

Overcoming Temptation Matthew 4:1-11

Introduction:

1. Webster's says that "temptation" is "*that which is presented to the mind as an inducement to evil.*"
 - Illustration: Fish going for worm
2. How many of you have ever given in to temptation? Every hand should go up, shouldn't it?
3. Last week we learned that Satan is the ultimate author of all evil enticements. John 8:44 gives us great insight into the nature of Satan.
4. In our text, Satan attempts to entice our Lord Jesus Christ to do evil (read text). Isn't it interesting that Satan comes after Christ three different ways and in three different locations?
5. Geography is no protection from the devil. He attempted to lure Christ into sin in the wilderness, on the temple, and on a high mountain. You can be tempted right here in church!
6. We live in Satan's world system and no matter where we go or live, we are going to encounter temptations. You simply cannot remove yourself (until we get to heaven).
7. We also learned that **Satan's temptations all come from three roots.**
1 John 2:16
 - The lust of the flesh (corresponds with the body)
 - The lust of the eyes (corresponds with the soul – the eyes are the gateway to the soul – your mind and thoughts)
 - The pride of life (corresponds with the spirit – "I don't really need God or need to worship God. I can find fulfillment elsewhere.")
 - We can face temptations in all three areas.
8. **Adam and Eve faced all three areas of temptation and failed. But Christ faced all three and was victorious.** Therefore, if we know Him, we too can be victorious. We don't have to be slaves to sin.
Ephesians 6:16, James 4:7
9. Let's examine the three temptations of Satan that he used to try and defeat Christ and learn from our Savior.

Temptation # 1 (vs. 2-4) Fulfill your fleshly desires.

1. Satan attacks where there is a fleshly weakness. Jesus is hungry (vs. 2). As a man, Christ got tired and hungry and weak in body like

- everybody else. It is not sinful to be hungry. If so, we would have a lot of sinning going on right now.
2. Notice how Satan seizes this opportunity in vs. 3 and “*came to him.*”
 3. **Satan loves to bring temptations when we are weak physically** (hungry, tired, sick, in pain, etc.). We would all be wise to remember this. Jesus said that the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.
 - Never make big decisions when you are tired and weary. You usually will regret it later. Satan entices most people to quit when they are tired and exhausted.
 4. As we said, the Bible boils down all temptations into three areas (1 John 2:16). This temptation corresponds with the lust of the flesh. So what is the temptation? Command that these stones be made bread (vs. 3).
 5. Satan is indicating that the Father has been unreasonable to lead Him into a wilderness and then not feed Him for 40 days and nights. Satan reasons, “So if you are in fact **His Son**, meet this obvious need in your life that your Father has neglected to meet.”
 - Isn’t this just like Satan to cast doubt on God and on God’s goodness, care, and provision?
 - Doesn’t Satan do this same thing to us? He reasons, “God must not love you or this wouldn’t have happened, you wouldn’t be sick, your loved one wouldn’t have died, etc. ...”
 6. So Satan says to Jesus, “**If** you are the Son of God...”
 - But wait a minute - the Father has just declared this to be true in Matthew 3:17 right before this.
 - Satan says, “Demonstrate that you believe the heavenly utterance and do a miracle and provide for your hunger.” It was a subtle snare into which most would have fallen.
 7. Could Christ have done what Satan suggested? Did He have the power? Absolutely, but to do so would have been to by-pass the Father’s will and exercise His own will in the matter. This self-will and self-indulgence would have been sin and Satan knew it and Jesus knew it.
 - Jesus did always what pleased the Father. His attitude was, “If the Father desires that I fast and be hungry; I’ll be hungry for Him.”
 - Isn’t it interesting that Jesus began a ministry on earth that was rich in miracles by refusing to perform one? He’s like, “No, I’m not doing this miracle.” He fed others; Himself He would not feed. Just like He saved others, but Himself He would not save.

8. Christ met Satan's temptation with a quote from Deuteronomy 8:3. It was the perfect rebuttal to Satan's temptation. The context is when God allowed Israel to hunger in the wilderness and then He supernaturally fed them with manna from heaven.
 - Israel was to wait on the angel's food of manna (**Psalm 78:24-25**). Christ too waited on the Father and He too received angel's food (vs. 11).
 - God was teaching Israel that there life was to be found in Him and Him alone. True life could not be found in simply feeding the body or flesh.
9. Christ, by quoting this verse, is telling Satan, "My life is found in the Father and His Words and His will. I will eat when He tells me to eat. I will not simply live to fulfill my fleshly lusts."
10. Jesus lived under the authority of God's Word and so should we. He lived in perfect obedience and perfect dependence on the Father, which will bring us to our next temptation next week.

Conclusion: But for now, let's take home some principles that will help us to overcome fleshly temptations.

1. Remember, Satan always questions truth.
 - He said, "If thou be the Son of God..." There is no "if", the Father already declared it. He wanted to raise a question about this in Christ's mind.
 - If Satan can get you to question God's truth, he has already won the battle.
 - Isn't this what he did with Eve in the Garden? "Yea, hath God said...?"
2. Satan makes his temptations seem reasonable.
 - What is wrong with some bread? You're hungry. You owe it to yourself.
 - Satan will try to legitimize in your mind certain fleshly gratifications and convince you that it is alright. Of course, afterward, he will maximize the guilt and condemnation.
3. Satan tempts us to go outside of God's will to fulfill our desires.
 - There was nothing wrong or sinful about eating bread, but in that context it would have been wrong. Just like there is nothing wrong with sex, but it must be within the proper context.
4. You can only defeat Satan through God's truth.
 - Jesus said, "*It is written.*" He defeated Satan with truth. Jesus said that the truth will make you free.

- Satan has no answer for the truth. This is why a knowledge of God's Word is absolutely crucial in overcoming temptation.
Psalm 119:11