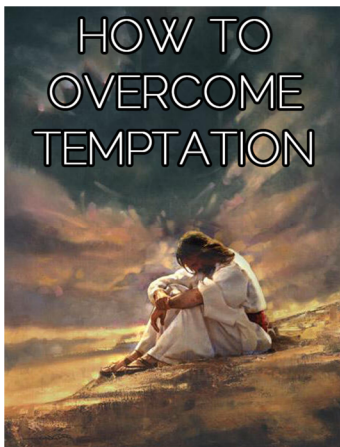


Matthew 4:5-7 How to Overcome Temptation “The Lust of the Flesh”

6.28.15

Turn in your Bibles to Matthew, chapter 4. This morning we continue in our series: “How to Overcome Temptation.”



In our series we have looked at “The Source and the Causes” of temptation and the “Lust of the Eyes.” Today we will talk about “The Lust of the Flesh” and next time we’ll talk about “The Pride of Life.” We’re building on these messages, so I hope you’ll try your best to be here each week.

You will remember from last time that Jesus was led into the Judean wilderness by the Spirit of God for one final test before the start of His 3-year ministry.

Matthew 4:1

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

God allows **tests** to our *faith* to grow us.
Satan uses **temptations** to our *lust* to defeat us.

From Satan’s viewpoint He sought to tempt Jesus to go against **the Father**. But from God’s perspective, **the Father** was going to allow the test to prove that Jesus was worthy to be the Savior of the world.

Remember, when Satan tempts Jesus, he will tempt Him in 3 ways and Satan continues to tempt us in the exact, same three ways.

How Satan Tempts:

- #1 The Lust of the Eyes
 - #2 The Lust of the Flesh
 - #3 The Pride of Life
-

Last time we saw Satan tempted Jesus with: “The Lust of the Eyes.”

Matthew 4:3

3 And the tempter came and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.”

That temptation was more than about just being hungry and satisfying the physical appetites. It was primarily about the authority of God's Word.

Jesus' mission...His task while on earth was to fulfill the original destiny and purpose of the human race: to live on the basis and trust upon every single word that comes from the mouth of God can be depended on without question.

How did Jesus respond to all of this rationalization?

Matthew 4:4

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."

"IT IS WRITTEN."

BTW...That's how Jesus would respond to every single temptation. He would simply quote Scripture. God's word is our food. It's better than bread. You are better off to obey God and depend on Him and wait on His provision than to try to grab some premature satisfaction just because Satan tells you that you deserve it and you've waited long enough. Satan wanted to create doubt in the word of God.

The Word of God is the lamp to our feet and the light to our path and you can trust it and quote it and rely on it because it is 100% authoritative and not one letter or one dot will pass away.

You see... the primary defense against temptation is the Word of God. That's why Satan attacked Jesus here first. But folks do you remember that the Word is Jesus?

John 1:1

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

Jesus is the Word! When you trust in the Bible, you are trusting in Jesus. And when you trust in Jesus, you are trusting in His Word.

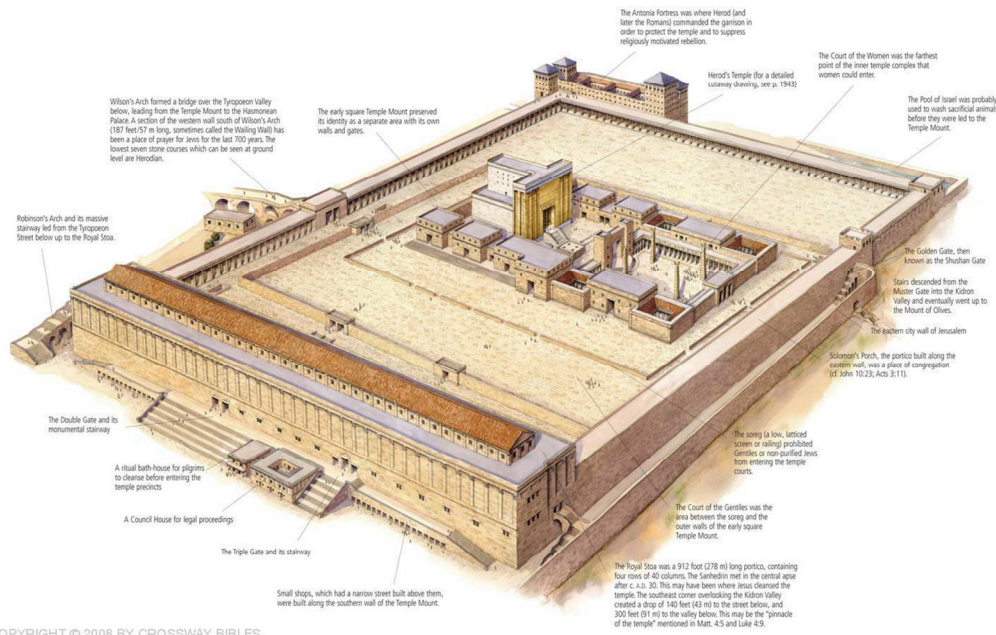
Jesus responded to all three of the devil's temptations with Scripture. Notice He didn't say, "Hold on a minute, Devil, while I look up this verse." He had God's Word hidden in His heart, so that He wouldn't sin against God (Psalm 119:11). As Christ followers, we need to be in God's Word every day, not just pulling the Bible off the shelf "in case of emergency." Do you know the Bible? Have you hidden God's Word in your own heart?

Today we will see Satan try another tactic to bring Jesus down. Watch.

Matthew 4:5-7

5 Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple **6** 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." **7** Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

Now I want to show you where this temptation took place. To do so, we move to the city of Jerusalem and the Temple.



COPYRIGHT © 2008 BY CROSSWAY BIBLES

See the area with the long brown roof at the bottom of the screen? That's called the "Royal Stoa" and that's where the Sanhedrin (the highest ruling council of the Jews) would meet. At the bottom, right-hand corner is what is called the pinnacle of the Temple or the highest point of the Temple grounds. It's a 300' drop from that corner to the Kidron Valley floor.



Interestingly, first century historians say that James, Jesus' half-brother, was martyred by being thrown off the top of that roof.

So, Satan and Jesus are there and I believe Satan was thinking back to the FAILED first temptation and he had to be thinking, "Okay Jesus, if you are going to live by the Scriptures, then I'll show you some Scripture.

Matthew 4:6

6 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."

Satan knows Scripture. Did you know that? He knows it so well, that he'll try to twist it and use it against us. He misquoted Psalm 91. Here's what it says:

Psalm 91:11-12

11 For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways. 12 On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.

He left out, "In all your ways..." What does that mean? Simply this... God watches over the child of God who is living in His ways. If we go outside of the ways of God, we lose the right to claim the promise of God's protection. And that was precisely what Satan wanted Jesus to do and it's what he wants us to do as well. Matthew Henry says:

"We are tempting God if we expect God to bless us in our sin. God has promised not to abandon us and He will follow us when we leave the path of our duty, but He will not indulge our sin or please our fancies. This is presumption and testing God. It is to insult the One whom we should honor. We must never promise ourselves any more than God has promised us." Matthew Henry

Listen, God is not our personal servant who just sits around waiting for us to ring a bell. No! We are to serve Him as His servants. He is our Master and we are His servants.

Do you know what happens so often in our lives and why we succumb to the lust of the flesh? It's because we get outside of God's Word and His protective parameters for our lives and we mess it up. And then we presume upon God by asking Him to bless our mess. But, folks, that's backwards! He wants to save us out of our mess. He wants to empower us with His Spirit and His Word to overcome temptation.

What we see with this second temptation is a blatant misuse of Scripture and Jesus knew it. Would you? Do you know the Bible well enough to know if it is being twisted? Most don't. Therefore Satan uses this tactic against us today...and it's proving to be very successful.

Today, Satan is employing a process of interpreting the Bible that is known as **Eisegesis**. This is a fancy word for people who choose to interpret the Bible for how it best suits their needs or their particular worldview. People who **Eisegete** Scripture are those who read into the Bible what they want it to mean, versus taking out of the Bible what the original writers (inspired by God) intended it to really mean. Eisegesis is an improper handling of Scripture. For Scripture (or any writing of antiquity for that matter) to be interpreted properly it must be "exegetes." In other words, we must let the text speak for itself. Let me show you the difference.

Eisegesis asks: What idea do I want to present by finding a passage of Scripture that seems to fit with my idea? In eisegesis, there is no examination of the words of the text or their relationship to each other, no cross-referencing with related passages, and no real desire to understand the actual meaning. With eisegesis, Scripture serves only as a prop and a crutch to the interpreter's ideas. This is SO dangerous!

Milton S. Terry (1840-1914), Professor of Hebrew and Old Testament exegesis and Theology said: **"A fundamental principle in biblical hermeneutics is that the words and sentences can have but one significance in one and the same connection. The moment we neglect this principle we drift out upon a sea of uncertainty and conjecture."**

Let me show you these definitions:

Exegesis: Extracting the meaning FROM the text. (What does it mean?)

Eisegesis: Projection of reader bias INTO the text. (What does it mean to me?)

Exegesis and Eisegesis is part of what is called: "hermeneutics," which is the branch of knowledge that deals with the proper interpretation of literary texts. Take a look at this definition.

Biblical Hermeneutics: is the science of properly interpreting the meaning and application of the Bible. The goal is to point to the correct interpretation, which the Holy Spirit has already inspired into the text. The aim is to discover the meaning of the passage as the original author intended and to protect us from improperly applying a Scripture to a particular situation.

We know God will not contradict His Word...Scripture interprets Scripture. Therefore, we can use the Bible to help us interpret other parts of the Bible. (i.e., taking a little wine for the stomach is not a proof text for drinking. Ephesians 5:18 says don't get drunk on wine but be filled with the Spirit.)

One of the grossest forms of eisegesis being used today is by the homosexual and transgendered community. What they are doing by playing fast and loose with the Scriptures is absolutely appalling. I've never seen anything like it in my life.

So, let me ask again: Do you know the Bible? Do you know it well enough to know when Scripture is being twisted?

2 Timothy 2:15

15 Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.

We must know the Scripture and then we must use it.

2 Timothy 3:16

16 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.

So we must ask, "What was Satan's objective in misusing the Word of God?"

First of all, Satan knew he couldn't throw Jesus off that Temple Mount if he wanted to. He has no power over Jesus. His power is limited by God! God is omnipotent. Satan is held under the thumb of God.

But Satan never gives up. His plan was to see if Jesus would presume upon God. He wanted to see if Jesus would get ahead of God's plan by by-passing it altogether. He wanted to see if Jesus would take the easy way out. The devil tempted Jesus to bypass God's plan for His ministry (which would include a tremendous amount of suffering) by performing a dramatic display of His power by jumping off the Temple Mount with angels appearing and sweeping Him to safety.

You see, Satan wanted to turn Jesus into some kind of glorified comic book hero like Superman or Captain America. Well, Jesus is not Superman or Captain America! He is the God-Man and Captain of the Universe.

Yet, Satan wanted Jesus to do the dramatic and he wanted to use this temptation to (interestingly) employ the angels of heaven. Why? Because Satan was still mad that 2/3^{rds} of the angels didn't leave heaven and go with him when he was kicked out of heaven.

So here's the deal...Satan wanted Jesus to be a daredevil like this guy...



That's Evel Knievel.



Satan was saying, "Do it Jesus! Go ahead...get everyone's attention: **Shout it out: "Hey EVERYBODY WATCH ME...HERE I GOOOOOO..."**

This made me think of the spectacles some churches are using to try to draw crowds today. It's like a Las Vegas-style show. They are looking for greater and greater sensations. More tricks...bells and whistles to lure crowds. Hey folks, I'm all for going out to the highways and hedges and compelling people to come in, but surely we don't have to look like the world and act like the world to do that. Surely we can do better than that and do so in Christ-honoring ways!

You see, the more tricks you use, the bigger, better and greater the trick has to be tomorrow.

Jesus saw that after feeding the 5,000 people with the bread and fish that they were following Him just for the food. They had a "What's in it for me...Give me more" mentality. So, He started weeding them out with His strong teaching. John 6:66 is perhaps one of the saddest verses in Scripture.

John 6:66

66 After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him.

Satan was saying, "Jump off Jesus. They'll love you!" The angels will rescue you and the people will know you are the Messiah!

Listen, public acceptance is never the proof of anything, ever! Jesus didn't come to be popular. He came to be despised, hated, rejected and ultimately killed by men. He came to His own and His own received Him not. If Jesus had fallen to this temptation, He would have circumvented the entire plan of God. He would have sinned and thus He could not have been our perfect sacrifice and saved us from our sins! No! Jesus would not presume on God with a different set of plans.

Satan was misusing the word of God and Jesus knew it and Jesus counters Satan again with the proper use of Scripture from Deuteronomy (6:16) when He says:

Matthew 4:7

7 Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

The word "test" here is the Greek word:

Ekpeirazō (ek-pā-rä'-zō):

1. to prove, test, thoroughly
 2. to put to proof God's character and power
-

It's used only twice more in the NT. Once in Luke 10, when a lawyer was trying to trap Jesus...

Luke 10:25

25 And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

Jesus would tell the attorney and all those who were listening about the Good Samaritan and this exposed the lawyer's deceit. Jesus wouldn't be tricked. The second time it's used is in 1 Corinthians 10 and I want you to see this.

Please turn to 1 Corinthians 10. Paul is writing to the believers in Corinth and he's trying to help them to understand how to overcome temptation. This is such a beautiful and powerful passage. The children of Israel tested God many times while wandering the wilderness for 40 years and we'll see a few here... and it doesn't turn out well.

1 Corinthians 10:5-13

5 Nevertheless, with most of them God was not pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness. 6 Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did. 7 Do not be idolaters as some of them were; as it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play." 8 We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. 9 We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents, 10 nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer. 11 Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come. 12 Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall. 13 No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

What's being said here to the Corinthians is the same lesson we see in Jesus' second temptation. Listen, there is always a way of escape. It's there, you've just got to look for it. **Martin Luther said, "I cannot prevent birds from flying over my head. But I can stop them from building a nest in my hair."**

What is an area of your life in which you are being tempted right now? It's hard isn't it? Going through temptation and overcoming temptation is a form of suffering. Did you know that? And Jesus went through the same kind of suffering so that we could look to Him as our example of how to overcome temptation and the Lust of the Flesh. The writer of Hebrews says:

Hebrews 2:10, 14-18

10 For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering.

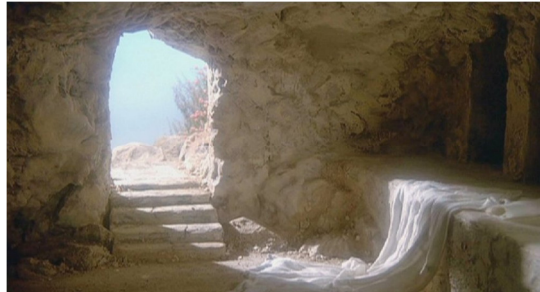
14 Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, 15 and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. 16 For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham. 17 Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. 18 For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

Listen, I'm convinced that the reason we succumb to temptation so much is that we aren't willing to suffer. You see, with temptation comes suffering. And this is something we seldom talk about. Jesus showed the example for us by suffering when He was tempted and He will help us when we are being tempted. But, if you want to overcome temptation and your flesh you have to be willing to suffer. The door to the way of escape is always marked with the word: "suffering" written on the door (1 Cor. 10:13). Are you willing to hurt? Suffer? You must or you will fall to temptation every

time!

So, if you keep getting into trouble with some of your friends, you might have to suffer and get some new friends. If you are struggling with looking at things on the computer or on your cell phone that you shouldn't, then you might have to suffer and spend \$11/month and get Covenant Eyes. If you struggle with eating too much, and you need to lose weight, you will have to suffer by eating less at meals. It's that simple. **You pick the temptation**...whatever the temptation is...I promise you...you are going to have to be willing to suffer to overcome. There are no short-cuts, even though Satan wants to tell you there is. If you aren't willing to suffer, then you won't overcome the Lust of the Flesh.

Can I ask you to do what I believe Jesus did when He stood on the pinnacle of the Temple and Satan was offering Him that short-cut? Jesus looked past the easy way out and saw the glory to come. He saw the glory that He would receive once again when He would be seated with His Father in glory...but He would have to suffer through the betrayal of Judas and the indignity of the Pharisees and sweating blood in the Garden of Gethsemane and the agony of being separated from His Father on the cross as He bore our sins for us. But this is what He saw...



Can you see beyond your suffering? Can you look past your temptation? Can you see what God wants to do in your life? Don't short-circuit God's best for your life by buying into Satan's plan to get you to jump and do it his way. That's the lust of the flesh!

Oh dear Christian, Jesus paved the way. Look to Him and His word and for the way of escape marked "suffering" and you will overcome temptation...for Jesus said to Satan...

Matthew 4:7

7 "Again it is written, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'"
