate in their mind. The mind is where Satan battles, whether you are lost (2 Corinthians 4:3-4) or you are secure in Christ (2 Corinthians 10:4-5). Satan makes temptation seem reasonable. He tries to legitimize certain fleshly things that he says will bring you gratification and pleasure. He does his best at the beginning to convince you it is okay, but after you do it, he attacks your claims of being a Christian, bringing guilt and condemnation. Satan wants us to go outside of God's will to fulfill our fleshly desires. But although Satan tries, we can defeat him through God's truth. That was Jesus' approach. Satan has no answer for the truth. That's why knowing God's Word and living God's Word is crucial to overcoming temptation (Psalm 119:11).

Regarding Satan and his strategy to attack when we are weak, when was a time that you were weak and how did you **fail** in that situation in your life? What did you learn from that experience?

Regarding Satan and his strategy to attack when we are weak, when was a time that you were weak and how did you **overcome** that situation in your life? What did you learn from that experience?

When trials and temptations come, what is your only source of help in time of need (Deuteronomy 8:17; Psalm 56:4; 2 Corinthians 10:4-5; Ephesians 6:17-18)? Why is this so crucial to remember?

Prayer:

- Pray that you would yield your heart to the reign of Christ, to experience the victory that comes by being in Christ and yielding to the leading of the Spirit of God (Colossians 3:15-16; Romans 6:12-22).
- Pray that you would have a spirit of discernment, identifying the things that are of God and of this world (Philippians 1:9-11; 1 John 2:16).
- Pray that God would enable you, as you study, to remember His Word so that you would not sin against Him (Psalm 119:11).