

18] JESUS IS TESTED AND TEMPTED

(Sunday, February 20, 2022)

Scripture: Genesis 3:1-15; Luke 4:1-13

INTRODUCTION

I stated last week that the devil being a creature cannot create but he does seek to pervert, twist, and destroy.

God tests His people.

The devil tempts us.

God humbles His people.

The devil seeks to humiliate us.

God brings us conviction of sin.

The devil seeks to constantly accuse and have us question God's gracious forgiveness.

God assures of us His love and the wonders of His grace. He gives us such rich promises.

The devil seeks that we be filled with ourselves such that the love of self and pride dominate.

We rightfully understand our text from Luke 4 to be focused on the tempting of our Lord by the devil.

That is a key part of the text.

But the first part of the text and the background is that Jesus was being properly tested by God.

Look to the Lord Jesus Christ and His Word so that you can endure the trials that God does sovereignly bring and so overcome the temptation of the world, the flesh, and the devil.

We will look at our text in two parts – the introduction in verses 1-2 and then the three temptations in verses 3-13.

1] JESUS FILLED BY THE SPIRIT IS LED BY THE SPIRIT, VV. 1-2

I have stated several times that Luke was a very diligent historian.

Luke we can also say through the Spirit's direction was a very careful theologian.

Verse 1 speaks of how Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit and then was led by the Holy Spirit.

One of the most challenging aspects of theology is understanding how our Lord Jesus Christ is one person with two natures.

Jesus Christ is truly God and truly man.

Our confession is very important.

How we work out the details as we study Scripture is the great challenge.

This is not the place for a long reflection on this subject except to highlight what Scripture emphasizes and **that is the importance of the Holy Spirit's work in the life of our Lord.**

John Owen, the great Puritan theologian, emphasized how the Spirit is the means by which the human nature of the mediator receives communications from the divine.

There is so much to explore on this subject, but in summary we must try to appreciate how the ministry of Jesus, the Son of God, involves the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit was the means of the incarnation as we saw in Luke 1:35.

The Holy Spirit descended on Jesus in His baptism.

Now, Jesus is led by the Spirit into the wilderness.

Luke 4:14 says that Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee.

If you look ahead to Luke 4:18, Jesus there reads from Isaiah 61, the Spirit of the LORD is upon Me.

The Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness.

Why the wilderness?

Two weeks ago, I emphasized that Jesus was baptized as the representative of all His true people in fulfillment of God's eternal plan of salvation.

Israel was led by God and tested in the wilderness for forty years.

So, Jesus was led to fast and be in a wilderness for 40 days.

In Scripture you sometimes find that one day is connected symbolically with a period of one year.¹

¹ John Nolland, *Luke 1–9:20*, vol. 35A of Word Biblical Commentary. Accordance electronic ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989), 179.

Num. 14:34 According to the number of the days in which you spied out the land, forty days, for each day you shall bear your guilt one year, *namely* forty years, and you shall know My rejection.

Ezek. 4:6 And when you have completed them, lie again on your right side; then you shall bear the iniquity of the house of Judah forty days. I have laid on you a day for each year.

Consider also the contrast of our Lord in the wilderness with Adam and Eve in the most beautiful place you could imagine on earth.

Adam failed the test when he had everything he could ever want.

Our Lord passed the test when He was stripped of all the comforts of life.

Here is also something very important to consider.

Some of our temptation is indeed connected with our sinfulness.

When you give into sin, the power of temptation is strengthened.

Our Lord was sinless so how could he be tempted?

Consider how Adam and Eve were also sinless in the garden and yet they gave into temptation.

We have a sinful nature because of the fall and our connection to Adam.

Our Lord did not have a sinful nature, but He did have a truly human nature.

Heb. 2:17 Therefore, in all things He had to be made like *His* brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things *pertaining* to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. **18** For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.

Let me emphasize one other point here.

Two things were taking place in this passage.

Jesus was being tested by God. Obviously, this testing is connected with His true human nature.

The devil used this testing this as a time for temptation.

Listen to the new Legacy Standard Bible:

Now Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was being led around by the Spirit in the wilderness for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And He ate nothing during those days, and when they had finished, He was hungry.

Do you see these two things?

1] Jesus was led by the Spirit for forty days.

2] The devil used this period to tempt him.

There is a question that we may not be fully able to answer.

Did these three temptations come at the end of the forty days?

Are these three temptations representative of the struggle which continued throughout the entire period?

It is probably best to see these temptations came at the end, but that Jesus likely endured similar temptations throughout the 40 days.²

Now we know that our Lord was victorious in this time of testing and temptation.

A great victory does not mean that something was easy.

We are all impressed with tales of human endurance – marathon runners, people who pass through very difficult military training programs, and the like.

How long would any of us have lasted under intense temptation before we sinned?

Would you last five minutes or even five seconds?

There is no way for us to fully appreciate the incredible testing that our Lord faced.

Now when an athlete accomplishes something amazing, that means nothing for you.

Dean Karnazes is an amazing runner. He once ran 50 marathons in 50 days in 50 different states. And this is just one of his amazing achievements.

It is incredible but what does this mean for you?

What our Lord accomplished is far more amazing and spectacular.

And His victory **is part of your salvation and deliverance** from the power of the devil!

² See the discussion by A. T. Robertson on this passage.

This is why this passage is very vital for us!

2] THREE TEMPTATIONS OUR LORD OVERCAME, vv. 3-13

The three temptations that we have listed here are found also in Matthew.

Luke's ordering of the three temptations is different, switching the order of the last two temptations compared to Matthew.

These three temptations really cover a lot of ground don't they – hunger and physical needs, power, and testing God?

I think it makes the most sense as I said before to see these three temptations came after Jesus had already passed through an incredible time of testing for 40 days.

It would not make much sense to see the devil tempting Jesus to make bread from stones before Jesus was truly famished.

The other temptations also manifest their power considering that Jesus was physically weak and tired at the end of 40 days.

It is never right to justify sin simply because we are physically tired or challenged.

Sin should never be simply excused.

However, we do understand that sometimes there are circumstances that make the temptation even worse.

What was wrong with Jesus commanding stone to become bread when Jesus was in need of bread?

Two answers initially can be given.

We never do what the devil encourages us to do no matter how proper it might seem.

If Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness and to fast for 40 days, then He would also be directed when it was appropriate to eat.

Notice that the devil seeks to twist the glorious truth that Jesus is the Son of God.

John Nolland wrote:

The Devil suggests that Sonship is a privilege to be exploited. Jesus is tempted to order his own affairs and provide for his own needs, rather than being nourished in filial dependence on God.³

One of the most important things that we see from this entire passage is how Jesus uses Scripture to turn away the temptations of Satan.

It is not like we can just come up with three easy steps for everything, but we must say, **if you have any hope of overcoming temptation, you also must look to God's Word.**

Scripture is the key! Why would you fight temptation any other way?

Adam and Eve failed to consider God's Word and they gave into the temptation of the devil.

Here our Lord turned to Scripture, the book of Deuteronomy in each case, to overcome the snares of the devil.

³ John Nolland, *Luke 1–9:20*, vol. 35A of Word Biblical Commentary. Accordance electronic ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989), 179.

The words, "**It is written**" are found about 65 times in the NT referring to something from the OT.

Deut. 8:3 So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every *word* that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD.

This verse and response helps us understand what was so wicked about the devil's temptation.

Jesus knew the issue was about **ultimate trust and sustenance**. Whose word will be the final say - man's word, man's need, or God's truth?

This really helps us understand many other situations.

The devil is never going to command you to turn stone into bread.

But often you are tempted to look to yourself or maybe look to others rather than always resting in God.

How many times do we despise God's testing and seek to solve our problems in our own power or strength?

The second temptation was issued from a high mountain where the devil showed Jesus all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time.

The devil claimed he could give all the authority and glory of the world to Jesus if only Jesus would just bow the knee and recognize his authority.⁴

⁴ Roberston's *Word Pictures of the NT*, s.v. Luke 4:7.

The devil has no legitimate power and authority, but he does have incredible influence, obviously.

Think of a drug dealer or gang leader who amasses great wealth and power.

It is not from legitimate means, but that cartel leader can make things happen and can give great favors.

Why would Jesus ever bow the knee and worship the devil?

It seems utterly preposterous.

John Calvin wrote:

The kind of temptation here described was, that Christ should seek, in another manner than from God, the inheritance which he has promised to his children.

We have to contend every day with the same imposture: for every believer feels it in himself and it is still more clearly seen in the whole life of the ungodly. Though we are convinced, that all our support, and aid, and comfort, depend on the blessing of God, yet our senses allure and draw us away, to seek assistance from Satan, as if God alone were not enough. ⁵

We also must consider that Satan is offering Jesus the easy path to glory.

Do it my way and you won't have to go to the cross.

How many times are we tempted to get something that we think we deserve and do it through compromise or in a way not appropriate?

It can be a very powerful force, but it means bowing the knee before the devil.

⁵ John Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries (Complete)*, trans. John King, Accordance electronic ed. (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1847), paragraph 67999.

Leon Morris wrote:

It meant casting out devils by Beelzebub. For Jesus it meant turning his back on his calling. His kingdom was of a very different kind (John 18:36f.). He had already identified himself with the sinners he had come to save (3:21). That meant the lowly path, not that of earthly glory. It meant a cross, not a crown.

Jesus rebuked the devil and again quoted from Scripture, this time Deuteronomy 6:13.

Deut. 6:13 You shall fear the LORD your God and serve Him, and shall take oaths in His name.

How dare that we would give worship to the devil, but it is not uncommon.

We are living increasingly in a world given over to all forms of idolatry and devil worship.

The third temptation is found in verses 9-12.

We might ask the question, was Jesus physically brought to Jerusalem and placed on the pinnacle of the temple?

I don't think we have to assume this was all taking place in regular time-space.

This could have been a form of vision even as we see in the previous temptation.

This is made the temptation no less real than if Jesus were truly placed on the high point of the temple perhaps the southeast corner of the temple which stood 450-feet above the ground below.⁶

Notice the temptation is again prefaced with the words, If you are the Son of God...

We also observe here that the devil quotes from Psalm 91:11-12.

The devil like many false teachers and pastors today is able to quote Scripture while perverting the meaning.

It is not sufficient to quote the Bible when you twist its meaning.

What is the temptation that the devil was offering?

Why would Jesus ever jump off a high place and expect angels to guard him?

John Nolland here gave a good explanation:

Jesus is here encouraged by the Devil to **provoke a life-threatening situation in Jerusalem in order to demand from God**, on the basis of his privileged status as Son of God, release from vulnerability to threat upon his life. **Jesus is to force the issue of divine protection.**⁷

The response of Jesus also helps understand how the devil was seeking to pervert Scripture and tempt Him.

⁶ NET Bible speaks of different locations that could have been called the pinnacle.

⁷ John Nolland, 181.

“It has been said, ‘*You shall not tempt the LORD your God.*’ ”

Jesus here was quoting from Deut. 6:16. Exodus 17:2 also speaks about Israel tempting the LORD in their complaining.

1Cor. 10:9 nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents;

We tempt God when we complain about His provision or work or when we foolishly demand that He do what we want.

You also tempt God when you challenge Him.

1 Cor. 10:21 You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord’s table and of the table of demons. **22** Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than He?

Sin is the most irrational thing we do. We pride ourselves with logic and clear thinking.

Sin makes no sense logically or rationally, but can be so attractive when we let *desire* or *need* determine what we should do.

James 1:14 But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. **15** Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.

In verse 13 we learn that after the devil finished his attempts to lure away our Lord, that he left but not for good.

The devil would continue to try to tempt and sidetrack our Lord through Peter, through the Pharisees, and especially in Gethsemane leading to the cross.⁸

CONCLUSION

Look to the Lord Jesus Christ and His Word so that you can endure the trials that God does sovereignly bring and so overcome the temptation of the world, the flesh, and the devil.

Chrysostom, one of the great preachers of the early church, said this in a sermon:

God does not hold all trial from us; first, that we may feel that we are become stronger; secondly, that we may not be puffed up by the greatness of the gifts we have received; thirdly, that the Devil may have experience that we have entirely renounced him; fourthly, that by it we may be made stronger; fifthly, that we may receive a sign of the treasure entrusted to us; for the Devil would not come upon us to tempt us, did he not see us advanced to greater honours.⁹

You have no power in yourself.

It is not even just about quoting Scripture.

It is only in utter humility and dependence upon the Lord that you can fight against your flesh, the world, and the devil.

Rejoice in His victory.

Confess your sin and failing. Know His complete forgiveness.

⁸ A. T. Robertson, s.v. Luke 4:13.

⁹ Thomas Aquinas, *Catena Aurea (Golden Chain)*, Accordance electronic ed. (London: J. G. F. and J. Rivington, 1842), 117.

Thank Him for the victories you see.

Hold fast to Him because you know that you will continue to be tested and tempted.

Prayer

Hymn 533

BENEDICTION - HEBREWS 13:20-21

Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom *be* glory forever and ever. Amen.