

8. All points tempted as we are

November 22, 2015

Last Sunday we covered a massive amount of the Scriptures, because it was one of those sections that cannot be divided into two. This morning we do have two sections of the beginning of Jesus' earthly ministry. I can certainly make them into two sermons, but they have two very important connections that we must understand – Jesus did these two – being baptized and fighting back against satan's temptations – so that we can follow His example and Jesus identified with what we face as we live.

A. THE BAPTISM OF THE LAMB OF GOD

John 1:29-34 The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! 30 This is He of whom I said, 'After me comes a Man who is preferred before me, for He was before me.' 31 I did not know Him; but that He should be revealed to Israel, therefore I came baptizing with water." 32 And John bore witness, saying, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him. 33 I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' 34 And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God."

Matthew 3:14-17 And John tried to prevent Him, saying, "I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?" 15 But Jesus answered and said to him, "Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he allowed Him. 16 When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. 17 And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

The people of ancient Israel were familiar with the lambs for the sacrifices. At Passover, each family had to have a lamb sacrificed for their sin covering. During the year, two lambs a day were sacrificed at the temple altar, plus all the other lambs brought for personal sacrifices.

Those lambs were brought by men to men, but this Lamb of God was given by God to men. The sacrificial lambs at the temple altar could not take away sin, but the Lamb of God did. The lambs at the altar were for Israel only, but the Lamb of God was sacrificed for the entire human race.

Have you ever asked yourself a question – "Why was the sinless Jesus, the Son of God baptized?" I will give you 6 reasons:

1) **Obligation** – "To fulfill all righteousness"

Matthew 5:17 "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill."

2) **Consecration** – According to the Mosaic Laws, the OT priest was washed, then anointed before they started to serve. Jesus submitted to water baptism, then the Holy Spirit came like a dove, so that He could start His earthly ministry.

3) **Commendation** – Jesus gave His approval of John's ministry and thus obligated the people to listen to John and obey him.

4) Proclamation – This was John’s official introduction of Jesus to the Jewish nation.

5) Anticipation – This water baptism looked forward to Jesus’ baptism of suffering for us on the cross. Jesus fulfilled all righteousness through His sacrificial death on Calvary.

6) Identification – Jesus identified Himself with sinful men. Immediately after, the Spirit drove Him into the wilderness. There may be here a picture of the “scapegoat” that symbolically carried the nation’s sins into the wilderness according to Leviticus 16.

The Greek word “baptizo” means “to dip, to immerse,” and John required “much water” for his baptism. All the wrath of God against mankind’s sins was experienced by Jesus on the cross.

The baptism of Jesus was unique. It wasn’t an act of repentance, but an opportunity for the Father to authenticate His Son, to declare the official start of His ministry.

In the muddy Jordan waters, the Trinity appeared before all humanity. You could see the Holy Spirit in bodily form like a dove. You could hear the Father. You could touch the Son. Those who deny the Trinity have difficult time explaining this event.

B. LED BY THE SPIRIT

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.

Jesus didn’t set up an interactive website of His new earthly ministry, do an email blitz, or start to use His Twitter to let everyone know that the Messiah has arrived in Israel right after His baptism. But by the Holy Spirit, He was obedient to go through the temptations of humans as a prologue of His ministry on earth.

God allows us to go through trials and tests under His infinite wisdom and providential knowledge. Nothing surprises Him, nothing is allowed without His permission.

1Corinthians 10:13 No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.

Spiritual victories are often followed by testing. Trials and tests are not there to hurt us, but to strengthen and deepen our faith in the Lord.

It is a common thought among many Christians that Jesus was only tempted by the devil three times during the forty days and nights. No, He was tempted by the devil from day one until the final moment nonstop.

The temptations that Jesus had to go through were very important, because Jesus is our great High Priest – the go-between between man and God. The holy God is unapproachable by unholy man. The distance between the two is so great that it cannot be bridged, except by a go-between, the Mediator. He became a man so that He could touch us, He continued to be God so that He could touch God.

1 Timothy 2:5 For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus

If Jesus is going to intercede really on our behalf, He has to understand our weaknesses, He has to understand temptations we face. He had to suffer in order to understand fully our sufferings – physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Jesus did not need to be tempted to help Him “grow.” Instead, He endured temptation both so He could identify with us, and to demonstrate His own holy, sinless character.

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.

Satan attacked the Lord Jesus in three ways: physically, spiritually, and emotionally.

1 John 2:15-16 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world--the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life--is not of the Father but is of the world.

C. THE PHYSICAL 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.’”

While Jesus was physically exhausted and wasted from no food for forty days, satan was trying to make Him doubt the love of the Father in heaven to allowing 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 our Lord 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 against satan’s temptation, not some elaborate spiritual power that is not available to us. We can effectively resist temptation in the same way Jesus did. But if we are ignorant of God’s Word, the Bible, 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 Holy Spirit, and the Word of God.

Satan tempts us to bring out the worst from us, but God can use these difficult experiences to put the best into us. The temptation is satan’s weapon to defeat us, but it can become God’s tool to strengthen us.

If we think that we can fight against the demonic temptations with our willpower, either we are plain stupid or we don’t understand spiritual warfare. Actually, both.

D. THE SPIRITUAL 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, that 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 EMOTIONAL 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 quoted out of context the promise and besides, he omitted "in all your ways." It reminds us that satan is a Bible expert and knows how to twist the Scriptures out of their contexts. If we isolate verses from their contexts, we can prove almost anything from the Bible. Just about every cult claims to be based on the teachings of the Bible.

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. When we tempt God, it is a dangerous thing to try God's patience, even though He is indeed patient and gracious.

In the last 15 years, false Bible teachers have been insisting that God's grace covers everything including consequences of our sins. That's a flat out lie. Yes, God's grace has no bound. God forgives, but He allows us to go through the consequences of our sins so that we don't repeat them again. That's divine love. Don't get into that cheap grace, because it is NOT from the Lord.

F. UNTIL NEXT OPPORTUNE 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 the most is the Word of God. People need the foundation that comes from studying the Word of God. That is what will give us the depth and power to resist temptations.

Let me ask you these 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.

The temptation itself is not a sin, but going for the temptation is a sin. The problem does not lie in the bait, but the bite.

G. APPLICATIONS

1) To master temptation, let Christ master you.

2) If we think that we can fight against the demonic temptations with our willpower, either we are plain stupid or we don't understand spiritual warfare. Actually, both.

3) 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 deep in one's throat.