

Ministry of Grace

Matthew 4

¹Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. ²And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry.

³And the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread."

⁴But he answered, "It is written, "'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

⁵Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple ⁶and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, "'He will command his angels concerning you,' and "'On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.'"

⁷Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

⁸Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. ⁹And he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me."

¹⁰Then Jesus said to him, "Be gone, Satan! For it is written, "'You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.'" ¹¹Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him.

¹²Now when he heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew into Galilee. ¹³And leaving Nazareth he went and lived in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, ¹⁴so that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: ¹⁵"The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles-- ¹⁶the people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light, and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death, on them a light has dawned." ¹⁷From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

¹⁸While walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter) and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. ¹⁹And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." ²⁰Immediately they left their nets and followed him.

²¹And going on from there he saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets, and he called them. ²²Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

²³And he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people. ²⁴So his fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought him all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains, those oppressed by demons, epileptics, and paralytics, and he healed them. ²⁵And great crowds followed him from Galilee and the Decapolis, and from Jerusalem and Judea, and from beyond the Jordan.

Parallel Passages

Mark 1:12-20, 35-39

¹²The Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. ¹³And he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. And he was with the wild animals, and the angels were ministering to him.

¹⁴Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, ¹⁵and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."

¹⁶Passing alongside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew the brother of Simon casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. ¹⁷And Jesus said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men." ¹⁸And immediately they left their nets and followed him. ¹⁹And going on a little farther, he saw James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, who were in their boat mending the nets. ²⁰And immediately he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants and followed him.

³⁵And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed. ³⁶And Simon and those who were with him searched for him, ³⁷and they found him and said to him, "Everyone is looking for you." ³⁸And he said to them, "Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out." ³⁹And he went throughout all Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons.

Luke 4:1-20, 3:19-20

¹And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness ²for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And he ate nothing during those days. And when they were ended, he was hungry.

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

⁴And Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone.'"

⁵And the devil took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, ⁶and 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. ⁷If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours."

⁸And Jesus answered him, "It is written, "'You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve.'"

⁹And 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, ¹⁰for it is written, "'He will command his angels concerning you, to guard you,' ¹¹and "'On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.'"

¹²And Jesus answered him, "It is said, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

¹³And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time.

¹⁴And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and a report about him went out through all the surrounding country. ¹⁵And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all.

¹⁶And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read. ¹⁷And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written, ¹⁸"The Spirit of the

Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, ¹⁹to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." ²⁰And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him.

¹⁹But Herod the tetrarch, who had been reproved by him for Herodias, his brother's wife, and for all the evil things that Herod had done, ²⁰added this to them all, that he locked up John in prison.

Notes

Matthew 4:1, 2

¹Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. ²And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry.

“**Then**” – This is the Greek word *tote*, implying an indefinite note of sequence. However, in Mark’s gospel he uses the word *euthus*, meaning “immediately” or “the very next thing.”

The Spirit immediately drove Him out into the wilderness.

Thus, it appears that the temptation of Christ occurred immediately after His baptism.

“**Jesus was led**” – The words “**was led**” are translated from the Greek word *anagō*, which is made up of *ana*, meaning “up” or “again” and *agō*, meaning “to lead” or “to drive.” It is an image of a shepherd leading, or driving, his sheep from one place to another. Again, if we look at Mark’s gospel we find a different expression. As seen in the quote from Mark above, it says that the Spirit “drove” Him into the wilderness. The word translated “drove” is *ekballō*, which is made up of *ek*, meaning “out” or “out of” and *ballō*, which means “to throw” or “to drive.” Hence, we see that Mark claims that the Spirit’s action was not a gentle leading, but an insistent driving.

“**tempted**” – The Greek word *peiradzō*, meaning “to tempt or test for the purpose of determining either bad or good.”

Matthew 4:3, 4

³³And the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." ⁴But he answered, "It is written, "'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

The Apostle John in his first epistle said,

Do not love the world (system) nor the things in the world (system). If anyone loves the world (system), the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world (system), the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world (system). (1 John 2:15,16) [NASB]

In the Garden of Eden, Eve was tempted in all three of these areas:

So when the woman saw that the tree was **good for food**, and that it was **a delight to the eyes**, and that the tree was **to be desired to make one wise**, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. (Genesis 3:6)

Likewise, Jesus was tempted in each of these three areas. The first temptation was regarding the desires (or lust) of the flesh. In Eve's temptation, it was the fact that the fruit was good for food. In the same manner, Jesus was very hungry after having fasted for 40 days.

"If you are the Son of God" - This expression in Greek is referred to as "a first class condition." It assumes that the "if clause" (If you are the Son of God) is true. So, this verse could be translated as, "Since you are the Son of God ..." In other words, Satan is not challenging Jesus to prove his deity. He is, rather, challenging Jesus to take action independent of the Father's will. So, what's wrong with Jesus producing some food? He was very hungry after all. Jesus came as a man, not to do whatever he wanted (what he desired), but to do his father's will:

Then I said, 'Behold, I have come to do your will, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.'" (Hebrews 10:7)

Also, when Jesus encountered the woman at the well in Sychar of Samaria, his disciples urged him to eat something.

Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, saying, "Rabbi, eat." But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you do not know about." So the disciples said to one another, "Has anyone brought him something to eat?" Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work. (John 4:31-34)

Let's look at Jesus' answer to Satan, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God." Jesus faced off with Satan, not as the second person of the trinity, but as a frail human being, as a man. Neither you nor I have the power to turn stones into bread, so if Jesus had done so, the temptation would not be the same as what we would have faced. That's why his response was "man shall not ..." Temptation involves the will and, as we quoted above, Jesus came to do the Father's will.

Matthew 4:5-7

⁵Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple ⁶and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, "'He will command his angels concerning you,' and "'On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.'" ⁷Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

The word translated "pinnacle" is *pterugion*, which means "a winglet." It is most likely a reference to the highest part of the temple wall which is about 500 feet above the Kidron Valley on the southeast corner of the Temple wall.

This temptation is regarding the pride of life. The Greek word translated "boastful pride" in 1 John 2:16 above is *aladzoneia*, which was used to describe a boastful, bragging person who is trying to impress others with his own importance. Satan was trying to get Jesus to prove how important he was. So important, in fact, that God's holy angels would protect him from hurting himself if he jumped off the pinnacle of the temple.

In Eve's case this was the third aspect of the temptation, "the tree was to be desired to make one wise ..." Eve was not satisfied with the way God created her. She wanted to be something on her own.

Jesus recognized, however, that in jumping off the temple wall, he would be once again acting on his own will and challenging (or tempting) God the father to do as He promised. And once again, Jesus used God's word to fend off the spiritual attack.

Matthew 4:8-11

⁸Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. ⁹And he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." ¹⁰Then Jesus said to him, "Be gone, Satan! For it is written, "'You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.'" ¹¹Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him.

“all the kingdoms of the world” – Luke adds “in a moment of time.”

The third attack from the Devil was in regard to “the lust (desires) of the eyes.” In Eve’s case, it was the fact that the fruit was a delight to the eyes. She wanted to possess this beautiful fruit. We don’t know what it was, but something about the forbidden fruit was very inviting. In Jesus’ case, it was the attractiveness of all the kingdoms of the world being in his possession. In our case today we might refer to this as having the “I wants.”

Jesus knew that after his sacrifice on the cross he would receive all that Satan was promising him. But, Satan was offering him a way to have it now, without waiting and without the suffering.

Keep in mind that Satan is the “god of this world” (2 Corinthians 4:4) and he has the authority to give it to whomever he wishes.

However, once again, we see that Jesus was willing to receive only what the Father wanted him to have. He also recognized that only God the Father is worthy of our worship.

Matthew 4:12-16

¹²Now when he heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew into Galilee. ¹³And leaving Nazareth he went and lived in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, ¹⁴so that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: ¹⁵"The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles-- ¹⁶the people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light, and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death, on them a light has dawned."

“Now” – This is not an indication of timing. It is translated from the particle *de*, meaning “and, but, or now.” Between Jesus’ temptation and this verse a number of events occurred. They are covered in John 1:19 – 3:36. These events included:

- the priests and Levites questioning John about who he is and why he is baptizing,
- John’s identification of Jesus as “the Lamb of God,”
- Jesus’ calling of his first disciples (Andrew, Simon Peter, and Nathanael
- The miracle of turning water into wine
- A Passover at which Jesus drove the money changers out of the Temple
- Jesus’ meeting with Nicodemus
- Jesus and his disciples began baptizing
- John the Baptist again testifies that Jesus is greater than he (John) is

Matthew's gospel account was not written chronologically, but topically. So, we have to consult the other gospel accounts to fully understand the sequence of events.

“And leaving Nazareth he went and lived in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali,” – Having returned from Jerusalem and the 1st Passover Feast of his ministry, Jesus left the home town of his parents and settled in Capernaum, which became his headquarters. Capernaum is on the northwestern shore of the Sea of Galilee.

Matthew 4:17

¹⁷From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” – This is the same message that John the Baptist preached. The people were expecting their Messiah soon and with Him was supposed to come His kingdom, the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 4:18-22

¹⁸While walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter) and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. ¹⁹And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." ²⁰Immediately they left their nets and followed him. ²¹And going on from there he saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets, and he called them. ²²Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

“And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.” – The term “fishers of men” was not a new term. For centuries, Greek and Roman philosophers had used it to describe the work of a person who sought to “catch” others by their teaching and persuasion.

This is not the first encounter that these two disciples had with Jesus. They had previously encountered him. If you will read [John 1:35-42](#), you will learn of their first encounter with Jesus. Apparently, after their first encounter, they returned to fishing. This time, however, they left their nets and followed him. These were not the only disciples of Jesus who were fishermen. We see from these verses that James and his brother John were also fishermen. In addition, in [John 21:1-3](#) we see that Thomas, Nathaniel, and perhaps two others were also fishermen.

Matthew 4:23 – 25

²³And he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people. ²⁴So his fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought him all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains, those oppressed by demons, epileptics, and paralytics, and he healed them. ²⁵And great crowds followed him from Galilee and the Decapolis, and from Jerusalem and Judea, and from beyond the Jordan.

“he went throughout all Galilee” - Jesus began his ministry in the area around Nazareth and Capernaum. However, his message and his healing brought people from all around, especially from the area of Syria (the area north of Galilee).

“gospel of the kingdom” – We tend to think of the gospel as “Jesus died for our sins, was buried, and rose again.” But, this is not the gospel that Jesus proclaimed. The word “gospel” is from the Greek word *euangellion*, which is made up of *eu*, meaning “good” or “well” and *angellion*, which

means “a message.” Thus, the word gospel simply means “good news.” This is not the same gospel that we proclaim today. Jesus was not starting the church, he was inviting people into the kingdom of heaven which had been promised to the Jews since the time of Abraham.

“**those afflicted with various diseases and pains ...**” – There was no physical malady that Jesus did not heal. He even healed those oppressed by demons. The Jews of that time surely would know the prophecies regarding the coming Messiah. Isaiah said:

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy. For waters break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert; (Isaiah 35:5-6)

In Luke’s gospel we read that previously, when John the Baptist heard of Jesus’ early ministry, he sent two of his disciples to ask Jesus whether he was the Messiah. Jesus’ response was:

And he answered them, "Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good news preached to them. (Luke 7:22)

So What?

Many Bibles have headings inserted before each section. At the beginning of Matthew chapter 4 some of them say, “The Temptation of Jesus.” First of all, these headings are not part of the original writings and are not inspired. For instance, before verse 18, some Bibles have the heading, “Jesus Calls the First Disciples.” We just learned a few minutes ago that Matthew’s account is not the first time he called these disciples.

Even though this heading says, “**The** Temptation of Jesus,” it is not the only time that Jesus was tempted. In fact, he was tempted, and challenged, throughout his entire ministry. He was no doubt tempted throughout his childhood years, but we are not told anything about that part of his life. This particular season of tempting is significant for several reasons. It was the first time during his ministry that Satan approached him directly, it is an example of how important it is to know Scripture to fend off temptation. These temptations were rooted in the world system, and he was tempted in the same areas that Adam and Eve were tempted.

There is an old saying that I have personally quoted many times, “I can resist anything but temptation.” And, there is an old comedy routine in which the comedian, Flip Wilson, proclaims, “The Devil made me do it.” Let me state from the beginning that the Devil does not make any of us sin. Our sins cannot be blamed on anyone else. We commit sin by our own choice, our own will. It is when our will is out of sync with the will of God that we sin.

Now, in Hebrews we are told that Jesus is our High Priest and:

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. (Hebrews 4:15)

But, how can that be? We learned a few Sundays ago from the book of James:

Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for **God cannot be tempted with evil**, and he himself tempts no one. (James 1:13)

If God cannot be tempted with evil and Jesus is God, then how could He be tempted by Satan.

Keep in mind that even though Jesus is completely God, he is also completely man (although without a sin nature). Satan did not attack his divinity, he attacked his humanity. It is because of this that we can draw strength from his resisting of the temptation.

So, what was it that allowed Jesus to resist the temptations? Jesus resisted temptation by recognizing that He came and took on human form for one purpose, “to do the father’s will.”

“But,” you may say, “I thought he came to offer himself on the cross to pay for the sins of the world.” Yes, he did. But before the cross, in the garden as he fell on his face and poured out his heart to the father, knowing what was to come, he asked that he might not have to go to the cross and then said, “Nevertheless, not my will but yours be done.”

The next question is, “So, what does that have to do with me?” And the answer is, “Everything.” When Jesus died on the cross he paid the penalty for your sins and he purchased you. As Paul says in his first letter to the Corinthian church:

Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? **You are not your own, for you were bought with a price.** So glorify God in your body. (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)

When we accept Jesus as Savior, we acknowledge that our sins have been paid for and that He purchased us. He is our owner. He is our Lord! We are, therefore, obligated to do whatever he wants us to do. If we do anything that is not His will, we are disobeying (we are sinning.) Any time we give in to temptation, we are following our own will, not His.

Now, let me throw a monkey wrench into the gears. Giving in to temptation is not always a sin. Say what! Giving in to temptation is not always a sin.

Let me give you an example. I am frequently tempted by chocolate. Seldom do I go to the grocery store and am not tempted to buy a chocolate bar. And, of course, they are always on display right next to the checkout counter. I would love to buy an armload of candy bars and consume them on the way home so that nobody knows that I indulged myself. Have I ever done that? Well – this is a sermon, not confession time. The problem is that if I did buy a bunch of chocolate and consume it quickly, my gut would remind me about it for hours to come and my weight would demonstrate it the following morning. But, would I be committing a sin by indulging in chocolate? There’s no scripture that tells me that chocolate is sinful (unless, you consider that over indulging in chocolate is doing damage to God’s temple - my body). But having just one bite of chocolate or one candy bar is not against God’s will for me, although it might be for you.

My point is that giving in to temptation is not always a sin. It is when we are tempted to act outside God’s will that giving in to temptation is a sin.

Therefore, the constant prayer on our lips should be, “Thy will be done!”

Now, let me ask you another question. How many times a day are we tempted by Satan? Keep in mind that Satan is not omnipresent. He can only be in one place at a time. Because of that, he uses others to tempt us. How many times a day does this happen? Consider this, every time you watch or listen to a commercial, on the radio, on TV, or on-line, you are being tempted. Every commercial is focused on telling you how attractive something is (the lust of the eyes), how pleasurable something is (lust of the flesh), or how important it will make you feel (the pride of life). So, even though we are seldom tempted by Satan, we are constantly being tempted by the world system around us.

What are we to do?! What did Jesus do? He did two things. He quoted Scripture and he focused on doing God’s will. In order to quote Scripture, however, you have to be intimately familiar with Scripture. I doubt that any of us here are in the practice of memorizing Scripture, but we should be!

Let me ask those of you who have been in church all your life. How many verses have you memorized since you quit going to AWANAS? Let me challenge you to find a passage from the Bible that really speaks to you and memorize it. See how much you can get done this week.

The other thing Jesus did was to focus on God's will. He was so committed to doing the Father's will that he was willing to do it even when it hurt. Remember what James said in his letter?

So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin. (James 4:17)

But, here again, the only way to know what's the right thing to do is to read the Bible. I don't mean once a week, we need to be in God's word every day. Are you willing to do God's will? Even when it hurts? Even when it means that you have to give up other activities?

My friends, we need to make God a priority, the number one priority in our life! We can find all kinds of excuses for not reading our Bible and we can find all kinds of excuses why we can't be in church every Sunday. But, if we are not willing to make God a priority and strive to do His will in everything we do, then why should He bless our lives?

Do you want God's blessing on your life? Are you willing to submit to Him and commit to doing His will above your own?

That's something to think about!

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