

Not by Bread Alone

Luke 4:1-4

July 10, 2016

Starting in Luke 4:1, and we'll read all the way through verse 13. "And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led up by the Spirit in the wilderness for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And he ate nothing during those days. And when they were ended, he was hungry. The devil said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread.' And Jesus answered him, 'It is written, "Man shall not live by bread alone."' "

"And the devil took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, and said to him, 'To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will. If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours.' And Jesus answered him,

'It is written, "You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve."'

"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."'

And Jesus answered him, 'It is said, "You shall not put the Lord your God to the test."' And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time."

Word temptation, there, that's in the text, is the word *peirasmōs*. The verb form is *peirazo*, as it's used there in verse 2, a verb form, there. It's a word that has really both positive and negative senses. You say, how could a word temptation have a positive connotation? Well, it's the same word in Greek used either way. Okay? In the positive sense, the word *peirasmōs*, it refers to testing. It refers to proving. You might think of God disciplining his children, refining their faith. Peter uses the word that way in 1 Peter 4:12, saying, "Beloved, do not be

surprised at the fiery trial," *peirasmos*, "the fiery trial, when it comes upon you to test you, as though some strange thing were happening to you." That's a positive sense.

In a negative sense, and especially when the devil is the subject, it's not used positively. It's used here in Luke 4:2, the word *peirasmos* means temptation, as in an enticement, a solicitation to commit sin against God, that's the idea. There's a sense in which that same word, *peirasmos*, and even in the same single instance of a *peirasmos*, a temptation, a test, in the negative sense it is a solicitation to commit sin, it's a temptation, but in a positive sense that same *peirasmos*, God is sovereign over that thing and he is using it to test us, to refine us, to prove and strengthen our faith. That's why James warns us never to blame God for our temptations.

In fact, let's go to that passage just quickly by way of illustration. Go to James Chapter 1, verse 12. James 1:12, turn over there for a moment cause this is the perfect place to clarify the difference between a positive *peirasmos*, that is a trial, te, a testing, and then a negative *peirasmos*, a, a

temptation, an enticement. God is sovereign over all of our trials, over all of our testing, that's the positive use of *peirasmōs*, but sometimes we fail to respond to that positive testing in a good and godly way. Sometimes we fail to see that as a good test from God. The sin nature within us, it's stirred up, old habits of thinking and responding come out of us, and that leads to sin and God is not responsible for that. He is not soliciting sin from us. He is refining us.

Listen to James 1:12, "Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial," there's the word right there used in a positive sense. "Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial for when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him." There's a test coming from God. God brings him through it so that he'll stand the test, receive the crown of life.

But, verse 13, "Let no one say when he is tempted," and here's the first of several instances of the negative use of the very same word, *peirasmōs*, "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. And then desire when it has conceived, it gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death."

So, there's a warning here, good warning against blaming God for the temptations that stir up within us. Any temptation, any sin, anything like that that comes up, that's our fault, that's on us. Make no mistake, God does test and try his children and he does it to strengthen them. He does it to refine them, to grow them. It's a great act of his love for us as his children.

It's kind of like a, a father or a coach, you might say, putting his athlete through rigors of testing and when that athlete goes through, he's strengthened through the test, he's ready for the game. When that athlete grumbles and complains and gets lazy and lays on the ground and doesn't do his push-ups, that's on him, isn't it? It's not the coach's fault. It's not the father's fault. That's testing.

But because of indwelling sin, because of our weakness in believing, we don't always respond righteously to God's plan to test and try us. We don't always respond, as strange as it may seem, we don't always respond well to God's amazing acts of love for us, like testing, like trial. And again, that's not God's fault. It's ours.

Look at verse 16, "Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures."

Listen, there is no fault in God. His intention for you is holiness, and he'll do whatever it takes to bring you there. His intention for you is good and only good all the time. There is no variation with him. There's no shadow of change. God is immutable. That means, "I, the Lord, do not change." That's what that means, it means, I never change. He's unchanging by nature, by definition, and it's that unchanging nature of his being that

guarantees he is going to help and reward us when we stand firm during the testing when we resist the temptation.

So, whenever you face temptation, realize that it's the sinful habits of thinking, the sinful desires of the sin nature that are in there luring you away, enticing you, but also realize that when you feel that, this is an opportunity for you to remain steadfast under trial. God is high above. He is sovereignly planning this situation for your good, whether it's a relational issue, whether it's a job situation, whether it's the threat of violence, whether it's the threat of financial instability, God is hovering sovereign above it all, he's planning it for your good. And he's not just high and transcendent, removed from it; he's very near, too. He's right next to you. He cares and he is ready to help you in your time of need; so, call to him, turn to him. He delights in responding to our prayers, our cries for help.

Now turn back to Luke 4:1, because this here is an extraordinary instance of God testing his son and it's an instance, like all instances, of the son responding in perfect righteousness. He

does exactly what he's supposed to do here. Jesus received this time of testing in the wilderness like he received everything else from his father. Jesus considered this time in the desert as, yes, "a good and perfect gift from above coming down from the father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change."

Everything that comes down from above is a good and perfect gift on us, even the hard times, even the pain, even the suffering. We are so wrong, beloved, to turn and run from conflict. We are so wrong as Americans to avoid every kind of suffering and try to medicate it all out of our lives. It's an indication that we are so small-minded. We're so weak in our thinking, so sinful.

But listen, whenever we are weak and failing, we have this recorded testimony of Christ's perfection. Jesus never failed and he is our hope. He is the ground of our Christian assurance. We don't look to ourselves as the ground for assurance, that is a false hope. We're so inconsistent. Christ is the ground of our assurance and that's what we find here in Luke 4:1 to 13. We have here in him an unshakable confidence of a certain

salvation, won by an absolutely in conquerable Savior. So whatever successes or failures you and I have as Christians, let Christ be our confidence, let Christ be our confidence.

This morning we're going to look at the first of the three temptations here that Jesus conquered. The devil came to him, it was in a time, as we read, of great hunger. The devil tempted him to turn stones into bread and to feed himself. We're not tempted in the exact same way, are we? I mean, none of us possesses the creative power that Jesus did, but we do face the same temptation in kind. There is the same kind of temptation, it's, in fact, this particular temptation is very common for us and it reveals in us the condition of our faith in God. Is it a strong faith in God, or a weak faith in God?

Here's the question that comes up in this passage that really we're going to spend our time focusing on. It's a question I want you to be thinking about as we go through. Do I really, do I *really* trust God, or do I tend to rely on myself? Do I really trust God, or do I rely on myself, because that's exactly what the devil wanted Jesus to ponder. That's what he wanted Jesus to

question. Am I going to trust God, or am I going to look to myself? We're going to see here how he stood firm.

So, we're going to proceed through our outline here, just five points you've got there: The Situation, The Attack, The Resistance, The Victory, and The Pattern. Let's begin with that first point: The Situation. The situation. We noted this last week. Talked a lot about this passage in setting it up. Jesus went directly from his baptism and the affirmation of God, and he went into the wilderness, right?

Mark, in his Gospel, I love Mark's vivid, forceful language that he uses to describe how Jesus went into the wilderness. He says this in Mark 1:10 to 12, "When Jesus came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open." Love that vivid imagery, torn open, that's Mark. "Torn open, and the Spirit descending on him like a dove and a voice came from heaven, 'You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.'" And then this, "The Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness."

Luke says Jesus was “led by the Spirit,” a little gentler. Mark says, he’s being driven out by the Spirit. It’s the verb *ekballo*, which is used every time Jesus casts out a demon. It’s *ekballo*, it’s cast him, throw him out. The Spirit here threw Jesus out. He threw him into the wilderness. It’s not that Jesus, here, is pictured as reluctant. It’s, he’s not resistant in any way, but what Mark wants us to see is that immediate issue that there is no time gap, there is no down time for Jesus. He went from one to the other immediately. God’s sovereignly here, even forcefully; took Jesus from the baptism tank and cast him into the testing tank, into the refiner’s fire.

Look at verse 1, Luke 4, “Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness for forty days, being tempted by the devil.” The participle there, “being tempted,” the participle shows purpose. So, let’s translate it this way, this comment on the temptation, “Jesus was led by the Spirit in the wilderness,” that is, he was led the entire forty days, “to be tempted by the devil,” with the purpose of temptation, being tempted by the devil. So, it’s

an issue of purpose there, not necessarily of duration. But, "he ate nothing during those days." Stop there.

As we noted last week, Jesus was in the wilderness for forty days after the pattern of Moses, God's chosen instrument to bring the law down to Israel from God at Mount Sinai. And as Alfred Edersheim put it, he said, quote, "Moses was the giver of the covenant, Elijah its restorer, and the Messiah its renewer and perfecter." End quote. That's exactly right.

Both Moses, as the giver of the covenant, and Elijah, as the restorer of covenant, both fasted for forty days, which is why we see Jesus being intentional about this period of withdrawal into the wilderness. The Spirit was leading him there for testing, but from Jesus' perspective as a devout worshipper of God, he entered the wilderness for a period of fasting and prayer. Having come from his baptism, realizing the great significance of the Messianic mission that lay ahead of him, Jesus intended to commune with God. He intended to meditate on God's Word, to fast and to pray.

It's the only period of fasting, by the way, that's recorded in Jesus' life and ministry. I feel compelled to make a note just for all of those who have mystic tendencies in them, that he only did this once, okay? And Jesus is unique. This isn't to be a pattern for us. Jesus' lack of fasting, actually, in contrast to John the Baptist, it was noted by his enemies. They saw Jesus' lack of fasting in his ministry, his lifetime, as a reason to dismiss him as, quote, "a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners." Jesus was not a glutton, but his life was not marked by fasting either. He came as the bridegroom to the bride.

His coming was a time of joy and, and I only point that out to make this comment, that Jesus' forty-day fast is not to be a pattern of spiritual discipline that Christians are expected to follow. I remember a time in the 1990's when it became popular within Evangelical circles to demonstrate a very high degree of spiritual discipline by entering into a forty-day fast. Listen, that's a bad idea. It's even a bad weight loss idea. Ask a nutritionist; it's not good for you. But they did this, it was popularized, and, never mind the fact that Jesus himself warned

in Matthew 6:1, "Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them."

I once knew a guy that became known, I knew him personally, this guy, he became known for his forty-day fast and, it seemed that that's what he wanted, to be kind of known as a modern-day monk living right in our seminary. He didn't hide his fasting at all, he actually paraded it. You could actually see his gaunt appearance, and he stumbled about the hallways from class to class. He ended up becoming so severely emaciated he needed medical attention. It actually affected his wife, his family, his work. If it weren't for the hospital plugging some IVs into him and nursing him back to health, that man would have died.

Folks, that's not what Jesus' forty-day fast is for. It's not here to set a pattern of spiritual discipline. Is it wrong for Christians to fast for certain things? Not at all, but keep it to yourself between you and the Lord, right? Matthew, chapter 6, don't practice your righteousness, whether it's giving or prayer or fasting or anything else you do in your life, to be seen by

men. Because if you do, well, there you go, there's your reward. Enjoy it because it's not going to last long.

God raised up Jesus here for a unique purpose in the plan of redemption. What Jesus did here was unique to his role that God had called him to. Jesus fasted one time in his lifetime, like Moses did, like Elijah did before him. Moses gave the covenant, Elijah restored the covenant, Jesus fulfilled the covenant. Look, none of us, as great of Christians as I think all of you are, none of us is in that position. None of us has that role.

That said, it was during this period of deep spiritual devotion, preparing for the ministry that lay ahead of him, that Jesus was visited by the devil. The devil watched. The devil observed. The devil waited patiently and then pounced on him at his weakest moment. Look at verse 2, "He ate nothing during those days and when they were ended, he was hungry and the devil said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread.'"

As I said, Jesus has here been fasting, praying. He's anticipating the end of this period of withdrawal. When Jesus was at his most hungry moment, his weakest physical moment, that's when the devil attacked him. The gloves came off. He pounced, knowing that this unique opportunity was drawing to a close, the window was shutting here. Jesus, here, was certainly close to death physically. In fact, Matthew's epilogue tells us that after Jesus stood firm against these final three temptations, outlasting the tempter completely, it says, "The devil left him. And behold, angels came and were ministering to him." That is to say, Jesus didn't have the strength to go walk back into the city and get some food. Angels had to come.

The verb tense that's used there, it implies that there was a period of time that was needed to restore his physical body. That is, angels were ministering to him over a period of time. It's a very significant degree of fasting and weakness and, in some measure, we all can understand this, to a very limited degree, but we can understand what it must have been like to be visited with temptation at a time of severe physical strain.

I like to think of mothers when I talk about this. Have any of you mothers had one of your dear, beloved children, the fruit of your womb, or even your normally very sweet and understanding and considerate husband, it's the end of a hard day, you've done a lot of thankless tasks around the house, and there's nothing but demands. Where's the dinner? I don't like this dinner.

What's for dessert? You don't have any dessert? All that stuff comes out. You're working on a severe headache, and whoever it is just walks in and plucks that last nerve. It's a time of weakness, isn't it? You're ready to snap.

Have any of you ever been in a time of sickness and you feel like you just cannot handle any more drama in any form, in any degree? You just want some peace and quiet. You just want some rest so you can recover. Amplify that beyond your ability to imagine, and that is the condition that Jesus was in here. He's not just hungry, he's weak. His nerves are raw and exposed. He's tired, he's weary and in that state of physical weakness, the devil says, I believe it's about time. That's the situation.

Second point: The enticement. The enticement. The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread." Notice here when the devil does draw near, he is pouncing, the gloves have come off, but you know what? If you're experiencing it, he's actually here kind of gentle. He's subtle here. He's gentle. He actually appears to be friendly. He's taking an interest in Jesus' physical well-being.

Let's start with that two-letter word, if. If. "If you are the Son of God." Is, is the devil here challenging Jesus' divine Sonship? Does he himself believe that Jesus is truly the Son of God, or, or does he doubt that? If you believe that the devil here is challenging Jesus' Sonship, then this probably appears to you to be a temptation for Jesus to prove himself to the devil. But that's not the case. That's never the case. Jesus never feels obliged to answer the devil's slanders. He doesn't care what the devil thinks. So, what is going on here?

It may seem by the use of the word if, that the devil is calling Jesus' identity into question, and that's, could be accurate, but it's not quite accurate. He's actually bypassing the issue

of Jesus' identity altogether. It's clear from the grammatical structure here that the devil is granting that Jesus may or may not be the Son of God. He's just granting it for the sake of argument. No matter what the devil actually believes about Jesus' identity here, he speaks to Jesus granting that assumption.

The devil refers to Jesus as the Son of God and, I, again, whether or not he believes that to be true is beside the point, because he's got something else up his sleeve. He's got something else in mind, and that's important to note right off the bat. The devil doesn't really want to engage in dialogue on issues of truth and reality. He doesn't care about truth. He's not interested in good solid arguments. He's not interested in logical deduction from true premises. He's got one aim, and that aim is this, to get Jesus to commit sin.

Listen, you can see this all through the abortion debate. You can see this all through the homosexual debate, the, the gay marriage debate, the transgender debate. There is no debate. All they want to do is throw in doubts, throw in accusations, throw

in slanders, get people to emote and feel. They don't care about truth and logic. That's why you can't sit down and debate the issues with someone on that side because they're not going to deal with you in honesty. They don't care about honesty. They want what they want.

That's what the devil's doing here. He doesn't want to get tied up into a debate he knows he'll lose about Jesus' identity. He just makes a tactical decision to avoid questions about Jesus' nature altogether. Let's just grant that and move on. And he takes aim here with one of his key weapons. It's called flattery. Flattery, "Since you are the Son of God", so supremely unique, there's only one in existence like you, since you're so important, since you're the object of God's affection, Son of God, you're the center of God's attention, you're the key to his redemptive plan. Look, this is an explicit stroking of the self-esteem. He applies it generously. He spreads it here around like a thick dab of creamy butter. But the devil does not pause there. He keeps it moving. "Since you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread."

The ESV translates the verb there as “command this stone to become bread,” but the verb literally means say or speak. The devil literally says, “Tell this stone to become bread,” or better, “Speak to this stone that it should become bread.” The devil here is affirming Jesus’ power to do this, whether on his own or by the power of the Holy Spirit. You remember that the devil was there hearing the father’s voice of affirmation. He saw the Spirit descend in bodily form like a dove. Saw the Spirit rest on Jesus. The devil knew that Jesus in some measure possessed spiritual power, even creative power. So, whether on his own, or by the power of the Spirit, the devil acknowledged that Jesus had power at his disposal and he says, you have the power, use it.

Again, he’s flattering him, flattery about his identity, flattery about his power. Proverbs 29:5 says, “The one who flatters his neighbor spreads a net for his feet.” Listen, watch out for those who flatter you. Watch out for those who puff you up because flattery is deceptive. I’m not talking here about legitimate, sincere encouragement, which is concrete and specific, which is substantive and edifying. We are to encourage one another. There are to be encouraging words flowing from our

mouths toward each other all the time. But I'm talking about legitimate, substantive, concrete words of encouragement and edification.

But this here is flattery. This is fine-sounding words and niceties that have no real substance at all. Deceptive words, the words say one thing, the actions betray the evil heart. And that is what the devil is attempting to do here with the Son of God. Satan hates him. He approaches with words, though, words of affirmation, friendly words, words that feel good, words that are laying a trap for his feet.

Notice the proposal. Pretty small thing here, really. "Tell this stone to become bread." The devil's not suggesting anything extravagant here. It's this stone, not this entire rock pile. And it's bread, not a four-course banquet. It's just a, just a modest suggestion. It's remarkably modest. It seems almost an insignificant exercise of power. Hardly worthy of notice. It's certainly nothing to get hung up about, right? Here, no one's looking, we're in a desert. For goodness' sake, we're, we're in a de, no one's here. You're starving. There's rocks everywhere!



Take one of them, just a little one, and turn it into a piece of bread.

What's really going on here? What is he really after? We know the devil's up to something. What exactly is the nature of this enticement? Some believe this is an opportunity, as I said, for Jesus to verify his sonship, to prove that he really is the Son of God. But, as we said, the devil's already granted that assumption, and he's moved on. He's really not calling that into question. And Jesus would not have been tempted to prove his Sonship, anyway. He'd known his true nature, his true relationship to God, from the time he was twelve years old or younger. So, proving his sonship to the devil like some kind of macho posturing, that's very small minded to tempt Jesus. No, something more profound is at stake here.

Others say the devil is tempting Jesus to put his miraculous powers to work for his own benefit, and that's the problem. That's certainly true, that's what he's saying, but that's not all that's going on here. After all, there were other occasions

when Jesus benefited from the miracles that he accomplished, right?

It's hard to believe that when Jesus provided food for tens of thousands of people, on one occasion five thousand men besides women and children, on another occasion four thousand men besides women and children, so we're talking tens of thousands that he provided food for, certainly he partook of the food himself. Deriving personal benefit from the use of supernatural power, that happened from time to time as he displayed his miracles, but that's not the nature of this temptation either.

In fact, one more just popped into my head I wanted to say, that, remember Peter's mother-in-law? She was serving them, and she was sick, and Jesus came in and healed of her of the fever, and then she came and served. We don't accuse him of self-serving there, do we? And while I'm on a rabbit trail, notice Peter had a mother-in-law, which means he was married, which means he's not the first pope, okay? Just wanted to say that.

Okay, so back on track. Here's what's going on. The devil is indeed calling on Jesus to make use of supernatural power, to turn rock molecules into bread molecules, but at the heart of this temptation is this, it's an insidious and subtle accusation against the character of God and he wants Jesus to bite at that. It's not about biting at bread, it's about biting at a character accusation against God. The devil draws near here; he comes alongside of Jesus, you might say. He pretends friendship. He pretends sympathy with Jesus' physical weakness.

Here's what he's saying, I'm on your side here, man. I'm on your side. You don't deserve this. You are the Son of God, after all. You possess creative power. You are far too important to languish here in the wilderness. Look at you, just look at you. Languishing in this Godforsaken desert, left alone without food, without sustenance. It's not too much to turn this little stone into a little piece of bread, and get on with it.

The insinuation here at the heart of this is that God is not taking care of Jesus' needs. The devil's basically telling Jesus that God is not coming through. He's not taking very good care

of his son, here, is he? You can almost hear him saying under his breath, some Father. Some Father. Doesn't even provide his child, his only child, by the way, doesn't even provide him with bread. At the heart of the ac, enticement here is the accusation that God doesn't really care.

So, the devil calls for the most logical course of action; if you're out on your own, you're all by yourself, all who doubt God's care and concern think like this. The temptation is: take matters into your own hands. You can't trust God to supply for your physical needs, so do it yourself. Home Depot, do it, heh, that's not true. Do it yourself, provide for yourself, take care of yourself.

Look, we got to ask, just to kind of ferret this out a little bit and expose the nature of it, why would a loving father allow his son to suffer? Why would God insist that Jesus endure this forty-day period waiting for food and water? If you were starving in a sunbaked desert, I'm guessing you'd start asking that question, as well, and all kinds of questions would start flooding into your mind. What is the point? What is the point of

forty days without food, anyway? Who cares about following the pattern of Moses and Elijah; let's just get on with it. I'm unique. I'll just make a sandwich, give myself the strength to do what I've been called to do. I mean, what is wrong with taking care of natural needs, that, by the way, God designed me to have and to satisfy, like eating, drinking, sleeping? What's wrong with me taking care of those needs?

Look, let's be clear about this right off the bat. It's not wrong to want to satisfy natural God-given desires. We have desires that God gave to us in our bodies, and it's not wrong to satisfy that. We're not Docetists here. We're not, we're not trying to, make a separation and call body evil, matter evil, and all spiritual, good. We're not denying ourselves in some kind of a Docetic way, a Gnostic way.

But the sin in our hearts becomes revealed when our natural desires are not satisfied, or at least not satisfied in the way we want at the time we want, right? And the question is this: Will we sin to satisfy our desires? Or, will we sin when our desires are not met? That's the issue. In fact, you might just

jot that down in your notes as a little note to self. God has given us all of our desires that are part of being human, whether we're talking about the desire to be satisfied with food, the desire for marriage, the desire for children, grandchildren, friends, whatever.

It's fine to acknowledge those desires, but here are the boundaries. First, if you're willing to sin or compromise to get what you want, that natural desire has become a sinful desire and you're turning that thing into an idol. You need to repent. Or, if you sin in your attitude when you don't get what you want and your thoughts toward God become bitter when your desires aren't fulfilled, again, that natural desire has become a sinful desire, and you've turned that thing into an idol.

So, ask yourself two questions about natural desires. Number one, am I willing to sin to get it? And number two, will I sin if I don't get it? If the answer to those questions is no, then you're not entering into temptation. You're safe. It's okay to desire those things. And wait for God to fulfill them in his time and in his way. But if the answer to either of those

questions is yes, you need to identify that thing as turning into a sinful desire, turning into idolatry, and you need to repent.

Look at Jesus here. He stayed well within the boundaries of righteousness. He's a man with all the natural desires of a man. No doubt he desired food, but he was not willing to sin to get it. And he wouldn't sin if he didn't get it. He waited on God's perfect timing, on God's fulfillment. And like I said, for, for Jesus the test was more severe. It's not just more severe because of the situation he's in. It's more severe because of who he is. Unlike us, I mean sometimes we don't possess what we need to get what we want. I mean, we, we're faced with similar temptations, but there is a limit to providing for what we want.

Sometimes God has to take us to the end of ourselves when the money is out, when the energy is out, when the strength is out, when the motivation isn't there, when we're just flat on our face, and he just does that to show us we don't have the resources to fix what can't be fixed. We don't have what it takes to provide for our own needs due to lack of funds, lack of

energy, whatever. That's exactly where he wants us. Why? Because then we look to him. Some of us more stubborn than others, we have to come to that place a lot.

That wasn't the case with Jesus, though, not at all. Jesus possessed the power to get what he wanted immediately when he wanted it. As very God of very God, Jesus possessed the power to satisfy every natural God-given need of his own humanity. As Son of God, he'd commanded creation into existence. It wouldn't be too terribly hard to conjure up a piece of bread. The devil said, "Speak to this stone, tell it to become bread." Simple. He faced a much severer temptation than we do.

So again, why would a loving Father allow his son to suffer? Since God is good and kind, why would he allow this kind of suffering? There is a similar charge leveled against God. I don't know if you see this in the news, but every time there is some kind of natural disaster, people say, where was God? Where was God? Some act of God, like a hurricane that devastates people and property, people ask, and it's often with accusatory

underpinnings, if God is all good, if God is all powerful, how can he let something like this happen?

One of my sons had a teacher who recently sent this very argument out to her students as proof that God does not exist. She had a series of ten, I might add, very poor arguments, very poor arguments, all of them with the major premise, one or two minor premises, and then this conclusion, therefore, God cannot exist. On this particular argument that she called the logical problem of pain, she brought up the age-old question of theodicy. Theodicy is just a fancy way of talking about how to justify God's goodness or power in the face of the existence of evil or suffering.

Here were her premises. Major premise: If God exists, God is supremely good and powerful. Minor premise: A supremely good and powerful being would not allow the existence of evil and pain in the world. Conclusion: Therefore, God cannot exist. Interesting, huh? Think about that, parents, as you send your children out into the world. They're not affirming or strengthening the faith of your kids, if you're not coming in to help your kids to

understand what's going on. You're not equipping your kids to answer these kinds of arguments. You're leaving them out there without weapons, without shield, without defense. But you, there are simple answers to these things, right?

We agree with the major premise that God is supremely good and powerful. We disagree with the minor premise, though, right? Emphatically deny that conclusion, too, that God cannot exist. But that's, it's that second premise there that betrays an evil, unbelieving heart. Since all things, even God himself, are subject to the breadth of her understanding and any unbeliever's understanding, and she can't figure out the reason for the existence of evil and pain in the world, therefore God cannot exist. That's pretty prideful, isn't it?

Listen, God is all good. God is all powerful. And let's never forget, thirdly, which she didn't include, that God is all wise. Evil and pain do exist in the world; therefore, since God is good and hates evil, and since he is powerful and could eradicate evil if he wanted to, and thirdly, since God is all

wise, therefore God has a good and wise reason for the existence of evil and pain in the world. You see how that works?

Look, that's the conclusion that the believing mind comes to, and only the believing mind can realize and embrace. The unbelieving mind rejects the goodness of God, the omnipotence of God, and the wisdom of God. The unbelieving mind says, I, myself, am the judge of what's wise and what's not. I'm the judge of what's right and what's wrong. But the believing mind rejects that kind of thinking, and says, I am not all wise, God is. I don't know all things. Fact, I'm definitely not all powerful and I'm really not even good when it comes down to it. And I go to the Scripture and I find a God that is all good and all powerful and all wise, and I listen to him.

Satan from the beginning rejected the true God and he was there, forever plunged into unbelief, an inescapable prison of unbelief. He enticed the human race to doubt God's goodness. He attacked that vulnerable pair and mainly Eve in the Garden of Eden with the poison of his own unbelief. "The serpent said to the woman," Genesis 3, "You will not surely die. For God knows

that when you eat of this fruit your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

In other words, the serpent told Eve, God's character can't be trusted. He's immoral, withholding something good from you. Opened eyes, godlikeness, more knowledge, fullness of knowledge, it could all be yours, Eve. She pondered it and sinned. She pondered it on what fact, on what evidence? None. It was just a dream, just a conjecture. That's the nature of his enticement of Jesus as well. It's this insidious attack on the character of God. God's concern for you can't be trusted. He doesn't really care for you, for your needs, for your hunger. You're at death's door, and still, he won't let you eat. What kind of a God is that? What kind of a loving father is that, to let his own son starve to death?

Why would a loving God, loving father, allow his son to suffer? Because God has a good and wise reason for putting his son through trial and suffering. Namely, our redemption. He took him into the desert so the devil could do what he does, and this temptation that Jesus endured, it was for our good. Jesus was

perfected through suffering and he becomes our merciful and faithful high priest through the suffering, so he can sympathize with us in our weakness. That's why. It wasn't revealed then. It's revealed now.

Listen, beloved, we face temptations like that all the time, don't we? We're tempted, and to our shame we sometimes fall prey to wicked thoughts, doubting whether God really does care for us, whether he's really concerned. Sometimes we give in to those enticements to think false thoughts about God. Look, we cannot excuse those thoughts. We can't deal gently with rebellious thinking. We can't give it a pass. We can't coddle our doubts. We can't reason with those doubts. They're just slanderous accusations against God's character, and they have no substance at all. We need to expose sinful thoughts to the light of God's truth. We need to call this what it is, unvarnished evil shared and promoted by the devil himself.

Look, thank God for the forgiveness that he has granted us through Jesus Christ, right? Because we all fall into this. Thanks be to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for standing firm

against this very temptation for our sake. Let's find out how he did that. Point three, the resistance. The resistance. Look at verse 4, "Jesus answered him, 'It's written, "Man shall not live by bread alone."'" I'm going to make three simple statements as sub-points to help us understand the way that Jesus resisted and stood firm against this fiery dart of temptation shot from the devil at him.

First, Jesus answered the devil. Jesus answered the devil. That is, he didn't ignore the enticement. He didn't pretend that it didn't happen. He didn't stick his head in the sand. He didn't run from the conflict. He looked carefully and intently at the reality of the temptation. He assessed the words, the nature of the temptation, and he responded to the temptation appropriately and righteously. Jesus answered the devil.

Secondly, Jesus responded with God's Word. He responded with God's Word. As I said, so many Christians want to wrestle, and banter back and forth with error, with lies and do debates and all that. They didn't learn that approach from Jesus. His words were, "It is written," and the rest of what he said were words

of Scripture. Jesus didn't debate here. He didn't enter into a dialogue. He didn't try to understand where the devil was coming from, to figure out if he had a good point or not, I mean, maybe he came from a bad neighborhood, didn't have really good parenting. I mean, there's kind of some trouble with his background and his culture. No.

He wasn't willing to listen to the devil and take in his lies and chew up the meat, as they say, and spit out the bones. No, he, he rejected it all. Jesu, for Jesus, here, this idea that the devil suggested was an attack against God. And Jesus is not going to stand for it. He's insinuating and assuming something is not right in the divine character, in the divine nature. So, Jesus, being God-centered in his thinking, he was God-centered in his response. There's a sense in which he stepped out of the way and he let God speak for God.

Listen, that is a good approach, folks. Let God speak for God. Charles Spurgeon famously said it this way, "Pardon me if I offer a quiet suggestion. Open the door and let the lion out. He will take care of himself. He no sooner goes forth in his

strength than his assailants flee. The way to meet infidelity is to spread the Bible. The answer to every objection against the Bible is the Bible." Thank you, Mr. Spurgeon, well said. Let the lion out. Spurgeon learned that from our Lord's example here.

Jesus answered the devil, he responded with Scripture, which demonstrates the heart of the matter is this, thirdly, that Jesus stood firm by faith. Jesus stood firm by faith. Luke's record of Jesus' response, here, quoting from Deuteronomy 8:3, that's only a partial quotation, here, from Deuteronomy 8:3, right? Matthew includes the whole of Jesus' response, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes out from the mouth of God." Luke captured the essence of that in a shorter version.

And you might say, why the difference? Why did Luke want to actually shortchange that statement, not give the whole statement? I believe that Luke's reason for the partial rendering, it causes the reader to stop and reflect more thoughtfully on that statement, to get to the nature of this temptation and the nature of the response. He wanted his

predominantly Gentile readership to stop and ask the question, Huh. Man shall not live by bread alone and then it stops. Well then, how does man live?

Good question. And that question actually gets to the heart of the matter. It reveals the true nature of the devil's enticement. This isn't primarily about Jesus making an unauthorized use of supernatural power, even though that's involved. This is fundamentally and primarily an issue of trusting God. How is it exactly that man is sustained? By his own hand, or by the will of God? That's the issue.

The fact, here, that Jesus is alive after all this time without food or water, it proved that God had been sustaining him, upholding him. He knew that to be true, but he knew it to be true first, by the written record. He believed the Word. Now he's experiencing it personally and practically.

He'd obviously, here, by his responses, all of them by the way coming from Deuteronomy, he'd been meditating on God's provision of Israel during the nation's wilderness wanderings recorded in

Deuteronomy. So, Jesus understood, here, and he's affirming the body's need for food. He knows the body needs food. He's not some mystic saying, oh, all I need is Scripture to chew on and, and I'll somehow be physically sustained. That's not what he's saying. He just refused to worry about food. He's not going to let it trouble his mind or his heart. He fundamentally trusted that God would provide for him. Man does live by bread, but not my, not by bread alone. That's the issue.

There's a parallel structure, actually, in Deuteronomy 8:3, which doesn't deny the need for food. It actually affirms the need for food; it's just not food only. That's the issue. It emphasizes the greater need for God's intention to provide, and it's God's intention expressed in all his promises to be our faithful provider, that's the true source of our sustenance. The food, that's merely the means of our provision, but it's not the source.

It's that simple confidence in God that will sustain us whenever we see no visible means to feed our hungry bodies. In fact, that's the point of the larger context of Deuteronomy 8:3. You

might turn back to Deuteronomy 8, Deuteronomy 8:1, and follow along as I read. Moses here exhorts Israel to obey God and to fear him because, because God's faithful to provide, and he reminds Israel, here, the Deuteronomy meaning second law, and he gives the reminder of the law that they received, and then he points back to what they just experienced.

And Moses says this in Deuteronomy 8:1, "The whole commandment that I command you today you shall be careful to do, that you may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land that the Lord swore to give your fathers. And you shall remember the whole way that the Lord your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness," why? "that he might humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments or not.

"And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord. Your clothing did not wear out on you, and your foot did not swell

these forty years. Know then in your heart that, as a man disciplines his son, so the Lord your God disciplines you. So, you shall keep the commandments of the Lord your God by walking in his ways and by fearing him. For the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land."

Stop right there. God took Israel in the wilderness to a place that they had never been before, to a place where all they saw before them was the impossibility of survival. All they could see before them in the land was barrenness and nothingness. Why did he do that? To humble them so they could learn that wherever man sees impossibility, God is never hindered. He'll always be faithful to what he promised. God is not limited. He can rain manna from heaven to feed our bodies. That's never the issue with God. The issue is will we look beyond the food, trust him as the source of our provision?

I love how John Calvin captured the essence of Christ's reply. He writes this, "There are some who torture Deuteronomy 8:3 to a false meaning as referring to spiritual life, as if our Lord had said that our souls are not nourished by visible bread, but by

the word of God. The statement is of itself no doubt true.

Moses, but Moses had a quite different meaning. He reminds them that when no bread could be obtained, God provided them with an extraordinary kind of nourishment in manna which they knew not, neither did their fathers know, and that this was intended for us as an evident proof in all time coming that the life of man is not confined to bread, but depends on the will and good pleasure of God.

"Having created men, he does not cease to care for them, but as he breathed into their nostrils the breath of life, so he constantly preserves the life which he has bestowed. Though we live on bread, we must not ascribe the support of life to the power of bread, but to the secret kindness by which God imparts to bread the quality of nourishing our bodies." End quote.

That's what Jesus understood from Deuteronomy 8. And that's what Jesus did in the spirit of Deuteronomy 8:3. By the way, you can turn back to Luke 4. But in the spirit of Deuteronomy 8:3, he kept God's commandments here, he walked in his ways, he feared him always, and from the depths of his heart, Jesus believed

God. He had already been sustained by faith in God very practically all the way up this very moment. He wasn't dead. God had proven faithful, and Jesus never had a reason to doubt him at all.

Jesus trusted the God who had said, Psalm 81:10, "I am the Lord your God, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt. Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it." It's God prerogative how and when, but his promise is, I will fill it. I will take care of you. That's how Jesus responded to this enticement. From the overflow of his believing heart, he responded to the devil, he expressed a fundamental, unshakable trust in God to provide for all of his needs, he responded by faith in the written Word of God. He responded by faith in the God of the Word.

That faith, by the way, is what won the victory. And that's the fourth point in our outline. The situation, the enticement, the resistance, and now, the victory. The victory. The victory is this, beloved, simple point: Jesus withstood the temptation. He did not sin. That's how we as Christians define victory. It's not sinning, it is pleasing God.

A few weeks ago, I was invited to teach one of the days during our Vacation Bible School outreach. It's a wonderful time. I just happened to be provided with one of my favorite themes in the Bible, that is being a good soldier of Jesus Christ. I was telling the kids that victory in warfare, a number of the kids that I'd surveyed had relatives who fought in Iraq and Afghanistan, but victory in those wars means killing the enemy and staying alive yourself and getting your, you and your buddies back home. You and your buddies make it home alive and you defeated the enemy while you were there, well, that's victory.

Victory is physical, it's literally, mortally a matter of life and death. And I asked the kids, who is the greatest soldier who ever lived? Well, they're all good Sunday school children, so they said, Jesus! Right answer. Right answer. Jesus fought the greatest fight, he served in the greatest war and he won the greatest victory. That's the right answer. But then I asked the kids, now wait a minute, though, didn't Jesus die on the cross?" I was playing devil's advocate, there, right? That's probably bad for the pastor to do. But, that's what I did.

So, didn't Jesus die on the cross? How can he be the greatest soldier who ever lived if he actually died? And the kids were like, hey, well, well because he died for our sins. I loved it. They were awesome. They were well-taught. I told them, you know, that's exactly right. And we need to understand that it's not a matter of whether our bodies die or live. That's not what victory is as a Christian. We need to understand what it means to win.

Listen, in the war with Satan, in the war with sin and temptation, winning means never sinning. Even if our bodies die, to be absent from the body is to be where? Present with Christ, right? Winning means pleasing God at all times. Satan's sole objective in fighting against God and his people is to get them to sin. Sinning is losing. If we fail to please God, that is losing, that's a victory for Satan. That's why Jesus is the greatest soldier who ever lived, he won! He never sinned. He always pleased God even when things were very hard. Listen, even when he died: never sinned.

Jesus Christ fought the greatest fight against Satan. He served in the greatest war for the glory of God and, to win the souls of his people. He won the greatest victory. He prevailed over sin. He destroyed Satan; conquered death by rising from the dead. In the language of Ephesians 6:13, Jesus took up the whole armor of God, he withstood in the evil day, he was girded about with the belt of truth, his vital areas were protected by the breastplate of righteousness.

Jesus lifted that shield of faith, which quenched all the flaming arrows of the evil one. And when the enemy rushed upon him hoping that he would drop that shield and he could get through the line, he drew the sword, which is the Word of God. He did so skillfully. He parried that mortal blow. He stood firm, never sinning, fully pleasing God. That's victory.

We've learned about the enticement, the resistance, the victory. What is the pattern here? That's what we need to see for ourselves, for our own encouragement and application. What is the pattern of temptation and victory? The pattern is this, as we said, the goal of every temptation is to get us to sin, okay?

We stand firm by resisting that temptation, dressed in the full armor of God, Ephesians 6:10 to 20. Sometime I want to teach that to you, wonderful passage. But we win, we resist by not sinning.

We'll be more wary of the wiles of the devil, more aware of the way he operates if we notice the pattern that is there, resident in every single temptation. And we saw it here in the first temptation. Each temptation involves, firstly, a solicitation to please yourself. Here, it's avoid suffering, provide for your needs, fulfill your desires. Don't wait for God, take care of yourself; if you don't look out for yourself, no one will. So, first, solicitation to please yourself.

Secondly, each temptation involves a solicitation to distrust God, to think slanderous thoughts about him, to think lower thoughts than are due him. In this case, with temptation toward independent self-provision, the unbelieving, unworthy thought of God is this, God doesn't care about my needs. He's stopped caring. There's a lapse in his concern. And that little window

that you give, that foothold for the devil, leads thirdly, this unbelief leads thirdly to a distortion of reality.

If you enter into that temptation, it distorts your thinking. Why? Because it's a denial of truth altogether. It's a denial of truth. And from that platform of distorted thinking, that erroneous thinking based on a lie about God, embraced because your sin nature deceived and enticed you, it's only going to lead to living in a distorted version of reality. In this case, the distortion is that pain and suffering cannot or should not be tolerated or endured.

Look, that's ridiculous. Any athlete that's ever achieved anything, any musician that's ever achieved anything, anybody who's ever built anything, built a business or anything else you might imagine, has gone through difficulty, trial, suffering, and we acknowledge that and affirm that and look up to that, as well we should. Suffering should be tolerated and endured. We're distorted when we think we need to avoid it. But God doesn't intend his people to suffer, to go through trials, what kind of lunacy is that?

The same lie peddled by the prosperity preachers that fill our land, God only wants your health, wealth, and happiness. It's that distorted view of reality that cuts people off from what God wants to teach through pain and suffering. Jesus endured sadness and sorrow. He endured pain and suffering, all manner of trials, but that is all lost on those who are living in that satanic dream world where they pretend suffering does not exist.

Each and every temptation works according to the same pattern. It starts with the solicitation to please the self. It quickly solicits from us a distrust in God to move away from our faith in God based on slanderous thoughts about him. And when embraced, you enter into temptation, distorted reality. You've gone down the rabbit hole, and the world is all off tilt. Once you enter that distorted reality, once you've entered into temptation, well then transgression and every kind of misery follow on your heels. "Desire when it has conceived, it gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death," right?

That said, we can do a choose-your-own-ending kind of a story, here. We don't have to enter into temptation, okay? So, let's scrap that third option I just said there, and let's do a new third option. Here's the new third step. It's, that, that step of entering into temptation, it's avoidable because we're saved, because we have a new nature, because we respond to God and his Word, because his Holy Spirit is in us, resident within us to give us power to move through it. So, we can say, make that third step, okay, so there's solicitation to please self, there's solicitation to distrust God; thirdly, this is the perfect opportunity to put ourselves in God's hands, to trust him and not ourselves, to turn away from what we're tempted to embrace.

Look, we don't have to understand all that God has in mind for our circumstances, do we? We don't need to understand the fullness of the situation we're facing. We don't have to know all the reasons in his mind for our suffering. All we need to do is believe in him. We need to accept the fact that God is fundamentally good. We need to affirm the fact he is powerful enough to remove our suffering if he wants to. We need to embrace the fact that if we continue to suffer, well, then he

has a good and wise reason to continue that trial. He will bring relief when he believes it's the proper time, but not before, because he's wise. We trust him, and we walk forward in obedience.

Look at the last verse there in Luke 4. I just want to wrap up here. It says the devil departed from him "until an opportune time," in Luke 4:13. There were other opportune moments throughout Jesus' ministry in which he faced other temptations. But this one, the temptation to avoid suffering, to take care of his own needs, to distrust God's wisdom in putting him through suffering, this temptation visited and followed him throughout his ministry because everywhere he turned, he faced conflict and suffering, and he needed to lean into it, not run from it.

How many of you are conflict avoiders, you hate conflict, you don't want to offe-? You know what? We're not allowed to do that as Christians. Look what Jesus did. Luke 22:39 to 42, I'm not going to have you turn there, but just listen. He faced a severe, probably the severest form of this same temptation. He looked ahead and he saw the cross before him.

It says, "He came out and went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives, the disciples followed him," on that night. "And when he came to the place, he said to them, 'Pray that you may not enter into temptation.' And then he withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and he knelt down and prayed, saying, 'Father, if you're willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done.'"

He faced the temptation once again to please himself, to avoid the suffering of the cross, to turn away from that bitter cup and not drink it. He faced the temptation to distrust the goodness and the wisdom of his father. Instead of entering into temptation, instead of entering into a distorted reality, Jesus reaffirmed his trust in the father saying this, "Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done." At the end of his earthly ministry, just as at the beginning, Jesus affirmed the good and wise provision of God. God was his provider, that Jehovah Jireh. "I am sustained not by bread alone, but by the good will of my Father." Same thing for us, isn't it?



Let's pray. Father, you are our great provider, and having seen the devil's wiles, his craftiness, his trickery and deception, we're a little bit more informed now than we were when we came in here about that tendency to distrust you, to listen to the whisperings of a, a voice that says, take care of yourself, a voice that says, God doesn't care anymore. Heavenly Father, we reject emphatically, reject that voice. And we want to once again affirm you for who you are, that you are great. You are God. You are very God. You love us. You care for us. You're concerned for us. You are good and wise.