



Triumph Through Temptation Matthew 4:1-11

If you have a Bible, and I hope you do, let me invite you to open with me to Matthew 4. Pull out those notes that are in your Worship Guide. In light of the text today, we wanted to dive into the Word right after confession as there is such a close tie between Matthew 4:1-11 and the battles that every one of us fight against sin in the world—battles with temptation that you and I are fighting now, even at this moment. So I want to read this text. A story that may be familiar to some of us but I'm convinced, a story whose meaning I think we're in danger of missing.

So not long ago I received a book that was written by a friend of mine from Southern Seminary, Russell Moore. The book's title is, "Tempted and Tried." It's a book that analyzes temptation based on Matthew 4:1-11. And to put it bluntly, I've never read anything better on Matthew 4:1-11 than this book. And so I immediately endorsed that book and couldn't wait until the moment where we as a faith family would come to this text. So here we are today. And there's a lot I want to cover. And you can see there's practically a book in your notes right there.

I just would say from the beginning, I am indebted to Dr. Moore for how he has helped point me to truth of this text, and a lot of what I share today is the overflow of what I learned from studying through that text alongside him in a sense. And there will be a few points where I quote directly from him. Let's read this story and then ask God, by His Spirit, to teach us His Word. Matthew 4:1-11:

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. And the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." But he answered, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'

Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, 'He will command his angels concerning you,' and 'On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.'

Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'" Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." Then Jesus said to him, "Be gone, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.'"

Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him.

Let's pray. Father, we know the devil and demons and trials and temptations and testing—they are all real. Even as we sit here in this room this morning with our heads bowed, we know that we are surrounded by spiritual warfare. At this moment there are spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms who are warring against Your worship in this room, and warring against our minds, our hearts and our souls. I'm cognizant of this spiritual battle being waged even now as I pray and as I'm about to preach and as people listen. So together we pray in total dependence on Your Spirit. We ask of You, we plead of You, show Your power and Your supremacy in this room and in our lives. You are the One Who has conquered sin and Satan. So help us to see Christ clearly today. Help us to realize what it means to be in Him as we fight spiritual battles—a fight of faith—in our lives and in this church. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Six Realities...

Okay. Before we dive into the text, very quickly, six realities that are really reminders as we approach this text. Reminders that we talked about actually at the end, a few months ago, at the end of 1 Timothy. So reality number one: There is a spiritual world.

There is a spiritual world.

Let me say from the start. We don't know...When we see the devil tempting Jesus these three times in Matthew 4, we don't know exactly how this played out. Did the devil appear in a physical form or in some kind of spiritual form? How did each of these temptations actually physically take place? But what we do know is the devil is real and the devil is active. We do know that there is an invisible, spiritual world that is just as real as the natural visible world around us.

To expand on this picture in Matthew 4, Scripture teaches that there are vast numbers of angels, both good and bad—spirits that exist all around us. There are glorious beings that would take our breath away at this moment if we could see them. There are evil beings who would horrify us at this moment if we could see them. So just feel the weight of that. We must avoid an empty rationalism that has no room for supernatural spiritual. "If we can't see it then it's not real." Not true. So we've got to avoid an empty rationalism, and at the same time, we need to avoid excessive fanaticism that sees a devil behind every bush. So avoid both.

There is a spiritual world which means, second, we are involved in a spiritual war—a spiritual battle that is continually raging. And this battle is between conflicting kingdoms. The Kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of Satan; a kingdom of light and a kingdom of darkness, warring against one another. This is history. All of history is a story of spiritual warfare. It began, man and woman (Genesis 3) where the enemy (Satan) tempts man, leads him into sin, spiritual darkness and ultimately death. And from that moment in Genesis 3, all the world and its inhabitants have been darkened with sin under the rule of the Prince of this World.

Now we see just a few chapters after that, God takes a people for Himself, from the midst of the darkness, intended to be a display of His light. But even those people cannot overcome the darkness. Abraham—whom He starts with, a friend of God—lying about his wife. Jacob—whose name is changed to Israel, beloved by God—deceitfully scheming to receive God's blessing. Moses—the prophet of God—dishonoring and defaming the holiness of God. David—the king after God's heart—adultery, murder. Over and over and over again in

history, spiritual battles and men and women falling prey to the evil one, and experiencing the punishment of sin—death.

That's history—conflicting kingdoms that create a continual struggle in every one of our lives. Now I put Christians and demons here, which can be a little bit misleading because this battle is not just between Christians and demons, but all people and demons. But the reason I put Christians and demons there is to emphasize two things. First, when we think about spiritual warfare, one of the first things we need to remember is the devil is not omnipresent like God is. So when you are being tempted and I am being tempted, we need to remember that Satan is only a creature. And though he is behind every temptation to do evil, our battle is not just against him, but against what Ephesians 6 calls "*the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.*" Demons—powers of this dark world.

The second reason I put Christians and demons there is because I want us to remember that when we talk about temptation as Christians, temptation is not ultimately just about what's going on in your life or what's going on in my life. Temptation is ultimately about an all-out attack from the devil and his demons on the Kingdom of Christ and everyone who associates themselves with Christ. In attacking Christians, demons are attacking Christ. Which is why, if you will notice, Christian, when you trusted in Christ for salvation, temptation did not stop. If anything, temptation has ratcheted up more notches because the devil and all his demons are dead-set in Scripture on destroying the Messiah. And then flowing from that, devouring every one of His followers. So when we talk about temptation, we're not just talking about some psychological battle in our heads. We're talking about an intense spiritual war against cosmic powers of darkness who were dead-set on destroying the Kingdom of Christ and the children of God. We're involved in a spiritual war.

Our enemy in this spiritual war is formidable

Our enemy in this spiritual war is formidable, he's a "lion looking to devour."

The stakes in the spiritual war are eternal

The stakes in the spiritual war are eternal—Heaven and Hell hang in the balance with this war.

The scope of this spiritual war is universal.

It is being waged in every nation, among every people and every language and in every life, which leads to this last reality—this last reminder.

Our involvement in this spiritual war is personal.

So here's the deal. Don't miss this. There is a grand, overarching realm in which this war is being waged. But there is also a specific, pointed, personal way that this battle is being fought right now in the seat where you sit. So it's grand, cosmic, and specific, personal. You are being tempted right now. I am being tempted right now. Always being tempted in our lives. Most of the time we don't even realize it.

Dr. Moore's subtitle in one of the chapters in that book: "You are on the verge of wrecking your life, especially if you don't know it." And that is true. And he uses an illustration of cows being led to the slaughter. Let me apologize in advance to vegetarians who are here this morning. This may be one of the reasons why you are a vegetarian. But he writes.

"For a long time cattle workers would forcefully push and prod cows into the slaughter house. For good reason, the cows would resist and the whole operation would be extremely difficult to carry out until one specific scientist came along and said, 'No, no, no. The way to slaughter cows is to make them

feel like everything is great as they enter into the slaughterhouse. Keep the scenery the same as it is in the most peaceful moments in the cow's life.'

"The scientist began to experiment, not with prodding cows off a truck, but by leading them quietly onto a ramp, where they walk through a squeeze shoot—a gentle pressure device designed to mimic a mother's nuzzling touch. Then the cattle continue down the ramp onto a smoothly curbing path. No sudden turns. A path designed to give the cows a sense that they are going home. And as they mosey along the path, they don't even notice then their hooves are no longer touching the ground. A conveyor belt slowly, gradually lifts them upward and then, in the twinkling of an eye, a blunt instrument levels a surgical strike right between their eyes. They're transitioned from livestock to meat and they're never aware enough to even be alarmed by any of it."

And I share that to make as clear as possible to you, that there are forces afoot at this moment who are working to lure you to a place that you do not want to go. To use Russ Moore's warning, "you are on the verge of wrecking your life, especially if you don't know it." I feel this at every moment in my life. I'm prone to sin at every point of my life. My mind is susceptible to wandering and I'm tempted to think unimaginable thoughts when I see an attractive woman who is not my wife. My heart is bent toward pride and I am tempted to compete with other pastors over who is more spiritual and more successful. I am tempted to cut moral corners in order to gain personal advantage over others. I'm prone to pretense and hypocrisy. I'm tempted to lie to make myself look better and to call people to do what I'm not willing to do myself. I'm prone to value appearance over authenticity; my wants over other people's needs. And I am prone to desire the glory that is due God alone. I am keenly if not frighteningly aware that one wrong look, one inappropriate meeting, one rash decision, one fleeting moment could wreak spiritual havoc on my life, my family, and this church, and bring untold disgrace on my God.

I say that to make clear that my involvement in this spiritual war is personal and so is every one of yours. The battles may look different all across this room, but do not be fooled. The war is real and the "Evil One" is persistently plotting to suddenly entice your soul to evil and ultimately bring you to destruction. Do not be caught unaware. There's a spiritual world. We're involved in a spiritual war. Enemy is formidable. The stakes are eternal. The scope is universal. And our involvement is personal. All of us. We are part of a human race where over, and over, and over, and over, and over again in history, every man and every woman has succumbed to sin, and every man and every woman has experienced death except One. And that's the good news of Matthew 4:1-11. A new man has come, a man over whom Satan could not gain control. So see it. Two pictures of Jesus in what we just read

Two Pictures...

Jesus is the new man, stepping in to the universal human story.

One: Jesus is the new man, stepping in to the universal human story. There are deliberate parallels here between Jesus in the wilderness in Matthew 4, and Adam and Even in the garden in Genesis 3. It was no coincidence that both Adam and Jesus are initially tempted to eat food apart from the Father's will. For Adam it was fruit from a tree; for Jesus it is stones becoming bread. In both of their situations their temptations begin with questioning God. For Adam, the serpent questions God's Word, asking, "Did God really say not to eat that?" For Jesus, the serpent doubts Christ's son-ship. "If you are really the Son of God,

why are You hungry like this?" See it. Jesus is stepping into the same story that Adam stepped into. Jesus will stand where Adam fell. He is a new man, unlike Adam and unlike all of us in this universal human story who have succumbed to sin. So He is the new Man, stepping into the universal, human story, and Jesus is the true Son, suffering through the particular Israelite story...

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So there are parallels between Matthew 4 and Genesis 3, but there are even more parallels between Jesus' temptation here and the testing of God's people before they entered in the Promised Land in the Old Testament. Now, you say, "What do you mean, Jesus is the true Son?" Well, when you go back...We won't have time to turn to any of these places so there will be a variety of verses along the way you might just write out to the side. But when God was preparing to deliver Israel, the people of Israel, His people, out of slavery in Egypt, in Exodus 4:22 He said, "*Israel is my firstborn son, and I say to you, [talking to Pharaoh] 'Let my son go that he may serve me.'*"

So God refers to the people of Israel as His son. "*Let my son go.*" It's what we saw a couple of weeks ago when we were in Matthew 2:15, when Hosea said, "God called His son out of Egypt." That's talking about the people of Israel referred to as His son. So Israel is referenced as His son. And what you have in the Old Testament is God's son, Israel, being led through the wilderness to be tested. And now in the New Testament, you have God's Son, Jesus, being led through the wilderness to be tested. Parallels are all over the place—both in the wilderness. In the Old Testament, God's son, Israel, was tempted and tested for 40 years. Here in Matthew 4 Jesus is tested for how many days? 40 days and nights. He's fasting. Every time Jesus wards off temptation here in Matthew 4, He uses Scripture. And where does He quote from?

First time, look at verse 4. "*But he answered, 'It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"*" Look for that little letter in your Bible. It takes you to the bottom and helps you understand where He's quoting from. Where's He quoting from there? What book? Deuteronomy 8:3. Now look at the next time He quotes from Scripture. Verse 7, "*Jesus said to him, 'Again it is written, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'"*" Where is He quoting from there? Deuteronomy 6:16. You go to the last one, verse 10. "*You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.*" There it's what book? Deuteronomy 6:13. So three times from Deuteronomy. Deuteronomy 6 and Deuteronomy 8—both passages that are specifically referencing Israel's testing in the wilderness.

So Jesus, in the context of temptation, is pointing us back to exactly what happened when God's son, Israel, was tested in the Old Testament. And then, last parallel I'll point out. In the Old Testament story, right before God's son Israel was tested God delivered them out of Egypt through the waters of the Red Sea. Remember that? And in 1 Corinthians 10:2, Paul talks about how that deliverance was Israel's baptism. And so right before their testing, God led them out through the waters through a picture of baptism.

And so what did we study last week right before the temptation story that we come to this week? What did we look at? The baptism of Jesus. And so we see Jesus coming out of the waters now into the wilderness to be tested. So the reason that all that's important... It's not just, "Hey that's kind of cool information." The reason that's so important is because everything in Matthew 4 in this temptation story revolves around understanding what it means for Jesus to be Son and God to be Father. You'll notice that the first two times Jesus is tempted, what are the first words out of Satan's mouth? "*If you are the Son of God...*" Every temptation here in Matthew 4:1-11 is an assault on son-ship. Matthew 3:17, "*This is*

my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.” “Well, if so, then why are You starving? If so, then jump off this temple. If so, then You could have all of these things.”

And don't miss why this is so important. It's because this is where we begin to realize...I want to be careful not to get into it yet because we're about to dive into it specifically. But just see it. Every temptation in your life and in my life is a temptation to see God as rival, not as Father. It's all the way back in the beginning, Genesis 3. Satan convincing Adam and Eve that God is their rival, not their Father. He's withholding something from them that is good. And every time you or I sin, it is you or I saying, "My Father does not know what is best for me. *I know what is better.*" So see the tie between temptation and son-ship here, because it's exactly where we are tempted. Every sin that you or I commit is tantamount to a rejection of God as our Father. In that moment, in that instant, as the One Who knows what is best to us and is committed to providing for us.

Two Questions...

So. Okay. I'm getting ahead of myself. Here's the deal. Two questions that often come up when people come to this passage. And I've got to fly through these, but I think they're worth noting because I know they're out there.

Does God tempt us?

One: Does God tempt us? Matthew 4:1 says, "*Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.*" So He was led by the Spirit to be tempted. What does that mean? Does God tempt us? The clear answer that Scripture gives to that question is, "No." God never tempts us in the sense of enticing us to evil. James 1:13, "*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.*" Instead, Satan is seen in all the Scripture and in Matthew 4 here as the tempter.

So we are tempted by Satan (who is subordinate) for evil. And I emphasize subordinate there to help us understand the next point. Yes, only the devil and the demons tempt us to evil. But we need to remember that even their tempting to evil, though directly attributable to them, is ultimately under the sovereign control of who? God. Nothing happens in the universe apart from the sovereignty of God. This is where we see God in the picture. Not as tempting for evil, but as testing for good. So here's the deal. We are tempted by Satan, (who is subordinate) for evil, and we are tested by God (Who is sovereign for good). So realize this. Temptation by the devil (who is subordinate) toward evil is ultimately a part of testing by God (Who is sovereign for good).

We know this from the book of Job. We know in the book of Job it is clear. Satan is on a leash. He can do nothing outside of the sovereign power, permission, prerogative of God. Yet, Satan tempts Job under God's sovereignty, and in the end it is used for Job's good. Testing for good. Under that umbrella—tempting by the devil for evil. Same thing with Paul, 2 Corinthians 12. There was given him a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment him. Why? So that through this Paul would learn the supremacy of God's strength and sufficiency of God's grace. So this was tempting toward evil, messenger of Satan tormenting him, used for good in Paul's life under the sovereignty of God. Genesis 50, Joseph sinfully sold into slavery by his brothers, and then tempted with all kinds of temptations along the way. Evil temptations and sin, all under the banner of a sovereign God, Who uses this testing in Joseph's life to bring about good for Joseph and for all of his brothers who sought to kill him. So hear the picture here.

And it's here in Matthew 4. The Spirit of God is leading Jesus into a time of testing, just as He led the people of Israel into the wilderness for a time of testing. But God is definitely not tempting Jesus here in Matthew 4. God is definitely not tempting Israel in the Old Testament, and God is definitely never going to tempt you to evil in your life. Instead, what He's going to do in His sovereignty is to use Satan's attempts to tempt you to evil to bring about good in your life. That's exactly what we see here in Matthew 4. So that's the first question: Does God tempt us?

Could Jesus have sinned?

Now the second question people sometimes ask: Could Jesus have sinned? Could Jesus really have sinned? I want to take a poll here, okay? There's two options here. Yes or no. So could Jesus have sinned? How many of you think, "Yes, Jesus could have sinned?" Okay, how many of you think, "No. Jesus could not have sinned?" Okay, it's split and the majority of you did not vote. I appreciate the boldness of those of you who did. So the answer is, "no and yes." So you're right on both of them. So let me explain briefly here. Okay, so four truths that pertain in this question that we know without a doubt from Scripture. One: Jesus is fully man. We've talked about this. We know that Jesus is fully man, like you and me. Man. Second: Jesus was fully tempted. The Bible says, Hebrews 4, that He was tempted just as we are. He was tempted with things that are common to us (1 Corinthians 10:13).

Now, we need to remember this. When we look at Matthew 4:1-11, we might start to think, "Well, I'm just not tempted in these ways. To be honest, these temptations don't seem that bad. Maybe they even sound trivial, like I've never been tempted to jump off a tower or to tell some stones to become bread. This is just foreign to me." Well, the reality is, as we're about to see in a second, there are no new temptations. There are simply new ways of succumbing to old temptations that have been there ever since Genesis 3. So clearly, people in the New Testament didn't have the internet and TV and some of the stuff that we have that brings temptation into our lives. But do not be fooled into thinking that we have come upon something new. The adversary's strategies are age-old, going all the way back to a garden in Genesis 3. And you will not face a temptation "*that is not common to man.*" And you will not face a temptation that Jesus Himself has not faced. And so He was fully "*tempted as we are,*" Hebrews 4 says. No new temptations; just new ways of succumbing to old temptations. Jesus was tempted just like you and I are tempted.

Third: Jesus is fully God. We've talked about this. He's fully man and He's fully God. And then fourth: God cannot be tempted. Just as James 1:13 says that God does not tempt us to evil, it also says "God cannot be tempted with evil." So we know these four things to be true. Jesus was fully man. Jesus was fully tempted. Jesus was fully God. And God cannot be tempted. The problem comes when you try to put those together and figure out how they work. And all of this leads us back to the mystery of the Incarnation. Remember we talked about this a few weeks before Christmas? We talked about how Jesus' human nature and divine nature are unified and yet different, which leads us to some wonderful mysteries.

As a picture of His humanity, He was asleep on a boat in the middle of a storm. As a picture of His deity, He stood up and calmed the wind and the waves in that storm. Fully human, fully God. Humanity. Deity. So in His humanity, Jesus was fully tempted as we said, just as we are, as men and women. And it was possible that He could sin. Yet, in His deity, He was not tempted for God cannot be tempted. And so it was not possible that He could sin.

So how do you put these mind-boggling mysteries together? Well think about it this way. Think of the person in the world that you love the most. Picture them and then let me ask you an absolutely horrifying question: Could you murder that person? And as soon as I ask that you're thinking, "Absolutely not. I am repulsed at the very idea that you'd even

mention that. There's no way that I could hurt that person in that way, that I love so much." And in that response what you're thinking is, "I don't have the moral capability of murdering that person." But if you understood my question, "Could you murder that person?" in terms of physically performing an action, though it's unfathomable to you, it would be physically possible.

So in a similar way, Jesus, in His deity, as the Light of the World in Whom there is no darkness, could not have sinned. His moral nature is incapable of that kind of action. At the same time, in His humanity, Jesus could have sinned in the sense that He was absolutely capable of turning stones into bread, jumping off a tower, and bowing the knee to Satan. He was fully tempted as we are.

Three Temptations...

So now that we have all of that cleared up, we will get to the three temptations. So we're going to have to fly here too, but I want us to get below the surface of these, see the core of temptation here, to bring that core to bear on how we are tempted. That's why you'll look in your notes and you'll say, "We are tempted, too. We are tempted, too. Because what we're seeing in Jesus is common to man. He's being tempted as we are." So just see how...Think about how this plays out in our lives, and then I want us to see how Jesus conquered each temptation. We'll hit them one by one.

Self-gratification

First temptation: self-gratification. Self-gratification. After 40 days of fasting, the Bible says Jesus was hungry. That's quite an understatement, Matthew. And the devil tempts Him to turn stones into bread and eat, if He is the Son of God. Remember, Jesus' understanding of His son-ship is central to our understanding of the devil's temptation. The devil is saying to Jesus, "If you are the Son of God, if you are beloved by God (Matthew 3:17), then why are You out here in the wilderness starving? You desire food. Is Your Father not providing for You, caring for You? Satisfy Your desires now." See the self-gratification here that is common to every single one of us in this room at the depth of our hearts. We are tempted to fulfill our wants apart from God's will. Every one of us. We have desires. All of us have desires that God has built into us. Desires that are good. Physical desires and emotional desires. Needs in our bodies. Cravings in our souls.

God has created us with these things. And He's created them in such a way that we are intended to look to Him as our Father to gratify those desires. That was the whole point in the Garden of Eden, right? God had created Adam and Eve with a desire for food, and it was a very good desire (Genesis 1:31). But He created to be fulfilled according to His Word and His way. And Satan ushered into the world the idea, temptation, that God is withholding some kind of good from Adam and Eve. They have a hunger, a desire, a craving, a want that they needed to fulfill apart from God's will. And that is when sin entered into the world. It's there in Genesis 3.

It's the same story of what happened in the wilderness with the manna that God provided. And it's why Jesus quotes from Deuteronomy 8. Let me give you the whole quotation. Deuteronomy 8:2. "*And you shall remember the whole way that the LORD [follow this] your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, that he might humble you...*"

So this is what God was doing: leading them through the wilderness, giving them manna day by day.

"...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."

This is the testing of the heart to see if they would trust the goodness of God to fulfill the desires in their lives according to His will and His Word. And this is the testing of your heart and my heart that accompanies every temptation in our lives. You have desires. I have desires—desires that are good; desires that created by God—for food, for water, for sleep, for sex, for relationship, for companionship. All of these desires are good. And they are the point at which Satan works in your life and mine.

So you desire food. That is good. And Satan takes that which is good and he tempts you towards undisciplined overeating. You desire sleep and he tempts you toward apathy and laziness. You desire sex and he tempts you toward lust, pornography, adultery, homosexuality. You desire this or you desire that, and he tempts you at the point of your desires to fulfill those God-given wants apart from God's given Word.

You think about it. Just analyze sexual temptation for a minute, whether it's pornography, homosexuality, adultery, an affair. You think about it. What is so rampant across our culture and rampant in the church? You have a sexual desire that is created by God to be good, but you are tempted to fulfill that desire in ways that are outside God's will and God's Word. And at the core of that temptation is a desire for self-gratification that says, "God is not providing the way I want Him to, and so I will seek my own gratification apart from Him and sin." Whether it's a look, a thought, action, deed, it's where it's birthed out of. And that's one of thousands of thousands of other examples all across this room.

We are tempted to fulfill our wants apart from God's will. And the devil is so subtly deadly in the way he attacks our desires. He has convinced many of you that these desires that you have for sin in certain areas, they are just the way you are. They are just who you are. Come back to the core, Christian brother or sister. This is not who you are. You are a child of God. You are a son or a daughter of God. And just because you have a desire that leads you toward temptation doesn't mean that that's just who you're destined to be. Now the reality is, you may fight with that desire for 40 days, or for 40 years, or for a lifetime. It will be a battle. But the way to fight that battle day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year is the same way Jesus did by trusting in the all-satisfying, all-sufficient goodness of the Father. This is what Jesus did. Jesus did not tell the Father when and how His desires should be fulfilled. Instead, He trusted God to fulfill those desires in His way according to His Word.

So how do you fight self-gratification? Fulfilling wants apart from God's will? You fight it by believing, by trusting, by realizing that your Father is good. And realizing and believing and knowing that every attempt to satisfy your wants apart from His will, will not lead you to delight; it will lead you to destruction. It's just three...No sooner had they taken that fruit into their stomach, everything changed between them, them and God, and the world; everything. If they could have that moment back... They knew now, "No, this doesn't satisfy!"

It's Jacob and Esau. What leads to the formation of the people of Israel in that story was Esau, selling his birthright because he's hungry for a bowl of soup. No sooner had that soup filled his stomach that he was certainly thinking, "What have I done? I've just given away my whole future for a bowl of soup!" It's Judas and greed for money betraying Jesus to

have 30 pieces of silver, that then become the means by which a field is bought where he hangs to his death.

The bread of the devil always leads to destruction. And yet, it suddenly deceives you, convincing you that it will lead to delight. So you fight it by saying, "No. Only my Father can bring the delight to my soul that I need. I fulfill my wants according to His will. I'm going to live according to His Word as my sustenance and my sufficiency and my satisfaction." Fight self-gratification with supreme satisfaction in the goodness of your Father. Jesus did that, and by the end of this story, Jesus' desire for food is being supernaturally fulfilled.

Self-protection

Second temptation: self-gratification and self-protection. Self-protection. Now this temptation is probably the most difficult to understand because we struggle to see what is so enticing about the possibility of Jesus jumping off of a tower. But this was no normal tower. This was the temple—the place that was a visible demonstration of God's presence and God's protection among His people. So Satan gets into the Bible quoting business from Psalm 91, a song about God's protection. And He tempts Jesus to prove that God will be faithful to Him as His Son by jumping off. "If you're really the Son of God, throw Yourself down and He'll save you. Send the angels."

Once again, Jesus' response here, going back to Deuteronomy, helps us understand the essence of this temptation. Because He quotes from Deuteronomy 6:16 which says, "*You shall not put the LORD your God to the test.*" That's where it stops here in verse 7, but if you go back to Deuteronomy 6:16 it says, "*You shall not put the LORD your God to the test, as you tested him at Massah.*" Which takes us back to Exodus 17 when the people of God were wandering in the wilderness, experiencing the testing of God.

They began to complain about not having enough water. And their response was, "Is God really among us, or not?" They began to question the presence of God, the provision of God, the protection of God over them. They began to complain and grumble, and they put God to a test. "Okay, if You're really with us then show us by doing this for us." Presuming upon God—thinking that faith is demanding something of God and once He meets your demands then you will trust in Him. That's the core of what we all experience. Just like they were tempted in the Old Testament, just like Jesus is being tempted here in the New Testament. We are tempted to question God's presence and manipulate God's promises, to put God to the test.

Here in Matthew 4, to force the Father to show that Jesus was truly the Son by miraculously delivering Him. This would be tantamount to asking God for proof of His presence and protection. That kind of callused, experimentation with God is a clear example of a lack of trust in God, and it shows up in all kinds of ways in your life and mine. We are tempted to twist God's Word around our personal preferences. We are tempted to question God's plans for us when they don't go the way we would like. We are tempted to doubt His love when something goes wrong. We're tempted to ask for signs that He's still with us—that He will show His presence to us—when He has shown His faithfulness to us over and over and over again. We are tempted to complain to Him about the circumstances of our lives, boldly thinking, if not saying out loud just like the Israelites did, "God, are You with me or not?"

So how did Jesus resist that temptation? He rested in the shelter of the Father's unshakable security. He knew He had no reason to test the Father, for as His Son, He was secure. And this is what Jesus will say to us over and over and over again in the book of Matthew. "Do not worry," He'll say in the Sermon on the Mount. "You have a Father in Heaven Who takes

care of the birds of the air and the flowers of the field. He will provide for you. He's a Father! You're His child! You don't have to presume upon His...He's a good Father!"

I try to be a good father. I love my three kids. Mary-Ruth is adjusting so well; two boys had guys' day out yesterday at Monster Jam 2012. I love these kids and I want to protect them and provide for them! I want to do anything I can to protect them. Luke 11 says I'm an evil father. God is a good Father. Everything He does in our lives is good. Everything! And by everything, I mean everything—even the most difficult things. Everything He does is a good Father. Everything that comes from His hand is good. We can trust Him. So we need not ask Him to prove Himself. We're His children. Rest in the security of what that means! Unshakable security. Jesus does that and by the end of this story, the Father has sent angels to minister to Him.

Self-exaltation.

Third temptation: self-exaltation. Self-exaltation. Jesus is taken to a very high mountain, or at the very least, given a very high vision of all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. And you might think, "Doesn't Jesus know that He's going to have all of these things?" Maybe He does. But He also knows that the road ahead, the path that leads to gaining that kind of authority is filled with sorrow, suffering, and ultimately, a violent death on a cross. So certainly there was temptation to have all of these things now apart from that painful path. "You're the Son," the devil says. "Why be a servant? You're the King. Why are you going to be crucified? Take these things now. They're Yours for the taking." And it's the same thing that he whispers in your ears and mine.

"Look at the things of this world—all the successes, all the accomplishments, all the accolades, all the things, all the stuff, all the pleasures, all the pursuits, all the possessions—and they're Yours. Take them. Live." That's what he told Adam and Eve. "Eat the fruit and you'll live. You'll be like God." And they believed him. And in their believing him, they ascribed worth to him instead of worship to God. Same thing we are tempted to do—to assert ourselves in the world while we rob God of His worship. Instead of a life of trusting, humble, difficult obedience to God in this world, in our pride we say, "I'm going to attain what I want in the way I want to do it. My plans, my pleasures, my pursuits, my possessions." Do not miss the danger of pride. It's the root of all our rebellion. We all struggle with pride.

If your first thought is, "I don't struggle with pride," it sounds like you're proud of that. You see, self-gratification, self-protection, self-exaltation. It looks different in our lives. The core of sin is a taking—a dethroning—of the God Who alone is worthy of worship, and replacing Him with someone, something, that we think ultimately ourselves more worthy.

So how did Jesus resist that temptation? I'll quote directly here from Russ Moore because I can't improve on his words.

"Jesus refused to exchange the end-time exaltation by the Father for a right-now exaltation of a snake. Jesus, the beloved Son, knew the supreme duty of every single person on the planet is to worship God. And He knew that everyone who humbles himself before the Lord will be exalted, so He chose to live a life of suffering obedience to the Father instead of sinful submission to Satan. And in the end, all authority in heaven and earth were given to Him."

We face these battles every day. Today, the rest of the day you will be tempted toward self-gratification, self-protection, and self-exaltation. And you will face these battles tomorrow, the next day, and every day this week, and so on and so on and so on until the day that

Revelation 12 describes. I'll put these verses on the screen. We don't have time to turn to them but you've got to hear them. Listen to this.

"Now war arose in heaven, [Revelation 12:7] Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back, but he was defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, 'Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death. Therefore, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them!'"

Three Conclusions...

Christ will be crowned as King.

Ladies and gentlemen, brothers and sisters, there is coming a day when ultimately, finally, and eternally, Christ will be crowned as King. The Christ, Who 2,000 years ago in Matthew 4 conquered temptation as our representative, and then not long thereafter conquered sin as our Savior on the cross. Conquered sin as our Savior. You think about how we're going to see these temptations play out as Jesus goes to the cross. As He's hanging on the cross, and its shadow to Him, "If You are the Son of God..." not coincidentally, "If You are the Son of God, bring Yourself down. Certainly the Son of God would not be up here." Assault on His Son-ship.

Jesus says to Peter, "I know that at any moment, I could call down 12 legions of angels to come and deliver me from this cross. Instead, He bows the knee in the Garden of Gethsemane and He says, *"Not my will but Yours be done."* "Father, glorify Your name." He lives for the worship of the Father and He dies. And in the process becomes the only One Who is able to take Your sin and my sin upon Himself—pure and unstained, fully able to pay the price for our iniquity. And then to rise from the grave in victory over sin and death and to ascend into heaven. So 2,000 years ago He has conquered sin as our Savior. Today He is at the right hand of the Father, fighting with and for us through His Spirit.

To use Paul's words, we are "like lambs lead to the slaughter." No. *"We are more than conquerors to him who loved us."* *"If God is for us, [we say it] who can be against us?"* *"Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us."* He has given you and me, Christian, His Spirit—the very same Spirit Who led Him in and through the wilderness here unscathed is the same Spirit Who is alive in you.

Brothers and sisters, you cannot conquer temptation, but Christ in you can. And He is in you. He's *"the hope of glory."* So on one hand I want you to feel a sense of how endangered you are, how vulnerable you are. At the same time I want you to feel a sense of how empowered you are. There is always a way out (1 Corinthians 10:13), and the way out is Christ. So live in Him until one day He will reign over all as our Sovereign. He will once and for all assert His authority over all creation.

Satan will be cast down in defeat.

When He comes, Christ will be crowned as King; Satan will be cast down in defeat. Revelation 12. "...*That ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.*" The accuser will stand accused. The serpent will be sentenced and the devil will be destroyed. Revelation 20 continues saying, "*And the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.*" Christ will be crowned as King. Satan will be cast down in defeat. And the church will rise in victory.

The church will rise in victory.

Oh church, victory is assured! Sons and daughters of God, we may be in wartime right now, but peacetime is coming. And so as we work and fight and wait for that day as children of God in Christ, let's trust the all-satisfying, all-sufficient goodness of our Father. Let's let His love be the supreme satisfaction of our souls. Let's trust Him. Let's trust His Word. Let's trust His will. He knows what is best for us. He is not your rival—He is your Father. As children of God in Christ, let's rest in the shelter of our Father's unshakeable security. We have no reason to fear. We have no reason to ever worry. We have no reason to doubt. We have no reason to question Him. No reason to complain against Him, in any way be concerned about His presence, His power, His protection for us. Christ has secured all of these things for you and me. So rest in Him. You're His child, and He will always, always, always protect and provide for you—guaranteed. As children of God in Christ, let's refuse to exchange our end-time exaltation by the Father for a right-now exaltation of a snake.

You say, "What do you mean by 'our end-time exaltation?'" Did you hear Revelation 12? It's not just a picture of a conquering Christ; it's a picture of a conquering church. So there's coming a day when we will be heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, receiving the ultimate reward of our salvation as we reign with Him in His kingdom. So resist the devil and all of his attacks. Why? Because you are a child of the King on the way to the kingdom.

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