

LUKE'S GOSPEL

INVESTIGATING THE MAN WHO IS GOD

LUKE 4:1–13

JESUS WITHOUT SIN

LUKE 4:1–13

¹ And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness ² for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And he ate nothing during those days. And when they were ended, he was hungry. ³ The devil said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread.” ⁴ And Jesus answered him, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone.’” ⁵ 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.” ⁸ And Jesus answered him, “It is written,

“You shall worship the Lord your God,
and him only shall you serve.”

⁹ 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.”

¹² And Jesus answered him, “It is said, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’” ¹³ And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time.

INTRODUCTION

Question: when was the last time that you were tempted, really sincerely, deeply tempted to sin, to say or do exactly what you know you are not to say or do? What was it? Was it something new? Is it something habitual that shows up every day, week, month, or year, but in cycles nonetheless? How did it go? Did you resist temptation and walk in victory? Were you defeated? Did you yield, succumb to the temptation?

As we examine Luke chapter four, we get this amazing snapshot of the temptation of Jesus Christ. Jesus was tempted. That tells us that temptation itself is not a sin. Satan has lied to some of you and said because you're tempted, you're already defeated. That's not true. Jesus was tempted and did not sin. And as we examine the

temptation of Jesus, we get the perfect example of how sin and temptation are to be resisted, and the power by which to share in that same resistance to temptation and sin.

TEMPTATION IS LIKE BAIT ON A HOOK

And, by way of preference, I want to give you an analogy that I hope will serve you well and be ever present in your mind throughout the remainder of your life as temptation is set before you. Thomas Brooks, a great Puritan author, he wrote a book, *Precious Remedies Against Satan's Devices*.¹ He uses this amazing analogy. He says that temptation is nothing more than bait on a hook. You see the analogy? Satan will come to you as he came to Jesus and he will bait your hook with whatever it is that will be enticing to you: food, sex, fame, money, power, glory, boyfriend, girlfriend, husband, wife, security, comfort, whatever it is. Achievement, accolade, grade point average, high, whatever it is, he'll bait the hook. His entire goal is to give you whatever will compel you to bite, take the hook, so that he can, in every way, reel you in toward death. Sin leads to death, and the reason that people keep sinning is, oftentimes, they are enticed by the bait and they neglect to pay attention to the hook.

See, Satan, if he came to you and said, "I would like you to experience divorce or gluttony or obesity or drunkenness or drug addiction or devastated generations of family lineage from gossiping and busy-bodying or violence or mean-spiritedness or bitterness," no one would bite. And so, being crafty and clever, the tempter, the deceiver, the liar finds creative ways to bait the hook.

JESUS WAS TEMPTED AS WE ARE, BUT NEVER SINNED

And, what we'll see in Luke chapter four is that Satan comes to the Lord Jesus, and he baits the hook continually for forty days, with all of the kinds of temptation that you and I are constantly battling against, some of us successfully, some of us unsuccessfully. And as we look at the temptation of Jesus, we find ourselves meeting a God who, in every way, identifies with us when we are tempted. He's been there. He's not a God who stands back and is immune from temptation and trial and suffering. He's a God who enters into it, to identify with us in it, to deliver us from it.

Now, before we jump into the text, I need to clarify one thing theologically. Otherwise, when you get into your community group this week, a verse from James will be thrown out like a Frisbee before a dog. And you'll all chase it and end up completely lost in your community group. Community groups meet in condos, homes, dorms, apartments, to live on mission together as the church. One of the elements of those gatherings is discussing the Scriptures that I preach.

And, I know when you all get together—if you're not in a group, get in a group, we'd love to plug you in today—when you get together, someone is going to do this. Here's the Frisbee that will be launched. James chapter one, verse 13, "God cannot be tempted with evil and he himself tempts no one." And then your group will ask this question, "Okay, God cannot be tempted. Jesus is God. He was tempted. Oh no, my head exploded! What does this mean?" You feel it? And then, all of a sudden you'll be chasing the Frisbee, asking, "Could Jesus have sinned or could Jesus not have sinned? Was he really tempted, was he not tempted?" Rather than learning from Jesus' temptation for victory in your own temptation. My fear is you'd waste your whole community group, not talking about your struggles, your sins, your trials, your temptations, arguing over this theological hypothetical of whether or not Jesus could have sinned. The Bible says two things: Jesus was tempted; he never sinned. Hebrews 4:15, our high priest has been tempted like we are, without any sin. That's what the Bible says.

¹ For a PDF version of Thomas Brooks' *Precious Remedies Against Satan's Devices*, go here: <http://www.preachtheword.com/bookstore/remedies.pdf>.

So, how is it that Jesus, the second member of the Trinity, the Son of God, could be tempted if God is not tempted? Something unique, a one-time occurrence in human history happened at the incarnation, the coming in flesh of the second member of the Trinity, the Son of God, coming to us as the Lord Jesus Christ. That he humbled himself, that God took upon flesh, that the Creator entered his creation. Philippians 2:5–11 says he did so humbly to serve us, to identify with us, to live as we live, to be our Savior and our Redeemer. God becomes a man to connect men and women to God.

And, Jesus, during his life on the earth, was fully God, fully man. He still is, to this day, fully God, fully man. It's not that a man became God, but God became a man. And Jesus was God while he lived on the earth and he served others out of his divinity. But he never cheated and used his divinity for his own benefit. When he performs miracles, it's to feed other people, not himself; to heal other people, not himself; to alleviate the suffering of other people, not his own suffering. Jesus' divinity he used to benefit and bless others through miracles and supernatural power. But he himself lived as we must live: humbly, humanly. He suffered like we suffer. He grew tired like we grow tired. He was hungry as we grow hungry. He felt pain as we feel pain. And he endured temptation as we endure temptation.

In looking back on Luke 4, Hebrews chapter two comments. And here is the commentary: Hebrews 2:17–18, “he,” meaning Jesus, “had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.”

God became a man. He humbly lived. He didn't cheat and use his divinity to make his life easier. He was tempted as we are tempted. He identifies with us. And when we are tempted, we can look to Jesus, speak with Jesus, follow the example from Jesus on how to deal with temptation, because our God is not one who is immune and removed. He is one who is involved and sympathetic. He's been there. He understands.

And he was tempted continually for forty days. Whatever you've been tempted with, Jesus was tempted by it. That's why he is such an amazing God to those who are being tempted. He understands. He relates. He's a high priest. The high priest stands between God and the people. That's what Jesus does as our great high priest. He also, Hebrews says, makes propitiation for our sins, that the wrath of God is against us because of sin, and Jesus lives without any sin. He's tempted. But unlike us, he doesn't yield to that temptation. He goes to the cross, he suffers and dies in our place for our sins. He's our high priest. He's our Savior. He's our deliverer. He's our redeemer. He's our righteousness. He's our hope. And all of that took place by Jesus humbly living in temptation.

WHO CAN FULLY APPRECIATE THE WEIGHT?

And some of you will look at Jesus and say, “I don't think he really understands temptation.” And you would say, “Well, because he never sinned, I don't think he really understands how tempting temptation really is.” Let me give you an analogy. If two guys are at the gym and they're spotting each other on their bench, which guy fully appreciates, understands the full weight of the bar, the guy who can't lift it or the guy who can? Answer: the guy who can lift the full weight; he's the one who truly knows the full weight of the bar. Jesus resisted all temptation. He's the one who understands the full weight of temptation. You and I, eh, we get ten pounds up and then it collapses on our proverbial chest. He, for forty days, is continually resisting every temptation. He knows how heavy it is. When you get in your groups and you talk to your family, friends, and coworkers, remember this: Jesus was tempted; he forgives those who have yielded to temptation; he helps those who are being tempted.

FORTY DAYS OF CONTINUAL TEMPTATION

I'll show you where the story begins. Luke 4:1–2, you ready? One of my favorite parts of Luke: “And Jesus,” it's all about him, “full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan,” where he was baptized, “and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness for forty days, being tempted by the devil.”

What had just happened here in Luke three, Jesus was baptized, came out of the water, and immediately upon his coming out of the water, God the Father speaks from heaven, “This is my Son, in whom I am well pleased.” The Holy Spirit, the third member of the Trinity, descends on Jesus like a dove. Jesus comes out of the water. The whole Trinity is there. This is Jesus' public inauguration, declaration of ministry. And he goes right to the battlefield. He goes right to the frontlines. He may still be wet. He is off to battle. He is no coward. He is right to work.

And he goes out into the wilderness all by himself for forty days. He fasts. He doesn't eat anything. And he is doing battle with Satan. This is all exceedingly important. The forty days remind us of the forty-day fast of Moses and Elijah. And Jesus is greater than those prophets. I would say that some of you will read this and think it's going to be super spiritual to fast for forty days. Talk to your doctor first. You may not be in the condition to handle forty minutes, right? Get some medical clearance before you go after that endeavor. But Jesus was young. He was healthy, about thirty, blue-collar job, walking over lots of rough terrain. We can assume he was in good shape. Forty days.

This also reminds us of the forty years that God's children wandered in the desert in the wilderness. Jesus here is the true and better Israel. He's spending his forty days in the wilderness.

And he picks up where Adam leaves off. At the end of Luke 3, the genealogy was from Jesus back to Adam. Adam enjoyed a paradise, not a wilderness. He got to feast, he wasn't famished. He sinned and rebelled against God. When Satan came to him and tempted him, he yielded to that temptation. As a result, he was cast out of the garden into the wilderness. He was our father, head, and representative. We all, as his children, sons and daughters, we bear that sin nature given us from him and we are born in the proverbial spiritual wilderness, separated from God because of sin.

And so, Jesus picks up where Adam leaves off, in the wilderness. And he goes back to the battlefield where Adam, our first father, failed. And he comes, 1 Corinthians 15:45, as the last Adam to win a victory where Adam suffered a horrendous defeat. And, he is going to be tempted for forty days. That's what it says. He was in the wilderness for forty days being tempted by the devil.

Luke will record for us three of the temptations but there were more. This was continual ongoing temptation for forty days and forty nights. And Jesus got to that place by being Spirit-filled, Spirit-led. Luke will introduce us repeatedly to God the Holy Spirit. Here he shows us that Jesus was filled, empowered by God the Holy Spirit, led by God the Holy Spirit. We believe, at Mars Hill, in being Spirit-filled, Spirit-led. Jesus was. By the grace of God, we want to be. We want the Holy Spirit to fill us, to give us new life and new power, the life and power of Christ, we want to be Spirit-led. We want to go wherever the Holy Spirit would call us to go, not just those place that are most easy and convenient. Sometimes the Spirit leads us into very difficult circumstances for the glory of God and the good of others. That's what he's doing here to Jesus.

And as we investigate the temptations of Jesus, it is the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the boastful pride of life. First John 2 says that those are the categories of our temptation. Jesus is going to be tempted like we're tempted, for pleasure and power and fame and glory and security and comfort and health and wealth and ease.

And so Satan comes to him repeatedly over forty days.

THE FIRST TEMPTATION: JESUS WAS HUNGRY

The first temptation begins at the end of verse two, chapter four: “And he ate nothing during those days. And when they were ended, he was hungry.” Fully human. “The devil said to him, ‘If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread.’ And Jesus answered him, ‘It is written, “Man shall not live by bread alone.”’”

Could Jesus have turned stones into bread? Yes or no? Sure. He’s going to make water into wine. If he can make water into wine, he can make stones into bread. Jesus is hungry. And Satan tells him to make bread. If you’re hungry, is it a sin to eat bread? No. Then what’s the temptation here? Well, part of the temptation is whether or not Jesus would obey Satan. Satan is the one commanding him to do this, not God. Secondly, Satan is calling him to meet a physical desire or urge. You need to know that many of your and our temptations are around bodily appetites and pleasures that are not necessarily evil in and of themselves. Food, drink, rest, intimacy can be gifts that God gives if appropriated in a godly fashion. They also can lead us into much temptation: gluttony, drunkenness, addiction, and perversion; worshiping comfort and pleasure as if they were gods and we pursue them at all cost.

IDENTITY DETERMINES BIOGRAPHY

The real temptation here, though, is actually an attack on Jesus’ identity. Hear Satan’s line: “if you are the Son of God.” Satan will say that twice in Luke 4:1–13. “If you are.” Now, if you’ll remember back with me in Luke chapter three when Jesus was baptized, comes up out of the water, God the Father says, “This is my Son, in whom I am well pleased.” Satan says, “Are you really the Son of God?”

Your life comes out of your identity. Who you think you are will determine what decisions you make and how you live your life. Do you think you’re a victim? You’ll live as a victim. If you think you’re without sin, you’ll live a religious life. If you think you are damaged goods beyond repair, you will never enjoy the totality of redemption that God would have for you. Identity, identity determines biography. I’ll say it again. Identity determines biography. Who you are determines how you live. Jesus is the Son of God. That is a title of divinity. He’s God. That’s what God the Father says. Satan comes and says, “Are you sure?”

See, in Christ you have a new identity. You’re a new creation. God is now for you a new Father, the church is a new family, heaven is a new eternity, the Spirit of God in you is a new power. And Satan would come to you and say, “Are you really forgiven? Don’t you remember the horrible things you did? Are you sure God forgives you of that? God loves you? Are you sure that he loves you? You’re suffering right now.” Maybe like Jesus, you’re broke, homeless, poor, hungry, and lonely. “You sure he loves you? It doesn’t look like he loves you. You sure that God adopted you into his family? It doesn’t seem like your Christian friends are all that helpful. It doesn’t seem like anyone else is really trying to serve you. Are you sure that God is your Father? Are you sure you’re a Christian? Are you sure you’re saved and loved and redeemed and cleansed and forgiven? All those big promises the Bible makes, if that was true, wouldn’t your life look a little better than it does right now?” And Satan will question your identity as a child of God as he questioned the identity of the Son of God. I really want you to know that, in Christ, you get a new identity. And out of that identity, you live a new biography. That’s why the Bible says let us live up to what we’ve already attained. God loves us, saves us, forgives us, gives us his righteousness, adopts us, cares for us, prepares a place for us. Let’s just live up to what we’ve already attained. But if you forget your identity, you’ll destroy your biography.

And Satan’s a liar. John 8 says he is a liar. He’s the father of lies. Lying is his native language. He’s been lying since the beginning. And if he can lie to you like he lied to Jesus, and if he can get you to question your identity, he can destroy your life. He’s a liar. Something doesn’t need to be true to be devastating, it simply need be believed. And sometimes Satan just starts with a question, like he did Eve, like he did Jesus, like he does you. “Did God really say?” “Do you really think?”

YOU NEED TO KNOW THE BIBLE

How does Jesus respond? Jesus responds by quoting Deuteronomy. He's going to quote Deuteronomy three times, likely from memory. Here it's Deuteronomy 8:3, "It is written." Here's what Jesus is saying, "The Bible says." When Satan comes at you, you need to know your Bible. If you don't, you have no spiritual authority. Your spiritual authority is Jesus' spiritual authority delegated to you. That comes from the Scriptures. When Ephesians and Hebrews say the Word of God is living and active, sharper than a double-edged sword, that it really is made for battle. And as Satan comes to you and as the battle of temptation rages in your life and your hook is being baited and your flesh is being tempted, Scripture is your only hope, and to know it well and to quote it from memory.

And, the question is, if all of human history hinged on your capacity, after forty days in the wilderness without food, the ability to quote Deuteronomy, how would it go? Answer: Deute-what? Deute-where? Deute-who? Deute-uh-oh. Yeah, Deuteronomy. *[Laughter]* It's to the left of where we find ourselves at present. Some of you simply need to start by just committing to reading through the Bible, just read it all to start with. Yes, get in a community group. Yes, study it over. Yes, pray it over. Yes, memorize and meditate. Start somewhere. Start somewhere by reading the Bible. Twenty minutes a day, you could read the whole Bible in a year.

Jesus, we're told in Luke 2:52, during his teen years, he grew in wisdom, stature, and favor with men and God. He's baptized, he begins his ministry, he goes out to the wilderness, frontline of the battle. Satan comes to him. What he doesn't say is, "I'm sorry, I've got to do some homework. I'll get back to you in a decade. I forgot to read Deuteronomy. Uh-oh." He's ready to go. Some of you are younger, you're single, you're in a season of life, and you're wasting it with television and the Internet. You're wasting it with hobbies and entertainment, none of which is necessarily bad but is, oftentimes, not best, and that, when temptation comes and Satan comes, you will not be ready to do battle because you have not been preparing yourself for that war. Jesus is ready.

SATAN WILL RE-BAIT THE HOOK

Does Satan leave him? No. See, some of you have been told wrongly. You've been told two lies, oftentimes by those who even claim to be pastors. The first is, "Oh, that stuff on the hook, it's really not that enjoyable. Sex, money, fame, power, glory, nice clothes, someone to adore you, yeah, it's not really that great." The truth is, it is. That's why people keep trying to get the bait off the hook. You always end up with the hook in your mouth, but people keep trying. I'm not going to lie to you and say, "Oh, sex and eating and a glass of wine and a day off and somebody to rub your neck, that's really bad. You don't want that." I'm not going to do that. The Bible says thou shalt not lie. The truth is, when the hook is baited, it's usually with good things that become God-things and that's a bad thing. It becomes something you're willing to trade in for God, like Esau trades in his birthright. You're willing to do that.

The second lie that is often told, sadly, is that if you just say no he'll leave you alone. And sometimes you'll even watch those Bible teachers say, "Quote a verse, tell him to go." He doesn't always go. He doesn't just leave Jesus. It's not like, "Oh, I heard Deuteronomy, now I got to go." He keeps coming. He just re-baits the hook. He baits it again.

THE SECOND TEMPTATION: SATAN PREACHES PROSPERITY

Luke 4:5-8, "And the devil took him up," a miracle—we don't know how it happened, "and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, 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. If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours.' And Jesus answered him, 'It is written, "You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve."'"

Satan comes to Jesus and preaches prosperity. It's amazing. Satan still preaches prosperity. He does it in "Christian"—"Christian," I use that word loosely, in quotes; God judges the heart, but the doctrine is not sound.

He does it in pulpits, in books, in Bible colleges, in seminaries, in television and radio. Satan comes to Jesus and says, "I thought the Father loved you. I thought the Father was a King. I thought he owned the cattle on a thousand hills. You should be eating good food, not starving. You should be living in a big house, not a barren wilderness. You should have a bunch of servants, not left to tend to yourself."

Satan's a prosperity preacher. *The Atlantic* recently had a cover story asking the question, does evangelical prosperity hold responsibility for the economic downturn?² Did the Christians get so greedy, overspending, over-consuming, believing that God is not preparing a kingdom for them but that, on credit and third mortgages, they can build one right here right now that they contributed to the economic collapse of the nation and the world? That's a very interesting question for a non-Christian magazine to post. The answer is that many of you today would think that we have a financial problem. We don't. We have a worship problem. That so many of us have bought this lie. "I deserve good clothes and a new car and a big house. And I deserve nice things. I'm a child of the King. My Father certainly wouldn't want me to live like Jesus." And that sounds crazy. So then, there are some who would say, "Jesus was a rich man. Jesus had a big house. Jesus drove a nice car. Jesus wore designer clothes and he wants the same for you." And it's satanic. It's demonic. It's a lie.

And all it is, is Satan handing the hook to the preacher, saying, "You know what, out in the world I can use marketing and advertising firms and everybody takes the bait. But in the church, they are a little more suspicious. So, dear pastor, could you please bait the hook for me?" And the pastors do.

Satan comes preaching prosperity to Jesus, "I'll give you all the kingdoms of the world. You want to rule over a billion in China and a billion in India? You want to rule over the Roman Empire? You want to be president of the United States of America? How big do you want your house? How big do you want your twenty-seventh house? How big do you want your car? How big do you want your twenty-seventh car? How big do you want your throne? How high do you want your servants to carry you so that all could see you?"

We've all been lied to. Some of you say, "Is it bad to have a job and make money and to live in a house and to have a car?" No. But if it's Satan that puts that bait on your hook through marketing or prosperity preaching and you bite, you're dead. Satan will reel you into death and some of you are tasting it right now, economically, maritally, emotionally, practically. The answer is not more money. The answer is to get the hook out of your mouth. The answer is not more bait on the hook, hoping if you have more bait eventually you won't even feel the hook. The answer is to repent and get off the hook.

See, the Bible is not just about what happened. The Bible's about what always happens. Second Corinthians 2:11 Paul says, Satan won't outwit us if we know his schemes. If you know his tactics, at least you have a little preparation.

SIN IS SATAN WORSHIP

And the real issue is this. It's a worship issue. Here's what he says. Satan says to Jesus, "You want glory, you want fame, you want power? We can do that without the cross. You don't need to be abandoned and betrayed and homeless and flogged and arrested and murdered and crucified and buried. We can give you a crown without a cross. We can give you a kingdom without a tomb. We can do that. Just one thing, you'll need to worship me."

See, some of you come here and you say, "I don't worship Satan." Let me give you another definition of sin. Every time we sin, we're choosing to worship Satan. Worship is not just what we do on Sunday when we

² Hanna Rosin, "Did Christianity Cause the Crash?" *The Atlantic*, December 2009, <http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/200912/rosin-prosperity-gospel>.

gather for corporate meetings. It's what we do throughout the course of the week. What you look at is an act of worship. What you say is an act of worship. What you do is an act of worship. Every time you take your debit card out of your wallet or purse and you go to transact commerce and business, that's a worship act. It's for or against the glory of God. What you drink, what you eat, that is to or against the glory of God. It's all worship act. It's all worship act.

And so Satan comes to Jesus and says this, "Hold me in a position of prominence and preeminence." He's not even asking Jesus to become an atheist and deny the Father. "Just take the Father down from his position of glory. Don't do everything that honors him. Do some things that I want you to do as well. Can't you have divided loyalties and interests?" And some of you are that way. You're like, "Well, I love Jesus and sex. I love Jesus and money. I love Jesus and food. I love Jesus and gambling. I love Jesus and drugs. I love Jesus and gossiping. I love Jesus and busy-bodding. I love Jesus and laziness. I love Jesus and comfort. I love Jesus and relationship. Or, I don't identify with any of that because I love Jesus and religion, and I'm proud and self-righteous and look down on people with those other troubles."

And Satan comes to Jesus and says it's a worship issue. "I'll make you comfortable, successful, powerful. I'll fill your stomach. I'll give you all the pleasures that your mind could even conceive of."

How many of you right now, this is present, this isn't ancient history for you, this is your life? I've been praying with people all day. Women coming up, "Yeah, I am addicted to drugs." Guys, "I am addicted to alcohol." "Yeah, I am addicted to sex." "Yeah, I have taken the bait, the hook is in my mouth, I am dying." Those are worship acts. Repentance is where we apologize to God. Our goal is not to eat less of the bait. Our goal is not to get the bait off the hook before it lodges in our mouth. Repentance is "I'm satisfied if I'm homeless and broke and hungry and alone like Jesus, because God is enough for me."

And so Jesus responds again by quoting Deuteronomy. This time he quotes chapter six, verse thirteen. Jesus answered him, "It is written." Back to the Scriptures. "You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve." Does Satan leave him alone? No, he baits the hook again.

THE THIRD TEMPTATION: SATAN KNOWS THE BIBLE

Luke 4:9–12, "And he took him to Jerusalem," now we're going to get religious, "and set him on the pinnacle of the temple," which was on a hill. This would have been a magnificent sight, "and said to him, 'If,' there it is again, second time, "'you are the Son of God,'" it's an identity issue, "'throw yourself down from here, for it is written, "'He will command his angels concerning you, to guard you,'" and "'On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.'" And Jesus answered him, 'It is said, "You shall not put the Lord your God to the test."'"

Satan comes to Jesus and says, "I notice you like the Scriptures. I study them myself." Satan still has professors at Bible colleges, seminaries, Christian universities, and publishing houses. Not all, but there are false teachers, they do abound. Satan comes to Jesus and basically says, "Yeah, you quote Deuteronomy a few times, I've also been getting my devotionals in the Psalms." You know what Satan and demons are doing right now? They're having a community group, trying to figure out how to destroy us. They're sitting around with a Bible open, trying to figure out, "Okay, those guys at Mars Hill, I don't think they really understand this. Maybe we could use that to lead them astray, and then we can destroy their lives and their legacy and their work could be diminished. Maybe the Gospel wouldn't go forward." Right now Satan and demons are having a community group, trying to figure out how to take this sword out of our hands and run it through our middle.

Do you know your Bible? See, here he quotes Psalm 91:11–12. Do you know that Satan knows the Bible? Do you know that? Do you know that if you're sloppy with Scripture, he absolutely will destroy you. And see,

some of you are in that season right now, you're like, "I feel like I'm in a pretty good place. I'm not being really tempted. My life's in a good rhythm. I feel like it's okay." See, that's exactly what he wants. He wants all the soldiers to take the bullets out of the gun, to take their boots off when they go to bed, to forget where they left their helmet. He'll be back. He's just waiting. Your life is at stake, your soul is at stake, your legacy's at stake. Your city is at stake.

And see, I want you to remember that every time the hook is baited. And sometimes it's baited with religion. And sometimes religion even comes along and says, "You want the bait on the hook, great, we'll take verses out of context that Satan gave us, we'll tell them to you so you can feel biblical while you're worshiping Satan." And Satan says, "That's great. We definitely need to get that guy a book deal and maybe a really big ministry with a lot of money, so it looks like God's blessing him."

He comes to Jesus, sits him on the pinnacle of the temple, and what he tells him is this, "In Psalms 91:11–12, it says that God will protect those who are his faithful servants. Test him." Jesus goes back to Deuteronomy. This time it's chapter six. And he says this, "You shall not put the Lord your God to the test." What he says is, "Satan, you have quoted the verse, but you have misapplied it." God's point in Psalm 91 is not, test God and make him prove to you who he is, it is, if you faithfully serve him, he will lovingly help you in your time of need.

See, some of you, be very careful. God will call you to other places and churches and you'll move and God will call you out of here. And I don't want to sound like a fear-based preacher or someone who thinks he's the only Bible teacher on the earth. That's not true at all. But, if and when God would move you out of Mars Hill, please pick a church that is biblical, not just in the quoting of verses but the actual teaching of truth that is consistent with the rest of Scripture that points to Jesus as hero, God, Savior, Lord, and Christ. The cults will quote verses but they do so with Satan's influence. The false teachers will quote verses but they do so with Satan's influence. See, Satan is crafty and cunning and sly.

SATAN DOES EXIST AND HE IS EVIL

Now, let me say this. I feel compelled to. As I say that Satan exists and he's at work, some of you immediately will have resistance at that point, you'll be like, "Oh no, I'm in one of those conservative, fear-based, spiritually abusive churches where they tell people there's a devil and they scare them. Thankfully, I don't believe in the devil." My answer would be, he's already defeated you. For those who come from more liberal Christianity, they tend to say that the miracles and supernatural in the Bible are nothing more than human projection of primitive fears and that, now that we're enlightened, we've been to college, and we've got a telescope and a microscope, and we've not seen Satan and demons in either, we don't believe in Satan and demons. That's primitive and it's ancient and, thankfully, we've evolved beyond that. And I would say that simply proves my point.

Satan is the father of lies and he works through pride and he lies to people and tells them that they're too smart to believe in him. And they're dumb enough to believe it. Some of you come from more spiritual backgrounds, pantheism, pantheism, New Age, Buddhism, Easternism, Hinduism, Oprah-ism, Eckhart Tolle-ism, Avatar-ism, whatever it is. *[Laughter]* And all is one; there's not good and evil and God and Satan and angels and demons and truth and lies. There's just the spiritual. To be spiritual is to be demonic, if what you mean by that is, "I embrace all that is in the spirit world." Much of what is in the spirit world is Satan and demons.

So be very careful that you're not even trying to be spiritual, that you want to know the Holy Spirit, not the unholy spirits. And Satan comes to Jesus. See, there really is a Satan and he really is evil. The liberals and the new spirituality, general vague spiritualists, they're both wrong. Satan does exist and he is evil.

He comes to Jesus one last time. Jesus is exhausted. He has been without food for forty days and forty nights. Jesus is all alone, no one is there. Many of your sins are committed at that time. Are they not? When no one is

there. Well, God's there. But when there's no human accountability, that's when temptation is most tempting, correct? Jesus doesn't know this might be the last temptation. For all he knows he's got forty more days to go. Like you and I, we don't know when Satan will give us a break. And Satan is now forcing him to do exegesis, to from memory, roughly remember the context of Psalm 91:11–12. Jesus knows the Scriptures very, very well. "You shall not put the Lord your God to the test." Satan, you're not in charge. You don't get to judge God the Father. We don't show up and perform for you.

Some of you need to learn that lesson. Highly religious, demonically inspired people will want you to answer to them for no apparent reason. "Well, prove to me this and show me that." No. There is a throne and you're not on it. You are not in spiritual authority. You're not the pastor. You're not part of the elder team. You're acting like Satan. You're elevating yourself to a position of undeserved spiritual authority, quoting verses, demanding that the rest of us obey you and prove ourselves to satisfy you. It's demonic. Religious people do this. This is all happening in religious context. They're on the temple in Jerusalem. And Jesus says no. We don't answer to you, we don't follow your orders, and we don't try to appease your demands. The answer is no. Don't put God to the test.

See, God doesn't need to prove he's God. He is. God doesn't need to appeal to anyone. He's the highest authority. And Satan's problem is not that he is unconvinced, it's that he's unwilling to worship God as God. And he is determined to be worshiped as God.

UNTIL AN OPPORTUNE TIME

Now, ultimately, Satan does leave Jesus. Luke 4:13, "And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time." Forty days, constant, ongoing, habitual, painful, real conflict, battle, temptation. The hook is baited over and over and over with every temptation. Commenting on this, Hebrews 4 says, he was tempted in every way as we are, yet without sin.

So, dear friend, when you're tempted, please do not, please do not believe the demonic lie, "Jesus doesn't understand, Jesus can't relate, Jesus has never been there. My circumstances are unusual. I can't talk to him about this. I'm totally embarrassed. He won't understand. I'm so ashamed of myself." There is now no condemnation in Christ. He's been there. He's felt that. He's seen that. He's resisted that. He's there to help and serve you and you need him. *[Applause]* When it says that he was enduring every temptation, believe that. Whatever your temptation is, Jesus faced that temptation.

And eventually Satan left him. Forever? No. Till an opportune time. Some of you are between temptations, some of you, the battle rages heavily right now. For some of you, there was a battle, there's one coming, you know not when, and you're in the middle. It seems like a season of peace. Life's got a little momentum. Things are going pretty good. This is time to prepare yourself for the next battle, not retire from reading your Bible and going to community group and praying and repenting of your sin and inviting accountable relationships into your life. This is the time to get ready for the next battle. He'll be back at an opportune time.

Why do I tell you this? I'm your pastor. I love you with all of my heart. One of the most devastating parts of my job is seeing people who day after day bite the hook, bite the hook, bite the hook and get reeled off. They disappear. They disappear out of relationship and community and church. And Satan just drags them away and destroys them, devours them. Some of you come here, and even hearing this, all you hear is Satan whispering in your ear, and you'll hear it as second person: "You have gone too far. You have done too much. You have committed the unforgivable transgression. Your temptation is so strong and your faith is so weak. Your life course is already set. Your past is unforgivable. Your future is unhelpful. You're beyond the grace of God. You really should rejoice that others get to hear this, but this isn't for you."

Dear friend, if you're hearing "you," that would be your enemy whispering in your ear, trying to take away from you the freedom and the joy and the newness of life offered in Jesus Christ. He's a liar. He's a liar and the truth will set you free, that he is right now, perhaps, questioning your identity in Christ if, in fact, you are a Christian, just as he questioned the identity of Christ. I want you to be free people and happy people and liberated people, whether God has you to be rich or poor, homeless or in a nice home, in a wonderful relationship or all alone, eating a nice dinner or having a hungry stomach, I want you to be free.

And freedom comes to those who are devoted exclusively to God, who say no to temptation, who refuse to try to get the bait off the hook and are content with whatever God would give them as a life course. Jesus had nothing and he was free. He was free in a way that we're not. He never had the hook in his mouth.

TEN TEMPTATION TRUTHS

There are ten things I want to give you in closing. I'll call them ten temptation truths.

1. Satan is a real enemy.

Number one, Satan is a real enemy. Do you believe that? You need to discuss that at your community group and with your friends. If you don't, if you still think, "I think that's hocus pocus. I think that's psychological projection. My community college professor really confused me on this point." You need to articulate that. Don't be a liar. Be honest. Come clean.

See, one of the most amazing things Satan did is, he presented himself in the media, cartoons, little horns, red cape, pitchfork, "Here he comes. Yeah, we know it's him. How can we tell? He's the red guy." It's not that easy. He's into marketing and advertising. He's subtle and crafty and sly and he's very adept at baiting the hook. You have a real enemy. If you don't believe that, confess that as sin. That's the beginning of all your troubles. You have a real enemy. You're born into a real war. You're born again as a Christian on Christ's side of the battle. But, the battle rages in your life as it did in his.

2. Satan will H.I.T. you.

Number two, Satan will H.I.T. you. By that I mean, be particularly aware when you're hungry, isolated, and/or tired. How many of you find that your physical condition weakens your resistance to temptation? Jesus has physical hunger. When you're physically hungry, you'll get more grouchy, grumpy, tempted, isolated.

Now, solitude is good. The Bible will say, and we'll see it a little bit further in Luke, Jesus often withdrew to lonely places to be alone with the Father. Solitude's good. It's, "I need a break from all of my activities to get alone with God and have him refresh me." Isolation is dangerous. Jesus here was led by the Spirit into isolation, to do battle with Satan, to win where Adam and we lose. But, for you, isolation is a very dangerous thing. Isolation means you don't really have a lot of Christian friends, or the friends you do have, the relationships are very shallow. "How are you doing?" "Great, how are you?" "Great." "Well good, nice that we're all caught up now." It's even inviting your friends in defining the terms of your relationship. "Okay, look, we're Christian friends, not in some legalistic, weird referee, whistle-blowing religious way do I want you to ask me accountability questions. But, as a loving friend in the course of relationship, I want you to ask me real questions. You know my weaknesses towards sin. Ask how I'm doing. You know my vulnerabilities, you know how Satan baits my hook." And, if you don't know how he baits my hook, ask with your friends and in your group and with your spouse. That's the first question. "So, what bait's usually on your hook? Great, do you mind if I ask every once and a while how it's going?" Those kinds of relationships draw us out of isolation and into community. They're very important.

And, what happens is, most people don't pursue them until they're in crisis. So, they don't pursue Christian friendships. They don't join a community group to live on mission together as a church, opening the Scriptures

habitually every week together, doing life together. They wait till they've taken the bait, they've got the hook in their mouth, they're headed off into Satan's possession and their destruction, and then they run into the church and say, "Give me deep, significant, profound, life-changing relationships right now." We'll try, but it would've been a lot smarter to get started before the hook was in your mouth. It's not too late. We're not going to give up on you. But, it's better to be preventative than it is reactive. It's better to have friends help keep the hook out of your mouth than wait till the hook is in your mouth and then beg for some people to come and take the hook out of your mouth. Isolated. This includes church hopping and shopping and bouncing, not committed, plugged in, dialed in anywhere. Find a home.

And tired. Sometimes that tiredness is our own sin: stay up too late, watching TV, surfing the Internet, disorganized. Sometimes it's just a season of life: crisis happens, the baby's teething, it's just one of those times when you're just tired.

And what can happen when you're hungry, have physical need, this can be a propensity then toward gluttony, comfort food rather than Christ giving us the Holy Spirit as our comforter. Drunkenness, just, "I've had a hard day, I just deserve a stiff drink." This can be sexual sin and pornography and things of various sorts and kinds. "I'm lonely, I have urges, my body desires things so I must satisfy them." Isolation, "I'm lonely, there's no one to help, God you've abandoned me. Where are my Christian friends?" Tired, "I'm exhausted, I'm worn down, I'm weary." Jesus was hungry, isolated, tired, and without sin. Don't use biological, physical desire, relational isolation, or personal fatigue to allow you to sin and say, "Well, God, look, it's hard. I feel like you owe me one." No. You will be hit when you're hungry, isolated, and tired. That's why you need to make particular provision for those seasons where you're experiencing one or more of those factors, you just need to. You need to be honest about that, particularly if you're married.

3. Jesus Christ is your victorious Warrior-King.

Number 3, Jesus Christ is your victorious Warrior-King. Up until this point, you're all depressed. You're all like, "Alright, I've got the big idea. I'm really bad. Satan's a winner, winner, chicken dinner, and I am a loser. I got it, big idea, thank you very much." Here's the hope. The hope is not in you. The hope is Christ in you. That's the hope. You're not a winner. You're a loser. See, some of you say, "Well, now life makes sense," because see, in school, they keep telling you, "You're a winner, you're a winner, you're a winner." And, if you're paying any attention, you will notice that you're not. *[Laughter]* And what they'll say then is, "Okay, you're a loser, but if you have high self-esteem then you'll be a winner." No, then you'll be a proud loser. *[Laughter]* And pride is the worse sin of all. And if you walk into a church, they'll tell you, "You need to have more esteem so that you can be all you can be. You'll never have to be poor. You'll never have to be sick. You can be a winner." It's all a lie. Here's the truth. Jesus is the winner. That's the truth. We're not victorious. He is. We're not righteous. He is. We don't redeem ourselves from slavery to sin. He does. We don't change ourselves. He changes us.

I'll read it to you, one of my favorite texts, Colossians 2:13–15, "And you," that's you, "who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him."

Here is what he is saying. There's a list of laws and commands and Satan would stand as the accuser of the children of God, that he would condemn us day and night, and he would simply check the list: "This is your sin and your sin and your sin, thought, word, deed, omission, commission. You have done what you ought not do. You have done what you ought not have done. You've said and done that which is in violation of God's laws. Guilty, guilty, guilty, guilty, guilty. You are my possession. You belong to me. The hook is in your mouth. I am your master. You will worship me." And Jesus comes, and he identifies with us humbly. And he's tempted in every way as we are, yet without sin. And he goes to the cross, and what looks like the greatest defeat in

the history of the world is the great victorious liberation of the captives who become the children of God. And Jesus substitutes himself on the cross. And he who is without any sin takes our place, suffers and dies in our place for our sins. And he says that cancels, that cancels, friends, that cancels any right Satan has to you. You don't belong to him. You belong to God. You're not a slave, you're an adopted son. You're not an addict, you're a worshiper. Worship got you into trouble and worship will get you out. And so, you need to worship Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit. And that he triumphed over Satan at the cross. That he disarmed him. He can't defeat you. He can get you to defeat yourself, but your victory is in Christ. I have so much hope for you. All day I've been praying with people who have no hope. And I look them in the eye and I tell them the same thing I tell you, I have hope because we have Christ. And he is not finished with you and he has not given up on you.

And I know you may be feeling guilt and condemnation and shame right now. But there is now no condemnation in Christ. There is conviction but not condemnation. The conviction should cause us to love Jesus, give him our sin, and go and sin no more, and walk in his great triumphant victory. Condemnation is paralyzing. Conviction is liberating. Condemnation will cause you to live out of an identity that is one who is stained and marred and broken and worthless and a failure. And Jesus will give you a new identity as one who is changed, loved, healed, forgiven, and granted his perfect righteousness. Jesus' victory is your victory. Jesus' righteousness is your righteousness. Live up to what you've already obtained. See, this is why we love Jesus so much. See, some of you would've come in here and you would've said, "I think Jesus is good. But sometimes he's not very fun. He doesn't let me do some things that I really want to do. And maybe Satan isn't that bad because he would let me do those things." No, Satan is bad and Jesus is good and sin is death and he's a liar and you need not be a fool. He's your victorious King.

4. The Holy Spirit is your power.

Number four, the Holy Spirit is your power. Jesus was filled and led by the Holy Spirit. How did Jesus resist temptation for forty days? Answer: by the power of God the Holy Spirit, the same Holy Spirit who takes up residence in the children of God. You have the same presence and power of God the Holy Spirit in you that Jesus did. You can live as he did. You can defeat the temptation that comes to you as he did by the presence and the power, by being filled and led by God the Holy Spirit. This isn't religion and it's not guilt and it's not more that you need to do, it's more of you yielding to his purposes and presence and power so that you can follow in the life of Jesus by the enablement of the Holy Spirit. God doesn't just stand back and say, "I'm keeping score, you need to do better." Jesus dies to forgive, redeem, give new identity, sends the Holy Spirit to redeem, regenerate, transform, and give new power. That's an amazingly loving, gracious God.

5. Biblical truth is your counterpunch.

Number five, the Bible is your counterpunch. Biblical truth is your counterpunch. Satan will lie to you. You need to know the truth. Jesus says this in his high priestly prayer in John 17, "My prayer is that you protect them from the evil one. Father, sanctify them by the truth. Your Word is the truth." Every Word of God, Proverbs 30:5-6, is flawless. This is the truth. When Satan comes, you need to know the Scriptures. I just want you so bad to read your Bible. I know some of you come here and the only time you pick up your Bible is when I'm talking. I'm grateful that you would come. I'm grateful that you would let me teach you. I'm grateful that you would come to listen and learn. But if this is the only consistent time you pick up the Scripture, you are really doing great danger to your soul.

6. Christ is your identity.

Number six, Christ is your identity. I don't care what you've done, and I don't care what has been done to you. Those things are horrible and we can deal with them in redemption groups, Biblical counseling, community groups, friendship, and relationship, but here's your identity. It's not what has been done to you or what has been done by you, but it is what Christ has done for you. In the eyes of Christ, you are clean. You were forgiven. You were adopted. You were redeemed. You are beloved. You are, you are. And I know some of you, the guilt is deep and the sin is real and life is a wreck. And Christ is good. And if you believe that your identity is

transformed in Christ as an adoptive, loved, forgiven, regenerated, transformed, empowered, renewed, hopeful child of God, you will live differently.

7. Escape is always possible.

Number seven—most of you don't believe this—Escape is always possible. What happens is, for some of us, the hook has been there so long, it's like, "I can't ever get free of it. I used to eat all the bait. Now, I eat some of the bait. I used to eat the bait every week, now I only eat the bait once a month." Or, "I eat the bait, but it's my dad's fault, he ate the bait too and it's a habitual family issue. My counselor says it's a genetic issue. I come from a long line of people who are addicted to this particular bait. I can't really stop." So, I need to blame someone else, manage it, hide it, "Oh, I'll just go over here in the dark all by myself and I'll eat my bait and I'll put the hook in my mouth. But, if I do it privately, it won't count." God's there too.

See, some of you would take the bait and you'll put it, you'll walk so close to it. Like, "Oh my goodness, look at that. That's amazing. I would like to eat that, smoke that, drink that, get my hands on that, do that twice." [Laughter] God would say, "Hey, there's a door over here that's open and you could walk out it and be free." "I don't see any door." [Laughter] "Really? Well, there is one right over there." "Yeah, this is so big and so real and so awesome and so close." God would say, "Do you see the hook?" "No, I don't see the hook. I see some pretty amazing bait."

The truth is, you have two choices: the hook or the door. You either bite the hook or run out the door. Those are your only options. I'll give you a verse, so that I can win: 1 Corinthians 10:13–14, "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. Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry." Don't worship anything or anyone other than God.

What he's saying is this. When temptation comes, keep your senses. Look for the way out. There is a door of escape somewhere. There's a way out of it. Some of you for so long, "Well, I'm already dating them. I'm already at the club. I've already logged onto the Internet. I already started this conversation, you know. I'm already halfway there." Run. Run out the door of opportunity that God gives.

You have two choices, friends: the hook or the door. You bite the hook or run out the door. Your whole life, it utterly depends on the decisions you make in those moments. There's always a way out. You and I, we love to always be the victim. "I couldn't help it. It was not my fault, my friends blank, my life blank, this blank, God that." No way. The door was open and your eyes were closed. And repentance is believing that. Some of you need to go back over your life history and some of the major traumatic decisions you made and say, "Holy Spirit, show me where the door was open so that I can repent of having my eyes closed. And please help me to keep my eyes open. And please help me to keep my feet moving."

8. Satan eventually taps out.

Last few. Satan eventually taps out, number eight. Resist the devil and he will, what? Flee from you. Eventually. Maybe it takes forty days.

9. Repent whenever you tap out and fight another round.

Number nine, repent whenever you tap out and fight another round. Some of you, Satan tempts you, you're in a fight, and after a while you're like, "Okay, I tap out, I give in, I'll do what you want, I'll believe what you want, I'll behave how you want." So, what do you do then?

10. Life is a battle with many rounds.

Fight some more, because, number ten, life is a battle with many rounds. Just because you tapped out in one round doesn't mean it's over. He's going to be back anyways, just like he was to Jesus. He's going to come

back into Jesus' life repeatedly. He's going to, in fact, indwell and empower Judas Iscariot to murder him. This was just one round. The battle will rage all the way through the empty tomb.

And it rages all the way to this very day. Some of you come here having already tapped out. Repentance is acknowledging that you bit the hook rather than running out the door. It is acknowledging that Jesus is your only hope for escape and victory. It is confessing your sin to him in humility so that that control that Satan has in your life would be broken, that you could live a new life as a new creation as a new person with Christ.

THE ANSWER IS TO WORSHIP JESUS

I really love you. I know this is a heavy word. It's a somber moment. It needs to be. I've always believed that hard words produce soft people, and soft words produce hard people. And my hard words are with deep, loving affection because I have so much hope for you. I want your life to be the life that Christ wants for you, not the life that Satan has devised to destroy you. And I need you, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to be willing to fight, to fight for the glory of God and the good of your life and those who love you. This means, if you are not a Christian, you are without hope. If you are without Christ, you need to give yourself to Jesus today, as many have, and see that slavery broken, to see your enemy defeated, to see that hook taken out of your mouth, to, for the first time, experience a measure of victory in battle.

Some of you are here and you are religious and you need to repent of your religion. As I talk about sex and drugs and alcohol, you, smugly, under your breath, smile, thinking, "I'm glad I'm not like those people." You're worse than they are. You're self-righteous, religious people looking down with a lack of sympathy and compassion on those who are struggling and suffering. You are like the Pharisees. You're not like the high priest, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Some of you are here and you are devastated and you are broken and your life is in shambles and you have worshiped Satan. And the answer is to worship Jesus. Worship got you into trouble and worship will get you out.

Father God, I pray for my friends. I pray against the enemy, his servants, their works, and effects. I pray, Lord God, that these hard words would produce soft people. I pray, Lord God, that none would leave here disbelieving in the existence of Satan and demons. I believe that, Lord God, you want to help and serve these people. You want to set captives free. You want to bring newness of life. You want to open blind eyes. You want to take hooks out of open mouths. You want to give new appetites for things that are not evil. You have opened doors in a way of escape. And, Holy Spirit, I request that right now you would open the eyes and hearts and minds of our people, that they might see the open door and run through it to meet Jesus, whose arms are open, whose salvation is real, whose forgiveness is total, whose cleansing is thorough, whose grace is sufficient, whose righteousness is gifted, whose eternity is breathtaking, and whose sacrifice is amazing. Lord Jesus, I pray for my friends, that they would run through the door of opportunity to enjoy your embrace as we worship you together. Amen.

[End of Audio]

Note: This sermon transcript has been edited for readability.