

## Dealing with the Devil

The Ministry Begins, Part 1

Luke 4:1-13

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Stephen Davey

Temptation can be defined as an act of enticement to sin, accompanied by a promise of pleasure or gain if we follow through.

Enticement to sin with the promise of something to gain.

We're about to see that played out in the life of Jesus Christ, as he now moves into the wilderness to deal, as it were, with the devil.

But before we enter this scene, I want to provide three observations of temptation.

### **Temptation is totally impartial.**

In other words, it doesn't care who you are, how mature you are, or how old you are in life or in the faith.

In fact, if Jesus Christ—the most spiritually mature man to walk the planet—can be tempted, certainly you and I are not going to grow beyond its alluring pull.

The truth is: temptation doesn't consider anybody off limits.

Temptation is totally impartial.

### **Temptation is extremely persistent.**

It's isn't like some pendulum that swings your way, and you dodge it and it goes away and then returns.

No, it's more like a bloodhound that never stops trailing you and tracking you down.

It doesn't matter how successful you were in avoiding it in the past, which is why the apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthian believers, ***"Take heed, while you are standing, lest you fall" (1 Corinthians 10:12).***

You will never outgrow the danger and you will never outdistance the reach of temptation.

Several years ago, I read the true account of an early church father who decided that his problem with sin was the result of all the surrounding temptations—his surrounding culture, society, people and visual and audible temptations. So, he

decided to move away from his village and away from all the stimuli that bombarded him in daily life.

He literally began living a rather primitive life in a cave he found in a hillside. His needs were simple; he grew his own garden and hunted his own game. But eventually he moved back into the life of the village. He wrote in his journal these words, “Even there, all alone, I was tempted with thoughts of great pride; worldly temptations still knocked at my door. There, in a cave, temptation found me.”

Temptation is extremely persistent.

One more observation here:

### **Temptation is uniquely personal.**

Have you ever thought about the fact that Satan happens to be a fisher of men, too? And women and young people alike.

And like any dedicated fisherman, he doesn't just have a one-lure-fits-all approach. There are all kinds of lures for different kinds of fish. I did a little research; I Googled fishing.

Archaeologists have found fishing poles dating back to the Egyptians. Fishing line has been excavated dating back 4,000 years, made of spun silk.

Fishing lures were often crafted out of bronze and copper. One Viking era lure has been found. It was a simple hook attached to the end of a copper spoon, designed to catch the rays of the sun.

Lures painted to resemble bugs and worms have been found after hundreds of years.

Fishing is really a science. And I was never good at science and maybe that's why I've never caught a fish.

I've been invited to fish on the lakes around here, and even to go deep sea fishing off the coast, thanks anyway!

The only place I think I would agree to fish is standing on that wooden bridge in the park where people throw bread in the water and the fish swarm to the surface. I could fish there.

If all this strategy and science and planning goes into fishing lures to catch fish, why should we be surprised that Satan would study us well; to drop into our lives the right lure, with the right bait at just the right time, and if we don't bite, patiently change the bait and craft another lure.

And it isn't just the devil. Our fallen nature happens to give him plenty of ammunition and information along the way.



**What kinds of temptations do you regularly face? What information would Satan know about you that impacts how he tempts you?**

Temptation is totally impartial, extremely persistent, and uniquely personal.

So, what hope do we have? If we can't outrun it, how do we handle it?

Well, we're about to be given an amazing model in the life of Jesus Christ. He's going to rely on the same things that we are to rely on to this day: obedience, submission, humility, patience, and a mind and heart saturated with the Word of God.

***Let me invite you to Luke's Gospel and chapter 4.***

And let's watch as Satan drops the line of temptation into the pond of Jesus Christ's heart and life.

***Notice verse 1:***

*And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness.*

*Luke 4:1*

The wilderness here was several hundred miles of desert actually nicknamed, "The Devastation."

It has been described with rocks bare and jagged; glowing with heat like a vast furnace as it swoops downward some 1200 feet in elevation toward the Dead Sea.

William Barclay, *The Gospel of Luke* (Westminster Press, 1975), p. 43

You can't imagine a better setting for this battle between the princes—the prince of darkness and the Prince of Peace.

Now we're told here—don't miss this—that Jesus is full of the Holy Spirit. That is,

He is under the dominating control of the Holy Spirit. We're told to be the same daily; to be filled or dominated by the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18).

So, Jesus is in perfect fellowship with the Holy Spirit, and did you notice these two contrasting environments?

He's in the Spirit and in the wilderness. We don't normally put those together do we?

We assume that if we're in the middle of where God's Spirit wants us to be, it won't look anything like a wilderness.

In our minds, it should be green pastures and still waters all the time (***Psalm 23:2***); it might be, but it also might be a season where He prepares a table for you in the presence of your enemies (***Psalm 23:5***).

As hard as it might be to imagine, it's possible to be full of the Spirit and face the serpent, at the same time.

***We're also told here in verse 2:***

*[Jesus] was led by the Holy Spirit in the wilderness for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And he ate nothing during those days. And when they were ended, he was hungry.*

*Luke 4:1b-2*

Now keep in mind that if "***forty days***" is linked to the participle "***being tempted,***" which Mark's Gospel account clearly links it together, this means that Jesus isn't being tempted at the end of 40 days,

Jesus was being tempted over the entire course of these 40 days.

David E. Garland, *Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Luke* (Zondervan, 2011), p. 180

For forty days, it was non-stop temptation.

For forty days, Satan was probing for weakness.

Ibid

He's been changing the bait every day, no doubt, many times throughout the day and into the night.

And now here, at the **end** of 40 days, when Jesus is physically exhausted and hungry, Satan pulls out all the stops.

What we have here are three final, climactic, incredibly strategic temptations.

And here's the first one, **verse 3:**

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

*Luke 4:3*

Let me give each temptation a title.

The title of this first temptation could be, simply:

### **Temptation 1: Put yourself first!**

God the Father is withholding something good from You.

Now when the devil says here in **verse 3**, "**If you are the Son of God...**" this is not a denial or a statement of uncertainty.

This is an affirmation. He's effectively saying, "In view of the fact that you are the Son of God, why in the world are you hungry?"

Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Compassionate: Luke, Volume 1* (Victor Books, 1989), p. 41

How can you, the Son of God, be hungry?

You've got a legitimate need as humanity, and you have the power of deity, so why not use your deity to solve the problems of your humanity?

Satan is tempting Jesus to step outside His representative role as a man.

Leonard Ravenhill, *Tried and Transfigured* (FOR Publishers, 1962), p. 5

He wants Jesus to use His divine attributes to serve Himself. "Jesus, put yourself first; serve Yourself," and if Jesus does that, it will create in a split second of time an act of self-serving, and self-serving is sin.

But there's this subtle implication going on. This is the subtitle in this temptation:

Your Father is withholding something you need! Doesn't He want the best for You? Doesn't He care about Your needs? Doesn't He know You're going hungry? What's He waiting for? Maybe after 40 days it's time you started looking out for number one!

Darrell L. Bock, *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Luke, Volume 1* (Baker Academic, 1994), p. 373

How many of us have fallen for this bait: “I’m in the wilderness; I have legitimate needs that are unmet; I’m suffering without any light at the end of the tunnel; There are good things that God isn’t giving me. What’s God waiting for? Maybe I’ll start looking out for number one.

But instead of taking the bait, Jesus responds with the Bible, **here in verse 4:**

*“And Jesus answered him, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone.’”*

*Luke 4:4  
(Deuteronomy 8:3)*

By the way, Jesus did not say, ‘Man shall not live by bread—period.’”

No, “Man shall not live by bread *alone*.” Jesus didn’t want bread at the expense of losing fellowship with God the Father.

For Jesus, it was better to be hungry in the will of God than full outside the will of God.

Adapted from Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Compassionate: Luke, Volume 1* (Victor Books, 1989), p. 41

Now, keep in mind that Jesus is going to counter each temptation by quoting Scripture. His mind and His heart were saturated with the Word of God.

He’s modeling for us the truth of **Psalm 119:11: “Thy word have I hidden in my heart that I might not sin against Thee.”**

How does that help?

Well, the Word of God gives you the mind of God and the wisdom of God and the moral boundaries of God and the perspective of God and the warnings of God and the commandments of God and the counsel of God.

Adapted from R. Kent Hughes, *Luke: Volume 1* (Crossway, 1998), p.138

You deal with the devil with the mind, the wisdom, the boundary, the perspective, the warning, the commandment and the counsel of God.

When we are governed by this, we can resist the devil.



**How do you use Scripture to resist temptation? What passages of the Bible do you regularly turn to? Have you memorized any verses to help you resist?**

Well then, I need to memorize books of the Bible—and I’ll start with Romans.

No, you should notice that after each temptation, Jesus is going to quote back to Satan a verse from the **Book of Deuteronomy**.

How many of us have had devotions in the Book of Deuteronomy lately?

How would we handle temptation if all we had was the Book of Deuteronomy?

## Temptation 2: Take the easy way out!

God is asking too much of You.

### Now verse 5:

*And the devil took him up 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."*

*Luke 4:5-6*

Satan obviously has delegated powers; he is able to sweep Jesus up to a high place. Matthew's Gospel refers to a high mountain, Luke simply refers to being taken **up**, and there Satan shows Jesus the might and glory of earthly kingdoms.

And Satan isn't lying here, by the way. Three times in this book Jesus will refer to Satan as **"the prince of this world"** (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11); the apostle Paul calls him **"the ruler"** (Ephesians 2:2) and **"the god of this age"** (2 Corinthians 4:4).

Satan has been given delegated, temporary power that would probably boggle our minds. But just keep in mind that he's on a leash and God is holding the leash.

In fact, Satan slips up here in mentioning the fact that his authority has been

delegated to him—it's been given or handed to him.

Garland, p. 186

That was a slip-up. The kingdoms don't belong to him forever, but only for a season.

But he's legitimately promising Jesus that He can have it all right now, and that's the bait.

And you might wonder why would this be tempting to Jesus?

That's the hidden hook here. Satan is subtly suggesting that the will of the Father is just too much suffering. Why not take a shortcut to kingdom authority?

Jesus knows Psalm 2; He knows His destiny as the sovereign Lord of the nations, and Satan knows that Jesus knows that, and Satan knows that Jesus knows he knows that.

But here's the bait: "This shortcut will be painless!"

Bruce B. Barton, *Life Application Bible Commentary: Luke* (Tyndale, 1997), p. 87

"You can skip the cross and wear the crown *now*! The Father's will for You is untold suffering and agony, blood and pain and tears and ultimate rejection. There's no need for that; You are God the Son; You can have the kingdoms of this world and throughout human history without ever suffering or dying."

You can have glory without Gethsemane.

Charles R. Swindoll, *Insights on Luke* (Zondervan, 2012), p. 98

That's the bait, but here's the hook—  
**verse 7:**

*“If you, then, will worship  
me, it will all be yours.”*

*Luke 4:7*

The word for **worship** here means to bow down before. Literally applied, Jesus has to change sides. He has to shift His allegiance from the Father and give it to Satan.

Bock, p. 377-378

It's just one little bow, but—**verse 8:**

*And Jesus answered him,  
“It is written, ‘You shall  
worship the Lord your God,  
and him only shall you  
serve.’”*

*Luke 4:8*

*(Deuteronomy 6:13)*

Satan wants us to take the same bait and not consider the fact that we're making a deal with the devil who wants to master us.

And one of his strategic methods is to drop this bait in our mind that God's will is too hard; God is asking too much of us. Living for Him is too difficult. I thought God would make life easier.

Where's the shortcut? There has to be an easier way!

That's the bait, but the hook is that the easy path is his path—the broad path, paved and smooth. But he is the master of everyone on that path.

A Sunday school teacher for high school boys would give them this warning: “Listen, if you're driving your car down the street and you see the devil hitchhiking over on the side of the road, don't stop; don't open the door; don't let him in, because if you do, it won't be long before he is driving the car.”

### **Temptation 3: Do things your way!**

God's Word needs to fit your agenda.

**This is incredibly subtle here, notice  
verse 9:**

*And he took him to  
Jerusalem and set him on  
the pinnacle of the temple.*

*Luke 4:9a*

This word **pinnacle** means tip—or little wing—it was more than likely the ledge on the southeast corner at the top of the temple, described by Josephus, the 1<sup>st</sup> century Jewish historian as the roof top, looking down 450 feet to the Kidron Valley below, which would make one dizzy.

Hughes, p. 136

There Satan perches with Jesus,

*and said to him, “If you are  
the Son of God, 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.”*

*Luke 4:9b-11*

Satan is quoting here from Psalm 91, a Psalm that celebrated God’s protection of His beloved people.

But Satan rips this verse out of context and says, “Let’s make this verse apply to your spectacular jump from the roof of the temple. God says He will protect the faithful, and since You’re faithful, why don’t You put God the Father to the test, right now. Take this verse and twist it to justify your own agenda, it’s time you did things your own way.”

Before we go any further here, don’t miss the fact that the devil can quote Scripture.

Garland, p. 187

He’s heard Jesus respond now two times with Scripture and with incredible, brilliant, deceptive skill, Satan says, “Well here’s a verse or two for You from one of my favorite Psalms.”

Satan is obviously a student of Scripture, but the problem is he twists it to serve his own defiance of God.

To this very day, most cults and many unbelievers that I have come in contact with do not reject the Bible, they just reinterpret the Bible; they add to the Bible.

They have rung my doorbell and their opening line has been, “We would like to interest you in reading the Bible.” And I

always say, “Well, I’m sort of interested in reading the Bible too.”

But you know, it’s one thing to talk about those cults and those unbelievers out there that ignore passages they don’t like and reinterpret the Bible and miss the fact that we can use the Bible to justify just about anything we want to do.

We often use phrases like “God told me,” or “God is leading me,” but underneath all that spiritual talk is a personal agenda.

Satan wants Jesus to reinterpret Psalm 91 to suit Himself.

There’s more to that lure here; in fact, there’s a prophecy in Malachi chapter 3 that says the Messiah will ***suddenly come to His temple (Malachi 3:1).***

Satan is challenging Jesus, once again, to jump ahead of the divine timetable, twist the meaning of Scripture, and with one spectacular descent to the temple courtyard below, announce ahead of time who He is.

“So, do it your way, Jesus. Test your Father, see if He won’t reward you by protecting your leap of faith. It’ll be amazing!”

***And Jesus responds in verse 12:***

*And Jesus answered him,  
“It is said, ‘You shall not put  
the Lord your God to the  
test.’”*

*Luke 4:12  
(Deuteronomy 6:16)*

In other words, don't tell God what to do; don't use His word to disobey His will.

**Now verse 13:**

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

*Luke 4:13*

Like that bloodhound I mentioned earlier, Satan will stay on the Lord's trail and track Him every moment of every day.

Imagine now the glory and wonder of this truth: Jesus never sinned. Our only hope and our security and confidence and joy is in the fact that He never once took the bait; He never sinned.

***He was in every respect tempted as we are, yet without sin (Hebrews 4:15).***

***He committed no sin (I Peter 2:22).***

He will be that unblemished Lamb, worthy to bear all our sins, because we daily—in thought or deed or willfulness or pride or defiance—take the bait, and daily go to Him to be relieved of the hook that has ensnared us all over again.



Are there any similarities between the way Jesus was tempted and some of your most common temptations? What lessons can you learn from our Lord's example?

But here is our model; He used only the resources we have; He's showing us how to deal with the devil, these are our resources in the battle:

**Resources when we Deal with the Devil:**

- be submissive to the leading of the Spirit of God—even if He leads you into the wilderness;
- be patient with the timing of God—even if it doesn't fit your timetable;
- be willing to suffer according to the will of God;
- be saturated with the Word of God.

Jesus, fully God, yet fully human, chose here to use only the resources that we as humans have at our disposal today.

And as a man, He took on the devil, and won. He won, for you and me. He won!

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