

Temptation

Luke 4:1-13

Preface

Too often we blame God for things that are really the result of our inability to resist temptation.

Illus: Following the death of Princess Diana, someone asked a minister, "How can God allow such a terrible tragedy?" The minister replied, "Could it have had something to do with a drunk driver going ninety miles an hour in a narrow tunnel?"

Illus: In a letter to Dr. James Dobson, a young woman asked this anguished question, "Four years ago, I was dating my boyfriend and became pregnant. I was devastated. "How could you allow this to happen to me?"

Temptation is a real and dangerous part of life. *"Opportunity knocks but temptation bangs on your door for hours."*

We do not have to be defeated by temptation. Satan tempts us to bring out the worst in us but God uses our difficult experiences to put the best into us. Temptation is Satan's weapon to defeat us, but it can be God's tool to build us up.

Scripture

¹Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the desert, ²where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry.

³The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread."

⁴Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone.' (Duet. 8:3) "

⁵The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. ⁶And he said to him, "I will give you all their authority and splendor, for it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. ⁷So if you worship me, it will all be yours."

⁸Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.' (Duet. 6:13)"

⁹The devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down from here. ¹⁰For it is written:

" 'He will command his angels concerning you to guard you carefully; ¹¹they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.' ¹(Psalm 91:11-12)"

¹²Jesus answered, "It says: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.' (Duet. 6:16)"

¹³When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time. Luke 4:1-13 NIV

Introduction

The temptation of Christ has always been very intriguing to me. Even today, I do not feel that I fully understand God's reasons for having His son go through the temptations.

Regardless, Jesus was tempted for 40 days. The Bible indicates that during that time Jesus ate nothing.

The temptation of Christ serves to teach us some important things spiritually.

1. It exposes Satan for his sneaky and shrewd ways.
2. It shows that while on earth, Jesus was a man in every sense of the word. He hungered, felt emotions and pain and was fully tempted.
3. It shows us that Jesus was truly deserving of His title as the Lamb of God. He was completely sinless.
4. It serves as an example to us that we can recognize and refuse Satan's cunning temptations.

As we look at each of the temptations, notice in each case, notice that there are really three aspects to the temptation.

(1) There is the "attractive proposition" which is the sugar coated way in which Satan makes the temptation so appealing it doesn't even look like sin.

(2) There is the "actual sin" that Satan is trying to get Jesus to commit on Satan's behalf.

(3) And finally, there is the "spiritual danger" that Jesus recognizes in each temptation.

The temptation of Christ is not at all unlike the temptations we face today. When you look closely at the temptation of Christ, you quickly recognize these familiar temptations.

Content

1. Satan Temps with Physical Satisfaction (vs. 3-4)

³ *The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread."*

⁴ *Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone.' (Duet. 8:3) "*

Attractive Proposition: Get food immediately by turning the stone into bread.

Actual Sin: Not waiting on God. Satisfy physical desires without God.

Spiritual Danger: Defying God and His timing to satisfy the physical.

Satan was saying, "God is holding out on you. God isn't coming through for you." This is how he tempts us.

But Jesus understands the fact that bread doesn't sustain our life, God does. If we defy God for physical satisfaction, what good is our pleasure?

Jesus was determined to do only that which the Father willed and in God's timing. Jesus knew he would not die in the wilderness. He desired to fulfill God's plan in God's time.

Trust God for sustenance. God is ultimately the source of all life, all pleasure and all satisfaction. If it doesn't come from God, you don't want it.

Many people today are fat on physical food but starving when it comes to spiritual food. God is the ultimate source of life, not bread. God is the ultimate source of pleasure, not sin.

Illus: Satan today tempts us with the promise of instant physical satisfaction. Many marriages are destroyed by this temptation of physical satisfaction. Many young people's lives are set on the wrong path because of this temptation.

We must understand that we can never sacrifice spiritual well being, rightness with God for the promise of instant satisfaction. We must wait upon the Lord.

2. Satan Temps with Promises of Power (vs. 5-8)

"I will give you all their authority and splendor, for it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. ⁷ So if you worship me, it will all be yours."

⁸ *Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.' (Duet. 6:13)"*

Attractive Proposition: Have immediate power over the earth without going to the cross.

Actual Sin: Worshipping Satan as your God.

Spiritual Danger: Defying God to worship another.

Jesus quoted Moses when he warned the people not to praise themselves for the Promised Land but give God the glory. Jesus was not about to make that mistake and take the credit for himself.

Illus: We are often tempted to take things into our own hands and give ourselves credit for all that we have. Jesus reminds us that nothing is of value unless it is from God. People who do not tithe are guilty of not recognizing that all good things come from God.

Our society is built on the lie this temptation offers. We will do whatever we can to get what we want and get it now. Less and less are people willing to work for what we have. People are trained today to just expect it to be handed over to them.

Illus: Sit on stool playing slot machine. We even think we can pay for our children's education with gambling rather than having to pay from our pockets or tighten our belts.

We need to understand the principle Jesus understood, Whatever we worship, we must serve. "Where your treasure is there your heart will be also." *Matthew 6:21*

Satan's pattern is to start with glory and end with suffering. God's pattern is to start with obedience and end with the glory.

Satan wants us to sacrifice the eternal for the temporary.

The Father had already promised to give the Son all kingdoms of the world. But Jesus was to first go to the cross. The obedience must come first then the glory.

There are no shortcuts in the Christian life. We must travel God's map to victory and spiritual maturity. Stepping out of the will of God for temporary gratification is dangerous business.

3. Satan Temps with Pride (vs. 9-12)

⁹ *The devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down from here.*

¹² *Jesus answered, "It says: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.' (Duet. 6:16)"*

Attractive Proposition: Prove to everyone who you are.

Actual Sin: Giving into pride.

Spiritual Danger: Testing God.

Since you are the Son of God...appeals to his pride to prove something.

We've all been dared, double dared and triple dared to do something that we knew was wrong.

The last words of a dead redneck - "Ya'll watch this." That is someone showing off their pride.

Illus: Today Satan still tempts us with our pride. Young people are particularly lured by the temptation of pride and peer pressure. Show you are cool by taking this drug or by participating in this activity. If you don't do this or that then you just are not cool.

Illus: An umpire named Pinelli once called Babe Ruth out on strikes. When the crowd booed with sharp disapproval at the call, the legendary Ruth turned to the umpire with disdain and said, "There's 40,000 people here who know that the last pitch was ball, tomato head." Suspecting that the umpire would erupt with anger, the coaches and players braced themselves for Ruth's ejection. However, the cool headed Pinelli replied, "Maybe so, Babe, but mine is the only opinion that counts."

We must not let our pride fools us. We need to understand that God's opinion of us is the only opinion that matters. Jesus was confident God was with Him and he had no need to prove anything to Satan or anyone else.

You and I need to prove ourselves only to God. Don't be tempted by Satan's tricks.

Conclusion

Notice that each of the temptations have one underlying characteristic. They all have a sense of urgency. In each case the real temptation is to have it now rather than waiting on God. In God's timing, Jesus would have food, he would have dominion over everything and he would be protected and made whole.

We must learn to recognize that Satan's biggest temptation is to promise us something now. No waiting - have it your way Now!

We have the same weapons Jesus had at his disposal to fight Satan's temptations.

Prayer

Word of God

Holy Spirit

Notice Jesus was full of the Holy Spirit. He was abiding in the Father and this was his strength to resist Satan.