

Love Never Puts God to the Test

Luke 4:9-13

July 31, 2016

By the virtue the two natures one divine, one human joined together, mysteriously in this one person, Jesus is proving to be the impeccable man. That is, a man who does not sin, will not sin, because of his divine nature, not able to sin. When tested, as we see here, these three times and tested, I think more than that as well. Also, as we'll see tested throughout his life and ministry, he did not sin. Instead, when he was tested, he stood firm in perfect righteousness.

God didn't send Jesus to take on human flesh merely to undergo contests with the devil, like we're seeing here. This is not some kind of mano-a-mano thing between God and Satan as if the two are pitted in this cosmic battle of equal forces, pulling at one another like some kind of a oriental yin and yang kind of a thing. That's not happening at all.

This isn't just about a cosmic war with Satan, even though that is what resulted from the Fall, the purpose of Jesus' sojourn here on earth is this purpose, to save sinners, to save sinners, like you and me; that's why Jesus, like God the Son, took on human flesh; that's why he pursued us here to fulfill this covenant of redemption; that's why Jesus went through these forty days in the wilderness; that's why the Spirit led him there to be tested, to be tempted by the devil, as it says in Hebrews 2:17 and 18, this is for our sakes. This is for us that he did this.

Hebrews 2, "Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people." Propitiation is a big word there that means satisfy the wrath of God, for us. He had to be made like us in every respect, so that he could be a merciful and faithful high priest, to be our perfect sacrifice, to satisfy God's wrath. For because he himself has suffered when tempted.

Yes, he suffered, he's able to help those who are being tempted. That's us. He did this for us. It says at the end of that fourth chapter in Hebrews that Jesus can help us in every kind of temptation, because he was tempted in every respect, it says, and yet he never sinned. He was without sin. And that sinless Savior is our sinless, faithful, merciful, High Priest. He identifies with us in every way and yet he didn't fall like we fell. He stands above us, able to lift us up, when we're tempted to fall. And that's what we see here in Luke's fourth chapter. This is Jesus standing firm through every kind of test.

As we've seen these past weeks, as we'll see again this morning, all three of these temptations, that the devil leveled against Jesus. They're tried and true weapons of the enemy and he has used them throughout history to such devastating effect on all of humanity and even, or maybe we could say even especially upon God's people. He has tried to thwart the purposes of God, to sanctify us in our lives. He's tried to do that over and over again based on thousands and thousands of years of observing human behavior, by studying human nature. The devil has come to this moment. He's designed these unique temptations to ensnare our Lord. It didn't work.

First temptation was to doubt God's provision. The devil enticed Jesus in verses 1 to 4 to take matters into his own hands, and rather than wait on God's timing, rather than wait to for God to provide his food at the proper time, the devil invited Jesus to satisfy his hunger, in the moment of his own choosing. Jesus answered the devil, and he used a Scripture that affirms his absolute confidence and trust in God. "Man shall not live by bread alone." That doesn't mean he's going to live by some mystical food, that doesn't exist and just satisfies his soul. No, he lives by bread, but bread is only the means of our provision. The source of our provision is what Jesus was affirming. That our provision the very source is the faithful character of God. And so Jesus is willing here to just trust God, to wait, wait on his timing, wait on his plan.

Second temptation, that's about taking a shortcut to the reward, and that we talked about that last time. The devil tries to induce and entice Jesus with the authority of all the kingdoms of the world, and their glory. For the devil, as he's considering about what might tempt Jesus, he's thinking about these things through his own sinful mind, right? He's

considering what might be tempting to Jesus by what is tempting to him. He thought all earthly authority was pretty enticing. After all, that's what he wanted power, authority, glory for himself.

For Jesus, though, that offer didn't entice him to some kind of reward. Authority didn't represent reward. Earthly authority meant responsibility, it meant sacrifice, it meant giving himself to others. Jesus already possessed his reward. His treasure was God and God alone. How do you tempt somebody who's satisfied in God and God alone? Jesus answered from Deuteronomy 6:13, "You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve." An expression of commitment to God as his treasure. At the same time, it became an indictment of the devil, an indictment at that kind of thinking. The devil, who hated God and served himself, he was indicted because he served and worshiped something else. He worshiped and served himself. So the devil found it impossible to tempt the Lord with any lesser reward. Jesus was absolutely satisfied, fully content with the greatest treasure of all, the worship of God. He didn't waiver for a moment. All of his hope is in God, he is satisfied in God alone and he remained loyal to God alone.

So the devil here he constructs a, a third temptation, and he kind of puts it together on the fly. He takes everything he knows, his experience with sinful humanity, and he takes what he's learned from Jesus, as well, and how Jesus responds and he believes that he can craft a temptation to get Jesus to presume upon God. He had heard Jesus' responses, all started with this declaration, what was it? "It is written," right? So he heard that. So he tried his own hand at interpreting the Bible. The devil interprets Scripture. He pitched a unique temptation at Jesus. He used Scripture to defend it.

The devil here as we see, were gonna see in this third temptation, he, he grants Jesus, his relationship with God, since you are the Son of God. He grants his trust in the revealed Word, even using the revealed Word for himself. He tries to use those commitments though, his relationship with God, his trust and reliance on the Word of God, he tries to use those commitments against Jesus.

Take a look at verses 9 to 12. And 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, 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.'" Jesus answered him, 'It is said, "You shall not put the Lord your God to the test."'"}} And that's it, silenced him.

This temptation from the devil, is a solicitation to commit the very worst kind of presumption. Though we're tempted with presuming upon God all the time, only Jesus was in a position, in a role, only he had the nature, the character, only he had this place as the Messiah to be put into a position, to put God to the test in this manner, in this way. This is unique to him. What the devil proposed is an absolute affront to the goodness and grace of God. He's taken here a beautiful promise in Psalm 91 that we read earlier, and he's using it to tie God's hands, to force his will. Before we go any further, let's be clear here about the meaning of presumption. What does it mean to presume? There are several definitions in the dictionary entry of the verb, to presume, and I'll give you just a few of them so you

get the sense here. To presume is to take something for granted, okay? Um to presume is , is to take it for granted, it's to undertake some kind of an action with an unwarranted boldness.

I like that phrase unwarranted boldness, that's presumption. To presume is to act or proceed with, with unwarranted or even impertinent boldness, to take liberties that you're not authorized to take. There are synonyms for the word presumption words like audacity, effrontery, even arrogance, that's presumption. Sometimes presumption can involve a, a foolish decision. Sometimes presumption can involve a, a brash, reckless course of action, and then, by the way, praying that God will uphold you as you live foolishly and dangerously, as you live unwisely asking God while you're cramming down those donuts to take away the calories, make them just not exist; don't have to exercise.

Sometimes sinful presumption involves going too far. You've been given an inch and you try to take what a mile, right? Our kids do this all the time, the little presumers. But you hear this when someone has a flippant attitude even about continuing

in sin. Hey Jesus died for all of my sins, so I'll just ask forgiveness in the morning. Do you ever hear that? That's what simple sinful presumption looks like. It's a simple-minded foolishness that's too lazy to study God's ways and to see how God would have them live. Presumption is a reckless boldness, too proud and self-confident to live within biblical parameters and biblical restraints.

Sinful presumption is an arrogant flippancy. It's an indifference to God's holiness and being oblivious to this attitude, a Christian attitude of meekness. No concern for righteousness, no practical, daily, diligent pursuit of holiness and repentance, and yet expecting that God should bless us. Those are attitudes of sinful presumption. Presumption is the foolish attitude of seeing what you can get away with. Especially in light of the fact that God is kind and gentle, especially in light of the fact that he is merciful and forgiving. It's taking advantage of his good character and assuming that because you've prayed the prayer, he is bound by his promise to forgive, and he'll allow you to get away with whatever you want, that's presumption.

I'm not going to have you turn there just now, but write down Psalm 78. Psalm 78, then go read it this afternoon. This is the record of Israel's sinful presumption against the grace of God and I'll tell you, folks, if you read that psalm and you kind of put yourself in Israel's camp, you can see yourself committing the very same sins. Israel committed all those sins of presumption against God's grace when they were in, let's face it, they were without water. How many of you have ever wandered a desert and you've run out of water? That's hard, you start to feel pretty desperate after a while. Most of us don't sin in the same way, we actually sin with a lot less provocation.

We sin in presumption in air-conditioned rooms with a water faucet behind us and we drink down water and we wish it were flavored. The air conditioning is on and we complain because it's too cold, so we complain, we grumble. Have you ever heard that saying, as a rule, man is a fool; when it's hot, he wants it cool; when it's cool, he wants it hot; always wanting what is not? Boy, that's us!

Read Psalm 78 and see, if that's not true of you and I. The devil had strong precedent for the power of this temptation. He knew Israel's history, and he knew Jesus is the representative as the Messiah of Israel. And so he hoped to crafted a temptation here that would get Jesus to act, in the very same way that his countrymen had always acted, presuming on God, putting God to the test, taking his grace for granted, living however they wanted, and hoping that the results would turn out to their benefit and their favor.

The devil hopes to get Jesus to test God's grace, test his kindness, test the truthfulness of his Word, to test the faithfulness of God's character, to test the reliability of this promise in Psalm 91. All that is the essence of what's at stake here. The devil is in for a hard sell, with Jesus. He really does face an impossible task to get the sinless Son of God to sin. Jesus had excelled in all things, as we see. He proved his devotion to God, he's wholly devoted to God, wholly devoted to his holiness, wholly devoted to his glory, and that's proven in all these tests.

By passing the first test, Jesus demonstrated that he had put all his faith in God. By standing firm through the second test, we can see he also put all his hope in God, and here in the third test, we're going to see that Jesus loved the Lord his God fully, completely. He loved the Lord his God with all his heart and soul and mind and strength. We see that because love never puts God to the test. Hear those three virtues in what I've just said faith, hope and love. It's that triad of Christian virtues. They're the virtues that we pursue as Christians, that we're growing in day by day as Christians. And they're all found here in Christ first as the author and perfecter of our faith.

We see these virtues of faith and hope and love lived out practically, but in ways that you and I will never experience. We see these virtues faith, hope and love, here in pristine perfection and beauty, in Jesus Christ. So as we proceed this morning in this third temptation, we need to keep both these things in mind. We need to keep ourselves in mind and how we have failed or how we tend to fail in this, but we also need to very quickly, on the heels of that, keep our Savior in mind.

Because if we only keep ourselves in mind, you know what, we're headed for absolute despair. If we keep him in mind, we're headed for joy, we're headed for the joy of worship. If we don't see how we have sinned in this regard, we won't see and appreciate how Jesus did not sin in this regard. I mean, how many times have we put God to the test? In what ways have we tested him? How have we lived foolishly and recklessly and flippantly? How have we sinned, knowing it's sinful, but then also knowing that we will land safely on the grace of God? How many times have we used the forgiveness of God as our license to sin? How many times have we used the kindness of God as justification or even a subtle justification for, a lack of diligence, anything in our life, a lack of discipline?

How many times have we used it for our warrant for doing whatever we want, because we know God forgives? But as we think about that, as that thought humbles us, and it really should humble us, it prepares us to perceive, to see the perfection of Christ. Our Lord Jesus Christ never tested God, never presumed on his grace. Every promise was for Jesus a motivation and a command to excel still more. He never failed in his love toward



God, he was perfect in it. And listen, beloved, this is the hope of the Gospel.

If you and I are found in him, we have a new nature. We're absolutely forgiven of all that sinful presumption, and all that stuff. It's gone. We have a new nature now, one that has no desire whatsoever to presume upon God, one that has no desire whatsoever to sin against his love, to sin against his kindness and his grace. We have a new nature that motivates us to pursue holiness in the fear of God. And that, beloved, gives us confident hope, unshakable joy, as we see him perfect even where we are not.

So, let's get into our outline for this morning. A, first point is a foolhardy recommendation, foolhardy recommendation or a foolish recommendation, you could say. Take a look at verse 9. It says there that the devil took Jesus to Jerusalem, set him on the pinnacle of the Temple and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here."

Now, I just want a to speak you again, once again, just remind you of the order of these temptations. We pointed this out last time, that Matthew treated this temptation as the second of three, whereas, Luke listed it as the third. Again, it's not a contradiction, just a difference in the purpose of the two authors, how they wanted to treat these temptations, what they're trying to convey.

Matthew it's clear in his Gospel that he uses temporal markers in his account and seems to convey a chronological progression from one event to another from the wilderness to the Temple finally to a high mountain. Luke, though, he's less interested in the chronology he's more interested in conveying theological themes that are found, in each temptation and tying those, wedding those together. Notice in Luke 4:8, where, where we ended last time, Luke 4:8 Jesus answer to the devil from Deuteronomy 6:13. He says, "You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve." I told you last time Luke uses that verse like a hinge. It's like a pivot point to focus our attention on the key to resisting all temptation.

By worshipping God and God alone, Jesus has victory over all temptation. That, that is the heart of true worship, that is the heart of a believer and it symbolized this heart of worship, this heart of a believer, this faith, hope, love in God, this worship, it's all symbolized, or supposed to be symbolized, in the Temple, because that's the, the location of the, the symbolic presence of God, is there, in the Ark of the Covenant, in the Holy of Holies with the cherubim leaning over the mercy seat.

That's where all this is supposed to be symbolized as this true worship of God. As we said, true, a trusting in God alone it won the victory in temptation, number one. Hoping in God alone won the victory in temptation, number two, loving God alone wins the victory in temptation, three. This faith in God, hope in God, love of God, love for God, we can summarize all that by this single principle as old as Moses, "You shall worship the Lord your God and him only you shall serve." And that is why thematically, Luke wants all the series of temptations to culminate at the Temple, to come together there. He wants readers, to see the contrast, between how Jesus treated the principle of worship, and how Israel treated worship.

He's standing there, at the Temple, where Israel purportedly worshipped. That may be what Luke has in mind for bringing us to the Temple. We'll get to more of that in a minute. The devil has another purpose. Here's what he's thinking. The devil had said in verse 9, he took Jesus to Jerusalem, the holy city, and he set him on the pinnacle of the Temple, the symbolic presence of God and presumably, the point was to put Jesus up on this great height, this precarious height, a dizzying height that would make you queasy if you looked down. I'm not a big fan of heights myself. Just imagining this makes me a little uncomfortable.

But he sets him there, he wants to up the ante, he wants to drive the stakes up here. "If you're the Son of God, throw yourself down from here," from this point. It's really high. The consequences are grave. There's definite article there that tells us we're not talking about just any point on the Temple, some indeterminate point. It's a very definite particular point. It's not a pinnacle, it's the pinnacle of the Temple.

Commentators admit they don't know the exact location where the devil brought Jesus, but they do suggest a few things here. They say maybe it's the apex of the sanctuary, the Holy Place, which had the Holy of Holies in it as well, could be that. They say it could be the top of Solomon's portico, or you know, this high, arching entryway called Solomon's portico, or even the royal portico.

Since Luke uses the word *hieron* to refer to the Temple, and not the word *naos*, *naos* refers to the Holy Place, the sanctuary that had the Holy of Holies in it, that's the word *naos*. He didn't use that. He used the word *hieron*, which is a word that refers to the entire Temple complex. Okay, so that, that had a number of high points the devil could have used for this temptation.

Most common perhaps the most popular suggestion, is that the devil took Jesus to the southeast corner of the Temple, which stood hundreds of feet above the Kidron Valley below. Josephus describes the royal portico and this whole area, he calls them royal cloisters. He says this about them, "This

cloister deserves to be mentioned better than any other," other, "under the sun, for while the valley was very deep and its bottom could not be seen if you looked from above into the depth," this fa, "farther, vastly high elevation of the cloister stood upon that height in so much that if anyone looked down from the top of the battlements or down both those altitudes, he would be giddy while his sight could not reach to such an immense depth." You can't even see the bottom is what he's saying, it's high.

And there are a lot of points along the Temple that could be in that location. Whatever the exact location was, the devil took Jesus there, and he basically challenged him to take a flying leap. Throw yourself down there from right here, from up here. And the question, why? How is this tempting at all? I mean, I'm not fond of any of that, without a parachute especially, but you do have to ask the question, what, what was tempting about this for Jesus? What was the nature of this enticement here?

Alfred Edersheim, who I've found a lot of help from he's written that big, thick *Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*. You should get that, read it, devotional reading, it's wonderful. But he believes that he's using a bit of sanctified speculation here. He believes that temptation it's about making a dramatic entrance into Messianic ministry, okay? He doesn't reference Malachi 3:1, but it seems that he could have because, it seems to predict something like this temptation of coming into the Temple "Behold, I send my messenger, he will prepare the way before me." We've already talked about that, that's a reference to John the Baptist.

Then he says this, "And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come into his Temple." The word suddenly, unexpectedly, surprisingly, could indicate such a dramatic entrance. It's actually a passage that some commentators refer to in the Midrash, which is rabbinic literature which refers to this Jewish expectation that the Messiah would manifest himself to Israel by standing on the pinnacle of the Temple.

Some have pointed to that expectation as well, and said, "Maybe this is what the devil wants Jesus to do." Edersheim goes further. He fills in the details a little bit and speculates, suggesting that the devil took Jesus to the Temple, this lofty pinnacle of the tower upon which the priest every single morning stood to watch for the break of dawn in the east, to announce to the Temple the morning sacrifice and then the priest would, once break of dawn boom, morning sacrifice, morning prayers are offered and just after that morning sacrifice, when all the faithful are gathered in prayer and worship, the idea is that Jesus, falls dramatically from a great height, lands safely in the arms of angels, who rescue him.

They cause him to descend gently onto the patio beneath amid this gawking crowd, this audience. He'd be recognized immediately as the Messiah. He'd be honored, he'd be crowned king. All would be grand, and they could move ahead with the program, right? And that's one possibility. I'll admit that I'd enticing aspect of the temptation, perhaps, it's the enticement to a fast track to honor, a fast-track to popularity, to acceptance, that Jesus could enter his Messianic ministry by this dramatic demonstration, display of angelic protection and

the sin, then, would be in Jesus doing something like this something reckless and foolish, forcing God to protect him, and if so, this would be an instance of sinful pragmatism, some kind of Messianic pragmatism, the end justifies the means. "After all, it's all about Messiah, it's all about me being recognized as Messiah and lifted up. I'm going to just speed it along and I'm going to do it my way."

It's doing God's will, right, but doing it in his own way that seems to be the thrust of that interpretation. And if Edersheim's interpretation is correct, it would explain why the devil, had to take Jesus to the Temple, because that's where adoring fans would be. That's where they'd be waiting to welcome and recognize their Messiah. Because if this temptation if it's just a matter of presuming on God, to protect him from physical harm, why after all, did the devil need to take Jesus to the Temple?

I mean certainly the wilderness had plenty of high peaks, perched way up above, rocky crags below, and that would provide the necessary element of fear and danger of harm. What the des,

desert lacked, though, was an audience. So the devil took, took Jesus here to Jerusalem, to the Temple to impress a gathered crowd. That's the idea. And I really, I gotta tell ya, I really like that interpretation, but I don't believe it's the right one.

As much as I like Edersheim's suggestion, and though I can see his suggestion could be a potential result of Jesus going through this, having some miraculous escape from certain death. I don't think it actually gets to the heart, of what's at stake here. The devil's command there in verse 9, it's brash, it's forceful, it's reckless, it's not tip toe to the edge, it's not lean over, it's throw yourself. Throw yourself And it's, it's clear too, from here down below, get on with it. The emphasis is on the physical danger. It's on the element of physical danger, not on a dramatic display. He doesn't want Jesus to think too much about this. He's not getting him to ponder what might happen as a result. He just wants Jesus to act, to be impetuous, brash, impulsive. Do you ever see Christians who act impulsively? Sometimes they base it on a promise of God. God says, do this, I did it. It's impulsive.

The devil follows up too, with reassurance which is on physical safety. Look at our second point, the false reassurance. In your Bibles, again, read in verses 9 to 11, the devil took him to Jerusalem, set him on the pinnacle of the Temple and said to him, "If you're 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.'" So, the devil follows up this foolhardy suggestion, throw yourself down, by giving Jesus a sense of assurance.

It's a false sense of assurance, but he's basically saying, look, Jesus, Scripture guarantees your safety. God has promised to rescue you from physical harm. It's his reputation that's on the line, not your safety. So go ahead, take the plunge, what have you got to lose? Before we think about what the devil did there with Scripture, before we kind of unravel his false interpretation, it's important to notice what the devil has passed by quickly here, what he's granted in the argument.

First of all, and we saw this in the first temptation, he's granted that Jesus is the Son of God. He's not making any comment about that, he doesn't want to argue about it. He, whether or not the devil really believed Jesus was the Son of God, or in what sense, he was, he recognized Jesus' as the Son of God, the devil doesn't care to engage in the argument, he never does. He just wants to throw doubts into our mind and leave us there waffling, right?

Same thing here, he just wants to grant the point, by pass that, because he's got a whole other design. Something else is at stake. He was obviously aware, as we said before, of the divine, heavenly pronouncement, "You are my beloved Son." Probably even witnessed Jesus' baptism. So he grants the issue of identity to Jesus, but he also he does a second thing here, he grants Jesus the use of Scripture as his authority. How does he grant that? By using it himself.

We've noticed time and again that Jesus did not get into a conversation with the devil. He didn't argue with him, he didn't debate with him, he didn't try to engage the devil in dialogue.

He just let Scripture do the talking. That serves as an example to us, doesn't it? It's also noteworthy regarding the issue of Biblical authority. Jesus held fast to Scripture as absolutely sufficient, as completely high and transcendent. It is the Word by which we're all judged. It is the authority that holds us all fast. Jesus didn't, here, ground any of his responses in his own authority, even though he possessed it. He grounded them in God's authority, synonymous with the Bible itself. It's a pattern for us, isn't it?

But having failed to entice Jesus here, to reason apart from the Scripture, Jesus keeps answering, "It is written," "It is written," so the devil tries to get Jesus to reason from the Scripture, but in a sinful way. Do you believe people can do that with their interpretation, reason from Scripture in a sinful way? Have you ever seen that?

The devil here attempts to make a biblical argument that will reassure Jesus in his course of action. What action? Namely this, that it's okay to jump off the Temple. He doesn't argue the point of ultimate authority; he just grants it. Uses

Scripture, attempts to use it to his own advantage. I like how simply G. Campbell Morgan put this. He said the devil admitted two things, he admitted relationship and revelation. Write that down, he admitted relationship and revelation, he granted relationship with the father, he granted revelation as his source of authority. The devil admitted Jesus' claim of relationship with God, "Since you are the Son of God," verse 9. The devil also admitted Jesus' reliance upon the revelation from God, which is, "It is written," "it is written," verse 10.

The deviousness is in this, that while he grants Jesus that relationship, while he grants the revelation, he tries to pervert those good commitments toward a sinful end. In tempting Jesus to act presumptuously, the devil is just baiting him. He just baiting him and enticing him, asking him to do this, prove your relationship. Prove the reliability of the Bible.

In other words, the devil wants Jesus to take, what he relied upon most, his close relationship with God, his confident trust in the Word of God, and he intended to use those commitments against him. Prove this loving relationship, by

seeing if God will come to your rescue. Prove the reliability of God's promise by putting it to the test. Just this one act, Jesus, will prove both things are true, that you are indeed the Son of God and that you are justified in relying on the Word of God.

The passage, the devil provides to reassure Jesus that it's okay to throw himself off the pinnacle of the Temple, as we read earlier, it's Psalm 91, it's verses 11 to 12. And as we read, you could hear it for yourself, it, it celebrates God's faithfulness as a refuge for the righteous. And here's the portion the devil quoted from Psalm 91, I'm reading from Psalm 91, verses 11 to 12, "For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways on their hands they will bear you up lest you strike your foot against a stone."

Now for those of you who are following along in Luke 4, following the wording, you notice the devil left out the last phrase in verse 11, "in all your ways." Some commentators try to make much of that omission as if that is the tricky part here. I don't think that's the issue, though. In fact, I believe that

that phrase would only have strengthened the devil's point, to help Jesus feel confident that God would guard him in all his ways, which included a way that led from the top of the pinnacle of the temple down into the rocky crag below. If that meant, if that was the part of "all my ways," aye, so be it, let's jump.

I think rather than get distracted by the omission of a single phrase at the end of verse 11 there, what about the omission of the entire heart and soul of the psalm? That seems to be the major omission here. That seems to be the violation, it's the violation of the entire psalm, the heart of the psalm, he's gutted it. The devil has distorted, mutilated this psalm for his wicked purpose because the very heart, of what it means to dwell in God, to abide in him, to trust him means you would not put God to the test.

That's precisely, what God himself takes note of at the end of the psalm, we read it earlier, but I'll repeat it for you. In verses 14 to 16, God says, "because he holds fast to me in love." God's about to speak a promise to those who hold fast to him in love. And certainly Jesus held fast to him in love, so

applying this to Jesus, because Jesus holds fast to me in love, I will deliver him; I will protect him, because he knows my name. What is it to know God's name? Just to know it's Yahweh, the Tetragrammaton, no. It means to know his character, it means to know his nature, means to know what he's like. "Because he holds fast to me in love," he's devoted. Because he knows my name, my character, my works, my ways. When he calls to me, I will answer him, I will be with him in trouble, I will rescue him, I will honor him with long life, I will satisfy him, I'll show him my salvation.

Beloved, that is the heart and soul of Psalm 91. Devotion to God, worship of God, relying on God, resting underneath his protection and that provides us with insight into a relationship with God that's based on love. **this** this is the kind character of God. "For those who love him, who are called according to his purpose, that all things work together for their good." He's there to deliver, to protect, to answer, this is the way that the way of God with his beloved, to rescue him, to honor him, to satisfy and content his soul, to show him salvation.

This is a beautiful thing to behold in this Psalm, isn't it? The devil here, he is so far from seeing that beauty. His eyes are so polluted with the filth of his own evil motives that he cannot see the beauty of that psalm. He's far from appreciating the beauty. So the devil sees this as an opportunity to entice to Jesus, to destroy all beauty and put God to the test. A.T. Robertson put it this way, "Satan does not misquote this psalm, but he misapplies it, and he makes it mean presumptuous reliance on God." End quote. So true.

He's absolutely gutted it and robbed it of all of its substance. It has the same words, but at the heart of it is now presumption. It's ugly to turn this beautiful Psalm into a monstrosity, to turn contented trust, loving faithfulness and worship into presumptuous doubt. That's the devil, though, that's what he does, let's make this really plain. Here's what the devil is saying to Jesus in all its ugliness. He says this, since you've trusted in this God, whom you call father, he calls you son, I get that. Since you've trusted in this God, and since you've anchored yourself into the Bible, let's see how serious you are about that. Throw yourself down from way up here, there is no going back, in fact, I've set you up for success. God

would not let his precious Messiah die, especially in Jerusalem, the Holy City, especially at the Temple of all places. The blood of the Messiah on God's hands, I think not. God wouldn't let his precious promise fall to the ground, especially one that so directly applies to you. God wouldn't let his beloved son die. Just tip-toe to the edge there, Jesus, and throw yourself down, hurl yourself into the greatest existential unknown. See if your faith in God and his word is truly warranted.

In fact, Jesus, that is a wise thing to do. After all, you're charting a pretty difficult course of unparalleled suffering. So let's test this, see if God is really trustworthy, prove it to me, prove it to yourself for your own sake. Like all these temptations, the devil sidles up to Jesus, and pretends friendship. He acts like he's on his side. He acts like he's got his best interest in mind, and he insinuates this garbage. Do you know the tricky part of this temptation? Is that if you back off a little bit, it may not even seem necessarily self-centered. It is self-centered, but it doesn't maybe necessarily seem self-centered. There's an aspect of this temptation, that if Jesus sees through the devil's machinations here, there's a challenge here to prove the honor of God, to prove the concern

for Jesus as the son, to prove here the reliability of Scripture and its promises. So, from that perspective, it, it almost seems like it might be a noble thing to do to take the leap. Let God prove his faithfulness. Silence this devil once and for all.

With that in mind, turn back to Numbers chapter 20, Numbers chapter 20. I want to show you a few things from Israel's wanderings, its time in the desert. And I want to show you how Moses, he faced a similar situation to defend God's honor, as it were. By Numbers chapter 20 in Israel's history, Moses had a pretty good read on the kind of people he's leading. They are unruly, they are a rabble, they're rebellious. Tha, they're a pretty unappreciative bunch, aren't they? Ready to complain at a moment's notice. He's been chosen by God, set apart by God to lead them, and they've done nothing but grumbled against him, resisted him, complained, been ready to even stone him and go back to Egypt. This is a nation full of ingrates.

If you've been in any position of leadership before, you know how hard it is to pour yourself into people who have no recognition of it at all. You read Israel's history and you say,

poor Moses! Man, I mean who would want that job? He certainly didn't, he tried to get out of it. God said, look, Moses, just quiet because it's not up to you, I've already made this decision, you are in charge. But I can't talk. Okay, Aaron will be there with you. He'll speak. Get up there and lead. It's not up to him.

And just before Numbers 20, as you go through the narrative, Moses and Aaron they had watched God judge Korah, Dathan and Abiram, leaders who stepped forward to challenge the authority of Moses and Aaron. They said in Numbers 16:3, "Moses and Aaron, you have gone too far!" Here's the charge, "For all the congregation are holy, every one of them, the Lord is among them. Why then do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the Lord?" These guys, Korah, Dathan, Abiram, they're expressing this seemingly righteous concern about the pride of Moses and Aaron in exalting themselves.

But I mean, these guys poor Korah, Dathan, Abiram, they're just representing the people, right? I mean, they're, they're, just put forward to represent these valid concerns, and

someone's got to confront the overreaching of Moses and Aaron. Who do these guys think they are? So, for the sake of the people, they step up. You know the story. The ground opened up, swallowed them all. Wow! Swallowed this rebellious faction.

Many others who agreed with the rebels, when they continued in their complaining and grumbling against Moses and Aaron, do you know what God did? You read it there, God sent a plague to kill nearly 15,000 of them. It's a total disaster and yet, this spirit of grumbling and complaining, which that should be enough. I mean as soon as I see the ground open up, I'm good. I'm going to back away. I'm going to say, okay, I'm with you, Moses and Aaron. Where are you standing because I'm going to stand next to you. But all that complaining hadn't been eradicated from the congregation of Israel, even when the ground opened up, even when a plague killed 15,000. Take a look at Numbers 20, verses 1 to 3, "People of Israel, the whole congregation, came into the wilderness of Zin in the first month, and the people stayed in Kadesh. And Miriam died there and was buried there. Now there was no water for the congregation."

And as I mentioned before, you can sympathize if you've ever been in that desert without water, it's not pleasant. "And they assembled themselves together against Moses and against Aaron. And the people quarreled with Moses and said, 'Would that we had perished when our brothers perished before the Lord!'" Stop there. Do you know who they're referring to when they say, our brothers? They're referring to Korah, Dathan and Abiram as our brothers. They're referring to the 15,000 that who died as our brothers.

That's interesting, if you were living through this at the time, you would see these as just interpersonal conflicts. You'd see them as power struggles, human loyalties, sympathize with them. And that guy lost, he lost a loved one in the plague, man. Don't be so hard on him. You'd get it, but when we look at it portrayed by God on the pages of Scripture, it takes on a different light, doesn't it? Sympathies, loyalties. The rebels are our brothers, and we're holding you responsible, Moses and Aaron. Look at verse 4, "Why have you brought the assembly of the Lord into this wilderness, that we should die here, both we and our cattle? And why have you made us come up out of Egypt to



bring us to this evil place? It is no place for grain or figs or vines or pomegranates, and there is no water to drink.”

Ultimately, you know, who, who are they complaining against, Moses and Aaron? I mean, can they, can they provide water? Can Moses and Aaron make figs grow, pomegranates? The complaints against God, isn't it? But Moses and Aaron they're just a convenient focal point because who wants to condemn God when you can condemn a man, blame him instead?

These people are barking up the wrong tree. Look at verses 6 and following, “Then Moses and Aaron went up from the presence of the assembly to the entrance of the tent of meeting and fell on their faces.” There's humility for you. “And the glory of the Lord appeared to them, and the Lord spoke to Moses saying, ‘Take the staff, and assemble the congregation, you and Aaron your brother, tell the rock before their eyes to yield its water. So you shall bring water out of the rock for them give drink to the congregation and their cattle.’”

What graciousness! What kindness! Verse 9, "Moses took the staff from before the Lord, as he commanded him. Then Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together before the rock, and he said to them, 'Hear now, you rebels, shall we bring water,' out "for you out of this rock?' Moses lifted up his hand and struck the rr, rock with his staff twice, water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their livestock." Stop there.

Just as God had done for Moses and the people back at Horeb in Exodus 17:6, God did it again here. Moses struck the rock there; he struck the rock here. Back in Exodus God had delivered them from Egypt, he drowned the entire Egyptian army, which was the superpower of the day. He turned bitter water into sweet water. He provided manna from heaven, the bread of angels.

He gave it to them, one test of thirst for the people of Israel coming out of Egypt, they came to a place without water and that's all it took to turn them from a grateful people into a complaining, bitter, quarreling, murderous mob. And God told Moses, "Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb, you shall strike the rock, and water shall come out of

it, and all the people will drink." Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel and the water flowed.

Now, Numbers 20, it's like déjà vu all over again. And Moses is tired of this rebellion. The complaining is grating on his very last nerve. He's tired of this continual questioning of God at the slightest chance, the people seem willing to throw all caution to the wind; they're willing to forget all that God has done for them in the past; they're ready to cast aside his faithfulness, slander his character, slander his nature, and invite his judgment. So instead of speaking to the rock as God told him to do, he struck the rock twice. Seems to indicate his irritation with these rebels. God said, "Speak." Moses struck. God told him one way; Moses did it his own way. And at least in this instance, the saying came true, "Like people, like priest." A nation of people of people who put God to the test. They were just led by a man who was made of the same stuff, right? Made of the same stuff.

And as we read it, we know God didn't let them off the hook, he didn't excuse it. God punished Moses for what seems to

us like such a minor violation. He struck instead of spoke, come on. It wasn't minor, it wasn't a small issue, particularly since it was committed by a man in leadership, a man with influence. He was born a Levite, he's called to be a prophet, he's put at the head of Israel, and he's leading them. Take a look at verse 12, "And the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, 'Because you did not believe in me,' Wow! God gets to the heart of the issue, it's a lack of belief, it's a lack of faith. "Because you did not believe in me, to uphold me as holy in the eyes of the people of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land that I have given them.' These are the waters of Meribah, where the people of Israel quarreled with the Lord, and through them he showed himself holy." There is no record of Moses complaining about this. He understood the violation of divine holiness. He accepted the punishment with his characteristic humility and meekness.

But listen, if you and I, if we could step into the scene there, sort of make a defense for Moses, what would we say? God, come on, this people has pushed Moses too far. He's just a man, he's in an impossible position, he's leading this rebellious complaining stiff-necked people. There he is ready to be killed

standing in the gap, he's standing in the gap for you, he's defending your honor. He's standing up for your faithfulness. He's putting it all on the line for the truthfulness of your Word. He's being loyal to you, God.

I can imagine God answering based on this text. If that's so, then he should have done it my way. Even Moses, as great a man as he was, Numbers 12:3 says, "Now the man Moses was very meek, more than all people who were on the face of the earth," but as great as a leader as Moses was, and as he became, he was not allowed to presume upon God. He was not allowed to take God's holiness for granted, to set it aside in one instance. If God says, "Speak, Moses," you'd better speak. If God says, "Strike, Moses," you'd better strike.

Like the people he was called to lead, Moses also had to obey every single word that comes from the mouth of God. He had to align himself, his emotions, his passions with the holy character of God, considering God first; virtually no concern about the people that are standing around him, he had to



consider God first, because that is the mark of one who loves and worships God above all.

Listen, where Moses failed and indeed we could say where all of us fail, every single one of us, Jesus never failed. The devil brought Jesus up to Jerusalem, to the Temple, he set everything up, the setting, the environment, the circumstances, the timing, taking care of every concern to induce Jesus to take the plunge, to put God to the test, from the pinnacle of the Temple. What the devil hoped would reassure Jesus and set his mind at ease, to precipitate his spiritual failure and his demise, his special relationship with God, the promise of Scripture, the sanctified location, all of it designed to prove the reliability of God and his Word. From that vantage point of the Temple, you know what Jesus saw a totally different picture and he was persuaded from the Temple in exactly the opposite direction that the devil had hoped.

When Jesus looked around at the Temple, he saw it for what it had become. It was the heart and symbol of spiritual presumption. It was the place where God had been tested again

and again and again. The Temple in Jesus' day had become the symbol of whitewashed idolatry. It had become the symbol of spiritual hypocrisy. It was the symbol of the spiritual rape of the most helpless of Israel's citizens, its widows and its orphans.

Remember the widow putting two mites in to the, into the Temple treasury? That's not a commendation of the widow, that's an indictment of Israel. How dare they take two mites of a widow, all she has to live on, and extract it from her for a building project? What in the world? The Temple had become the center of Jerusalem's commerce. It was the heart of its banking, the priests were the bankers. They employed the money-changers, the profiteers.

Rather than symbolize humble worship, the Temple had come to signify the place where priests make money from the sacrifices of God's people. Where they profited from people's sins, from their dirty consciences. It operated here as a system that was helping people to get their conscience clean before God, but that was all pretense because what they were really

after was getting their hands on people's wallets and Jesus saw all of that, and all he could think of was this verse, "You shall not put the Lord your God to the test." That verse expressed the heart of his love for God, the heart of his devotion, his commitment never to sin against the one he loved.

And once again, Jesus' reply became a condemning, stinging indictment against the devil himself. Point number three: the forthright rebuke, the forthright rebuke. That's point number three. Look at verse 12, "And Jesus answered him, 'It is said, "You shall not put the Lord your God to the test."'" Listen, testing God is not trusting God. It's not worshipping or loving God, testing God is doubting God. Even if you're trying to prove something to the devil himself, to test him is to doubt him. The unbelieving heart has no claim on God, no right to dictate terms of a test of faithfulness. The unbelieving heart is by definition faithless.

So if Jesus would have submitted to the devil's recommendation, whether he's deceived into trusting in this false assurance offered from Psalm 91, whether in a valiant

moment he wanted to step forward and prove the reliability of God and his Word, if Jesus had submitted, he would have put God to the test and he would have allowed the devil to dictate the terms rather than find contentment, rather than find rest in the faithfulness of God.

He could have just let the devil's so called questions go unanswered. It's interesting to note here that when Jesus quoted from Deuteronomy 6:16, he quoted from the Septuagint translation, and that translation actually changes the plural, you, of the Masoretic text, you all, referring to all the people of Israel, the Septuagint turns it into the singular, you, which refers to Israel pictures Israel as a single nation. But that singular, you, it points the finger at Satan. It indicts Satan for testing God and it reveals most immediately that the devil put God to the test by tempting Christ himself, who's not only the incarnate God, he's also the chosen Messiah, the one upon whom God has pronounced his love, he tried to get Jesus to put God to the test. That is the essence of putting God to the test, to presume on his protection this foolish leap into the air.

John Calvin writes, "Satan brings forward the guardianship of angels for the purpose of advising Christ to put himself unnecessarily in danger. As if he would say, 'If you expose yourself to death, contrary to the will of God, angels will protect your life.'" That has to be the very height of putting God to the test, to pit the God the Son against God the Father. The devil wins the prize, right, for the greatest violation of Deuteronomy 6:16. And you can see in that that he is at the heart and soul of every form of sinful presumption of mankind. He's the one animating. He's the spirit of the power of the air, animating every sinful presumption. But setting aside his testing of God the Son, the devil put God the Father to the test by twisting his words, by employing Scripture against its intended use.

He was making sport of God's promises. He's trying to bind God with his own Word. He has absolutely no fear of God. In fact, his heart is driven by utter hostility toward God. Those who use God's Word in such a devious way, like the cults, like today's moral activists who are leading the LGBT revolution. They are also turning Scripture on its head. They're turning God against God putting him to the test. Look, let's not point the



finger outward. Let's consider how we're prone to put God to the test.

I like what William Hendrickson says. He says it very clearly, "Daily life all around us affords abundant illustrations of false confidence similar to that which the devil urged Jesus to exercise. A person will earnestly beseech the Lord to bestow on him the blessing of health; however, he neglects to observe the rules of health. Or he will ask God to save his soul; however, he neglects to use the means of grace, such as the study of Scripture, church attendance, the sacraments, living a life for the benefit of others to the glory of God.

Again, someone will plead with the Lord for the spiritual, as well as the physical welfar, welfare of his children, but he himself neglects to bring them up in the way of the Lord. Can I tell you how we do that nowadays? We involve our kids in so much activity that we distract their minds away from Scripture. We, as fathers, fail to teach our children and our families. Mothers

can be so involved in interaction with other people, whether it's social media or face to face or on the phone or whatever.

We neglect to bring our children up in the way of the Lord and it's presumption. We hope for one result and we do nothing to help attain it. Hendrickson continues, "A church member, admonished because at a circus he had eagerly rushed into a corrupt sideshow, defended himself by saying, 'I cannot deny that I went in there, but while I was there, I was constantly praying, Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity.'" "You shall not put the Lord your God to the test" is the answer to all of this.

Beloved, we do this repeatedly, putting God to the test, hoping for some great dramatic result and benefit in our spiritual life, all the while doing nothing to attain it. How can we pray that way? How can we pray for our children to turn out well when we do nothing to invest? How can we pray, God make me holy, when I'm continually pursuing things that are unholy? How can we do that? God doesn't take this lightly, folks. He

killed 15,000 in one day. He's judged the nation, all those things are examples to us.

But I want to be quick to say this, we see our failings in these areas. When the Bible says, "All have sinned," it includes you and me. But thanks be to God for Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen? Oh, it's time for judgment to begin with the house of God. It has to begin with us first. That's the point of reading the record of these temptations that we'll see the perfect qualification of our Savior, that we'll see the perfect sufficiency of his representation of us, there is no lack in him and again, that's why I believe Luke wanted to put temptations two and three in the order he puts them in.

He wants us to see the theological significance of Jesus' commitment that true worship means never putting God to the test. Look down in your Bible, one more verse to cover very quickly. And it's the frustrated retreat in your outline, Temptations don't last forever, every temptation has an end. It's a massive encouragement to us. When the devil faces Jesus, it's a guarantee the temptation is going to end in the devil's

frustration. Look at verse 13, "When the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time." He's absolutely frustrated here. He can't get Jesus to sin.

And in fact, look ahead at the next couple of verses in Luke 4, Luke 4 verses 14 to 15, not only did he fail to tempt and test Jesus, get him to fall, but Jesus, verse 14, "returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee report went out about him throughout all the surrounding country and he taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all." He's launched into ministry in a commitment to holiness, having passed every test.

The devil ha, would have us believe that his power is unstoppable, his enticements are irresistible, falling to his temptations are inevitable. When we're free from the penalty and the power of sin, entering into temptation, falling into temptation, you know what, beloved? For us, nothing is inevitable, nothing. The resistance of Jesus Christ has proven this, and his power sustains us. Jesus found the power to overcome every temptation, all temptation. You say, but I'm not Jesus. I'm prone to weakness and failure, quite right, so look

to Jesus, he'll rescue you. Be diligent, constant in his Word, trust him in every moment, he will deliver. He has the will and desire to do so. The devil will flee and you will go forward in power of holiness.

Let's pray. Father, we plead upon you for your grace in every moment of trial, temptation, testing and need. And we know based on this record that you will provide it. You'll provide us with all the power we need to stand firm if we'll just call upon you. Help us never to try to fight temptation, to try to fight anything in our lives in our own power, in our strength, with our own foolish judgment. Let us live in a way all through the day that is pursuing your wisdom, meditating on your Word, getting close to the heart of every passage of Scripture so we can understand you, know your character, know your ways, love you more deeply, more fully, more contentedly.