

- ***READ Hebrews 4:14-16*** In our time of study this morning, we considered how it is that we can make repentance a real part of our discipleship. Repenting is more than just saying sorry, but it is saying no to bad habits that have created space between us and our God. There is a lot of effort that goes into such a process, but any of us who have put in the effort and have experienced the results of holiness know it to be worthwhile.
- However, what if we could avoid the chains of sin all together? What if we could stop ourselves from ever developing those awful habits of sin? While it might be necessary that we have to break the chains of sin, what if we were able to overcome the temptations that first put us in those chains? This text we read just a moment ago gives us encouragement to look to Jesus as our example. The truth is that we cannot look to Jesus as an example for how to overcome sin since He Himself never sinned, but we can look to Him as our example for how we can avoid sin by overcoming the temptations set before us.
- This past week we read through Matthew, Mark, and Luke's accounts of the temptations of Jesus, and I would like for us to take a few minutes to consider five lessons that I saw as I read and then thought upon what Jesus experienced in the wilderness as He went face to face with the devil. The example of Jesus can teach us and encourage us so much, but we can also learn a thing or two about the tempter when it comes to these accounts within the Gospels. We're going to focus mostly on Luke's account because it gives us nearly all of the detail of Matthew with a few more extra details added in.

I. Satan will attack our weaknesses. (Luke 4:1-4)

A. Satan tried to take advantage of Jesus's hunger.

1. It is after Jesus's baptism by John in the Jordan and just before the beginning of His public ministry that we find Jesus being led *"by the Spirit"* into the wilderness. Jesus remained there for 40 days and 40 nights and it was within this time that Jesus fasted. Of course, being human Jesus became hungry, and it was at this point that Satan begins his temptations.
2. We first find the devil attacking a current weakness of Jesus; His hunger. *"If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread."* **(Luke 4:3)** This might not seem that big of a deal to us since Jesus obviously had the ability to do such a thing, but Jesus understands this to be a challenge from Satan that God was not taking care of His needs.
3. Satan was saying that Jesus should just provide for what He felt like He needed at this time. This is what brings Jesus to say, *"It is written, 'MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD.'"* **(Matthew 4:4)** Surely Jesus was hungry and would love for some food, but He wasn't going to allow this weakness to cause Him to not put His full reliance upon His Father. He knew that His Father would always provide.

B. In the same way, Satan will try to tempt us in those areas where we might be most vulnerable.

1. It won't be a temptation for us to turn stones into bread, but couldn't we be tempted to take what is not ours simply because we have a need? It is in these places of perceived need that we can easily become weak and vulnerable to attack.
2. It could be the married man or woman who feels as if his or her spouse isn't providing what is needed, and so he or she seeks that fulfillment in someone not their spouse. It could be the person suffering at the hands of the wicked and instead of waiting on the vengeance of God they seek to take out vengeance on their own. It could be the former alcoholic who is stressed immensely and longs for the perceived relief that will come at the bottom of the bottle.
3. Whatever the weakness is, we must be a people who recognize that in those moments we are in a very vulnerable state in need of the full force of God's provisions to overcome. We must have confidence in His provisions so that Satan will not have opportunity to destroy us through sin having taken hold because we gave into the temptation.

II. We're playing on Satan's turf. (Luke 4:5-8)

A. Satan tries to tempt Jesus with everything this world has to offer.

1. I have never noticed it before but the second and third temptations are switched between Matthew and Luke's accounts of these temptations. I have also not noticed the slight difference between what Satan says in the temptation for him to give Jesus everything in the world if He would just fall down and worship Him. Notice that Satan says, *"I will give You all this domain and its glory; for it has been handed over to me, and I give it to whomever I wish."* (Luke 4:6)
2. What is it that Satan has just said? He has just confirmed what it is that is said in **John 12:31 & II Corinthians 4:4**; he is the ruler and god of this world. This is his domain, and we are playing on his home field. He knows what is enticing to the mind and heart of mankind, and he will use whatever means necessary to lead us to sin. The sin here of course was bowing down to someone other than the God of heaven, and he tries to offer up "the world" in exchange for such.
3. Of course, this is built upon a lie. While Satan does have great influence over this world, his power is illegitimate and stolen. He has caused mankind to displace God from His rightful seat of authority through empty promises of them gaining the whole world.

B. The cost for such gain is quite simple: our souls. We must stand strong against Satan's schemes.

1. This certainly brings to my mind the words of Jesus from **Mark 8:36**, *"For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul?"* This was the temptation presented before Jesus, and it is the same temptation put before us by the ruler of this world.
2. Satan wants for us to desire the perceived glories of this life to the point that we neglect the spiritual needs of holiness and devotion to God. He wants nothing more than for us to become so in love with this world that we completely neglect preparation for the next, and he is quite good at this because we are playing on his home field. He knows what we want in our flesh.
3. We must ever be mindful of the ever present temptations and lusts created by Satan so that we can stand strong against whatever it might be that He throws at us. He desires that we worship him and ourselves to our own gain, but this is all just a lie to entice and trap us in destruction. He knows the playing field, and he will hold no punches back.

III. Satan will try to twist our understanding of God and His will. (Luke 4:9-12)

A. Satan again seeks to get Jesus to abuse His authority, but this time he tries so support with Scripture.

1. The final temptation of Jesus in Luke's account involves Satan taking Jesus to a high place in which He could throw Himself to His death. His challenge for Jesus is that He should do so because God would save Him anyways through the provisions of His angels. He quotes **Psalms 91:11,12** as evidence for his claim. *"For He will give His angels charge concerning you, to guard you in all your ways. They will bear you up in their hands, that you do not strike your foot against a stone."*
2. What Satan is claiming isn't necessarily wrong. The Psalm is about Jesus, but it is taking a truth and twisting it to his own desires of the moment. Here he is trying to get Jesus to test to see whether or not God is actually with Him and will fulfill His promises of safety. Jesus responds by going back to **Deuteronomy 6:16** which is a reference to an even earlier occurrence in **Exodus 17:1-7**.
3. In **Exodus 17:1-7**, we find the people complaining against God and claiming that He wasn't taking care of them as well as they could've been cared for in Egypt. They wished that He had just left them in Egypt rather than bring them out to the wilderness to die. Luckily for them, God was patient with their complaining and allowed Moses to strike the rock for water to flow down for them. Yet the place was still remembered at the place where the people tested God, and that was to serve as a reminder to not do such a thing again. Jesus responds to Satan with that reminder to not test God or misuse His promises to our own gain.

- B. Satan will seek to create doubt within our minds concerning God promises to us through His Word.
1. This is something that we have seen from the very beginning. All the way back in the garden we see him trying to misrepresent what God had said to Adam and Eve concerning what they could and could not eat. **(Genesis 3:1)** He then goes on to flat out contradict God, but sometimes all that is needed is a slight twist.
 2. He does that to us in our lives in much the same way as he did to Jesus. He plants seeds of doubt within our minds as to whether or not God is with us during difficult times. We know that God loves us so much that He sent His son to die for us, but then why do we continue to struggle with difficulties in this life? If God loves us then where is He when we hurt? Where is He when we are in great need in this life?
 3. Satan would love for us to begin to question God. He would love for us to turn towards God not out of love and dependance, but he would love for us to start blaming God for the difficulties of life that are actually a result of Satan's wishes for us. It's so ridiculous, but also very clever the Satan would hurt us so and then twist God's word against us so that we blame the Father for the sins of the devil. We must stand strong and resist Satan's ploys for our demise.

IV. We must look to the Lord to overcome Satan's attacks. (Luke 4:4,8,12)

- A. Jesus's responses to Satan's temptations were consistently focused on God's will and Word.
1. Time and time again we see Jesus being consistent in His defense against the temptations, *"It is written,"* or *"it is said."* Jesus was not going to lean upon His own strength, but He was going to rely upon that which never changes.
 2. Jesus's clear knowledge and understanding of God's Word gave Him a clear advantage over the attacks thrown at Him by Satan, and if ever there was a reason for us to lean upon God and His Word certainly it would be so that we can resist the devil.
- B. Only through looking to God will we overcome the attacks of Satan.
1. If God in the flesh saw the need for leaning upon the heavenly Father and His Word then surely we can see the need for ourselves to do the same thing. Jesus recognized the divine authority and guidance contained within the Scriptures and we must do the same thing.
 2. It is God through His Word that can make us complete for every good work that He expects for us to carry out, and that includes standing strong against the temptations of the devil. **(II Timothy 3:16,17)** Jesus had put in the time and effort previously to know God's Word and this allowed for Him to stand strong against his attacks. If it took great effort for the Son of God to come to know the Lord's will for His life, then we must be certain that much effort will be required for us to be able to stand against Satan's attacks.
 3. For us that might begin with simply doing our daily Bible reading and meditating upon these types of stories so that we can be ready when our tests come our way. They will come, but how will we respond? With God we will be able to overcome, but even those victories won't be the end of our struggles.

V. If we overcome, Satan will not give up...he will be back. (Luke 4:13)

- A. Jesus overcame the temptations of Satan at this time, but this wouldn't be the last time He would come face to face with the devil.
1. The tests were completed and Jesus had come through unscathed by the temptations. He had leaned upon God and withstood the best shots that Satan could muster, and now it was time for God to fulfill his promises of strengthen. Matthew tells us that Satan left and the angels come to minister to the surely exhausted Messiah. **(Matthew 4:11)**
 2. Yet, Luke gives us one more detail that we would be wise to take heed of. *"When the devil had finished every temptation, he left Him until an opportune time."* **(Luke 4:13)** Jesus might have overcome at this juncture, but that didn't mean Satan had fully given up.

3. We don't have any other recordings of the Scriptures expressly stating that Satan tempted Jesus, but I'm sure we can look to different times in Jesus's life and see where Satan and temptations might have been present. Any time Jesus dealt with the Jewish leadership was certainly a time when His patience was tested. His time in the garden would've been a prime time for Satan to test Jesus's resolve. Even on the cross Satan could've been whispering in Jesus's ear that He should call the 10,000s of angels to rescue Him. Satan may have lost round one, but that didn't mean he would just ignore Jesus moving forward, and he won't give up on us if we find success against him at different points in our lives.

B. We can rejoice in the Lord for our victories, but we must never let our guard down.

1. Even after we have our own victories over Satan through reliance upon God and His strength, we must bear in mind that Satan is still around about us seeking that next opportunity to devour some helpless and unaware soul. **(I Peter 5:8)**
2. Sure we can praise God in our victories, but that doesn't mean we should ever allow ourselves to become so confident that we fall in a moment of weakness. There isn't a feeling much worse than think that you have conquered some temptation and sin only to let your guard down for just a second and become entangled again. Satan waited for a better more opportune time to go at Jesus again, and he will certainly do the same thing with us. May we always be on guard and on alert for the evil one as he seeks to destroy our souls.

While Jesus might not be able to give us much of an example of how we can deal with the sin that is in our lives, He most certainly gives us a tremendous example of someone who stood toe to toe with Satan and caused Satan to give up until another opportunity arose. May we look to our great High Priest and Savior for strength and encouragement, and may we keep these lessons on our mind as we go throughout this week standing strong against Satan and his temptations.

PRAYER *Our loving Father...we are so thankful that though the evil one and his temptations surround us...we are so thankful that You are always with us and that we can overcome by the strength of Your power and might. We ask that You would constantly be with us throughout this upcoming week to be aware of the dangers surrounding us. Help us to be on guard when we face weaknesses. Help us to be clear minded and focused only on doing Your will. May You help us to help and encourage one another, and may it all be done to Your glory. Thank you so much for Your Son and the blood He shed for us that gives us the ability to be in fellowship with You. It is in His name we pray...amen.*