

Tempted ... for us

Matthew 4:1-11

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Temptation. What is temptation? That which tries to lead us away from God, and to another. Away from trusting God, and instead, trusting another. Away from goodness to evil. Away from life to death. Tempted away.

Temptation is based on a lie. It promises one thing, but delivers something completely different. Temptation is deception. Where does it come from? It comes from the Father of lies, satan, the great tempter, who's always trying to what? To lead us away. Away from God, and to himself. Promising life, yet delivering death.

There are two great temptations recorded in the Bible - the temptation of Adam and Eve, and the temptation of Jesus. One temptation resulted in the fall of all of humanity into sin and death. The other temptation resulted in the fall of Satan and the rescue of humanity from sin and death. (Romans 5)

Where did temptation begin? In the Garden, in the lushness of Paradise, where nothing was lacking. Right there, in the middle of the garden, were two trees that defined the relationship of God and man - the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The middle is God's place. Man's life revolving around God, with God in the middle of everything.

This is *our* temptation. We're tempted to push God out and place ourselves in the middle, with everything revolving around us, instead of around God.

How did temptation begin? Much the same way it still happens today. Temptation began with doubt. Doubting God, instead of trusting God. "Did God *really* say ... that you must not eat from any tree in the garden?" Perhaps Adam and Eve had misunderstood, or misheard. That didn't sound like God. How could God, who is good and love, impose *limits* on our freedom? It isn't *fair*. *Why* would God put a forbidden tree in the very *middle* of the garden, of all places.

"Did God *really* say?" Eve is invited to step back and become a *critic* of God and His Word, instead of a recipient. She's invited to reach *beyond* God's Word, to *speculate* on her own. To trust herself and her understanding, instead of trusting God and His understanding. Going with the word of another, instead of God's word.

"Did God *really* say?" It's the same question posed *to* us and *by* us all the time. Did God *really* say, "Honor your parents"? Did God *really* say, "Do not murder"? Did God *really* say, "Do not commit adultery"? "Do not steal, lie, cheat, slander, covet?" Perhaps it *doesn't apply* to us anymore; us, in our modern, *enlightened* understanding. Perhaps we know better. Did God *really* say? Satan tempts us to *judge* God and His *Word*, to try to *push* Him out from the *middle* of our lives. (the above description of the two great temptations is by Pastor William Cwirla)

Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, to be *tempted* by the devil. Tempted away from trusting God and trusting another instead.

For Jesus, it was as basic as it gets. 40 days without food. And satan's temptation was what? The same as it is for us. Your immediate physical needs (meeting them, satisfying them) are everything. They are top priority. They are at the center of our life. Nothing is more important.

If you have to cheat or steal to meet your needs, so be it. If you have to lie, it's okay. If you have to manipulate others. Do whatever you have to. Your immediate physical needs (meeting them, satisfying them) are everything. What could possibly be more important? Can you hear the voice of the tempter, pushing God out of the center of our life and replacing Him with another?

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. And the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." Can't rely on God. He's not coming through for you. You have to take matters into your own hands.

How does Jesus respond? "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

Deuteronomy 8:2 *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. And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna ... 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. God at the center of your life!*

... 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, lest, when you have eaten and are full and have built good houses and live in them, and when your herds and flocks multiply and your silver and gold is multiplied and all that you have is multiplied, then your heart be lifted up, and you forget the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, who led you through the great and terrifying wilderness, with its fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty ground where there was no water, who brought you water out of the flinty rock, who fed you in the wilderness with manna that your fathers did not know, that he might humble you and test you, to do you good in the end.

Beware lest you say in your heart, 'My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth.' You shall remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth, that he may confirm his covenant that he swore to your fathers, as it is this day.

The first temptation of Jesus? The first attempt by satan to turn Jesus away from His Heavenly Father? You shall live on bread alone. Your immediate physical needs (meeting them, satisfying them) are everything. Nothing is more important. Can't rely on God. He's not coming through for you. You have to take matters into your own hands.

Jesus' response? "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, "'He will command his angels concerning you,' and "'On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.'"

In the 1980s, during arms-control negotiations with the Soviet Union, President Ronald Reagan popularized a phrase. "Trust, but ... verify". Don't take the Soviets at their word. Test, to see if what they say is true.

"Trust, but ... verify." That's, what satan was saying to Jesus. Which really means what? Don't trust. Don't take your Heavenly Father at His word. Test Him. Test His word, to see if what He says is really true; if He really can be trusted. The voice of the tempter, pushing God out of the center of our life and replacing Him with another?

Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

Deut. 6:10 *And when the Lord your God brings you into the land that he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give you—with great and good cities that you did not build, and houses full of all good things that you did not fill, and cisterns that you did not dig, and vineyards and olive trees that you did not plant—and when you eat and are full, then take care lest you forget the Lord, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. It is the Lord your God you shall fear. Him you shall serve and by his name you shall swear. You shall not go after other gods, the gods of the peoples who are around you **You shall not put the Lord your God to the test**, as you tested him at Massah.*

Exodus 17:1 *All the congregation of the people of Israel moved on from the wilderness of Sin ... but there was no water for the people to drink. Therefore the people quarreled with Moses and said, "Give us water to drink." And Moses said to them, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the Lord?" ... And he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah, because of the quarreling of the people of Israel, and because they tested the Lord by saying, "Is the Lord among us or not?"*

Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me."

Providing for ourselves. Testing God's word. Bribery. Three temptations. Three attempts by satan to push God out of the center of His life and replace Him with another.

Then Jesus said to him, "Be gone, Satan! For it is written, "'You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.'"

Deut. 6:13 *It is **the Lord your God you shall fear. Him you shall serve** and by his name you shall swear. You shall not go after other gods, the gods of the peoples who are around you - for the Lord your God in your midst is a jealous God—lest the anger of the Lord your God be kindled against you, and he destroy you from off the face of the earth.*

Temptation. What is temptation? Pushing God out of the center of our lives and replacing Him with another.

We know that we are tempted. But why *Jesus*? Why did the Spirit of God lead Him out into the desert to be tempted? What was the point? YOU were the point. You, who have given in to temptation. You, who've pushed God out of the center of your life and replaced Him with another. Providing for ourselves, instead of trusting God to provide. Testing God's word, instead of trusting it. Accepting satan's bribe of a better life if you follow him, instead of following God.

Why did the Spirit of God lead Jesus out into the desert to be tempted? For YOU. We've all been tempted to push God out of the center of our lives and replace Him with another. And we've all failed, miserably! We've all listened to the tempters voice and followed it instead of God's voice. And so, Jesus was sent into the desert to be tempted for us. To succeed where we failed. To live on the Word of God instead of bread alone. To trust the Father instead of doubt Him. To worship and serve Him instead of himself. Jesus was sent to live the life we were supposed to, but never have.

In life – His trusting for our doubting. In death – His death instead of our, in place of ours. In resurrection – we will rise because He has risen – conquering sin, death, and the tempter – for us.

For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous. (Romans 5:19)

Temptations *will* come, guaranteed. Our comfort and strength in every temptation is Jesus. *For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.* (Hebrews 4:15-16)