

The Son of God: Tempted, Tested and Tried **Luke 4:1-15**

This morning we are studying the temptation of the Son of God in the wilderness. After a spiritual high, Jesus, being filled with the Holy Spirit and the divine affirmation and anointing of His Father in Heaven is led into the wilderness by the Holy Spirit. In the wilderness, Jesus fasted for forty days.

Jesus went from a spiritual high into a spiritual battle. One minute He is up and the next He is in a war. Life is like that. You never know when temptation will come. Adam and Eve enjoyed the uninhibited goodness of the Garden of Eden but evil lurked in the trees of paradise just seeking an opportunity to corrupt God's most precious creatures. Moses led Israel out of Egypt to Mt. Sinai and then into the wilderness and to the edge of the Promise Land. At the edge of the Promise Land they gave in to the temptation to doubt God. They lacked faith and complained against God. Again, God's son was unfaithful.

The 13 verses we will study this morning are not simply a little story about Jesus temptation in the wilderness but are part of the bigger story of how God came in Christ to defeat our old enemy, Satan, and crushed his head by obeying the word of God.

Often this story is reduced to a formula for how to fight temptation through Scripture memory. We certainly see the importance of Scripture memory in this story but that is not the main point. If this story is only about Scripture memory then we are in big trouble.

There is more in this text than to fighting sin through Scripture memory. Scripture memory is an awesome thing to practice but if this is all there is to fighting sin then we will fail more often than succeed.

I am not saying memorizing Scripture is unimportant. Certainly, Scripture memory is a point of application but it is not main point. The main point of this text must be seen in the grand story of redemption (Creation, Fall, Redemption, Restoration). What is going on in this text is the Son of God, the Seed of the woman who was promised in Genesis 3 at the Fall is beginning to crush the head of the serpent by bringing the redemption God had promised for His people.

Everything in Luke's Gospel has been teaching us about the identity of the Son of God. It told us about how He fulfilled the prophecies of His birth, who His Father is, His anointing of the Holy Spirit at His baptism in the Jordan River and God affirming Jesus by saying, *"This is My Beloved Son, with you I am well pleased."* Then at the end of the genealogy we hear again that Jesus is the son of Adam, the Son of God. He is indeed the seed of the woman who has come to crush the serpent's head.

The greater context of "creation, fall, redemption, restoration" teach us that at *creation*, Adam was an unfaithful son in the Garden of Eden. Then as a result of the fall confirms that Israel, as the son of God, was an unfaithful son. God's people failed to trust God's word in the wilderness. Everything has been pointing to Jesus coming as God's faithful Son who would obey God perfectly and save His people by delivering them from the consequences of the fall and lead them into the Promised Land. Main Point: *Jesus, the faithful Son of God, filled with the Holy Spirit, by faith obeyed God perfectly and provided our salvation so that we may trust God when we are tempted to sin.*

I. The faithful Son of God is the Provider of our righteousness, by faith we must trust Him. (vv. 3-4)

Verses 1-2 tell us Jesus went into the wilderness after His baptism. These verses are an allusion to the story of Israel passing through the waters of the Red Sea and then God leading them into the wilderness. Any Jew who heard this about Jesus would have thought of Israel in the wilderness when he heard this story.

Here is how Jesus' story was Israel's story because Jesus is the true Son of God who was faithful to God in the wilderness. If you remember, the spies were sent to spy out the Promised Land for 40 days. Ten came back with a bad report because lacked faith in God. Only two, Joshua and Caleb, trusted in God. Numbers 14:34 records, *"According to the number of the days in which you spied out the land, forty days, a year for each day, you shall bear your iniquity forty years, and you shall know my displeasure."* During their time in the wilderness Israel failed over and over again but Psalm 106 records the three main areas in which they failed: the sin of *"uncontrollable craving"*, the sin of *"idolatry"*, and the sin of *"testing God at Massah/Meribah."*

Jesus is the faithful Son of God who He spent 40 days in the wilderness fasting and trusting God. By faith, Jesus resisted all of these temptations. Now that we have set the stage, let's unpack vv. 3-13.

The serpent speaks in v. 3: *"If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread."* Don't be fooled by the devil's questioning Jesus' identity. He said, *"if you are the Son of God."* He knew Jesus was the Son of God and Jesus knew He was the Son of God. Satan's goal was to get Jesus to abuse His identity or forget His identity or neglect His identity. Satan appealed to Jesus' power as God's Son to provide anything He wanted or needed.

This temptation was a real temptation that came to Jesus and it came at one of the weakest points of Jesus' life. Jesus had a fully human body. He had been fasting food for 6 weeks and His body was at its limit.

At 6 weeks the body is in crisis mode. His hunger must have been ravishing and perhaps even convulsing. So, it is at this most opportune moment the serpent speaks and questions God's goodness and provision for His life.

Jesus knew He could have turned the stones to bread and satisfied His hunger. Jesus could have just commanded His body to be well and it would have responded by being fully healthy. But He did not. Jesus had come as God's faithful Son and it was God's will for Him to fast 40 days in the wilderness.

In v. 4 the Faithful Son of God speaks: *"It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone.'"* So, instead of turning stones to bread, Jesus responded by feeding on God's word from Deuteronomy 8:3.

The larger context of Deuteronomy 8:3 helps us understand how Satan tempted Jesus to not trust God. Let me read some of Deuteronomy 8:1-9:5, ¹*The whole commandment that I command you today you shall be careful to do, that you may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land that the Lord swore to give to your fathers.* ²*And you shall remember the whole way that the Lord your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, that he might humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments or not.* ³*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. ⁴ Your clothing did not wear out on you and your foot did not swell these forty years. ⁵ Know then in your heart that, as a man disciplines his son, the Lord your God disciplines you . . . ¹¹ Take care lest you forget the Lord your God by not keeping his commandments and his rules and his statutes, which I command you today . . . Hear, O Israel: you are to cross over the Jordan today, to go in to dispossess nations greater and mightier than you . . . ³ Know therefore today that he who goes over before you as a consuming fire is the Lord your God. He will destroy them and subdue them before you . . . Do not say in your heart, after the Lord your God has thrust them out before you, 'It is because of my righteousness that the Lord has brought me in to possess this land,' . . . ⁵ Not because of your righteousness or the uprightness of your heart are you going in to possess their land . . . that [the LORD] may confirm the [promise] that the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob."

What we learn in this passage is that the reason Israel possessed the land was because of the promise of God and not because of their righteousness. They had failed God over and over in the wilderness. The promise to possess the land looked forward to the ultimate promise that Jesus would come and be the faithful Son of God who would do what Adam and Israel could not—faithfully trust and obey God.

In the wilderness, Jesus was faithful where Israel was not. He trusted in the promise of God to provide and care for Him even when it seemed His body was failing. Jesus did not complain, He did not take matters into His own hands, He did not get angry with God and go off on Him.

Instead Jesus trusted in God by feeding on the nourishment of the goodness of the promise of God to sustain Him in His weakness, in His trial, and in His struggle against sin. Jesus obeyed God perfectly and so that He becomes our righteousness before God when we trust Him as our Savior and Lord.

First, brother and sister in Christ, you are not the provider of your righteousness. I hope you succeed in your struggle against sin and if you do it will not be because you memorized the right verse and use it at the

right time. It will be because you looked to the One who is your righteousness, who went before you and He drove the sin. It will be because He has given you the consuming fire of His Holy Spirit to guard you. When you resist temptation and defeat sin it is not because of your righteousness but because of the righteousness of Christ.

Second, you and I will hit moments in our lives where we go through a trial or test. James 1:2-4 says we should, *“Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, ³for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. ⁴And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.”*

Let me ask you a question, what is your response when Satan drops his baited hook in your face and you are desperate for a quick solution? The flesh craves a quick resolution or an indulgence. Will your soul surrender or will you flee the tempters trap? Do you trust God in the heat of the battle? Do you depend on knowing that Jesus is your righteousness or do you fight sin in your own strength?

Temptation often comes to us in logical disguises. For example, let’s say a family is having money problems and either mom or dad are considering a couple of job offers. One job offers a higher salary but requires you to be away from your family and you will not be able to attend worship very often. You know this is a problem but the money will really help out the family. On the other hand, the job with the lower paying salary is a step up but it means funds will still be tight. You are tempted to take the higher paying job because it will solve your money problems but you believe the Lord is leading you to take the lower paying job for the sake of your family and church.

How do you know what the right decision is? Brother or sister, you are not Jesus in the wilderness all alone so don’t over spiritualize this text and think you need to go into the wilderness for 40 days to get your answer. You are not Jesus.

Instead you need to understand that Jesus is the Faithful Son of God who purchased your righteousness and has given you the manna of His word, His Holy Spirit and His church. So, you don't have to have every Scripture about money and work memorized. You need to know the word and obey the word of God but instead of going it alone ask for help from the body of Christ. Someone will have a verse that will encourage you or give you wisdom. Ask others to pray for you.

1 Corinthians 10:13 tells us what it looks like to draw near to God when tempted, *"No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. 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."*

When you read the rest of 1 Corinthians 10 it is about how the believer finds strength to endure in the local church. The local church is there to help the believer find strength, to have a people to flee to and endure the onslaught of temptation to sin.

God has given us His Holy Spirit; His word and His church as means of grace to fight our spiritual battles with sin. So, let me say to my Christian brothers and sisters, if a fellow believer or an unbeliever comes to you for help and prayer because they are struggling with sin, do not act shocked or be judgmental. Simply listen, give counsel and pray for him or her for you too are a sinner in need of the grace and mercy of Jesus. Meet with them, check on them, pray with and for them and love them with the grace that has been given to you.

II. The Son of God is the Provider of our salvation, by faith we must worship Him. (vv. 5-8)

The serpent speaks again in vv. 5-7, *"And the devil took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, ⁶ 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. ⁷ If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours."*

Since questioning God's provision and love for the Son of God didn't work, Satan changes tactics. Now Satan presents Jesus with a fantasy-like vision where the nations of the world stand ready to abandon their idols and accept Jesus as Lord. As retired pastor Kent Hughes says, *"Jesus was made to hear the rustling of the*

world's flags flying in his honor. He could win the world without pain, the enemy promised—no weeping over Jerusalem, no crucifixion. The great countries of the world—Israel's elect nation, the mighty Roman Empire, and all the rest—would open their gates to their new king.”¹ There is only one catch, the Son of God must bow down and worship Satan.

This is just more of the lies from the Father of Lies. Satan had no authority to give glory or the kingdoms of the world to Jesus. This was like the flea saying to the Lion, *“I can make you king of the jungle and you will be lord over all animals if you will only bow down and worship me.”*

Even in His weakened state, Jesus never wavered under the intense pressure of temptation. By faith and being filled with the Holy Spirit, He stood squarely on God's word.

In v. 8, the Son of God speaks: He quoted Deuteronomy 6:13, *“It is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve.’”* Deuteronomy 6:13 is a summary of the first two of the Ten Commandments given in Exodus 20:3-6, *“You shall have no other gods before me. ⁴ You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. ⁵ You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the Lord your God am a jealous God.”*

The context surrounding Deuteronomy 6:13 is the second giving of the Law where Moses was preparing the people to go in to the Promised Land. Moses applied the commandments to what the temptations Israel will face as they entered the promised land. It would be a land filled with idols, false gods and false religions. It would be a land where, if they were not careful, their children would be tempted to abandon their faith in Yahweh and seek after false gods. Satan's temptation for Israel was to abandon the first and greatest commandment *“to hear O Israel, the Lord is One and they were to love the Lord their God with all of their heart, soul, mind and strength and to teach their children to do likewise.”*

¹ R. Kent Hughes, *Preaching the Word Series: Luke, Vol. 1: That You May Know the Truth*, 135.

You and I would laugh at a temptation like this because it is too far-fetched for us but it was not for Jesus. Yet this temptation will come to us and the enemy will dress it up perfectly and we will believe the sin really is a workable shortcut to a better life.

You see we are prone to forget God and the gospel. We consistently forget the heart of the first two commandments that mean that we are to seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. There are no shortcuts.

Yet temptations assault us in the most opportune moments of our lives so that we are very quickly sucked in by the lie. It never comes to us in dressed in plain clothes and using plain words. If it did we would recognize the temptation. No, instead, temptation is seductive and appeals to our fleshly desire to bask in the glow of our own righteousness by building our own kingdom. It offers us a shortcut to glory without a cross.

For example, in our marriage relationship or in any relationship we are seduced in to thinking that we must always be right. We must never admit fault or ask for forgiveness. We must win the argument so that we have control. After all, we are so much wiser than everyone else.

Then when in the course of a disagreement or some other issue, it is evident that we are wrong and need to ask for forgiveness we stubbornly hold to our own righteousness. So, instead of humbling ourselves, taking the position of a servant and taking up our cross as our Savior did, we hold fast to our righteousness.

When we do this, we neglect our power of our great salvation by failing to apply the gospel through the graces of repentance and forgiveness that was purchased on the cross by Jesus. We fail to trust in the only one who has ever resisted the lies of the serpent and then He humbled Himself by dying our death on the cross for our arrogance and pride.

The second temptation of the enemy is the temptation to be a glory thief. Brothers and sisters, you and I are not the unique Son of God who deserves all glory. We are the adopted son and daughters of God

who find our glory in the One who deserves all glory. The problem is we do not just fall short of the glory of God we actually will steal it.

When you read the context of Deuteronomy 6:13, you realize that Moses concluded by charging the people of Israel to remember the gospel (their deliverance from Egypt). Their glory, their righteousness and their significance were not in their ability to save themselves but in the glory and salvation of another—Yahweh.

We are often tempted to seek our own glory in the form of significance and recognition. We are tempted to be glory thieves when we are overlooked or passed over for a promotion at work or we do not receive the recognition we believe we deserve.

Have you ever been overlooked? Has someone else ever gotten the credit for all of your hard work and you are ignored. Perhaps no one acknowledged your accomplishment or achievement or contribution to the success of the team. Beware because the temptation is crouching like a roaring lion and seeking to devour you. Yet the sin comes when you rob God of His glory.

Friends it is better to be overlooked and God get the glory by you finding your significance in Him than you seeking to establish your own righteousness through recognition. So, let's say you are going to rectify this by spreading the word among your friends about how you deserve the credit. Perhaps you tout your achievements on social media and talk about how you deserve the credit. Congratulations . . . you just got your reward because you just robbed God of His glory in your opportunity to rest in your identity in Him.

So, when you are tempted to make a power grab or to be a glory thief, remember the power of your salvation, your righteousness, your significance and your acceptance is in the One who overcame the temptation to NOT shortcut the cross but humbled Himself taking the form of a servant and died in your place and for your sin. When you are tempted to be a glory thief, you must die to self. You must remember that

your significance is in Christ. You do not need to seek your own glory because you are a child of the King— worship Him.

III. The Son of God is the Protector of our salvation, by faith we must hold fast to Him. (vv. 9-13)

In vv. 9-11, the serpent speaks one more time, *“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, ¹⁰ for it is written, “He will command his angels concerning you, to guard you,’ ¹¹ and “On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.””*

In this final temptation, Satan takes Jesus to the temple mount where they look down over the Kidron Valley from the southeast corner of the temple. It is said to be a breathtaking view. Satan again questions whether Jesus is the Son of God and urges Him to test God by throwing Himself off the corner of the temple.

Satan quotes Psalm 91:11-12, *“He will command his angels concerning you, to guard you,’ ¹¹ and “On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.”* Satan knows Scripture well and knows how to twist it to make it say what he wants even better. He takes the meaning of this verse out of context and misapplies it. This temptation is the direct misapplication of Psalm 91. However, the basis of the twisting of this passage is found in Deuteronomy 6:16 which says, *“You shall not put the Lord your God to the test, as you tested him at Massah.”* Satan is a clever tempter and he did not just twist Psalm 91 but tried to get Jesus to stumble where Israel stumbled in the wilderness and put God to the test.

Psalm 91 is a Psalm about protection but it never says God’s people will never have trouble or that they will never suffer or that life would be painless. Let me read context following v. 12, *“Because he holds fast to me in love, I will deliver him; I will protect him, because he knows my name. ¹⁵ When he calls to me, I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will rescue him and honor him. ¹⁶ With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation.”* The promise is to not abandon His people in times of trouble.

Furthermore, when you read Psalm 91 you realize it is about a specific person. Let me read it again, *“Because he holds fast to me in love, I will deliver him; I will protect him, because he knows my name. ¹⁵ When he calls to me, I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will rescue him and honor him. ¹⁶ With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation.”* Psalm 91 certainly is a Psalm of encouragement for the people of God but Psalm 91 is about a specific person and that person is Jesus. Jesus is the man in Psalm 91.

Jesus didn't throw Himself from the temple but He did something deadlier than that. He threw Himself in from the heights of Heaven on to the earth that was under the curse of God's wrath. He was not kept from trouble but was instead crushed for our iniquities and was killed on the cross.

On the surface, it seems Psalm 91 was not true for Jesus because He suffered and died. Yet what we learn is that Psalm 91 is true for Jesus because He was delivered from death and protected from decay. He called on God in the day of trouble and God rescued Him and honored Him with long life He satisfied Him.

Friend putting God to the test does not show you have a strong faith but a lack of faith. It reveals a lack of trust in God. The test we put God to is not jumping from a temple but often we test God to see if He will act on our behalf. We will say things like, *“God if you love and care for me then you will take this suffering away or this situation will turn out this way.”* We will test the emergency broadcast system of God and attempt to control Him by defining what His love and care should work according to our plan.

Another way we may test God is by trying to force God to act for His glory. We say things like, *“Father if this works then You will receive great glory and lots of people will be saved. O Lord You have to do this, You just have to.”* Friend, God does specialize in picking up the pieces of our lives but we must not test Him through rationalized disobedience.

Finally, we are all tempted to test God at some point but this temptation seems to come mostly from the more immature person. Immaturity comes in all shapes, sizes and ages but when we are younger we are more apt to test God with our visions of grandeur and glory. Friends beware of testing God.

Conclusion

Let me close by drawing your attention to the main assault tactic that the devil used on Jesus. His main strategy was to question His identity. The devil said, *"If you are the Son of God"*, then he followed the temptation of questioning of Christ's identity as the Son of God with another more focused temptation. The strategy of the devil was to get Jesus to neglect His identity, forget His identity, abuse His identity or even reject His identity. It did not matter to Satan which one of these worked so long as Jesus failed to be grounded in His identity as God's Son.

Brother and sister in Christ, you and I are not the unique Son of God but we do belong to God the Father as His adopted children. We are sons of God so with that said I want read from God's letter to the Ephesian church what your heritage as a son of God and the strengthen given by faith through the Holy Spirit to fight sin in your life:

(Ephesians 1) [Your new identity]: *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ⁴ even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love ⁵ he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. ⁷ In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace . . . ¹¹ In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, ¹² so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. ¹³ In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴ who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory."*

(Ephesians 2) [Your old identity]: *“And you were dead in the trespasses and sins ² in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— ³ among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.*

[Your new identity] ⁴ *“But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— ⁶ and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.”*

(Ephesians 4) [The results of your new identity are . . .]: *“I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, ² with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, ³ eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace . . . [therefore] . . . put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, ²³ and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, ²⁴ and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness . . . [therefore] put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. ²⁶ Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, ²⁷ and give no opportunity to the devil. ²⁸ Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. ²⁹ Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. ³⁰ And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. ³¹ Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. ³² Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.”*

Brother and sister in Christ, as we take the Lord's Supper this morning, we are reminded that we do not live the Christian life perfectly BUT we are also reminded that we are in covenant with and trust in the One who did live a perfect life and never sinned. It is in Him we trust.

Hebrews 4:15-16 says, *"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. ¹⁶ Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."*