

REAL TEMPTATION

Our study of Christ's temptation in Luke 4 leaves us with some questions. Was this a "real" temptation? You may withstand some temptation sometimes. But Jesus Christ was fully divine and fully human. Could He really be tempted to sin? CS Smith observes, "the only one to know the full force of the enemy's assault is the one who did not break. Only Christ knows the full power of temptation, because He alone withstood assault."

Hebrews 2:17-18 assures that Jesus Christ, God come in the flesh, was "*made like His brothers in every respect*" and that "*He Himself has suffered when He was tempted*" and "*in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin*" (Hebrews 4:15). This is why His perfect life makes Him the perfect sacrifice to make propitiation for sin, the payment of our penalty.

1- You can respond like Jesus did: In Luke 4 and Matthew 4, He was tempted by the lies of the world, the flesh, and the devil, just as we are. Yet without sin. Without yielding to temptation. How? Trusting and obeying God and His Word by the power of the Holy Spirit. In Luke 4:3 the devil tempted a starving Jesus to turn stone into bread. He answers, "*it is written, 'man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of God'*" (Deuteronomy 8:3).

Your real needs aren't what you put in your mouth, but what comes out of God's mouth. 1John 2:16 says, "*the desire of the flesh is not from the Father but from the world.*" You can't use natural cravings as an excuse for sin, as though God made you that way. Temptation is not sin, but yielding to temptation is sin. Claiming you can't help it and blaming God for making you that way is sin, because it is also contrary to God's holy character and His holy Word.

2- Doers not hearers only: The devil tempts "you need this," food, entertainment, stimulation, sex, etc. In all the abundance of Eden, Adam disobeyed God, giving in to the flesh for one bite of forbidden fruit. James 1:13 says, "*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. But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death. Do not be deceived.*"

James 1:22 "*be doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.*" Cravings of the flesh are powerful, but God is more powerful. John Owen counsels, "be killing sin or sin will be killing you." The battle is the flesh versus the spirit. In Christ, God provides power and victory.

3- Jesus' second temptation: The devil says worship me and all authority and glory will be yours. As though there's a shortcut to God's promise of glory to the victorious Christ. Jesus answers in Luke 4:8, "*it is written, 'you shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only shall you serve'*" (Deuteronomy 6:13). The devil tempts with shortcuts, as though a good end justifies any means. How are you tempted in this way? To take matters into your own hands to get your way at work or home or in the community? Because you mean well you'll be okay? Cut corners to get to your goal? God is not in a hurry and doesn't need shortcuts to accomplish His purposes.

4- Jesus' third temptation: The devil taunts Jesus, prove you're the Son of God by taking a great leap of faith. In Luke 4:12 Jesus answers, "*it is said, 'you shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'*" (Deuteronomy 6:16). Presumption is not faith. God has no obligation to do what you say He must. Some professing believers seem presumptuous, especially when justifying sin.

They say, God brought this person or this thing into my life, so it's okay to have an affair or to be addicted. Or, that guy made a mistake, so it's okay for me to profit from it. Or, God will save the baby so it's okay to have an abortion. God is not tricky like that. He is pure, holy, perfect, and pro-life. His character never changes, and He reveals His truth in the written Scriptures.

Romans 15:4 says, "*whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and encouragement of Scripture we might have hope.*" The Bible is not to be used against God, as the devil tries to do. Rather, Scripture is our weapon against sin, as the sword of the Spirit. Just as Jesus relied on Scripture because He was determined to obey God, not disobey, we too, in union with Christ and indwelt by His Spirit, can stand firm! □