

6. The same temptations for Jesus and us

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About nine or ten years ago, I went to a local music store to purchase a few guitar picks. I don't play guitar well at all. As I have said before I am a musician-wannabe. I realized how bad I was when I quit leading worship at our church, the congregation started to grow.

Anyway, after I purchased the picks, I should have bailed out of that store quickly. But I lingered around and saw a beautiful guitar. Then I made another mistake by picking it up and started to play it. It was not only a beautiful guitar, but also it had a great sound to go with. Then here came the store owner who was a great sales person. He said, "Why don't you take it into the sound room and try it with the speaker?" Sucker! When I walked out of that store, I had guitar picks and a brand new expensive guitar in my hands. Like I said, I don't know how to play a guitar well, but I look good with it.

Was that guitar necessary for me to have? No. Then why did I spend a chunk of money to buy it? The temptation justified the purchase for no good reason.

Should I blame it on the salesperson, guitar picks, the store, or even my car which I used to drive there? No, I am the only one who should take the blame. I made a decision to buy an unnecessary item.

A. THE DEVIL MADE ME DO IT

Before we jump into the texts, we need to go over a few things to help us. All of us heard, even used that famous excuse, "The devil made me do it." However, there is one problem. The devil can't make us do anything. He may be clever, but he's not all-powerful like our God. It may feel that way, when we're dangling on temptation's hook which is one of the satan's tried-and-true strategy for luring us into his net.

1) Satan lays out the bait.

Satan knows people like a skilled angler knows fish. He notes our habits. He observes our weaknesses more than we do. Then he prepares a tailor-made lure and drops it right in front of our noses.

2) Satan uses the appeal.

He can't make us bite, but he does know what happens inside us when we catch a glimpse of that tantalizing bait. Our fleshly nature draws us to it. We linger over it. We toy with it. We roll it over in our minds until it consumes our imaginations.

3) The struggle begins.

Immediately, our conscience jabs us in the hearts, warning us of the danger. We know it's wrong to take a bite. We may even see the barbed consequences poking through the bait. But satan's invitation looks so delicious.

4) The temptation ends with two responses.

The temptation ends as soon as we take an action for it or against it. Anyone who has resisted knows the feeling of freedom and new-gained strength that decision brings. On the other hand, anyone who has yielded knows the feeling of emptiness and anger to oneself that follows and the pain of the hook in one's cheek.

If anyone knows about satan's deceitful tactics and temptation's staggering power, it is Jesus. The devil designed some particularly powerful bait for Him – bait that could have snagged Jesus' ministry before it even got started.

B. LED BY THE SPIRIT INTO THE WILDERNESS

Luke 4:1-2A Then Jesus, being filled with the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, 2 being tempted for forty days by the devil.

After identifying with sinners in baptism, Jesus now identifies with them in temptation.

Hebrews 4:15 For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.

That would be the first reason why He chose to be tempted by satan. Second, in His temptation, Jesus exposed the tactics of the enemy and revealed to us how we can overcome when we are tempted. The first Adam was tempted in a beautiful Garden and lost. The Last Adam, Jesus, was tempted in a dangerous wilderness and won.

The Greek tense in v2 "being tempted" is continuous. In other words, Jesus was tempted throughout the entire forty days, not just three times He was tempted by the devil.

C. THE TEMPTATION TO SATISFY THE LUST OF FLESH

Luke 4:2b-4 And in those days He ate nothing, and afterward, when they had ended, He was hungry. And the devil said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread." 4 But Jesus answered him, saying, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.'"

I am one of those who needs to eat three meals a day. If I skip one or eat it too late, I get cranky. Our Assistant Pastor Jack told others that I get crankier. A nice guy! I cannot imagine not having any food for forty days.

"If You are the Son of God," is not correctly translated. Rather it should be "Since You are the Son of God." The devil is not doubting that whether Jesus is the Son of God. He knows.

While Jesus was physically exhausted and wasted from no food for forty days, satan was trying to make Him to doubt the love of the Father in heaven to allow His beloved Son to starve to death. Satan appeals to fulfill a legitimate desire in an illegitimate way.

But the test was even more subtle than that, because satan was asking Jesus to separate the physical from the spiritual. In the Christian life, whenever we label different areas of our lives "physical," "material," "financial," or "spiritual," we are bound to leave God out of areas where He rightfully belongs. Christ must be first in every area of our lives, or He is first in nothing. It is better to be hungry in the will of God than satisfied out of the will of God.

Jesus simply used the Word of God to fight back against satan. He quoted Deuteronomy 8:3, He put the emphasis on the word "man". Jesus used Scripture to battle satan's temptation, not some elaborate spiritual power not available to us. We can effectively resist temptation in the same way Jesus did. But if we are ignorant of God's truth, we are poorly armed in the fight against temptation.

We have at our disposal the same spiritual resources that Jesus used when He faced and defeated satan: prayer, the Father's love, the power of the Spirit, and the Word of God.

Satan tempts us to bring out the worst in us, but God can use these difficult experiences to put the best into us. Temptation is Satan's weapon to defeat us, but it can become God's tool to strengthen us.

D. THE TEMPTATION TO SATISFY THE LUST OF EYES

Luke 4:5-8 Then the devil, taking Him up on a high mountain, showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. 6 And the devil said to Him, "All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for this has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. 7 Therefore, if You will worship before me, all will be Yours." 8 And Jesus answered and said to him, "Get behind Me, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.' "

As the prince of this world, satan has a certain amount of delegated authority from God. Satan's offer to Christ was valid. I asked you to underline "*this has been delivered to me*". What does it mean? Who did deliver this world to satan and when? It goes all the way back to Genesis 3. God gave man dominion over the earth, and Adam and Eve have forfeited it over to satan by disobeying God's command.

Again, Jesus quoted God's Word, this time Deuteronomy 6:13. Jesus knew that whatever we worship, we will serve. Service to the Lord is true freedom, but service to satan is terrible bondage. God's pattern is to start with suffering and end with glory, while satan's pattern is to start with physical and emotional pleasure and end with suffering. Satan wants us to sacrifice the eternal for the temporary and take the "easy way."

There are no "shortcuts" in the Christian life, and there is no easy way to spiritual victory and maturity. If the perfect Son of God had to hang on a cross before He could sit on the throne in heaven, then we should not expect an easier way of life.

E. THE TEMPTATION TO SATISFY THE PRIDE OF LIFE

Luke 4:9-12 Then he brought Him to Jerusalem, 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 shall give His angels charge over you, To keep you," 11 and, "In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone.'" And Jesus answered and said to him, "It has been said, 'You shall not tempt the LORD your God.'"

Satan took Jesus to a prominent, high place of the temple. It was 150 feet high which is about over 12 stories high.

Following the example of Jesus, satan decided to quote Scripture, and he selected Psalm 91:11-12. Of course, he misquoted the promise and besides he omitted "in all your ways." It reminds us that satan is a Bible expert and knows how to twist Scriptures out of their contexts.

If we isolate verses from their contexts, or passages from the total revelation of Scripture, we can prove almost anything from the Bible. Almost every false cult claims to be based on the teachings of the Bible. When we try to get our orders from God by picking out verses from here and there in the Bible, we are not living by faith. We are living by chance and tempting the Lord.

When a child of God is in the will of God, he can claim the Father's protection and care. But if he willfully gets into trouble and expects God to rescue him, then he is tempting God. We tempt God, it is a dangerous thing to try God's patience, even though He is indeed patient and gracious.

F. UNTIL NEXT TIME

Luke 4:13 Now when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from Him until an opportune time.

The devil will always seek to come back at an opportune time, so we should never let our guard down.

I think that one of the weaknesses of the church today is the lack of the Word of God in the individual's heart. Many people following sensationalism, seeking exciting experiences. Others are looking for practical advice from psychologists' mumbo jumbo, with steps to success and things like that. But what we need more than anything is the Word of God. That is what will give us the depth and power to resist temptation. People need the foundation that comes from studying the Word of God.

Let me ask you questions: Do you know your weak areas? If you know them, what are you going to do about them? Wait until satan starts to attack you in those areas, then somehow you are going to fix them? Wrong.

G. APPLICATIONS

The bait of temptation is not our sin, but the bite of that temptation is. So what are we supposed to do against temptations?

James 4:7 Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

1) Submit to God

I have not yet seen anyone who can whip the devil with his own strength. He is the ruler of this world, a murderer from the beginning, the tempter, the destroyer of families, ministries, jobs, friendship and you name it. There are countless willful casualties of his around the world.

The main reason why they became willful casualties is that when they faced temptations they didn't have the spiritual weapon ready. This spiritual weapon is the Sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God from Ephesians 6:17.

Memorize the Scriptures even though you forget them. Repeat them until they become a part of you. Someday, those verses that the Holy Spirit bring them to remembrance will rescue you from temptations.

Psalms 119:11 Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You!

2) Resist the devil

This includes running away from the tempting situation like Joseph who ran away from Mrs. Potiphar. If we linger around, we will give in.

What is causing you to be tempted over and over again? Is it the pornography magazine you subscribed? Cancel it. Is the movies you watch? Don't go see them. Is the porno site you visit in the internet? Put a blocker on it and let someone has the password. Is drinking alcohol or illegal drugs cause you to stumble? Don't hang around with those who drink or do drugs. Keep yourself accountable with someone you can trust. Do you sin because of outburst of anger? Walk away and pray to the Lord for patience and love for the people who cause that outburst of anger.

3) When we resist a temptation, be ready for a different approach.

Satan's temptations are outrageously creative. If one doesn't work, he can always pull five more out of his hat. Keep a watchful eye on his move.

4) The biggest defeat in our spiritual warfare comes right after our glorious victory against satan, because we tend to let our guard down.

Too much Word and not enough Spirit and we puff up. Too much Spirit and not enough Word and we blow up. With the Word and the Spirit together, we grow up.