

Subtlety in Temptation

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[0 : 0 0] Let's turn again to the second part we read in Luke's Gospel, Luke chapter 4. Gospel of Luke chapter 4.

I'm not going to read the whole section, but last week we looked at the first couple of verses there, or looked at the beginning there of how Jesus being, and Jesus, chapter 4, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan, and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness for 40 days, being tempted by the devil.

We looked at that, at how it was when Jesus was full of the Holy Spirit, and was led by the Spirit, that he was tempted by the devil.

Then it goes on to say, And he ate nothing during those days, and when they were over he was hungry. And 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 so on. I just want us, very briefly this morning, to consider this section that we have of Satan's temptation of Jesus.

[1 : 1 1] And we've always got to remember that we fight against an enemy, not flesh and blood, but against principalities and against powers. And I can personally say that there have been times when I have preached about the devil, that I have said I will never preach about the devil again, because he does not like to be exposed, as it were, and you never can preach without suffering for it.

Somebody said to me, going out last week, you'll suffer for this, and I have. And part of me says, I'll just skip this this week. But I won't.

And we need to pray for one another. And we need to, that was, I think, one of the things that is so important, that we do pray for one another, because the devil is a roaring lion going about.

But sometimes he comes, as we highlighted that, sometimes he comes as the angel of light, like the serpent, and he'll come very alluring and enticing, and doesn't seem to be a threat.

But other times he will come as the roaring lion, and he will instill fear, sheer fear into you. He is a reality. And Jesus knew all about the vehemence of his temptations, Satan's temptations.

[2 : 3 6] Now, we saw last week, and we're not going to go over this, that it was after the Lord had made, God the Father had made the declaration, this is my son, and that Jesus, being full of the Holy Spirit, he had the spirit without measure, that he was led into the wilderness to be tempted.

And we saw how, very often, after a time of blessing, and it was a great moment of blessing, that temptation comes.

We've always got to be on guard. Sometimes we think, oh, we're in a bad way, or we're more prone to be tempted if we're far away from the Lord. But it's often when we're closest to the Lord, that we will be tempted, and often severely.

Then we find that Satan comes to Jesus. And I want us just to look very simply at Satan's, the type, or the manner of his temptation, and of how Jesus deals with it.

I'm not going to go through every bit and analyze it, but just, as it were, as an overview. And you'll notice how Satan begins the temptation, and he says to him, if you are the Son of God.

[3 : 46] That's how he comes to him. The devil said to him, if you are the Son of God. Now, it's very interesting that this is how Satan comes, because the Father had just made this great declaration, previously, at the baptism of Jesus, says, you are my beloved Son, with you I am well pleased.

That voice came from heaven above, where the Father made this declaration over the Son, you are my beloved Son. And yet, here we find Satan, and he's coming to Jesus, and he's saying, if you are the Son of God.

He doesn't come to him and say, you are not the Son of God. But he poses a question. He brings this little seed of doubt, so that Jesus will have to think, am I the Son of God?

He doesn't say to him, and Satan does exactly the same thing to us. There are times that, there are times he will say to us, and he'll whisper, there is no God.

But by and large, that's not so much his way of attack, as if there is a God, how come? This happens, that happens, the next thing.

[5 : 11] And you will often hear people articulate in that very way. If there's a God, how come there's this tsunami? If there's a God, how come there are all these disasters? And it comes personally into people's lives.

If there is a God, how has this happened to me? And you see, this is the way that Satan works. He comes, and he sows the seed of doubt into people's hearts, and into people's lives.

He's a master at doing that. And we find this over and over again. That's exactly what he did in Eden. We read about that. He came to Eve, and he said, did God say?

He didn't come to Eve and say to her, God did not say such and such and such. He said, did God say? So that you begin to question, you begin to wonder.

Are you sure? That's, and you see, this is what his whole idea. Are you sure that that is what God really said? And he does that with us too, with the Bible.

[6 : 18] We read the Bible, and we say, well, this is what the Bible says. We know it with regard to salvation. We know the verses, the key verses, with regard to salvation. There are many things.

We base our assurance of salvation upon the word of God. It is a rule for our life. Everything is in there. And Satan will come and say to you, are you sure that that's what it really says?

Are you sure that's what it really means? Is it not possible that you've misunderstood it? That you've been deceived by it? And the moment you begin to question, he's got you.

The moment you begin to say, well, that's what I thought. I better look at it again. I'm not too sure. The moment you start questioning, he's got you.

And the, as it were, the process of doubt begins to grow and to grow and to fester within your own mind and within your own heart. And so as Satan comes to Jesus, he says, if you are the Son of God.

[7 : 29] And, of course, we see that Satan comes to him at this particular time. If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread.

Now, of course, Jesus had been fasting for 40 days. He had had no food. So Satan comes to him where he knows there is going to be a weak spot, his appetite.

Because he knows that Jesus is hungry, ravenous, starving. And so he says, this is where I will attack his appetite. And Satan does that with us as well, attacks our appetites.

Because he knows how prone we are. Not just our appetite for food, but all the various appetites that we have. Our senses, our whole being. And Satan has access to it, and he attacks us.

And remember, when he attacks us, it is in order that we will disobey God. Because Satan hates God. And his purpose of tempting us to disobey God is so that he will get at God through us, through our disobedience, through our turning away from the Lord.

[8 : 36] And his first temptation is to get Jesus to doubt God's love for him. Doubting, trying to get Jesus.

That's what he's trying to do. That's why he's tempting. And remember what we said last week, temptation doesn't equal sin. It's not until we yield to that temptation, whether in our mind or whether we actually physically do or verbally do, it's not until we actually do that the sin occurs.

The actual temptation in itself does not equal sin because Jesus never sinned, but he was vehemently and violently tempted. We've always got to remember and distinguish between that.

But anyway, he comes to Jesus and he's calling him into question God's love for his son. And really what he's saying is, can you really be the son of God and you're here in his wilderness starving because remember, it is God who led you out here and it is God who has you staying here and where is his provision for you?

There's none. For 40 days you've been here and you haven't had even a crumb of bread to eat. What kind of father is that who is not making provision for you?

[10 : 01] That is his form of attack where he is bringing Jesus or trying, shouldn't say he's bringing him, he's trying to bring Jesus to doubt God's love for him.

And that's exactly the same temptation that we experience as well because Satan will often come to us particularly when there have been difficult times where we may have gone through bereavements and losses or where our world, our own personal world has been thrown upside down and Satan will say God doesn't care for you.

You cannot be a child of God because God if God were your father he would never have allowed that to happen in your experience or in your life.

So you see how subtle, how dangerous, how devious Satan is. and he's also trying I think here we could say to get Jesus again another type of the temptation is to get Jesus to disobey God's will.

First of all he's getting him to try and doubt God's care for him but secondly he's trying to get him to doubt God's will for him because you see what what Jesus what Satan is saying to Jesus is turn these stones into bread I know that you can you know that you can go on you're starving and you see the thing is if Jesus did that he would be disobeying God's will because God's will however complex however difficult it may be for us to understand and could have been strange in a sense even for Jesus to understand and yet he was complying he was delighting to do God's will the temptation was to disobey God's will and to turn these stones into bread and say I'm going to take matters into my own hand it's high time now

[12:19] I sorted things out God took me here it's time to get out of here my dear friends God is a timetable for our lives and you know far too often we're liable to use our own common sense and say the way things are going here I better go or I better do this or I better do that the Lord will often take us to places where reason will tell us one thing but faith tells us another an example of that is Elijah when Elijah was at that brook remember how the Lord sent him to a brook to wait there and the ravens fed him and he drank from that brook but then it tells us that the brook dried up no more water now human logic would have said the moment that there was just that little trickle left Elijah time to move on that's what reason would say it to you it would say to me oh time to move on common sense tells you there's that brook it's drying up time to move on it tells us that the brook dried up that little river dried up and it's after it dried up it then tells us the word of the

Lord came to Elijah rise up and go to Zarephath and a widow woman there will look after you Elijah stayed faithful to God's will where he was told to go until God told him to go somewhere else and Elijah is an example of adhering to God's will now I'm quite sure that as Elijah sat at that dried up brook Satan would have been tempting him saying Elijah what are you doing God doesn't care for you take matters into your own hand where would Elijah have gone on his own initiative he wouldn't know where to go he had to wait until God told him and you know it's the same principle for you and for me this is all part of the journey of faith where we discover bit by bit God's will for us as he unfolds it before us but Satan wants us to disobey that's what he's always wanting us to do to disobey

God's will and remember we said last week temptation is a tool that is used by God to strengthen us because the more we resist temptation the stronger we come remember we used the example of the gym and bodybuilders and people who are pumping iron it's through resistance it's through the pressure that there's development and there's growth guard against we said this last week forgive me for repeating guard against the temptation that Satan will often use as you're being tempted just give in now and start once listen give in to this temptation go on go on you haven't the strength to battle against it give in give in and I'll tell you what you'll do after you've given in next time next time round then you'll really begin to war against sin my friend no the more we give in the more difficult we will find temptation the more we're going to yield growth doesn't come by giving in by yielding

Satan knew that and the third thing there we find which all links very closely to the thing is that when Satan is tempting Jesus to take off to turn the stones into bread he is really saying to Jesus the physical is more important than the spiritual you need food you've been fasting you've been praying before God but come on come on let's get physical you need the food now of course we need food but this was a particular time here was Jesus preparing for this extraordinary ministry here in this world these not just hours but days were precious this was a battlefield this was a preparation this was spiritual confrontations in preparation for the mighty work he was to do and Satan is saying ah enough of the spiritual let's get physical and Satan is going to say the same thing to us as well he tries to take us away from the spiritual now as we

I'm not trying to in any way underestimate the importance of the physical as well of course it's important vital part of our lives but we need to realize that the spiritual is most important of all you see we have precious never dying souls we need that our souls will be fed and will be nourished and so many people are spiritually starving and it's not physical things that the soul needs but spiritual our bodies need the physical things our minds need the mental stimulation and thank the Lord for all these good things the Lord has filled our lives with great things every good and perfect gift is from above and we have all our different senses and our different appetites and God has given us the capacity and the abilities to satisfy these appetites and let us thank the

[18:12] Lord for them and thank the Lord for his provisions but we're spiritual as well and if we neglect our soul we are neglecting the greatest gift that God has given to us what will a person give in exchange for their soul what will it profit a man supposing he gain the whole world and lose his own soul if you went to a country where there was a famine and people are starving they're near the point of death and you come to them and you say you know I brought you some beautiful things here I brought you this new plasma 40 inch television satellite you can get all the channels from all over the world I put it into your little shack here now they have no food they've got no water they're they're just as it were on the borders of death they're crying out for food these things are of no use they would say I don't want that because it's going to be of no use to me because I want to be dead if I don't get food if I don't get water and so it is spiritually we will die our souls will die unless we receive spiritual feeding spiritual food and that's who Jesus is

Jesus said I am the bread of life Jesus says that he is the water of life we need him to eat upon him and to drink upon him in order that our souls will thrive will nourish and will grow move on very quickly time is going then we see the second temptation temptation we find that Satan is tempting Christ to lay hold upon worldly power and glory by unlawful means see what Satan is doing he said I'll give you all this he showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time and said 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 will worship me it will be all yours it's a very powerful temptation that Satan met

Jesus with Jesus had been promised already everything but the way that he was to achieve the glory was by way of the cross here is Satan and he's saying I'll give you the glory of all the kingdoms of this world without the cross just you bow down and the first of this word means just bow down once before me just once and worship me you see this is what Satan wants Satan is the impassionator of God Satan always wanted the glory he wanted the worship he wanted the place of God and that is why he is so opposed to God Satan has been cast out to the place of outer darkness but in this time while we are in this world Satan has Satan and his legion of angels the Bible makes it very clear they have a roaming freedom bound in ways but still freedom and Satan is saying something very powerful here he says

I have the power to give you authority in this world I have the power to make you the top passion in this world I can make you I can give you glory in this world and I believe Satan does that to so many people Satan will whisper to you I'll give it to you and I believe in fact there are people who will say that there are some people in the music industry people in different cities they will openly say that they gave their soul to the devil they've prospered they've thrived they're multi-millionaires but at what a cost Satan has powers and there are not just I'm not just saying in the music industry I'm not saying that not at all but there are people who are on record as saying they've done that and I believe there are people who've done that in all the different walks of life that they've sold their soul to the devil they have renounced any hope or salvation in order to prosper in this world because

Satan is a god of this world it's a fearful thing to play with our precious never dying soul yet that seems to be the way you see Satan's way is very attractive he says look I can do it for you I can give it to you but what Satan doesn't show is that whatever glory and whatever power he may give it's very temporary and afterwards he doesn't tell us about the afterwards whereas God's way in Christ yes there may be a cross but there is a crown and there is glory forever and ever and ever and so we find that the devil is always seeking to disrupt and seeking to bring down and then we find him lastly he takes

[24 : 03] Jesus' word to Jerusalem and he set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said 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 so on third temptation is a temptation of presumption and do you notice how clever the devil is because every time and we're just going to conclude with this in a moment every time Jesus deals with the devil he uses the word of God so what does Satan do for the third temptation he uses the word of God and he quotes scripture to Jesus and he says right throw yourself down and there shall promise in the word that the Lord will send his angels and he will command his angels concerning you to guard you but you know what Satan does he doesn't quote scripture accurately he misses the key part out it says in scripture he will command his angels concerning you to go in all your ways in all the ways in other words in all

God's way wherever you are as you adhere to the Lord's way to follow his way the Lord is promising to keep but there is no promise if you go away from God's way and this would be going away from God's way so Satan knows that so he misquotes scripture and he still does that with you and with me because he knows how much value we place upon the word of God and he whisper to you and if you ever find that the word is coming to you in a way and it's not it's not if you have ever been tempted to do something that you're doubtful about you're dubious about and then there's something about the word you make sure that it is the word that you have because Satan he has done that and he'll do it with you and he'll do it with in this world are built upon

God's word but they are distorted words they are words that are twisted turned round misapplied you know this I reckon you could find a basis or a warrant to do anything in this world if you wanted to from the Bible if you took scripture out of context and just twisted it a wee bit round you could do anything you could start anything you could be anything and you could say I'm backing what I'm doing by scripture it's scripture out of place out of context and that is something that God places his judgment upon that is the adding to scripture that is the detracting from or the subtracting from scripture which God pronounces woes upon and that's what Satan does he is the arch deceiver and we notice how Jesus meets Satan and deals with

Satan every single time Jesus doesn't debate with Satan you and I mustn't start debating we mustn't start questioning remember what I said at the very beginning if he says if you are and you begin to think oh well I don't know this what does Jesus do straight away he says it is written it is written man shall not live by bread alone it is written you shall not test or try or tempt the Lord your God it is written that's the only way that we deal because this is as the Bible itself tells us this is the sword of the spirit and a sword defends and a sword is used to attack and that is why we must use the Bible when Satan comes that we ward him off using God's word nothing else will work we cannot defeat the devil in our own power we don't have the strength we don't have the capacity we don't have it's only through the

Lord so let us be people who will understand the word fill our minds with the truth saturate our minds with the word to believe this word to believe the Lord who is the word as our only hope of salvation and that we will discover his deliverance from temptation and that we will become stronger and stronger as we go through this world let's pray oh lord our god we we pray that we may take this word to heart that we may seek to live it and upon it because we realize how open we are to temptation and how prone we are to give in to temptation lord everybody here has given in repeatedly to temptation we give thanks lord for every victory that we have experienced in temptation and we realize that

[29 : 28] Jesus is a great high priest who has been tempted in all points like as we are yet without sin what an encouragement that is to know that Jesus has already gone ahead and that Jesus has won the victory although there are many battles to be fought that the war has been won oh lord then help us to follow with all our heart bless us prosper us throughout this week both spiritually and temporally bless our homes our families all whom we love we commit each one to thy care and keeping take away your sin in Jesus name we ask God Amen Roberts to dump you