

“The Temptations of Christ”

(Luke 4:1-13)

Introduction

➤ Last Sunday, in preaching from Luke 4:1-2, I defined temptation simply as “the calling of one’s will.” That is, temptation is not sin but the devil’s attempt to seduce, deceive, or entice us into sin. Temptation places us at a crossroads with a decision (choice) to make: to obey or disobey God’s commands, to live righteously or unrighteously, to pursue holiness or sinfulness, to follow after the Savior or follow after the devil.

✓ Illust: “Temptation, then, in general, is any thing, state, way, or condition that, upon any account whatever, hath a force or efficacy to seduce, to draw the mind and heart of a man from its obedience, which God requires of him, into any sin, in any degree of it whatever” (John Owen, Of Temptation; ch.1).

James 1:13-15 ~ “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. ¹⁴But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. ¹⁵Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.”

In verse fourteen, the Greek words translated “*lured*” and “*enticed*” are similar words but effectively describe two different steps in the process of temptation. To be “*lured*” (*exelkō*) is to be dragged or carried away, as if compelled by an inner desire. The word “*enticed*” (*deleazō*) more specifically refers to the bait used to lure (and deceive) one’s prey. James makes a very illustrative point. No animal – in his right mind – would eat the bait if he knew it would lead to his death. The same is true for us when it comes to our temptation. In order to get us on his hook (of sin), Satan lures us with bait (temptation).

✓ Illust: “Thomas Costain’s history book *The Three Edwards* has the story of the life of Raynald III, a fourteenth-century duke in what is now Belgium. Raynald III was grossly overweight, and he was commonly called by his Latin nickname, “Crassus,” which means “fat.” After a violent quarrel, Raynald’s younger brother Edward led a successful revolt against him. Edward captured his brother Raynald, but he did not kill him. Instead, he built a room around Raynald in the Nieukerk castle and promised him he could regain his title and property as soon as he was able to leave the room.

This would not have been difficult for most people since the room had several windows and a door of near-normal size, and none was locked or barred. The problem was Raynald’s size. To regain his freedom, he needed to lose weight. But Edward knew his older brother, and each day he sent a variety of delicious foods. Instead of dieting his way out of prison, Raynald grew fatter.

When Duke Edward was accused of cruelty, he had an available answer: “My brother is not a prisoner. He may leave when he so wills.” Raynald stayed in the that room for ten years and wasn’t released until after his brother Edward died in battle. By then his health was so ruined that he died within a year … a prisoner of his own appetite.

➤ Whenever we succumb to temptation we sin (Jms.4:17; 1Jn.5:17), and all sin fits into (at least) one of three biblical categories:

THREE CATEGORIES OF TEMPTATION AND SIN		
Genesis 3:6	1 John 2:16	Luke 4:3-12
“ <i>was good for food</i> ”	“ <i>desires of the flesh</i> ”	“ <i>command these stones to become bread</i> ” (vs.3)
“ <i>was a delight to the eyes</i> ”	“ <i>desires of the eyes</i> ”	“ <i>it will all be yours</i> ” (vs.7)
“ <i>was to be desired to make one wise</i> ”	“ <i>pride of life</i> ”	“ <i>put the Lord your God to the test</i> ” (vs.12)

➤ This morning, we are going to look predominantly at the first two verses of this passage as we seek to learn the truth about temptation.

Luke 4:1-13 ~ “And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness ²for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And he ate nothing during those days. And when they were ended, he was hungry. ³The devil said to him, ‘If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread.’ ⁴And Jesus answered him, ‘It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone.’” ⁵And the devil took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, ⁶and 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. ⁷If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours.’ ⁸And Jesus answered him, ‘It is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve.’” ⁹And 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, ¹⁰for it is written, ‘He will command his angels concerning you, to guard you,’ ¹¹and ‘On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.’” ¹²And Jesus answered him, ‘It is said, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’” ¹³And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time.”

➤ Studying the temptations of Jesus in Luke 4:3-13 (Matt.4:1-11; Mk.1:12-13), we see illustratively the three categories of sin, and (more importantly) we see how Jesus defeated every temptation.

Heb 4:15-16 ~ “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” (see 2Cor.5:21; Heb.7:26; 1Jn.3:5)

➤ It is important, at the outset, to mention that Jesus answered every one of the devil’s temptation with Scripture. When Jesus said, “*It is written [or said]*” (vs.4, 8, 12) He was not only battling temptation with the Word of God, but (in doing so) He was affirming the authority and veracity of Scripture as God’s Word (see Lk.7:27; 10:26; 18:31; 19:46; 24:27, 44, 46).

Moreover, unlike the devil (vs.11^{x2}), Jesus always quoted Scripture in context. He did not try to bend God’s Word to fit His circumstances or desires. When He was “*in the wilderness*” (vs.1) being “*tempted by the devil*” (vs.2), Jesus quoted from the book of Deuteronomy which is the “theological hub” of the Old Testament – a book containing God’s law – and a book describing Israel’s wilderness journey.

All Scripture – i.e., both the Old and New Testaments – is God’s written, inspired, and inerrant Word. It must be read and understood in context. For while a verse or passage of Scripture may have many applications, it can only have one true interpretation – and all Scripture interprets all Scripture.

2 Tim 3:16-17 ~ “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”

➤ Throughout this passage we see the importance of knowing Scripture and how vital it is in our battle against sin. In order for us to be victorious over temptations, we must follow the example set for us by Jesus to know, obey, and rightly apply God’s Word (see 2Tim.2:15; Heb.5:11-6:1).

✓ Illust: John Bunyan, author of “*Pilgrim’s Progress*” had the following message handwritten in the cover of his Bible: “Either this book will keep you from sin, or sin will keep you from this book.”

Ps 119:11 ~ “I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.”

Col 3:16 ~ “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly ...”

Heb 4:12 ~ “For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword ...”

➤ As we study the temptations of Christ, we can expose the seductions and deceptions of the devil – seeing his temptations for what they truly are (2Cor.2:11). We can learn to recognize the bait which the tempter uses to lure us into sin. In the Gospel of Luke, this narrative reveals for us the three categories of sin which the devil seeks to ensnare us.

1. The temptation of not trusting God (vs.3-4)

➤ Satan's first temptation, at first glance, seems rather insignificant. "*The devil said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread'*" (vs.3). There is nothing sinful about bread (except for maybe the carbs). There is nothing sinful about eating food when you are hungry. And there is nothing sinful about Jesus performing miracles. So, what's the big deal? Why could Jesus not simply prove to the devil that He indeed is the Son of God by turning stone into bread?

At this point, we must remember that Jesus was hungry because he was "*fasting*" (Matt.4:2). He was not "*hangry*" and He did not simply skip lunch. Simply put, fasting is a spiritual discipline of voluntarily (intentionally) going without food in order to focus more intently on God and godly things – depriving oneself of physical things to prioritize spiritual things.

➤ Obviously, fasting for "*forty days*" (Lk.4:2) would make anyone "*hungry*" (Lk.4:2). The devil took this opportunity to tempt Jesus to break His fast – to tempt Jesus to break His dependence on, His devotion to, and His trust in God. The devil's first temptation was not simply to get Jesus to eat bread, but to compel Jesus to forsake God.

This is the sin of not trusting God! It is prioritizing physical (material) things over spiritual things. The temptation of physical things are temptations that would lead us to believe that God is unwilling or unable to provide for our needs. It is the temptation that lures us away from trusting God, to think that something other than God (or in addition to God) can bring us true peace, fulfillment, or happiness.

➤ This is the temptation to think and act as though God is not enough, or that God will not fulfill His promises. It is the "*Jesus-plus*" syndrome – "I need Jesus plus a good marriage", "... a good family", "... a good job", "... financial stability (or wealth)", "... a nice house", "... good health." We sin when we seek to act independent of God, or when think that God is not enough, or we feel that God has somehow failed or forsaken us, or when we fail to trust in Him and His Word.

➤ This has been rightly called a "*practical atheism*." This is where we doubt God's goodness or faithfulness, or when we become consumed with worry or disbelief. Worry is a sin because it is the evidence or express of a lack of trust in God, and ultimately the evidence or expression of pride.

Matt 6:25-34 ~ "Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? ²⁶Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? ²⁷And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? ²⁸And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, ²⁹yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. ³⁰But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? ³¹Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' ³²For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. ³³But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. ³⁴Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble." (Lk.12:22-34)

Phil 4:4-7 ~ "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. ⁵Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; ⁶do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

1 Peter 5:6-9 ~ "Humble yourselves [imp., vb.], therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, ⁷casting [vb., part.] all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. ⁸Be sober-minded [imp., vb.]; be watchful [imp., vb.]. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. ⁹Resist him [imp., vb.], firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world."

➤ Notice how Jesus combatted this temptation with the truth of God's Word: "*And Jesus answered him, 'It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone'*" (vs.4; cf. Deut.8:3). Jesus' forty days in the wilderness corresponded to Israel's forty years in the wilderness.

Deut 8:1-3 ~ "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 to your fathers. ²And you shall remember the whole way that the LORD your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, that he might humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments or not. ³And 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."

➤ Where the Israelites repeatedly failed to trust and obey the Lord (repeatedly grumbled against the Lord), Jesus never wavered in His faithfulness to God. Jesus never grumbled against God. He was never fickle in His faith. He never disobeyed God, never doubted God, never disparaged God. As our supreme example, Jesus showed us what it means to trust God fully and to prioritize Him over everything else.

2. The temptation of not worshipping God alone (vs.5-8)

➤ After failing to tempt Jesus to doubt God, the devil recalibrated his attack. In this second temptation, the devil sought to lure Jesus away from worshipping God alone. "*And the devil took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, ⁶and 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. ⁷If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours'*" (vs.5-7).

Satan took Jesus to a high place to let Jesus see – with His own eyes – "*all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time*" (vs.5). By some supernatural means, the devil showed Jesus all of the realms and wonders of the world. What an awesome sight to behold – "*in a moment of time*" vs.5).

➤ At this point, some people may see this as a bluff from Satan ("After all, they may ask, doesn't Jesus truly own everything already?"). But this is no bluff, for Satan (although only temporary) is "*the prince of this world*" (Jn.12:31; see (Jn.14:30; 16:11; 2Cor.4:4). At this moment, all of this world is owned and operated by Satan (under the sovereign control and power of God). For those who are power-hungry this temptation would be almost unbearable, and even for those who are not power-hungry to have all power and splendor over all the kingdoms of the world is extremely enticing. But keep in mind, Satan is also a liar (Jn.8:44).

➤ The devil was offering Jesus "*all the kingdoms of the world*" (vs.5), and all the "*authority*" (vs.6) and "*glory*" (vs.6) that comes with them. This temptation was even more attractive than it may appear. Not only would Jesus have authority and glory over all the kingdoms of the world, but He would be able to avoid all of the humiliation and sufferings of the cross. Jesus could "have it all" right now. It is the promise of a crown, without a cross.

✓ Illust: "But Satan was offering the world to Jesus on his own corrupt terms, not God's. That which the Father promised to the Son because of His righteous obedience, Satan offered to the Son in exchange for His unrighteous disobedience. God's plan in testing the Son was to prove the Son's worthiness to inherit and rule the world. Satan's plan was to draw the Son away from that worthiness by enticing Him to grab the kingdom the Father promised to give Him. Instead of enduring the long, bitter, humiliating, and painful road to the cross – and the even longer wait in heaven for God's time to be completed – Jesus could rule the world now!" (John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Matthew*; 4:8-10).

➤ Jesus could "have it all now" if He would simply "*worship*" (vs.7) the devil. The word "*worship*" translated two Greek words (*proskyneō enōpion*) which could literally be translated "fall down before" or "prostrate yourself in worship." The devil wanted Jesus to pledge devotion and adoration to him.

Matt 4:8-9 ~ “Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. ⁹And he said to him, ‘All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.’”

➤ For us, this would be the temptation to disobey or deny God in order to be spared a sorrow or suffering. This is refusing to walk through the “*narrow gate*” and the hard way “*that leads to life*” (Matt.7:13-14). It is refusing to offer our bodies as living sacrifices (“*holy and acceptable*”) to the Lord, choosing instead to be “*conformed to this world*” (Rom.12:1-2). It is refusing to “*deny*” ourselves and “*take up [our] cross daily*” in following Jesus (Lk.9:23). It refusing to love God first and foremost in our lives – “*with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind*” (Lk.10:27) – and choosing to love our family, our friends, our freedom, our reputation, our money, our possessions, etc. more than Him. It is prioritizing anything (or anyone) over God, or loving anything (or anyone) more than God.

➤ This is the essence of all false worship. This is essentially what the devil offered Christ – all glory and no pain. All Jesus had to do was forsake God and worship Satan: “*If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours*” (vs.7). This is a temptation that befalls many, who (for the sake of avoiding sufferings or sorrows in this life) choose temporary authority and glory over eternal blessings. They worship the devil, or ungodly things (1Jn.2:15-16), instead of God and God alone.

Ex 20:2-6 ~ “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. ³You shall have no other gods before me. ⁴You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. ⁵You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, ⁶but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.”

➤ Jesus again battled against temptation with “*the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God*” (Eph.6:17). He went back to the book of Deuteronomy, to a similar temptation the Israelites faced in their wilderness journey, to answer the devil’s temptation: “*And Jesus answered him, ‘It is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve.’’*” (vs.8; cf. Deut.6:13).

Deut 6:10-15 ~ “And when the LORD your God brings you into the land that he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give you – with great and good cities that you did not build, ¹¹and houses full of all good things that you did not fill, and cisterns that you did not dig, and vineyards and olive trees that you did not plant – and when you eat and are full, ¹²then take care lest you forget the LORD, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. ¹³It is the LORD your God you shall fear. Him you shall serve and by his name you shall swear. ¹⁴You shall not go after other gods, the gods of the peoples who are around you – ¹⁵for the LORD your God in your midst is a jealous God – lest the anger of the Lord YOUR God be kindled against you, and he destroy you from off the face of the earth.”

➤ This scriptural quotation from Jesus is in the context of God’s blessing for Israel if they would worship Him alone – to not follow after other gods but serve Him singularly and supremely. Israel failed. They caved to the temptation to worship other gods and forfeited the blessings of God. Where Israel failed, and where we fail, Jesus did not.

➤ There are many idols (false gods) in the world today. Whether it be the “gods” of false religion, or the idolatry of pleasure, money, possessions, self-esteem, family, celebrities, political ideologies, personal ambition, comfort/security, popularity, and the list goes on. An idol is something you worship instead of, or in addition to, the one true God. It is anything that is more important to you than God. An idol is something that promises to give you security or identity apart from God, or something that, if you were to lose it, would rob life of its ultimate meaning and value.

3. The temptation of testing God (vs.9-12)

➤ Since the devil failed to successfully tempt Jesus with pleasure or power, he tried to arouse Jesus' pride: *"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'"* (vs.9-10). This temptation is again masked to look rather harmless (as temptations often do). "Afterall," the devil would argue, "it would be good for you (Jesus) to prove yourself to be the Son of God. Isn't that why you came to earth?" The devil effectively challenged Jesus to challenge God

➤ With Jesus' obvious knowledge of Scripture and His use of it to battle temptation, the devil employed a different tactic. The devil used (misused) and quoted (misquoted) Scripture: *"for it is written, 'He will command his angels concerning you, to guard you,'¹¹ and 'On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone'"* (vs.10-11). Both of these verses are from Psalm ninety-one.

Ps 91:11-12 ~ "For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways. ¹²On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone."

➤ The devil here used Scripture out of context – specifically, using a Psalm as prescriptive (instructions or commands to be followed) and not descriptive (depicting or explaining a truth to know). That is, Psalm ninety-one is a Messianic Psalm describing the person and work of the Messiah. It does not contain commands to be followed, or promises to claim. And it certainly was not to be used as the basis for testing God.

It is dangerous to use descriptive verses/passages in the Bible as prescriptive. That is, thinking that we can replicate a narrative in order to manufacture a desired result. For example,

Acts 19:11-20 ~ "And God was doing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, ¹²so that even handkerchiefs or aprons that had touched his skin were carried away to the sick, and their diseases left them and the evil spirits came out of them. ¹³Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists undertook to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, 'I adjure you by the Jesus whom Paul proclaims.' ¹⁴Seven sons of a Jewish high priest named Sceva were doing this. ¹⁵But the evil spirit answered them, 'Jesus I know, and Paul I recognize, but who are you?' ¹⁶And the man in whom was the evil spirit leaped on them, mastered all of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. ¹⁷And this became known to all the residents of Ephesus, both Jews and Greeks. And fear fell upon them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was extolled."

➤ It should be obvious that handkerchiefs and aprons do not possess miraculous properties but were conduits through which God performed miracles. Notice that Paul was not selling "miracle handkerchiefs" for a denarius or "healing aprons" for a half a shekel (any more than Moses sold "water-parting staffs", or Joshua sold wall-crushing trumpets, or Jesus sold vials of His saliva).

✓ Illust: Citing Acts 19:11-12, one Charismatic faith-healer (self-proclaimed) mailed out a "Miracle Prayer Cloth" attached with this message:

"Take this special miracle prayer cloth and put it under your pillow and sleep on it tonight. Or you may want to place it on your body or on a loved one. Use it as a release point wherever you hurt. First thing in the morning, send it back to me in the green envelope (with your financial donation). Do not keep the prayer cloth; return it to me. I will take it, pray over it all night. Miracle power will flow like a river. God has something better for you, a special miracle to meet your needs."

This is more than a harmless religious gimmick. It is peddling in superstition and idolatry. This kind of biblical "interpretation" is reckless, foolish, and dangerous. Such attempts to mystically replicate biblical narratives make about as much sense as jumping out of a boat in the middle of the Sea of Galilee during a storm because you want to walk on water.

➤ This is what the devil was doing in his temptation of Jesus, but Jesus was neither seduced nor deceived by the devil. Quoting again from the book of Deuteronomy, Jesus correctly applied the instructional (prescriptive) commands of Scripture: *"And Jesus answered him, 'It is said, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test'"* (vs.12; cf. Deut.6:16).

Deut 6:16-19 ~ “You shall not put the LORD your God to the test, as you tested him at Massah. ¹⁷You shall diligently keep the commandments of the LORD your God, and his testimonies and his statutes, which he has commanded you. ¹⁸And you shall do what is right and good in the sight of the LORD, that it may go well with you, and that you may go in and take possession of the good land that the LORD swore to give to your fathers ¹⁹by thrusting out all your enemies from before you, as the LORD has promised.”

1 Cor 10:9-11 ~ “We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents, ¹⁰nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer. ¹¹Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction ...”

God had provided manna to eat and water to drink, but the people were not satisfied. They wanted more variety and more spice. They complained and complained, questioning God’s goodness, and tried His patience. They had no concern for pleasing God, only for His pleasing themselves. They did not use their new freedom to serve Him better but to demand that He serve them better. The result of their testing and trying the Lord was death – by snakes (Numbers 21:5-6; see Acts 5:3-10).

➤ It must be noted that there is a significant difference between seeking God and testing God. Sincerely seeking the Lord is wanting God to reveal Himself. Testing God is wanting God to prove Himself. Testing God is unbelief dressed to look like faith. Testing God is demanding that God act at our behest – it is wanting God to perform according to our wants and demands. It is Herod wanting to see Jesus only because “*he was hoping to see some sign done by [Jesus]*” (Lk.23:8). This is the attempt to have God serve us, rather than serving God. Jesus was not about to put God to the test.

Conclusion

➤ This passage ends with, in my opinion, one of the more ominous verses in all of Scripture: “*And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time*” (vs.13). The devil was not finished with Jesus. He would wait until “*an opportune time*” (*kairos*; time, season, occasion); not opportune for Jesus but for the devil. Satan would continue to “prowl around” like a lion looking for any opportunity to devour Jesus (1Pet.5:8).

✓ Illust: “Satan will not go till he has shot the last arrow from his quiver. Such is his malice that as long as he can tempt, he will tempt” (Charles H. Spurgeon; sermon: “Satan Departing, Angels Ministering”, August 15, 1889).

➤ While the devil is neither omniscient nor omnipresent, he is ever-lurking – searching for an opportunity to tempt us, waiting for us to expose a vulnerability, looking for any chink in our armor.

Eph 6:10-13 ~ “Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. ¹¹Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. ¹²For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. ¹³Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.”

Matt 26:41 ~ “Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

1 Cor 10:12 ~ “Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall.”

✓ Illust: In his book, entitled The Great Compromise, Greg Laurie writes about a massive redwood tree that had survived some 400 years in one of America’s national forests. This ancient tree had survived fourteen separate strikes by lightning. It survived countless earthquakes, storms, floods, and other natural disasters. Yet one day, without warning, this massive old tree came crashing to the ground with a tremendous thud. No bolt of lightning was responsible ... No overzealous lumberjack ... it just crashed with no apparent reason. On closer inspection, investigators discovered that this old tree had died. Tiny beetles had found their way inside their trunk and had begun eating away at its life-giving fibers, weakening the tree from the inside out. What earthquakes, storms, and lightning bolts could not do was easily accomplished over the passage of time by a handful of small insects! (p.xiii-xiv).

➤ We must be humbly vigilant against the temptations of the devil. We must faithfully trust God, worship God alone, and never test God. We must never think that we can have victory over sin apart from Christ. We must never think that we are beyond, or somehow immune to, Satan's attacks. We must never be deceived into thinking that small compromises will not have massive and long-lasting consequences.

✓ Illust: There is an old saying that remains a sobering thought for us today: "Sow a thought, reap an act. Sow and act, reap a habit. Sow a habit, reap a character. Sow a character, reap a destiny."