



“Temptation”  
Luke 4:1-13

**Idea:** The believer’s battle plan for resisting temptation is to run toward and rest in the High Priest.

**Intro:** No! Say it with me... “No!” Saying no can be extremely difficult. This reality is especially true for us Americans. For the most part, ours is not an offensive culture. We do not generally argue in public. If there is a misunderstanding, we do not raise our voices and flail our arms in the air. When shopping, we do not barter over the price of items in the stores. The price is indicated, and it is what it is. Therefore, when going to another culture, many times we are caught off guard by vendors who are shoving their goods in our faces and screaming the price. This approach is literally foreign to us, so it can be really hard to say no, and it is even harder to negotiate the price down.

Saying no may not be something we are used to doing, but it is something we must learn, nonetheless. Charles Spurgeon once said, “Learn to say no; it will be of more use to you than to be able to read Latin.” Now, I am not sure how useful it would be to read Latin in my world, but I do know how beneficial it is to be able to say no as a follower of Christ.

Thankfully, the Christian life is full of things we say yes to. At the same time, there are things that require a no. The Lord Jesus recognized this truth and modeled it.

Read Luke 4:1-13.

**Inquiry:** Luke wrote his Gospel to give an “*orderly account*” of the life and ministry of Jesus so that Theophilus would “*have certainty concerning the things*” he had been taught (Luke 1:3-4). Throughout our study of the first three chapters, we have seen that Luke has presented Jesus to us as the Son of God (1:32, 35; 2:49; 3:22, 38). He is seeking to answer the greatest question people have about Jesus... “Who is He?” Luke is showing us that Jesus our Savior is the Son of God, and this identity, as we will see, carries with it three offices. Jesus is priest, prophet, and king for the well-being of His people.

In each of the Synoptic Gospels the baptism account is followed by the account of Jesus’ temptation. Luke uses it as the last preparatory story before introducing the public ministry of Jesus. Having been affirmed as God’s Son by the Father’s voice from heaven and having been anointed by the Spirit, Jesus was led out by the Spirit into the wilderness. The term ἔρημος is translated as wilderness or desert in this verse. The implication Luke is making is that Jesus was led out into a wasteland or a solitary, deserted location.

Jesus was most likely baptized by the John in Jordan River slightly southeast of Jericho. From there the “*wilderness*” is clearly visible to the west. The mountain cliffs are a desolate wasteland, inhabitable only to

goats. It was there that our Lord was tempted by Satan who directed his attacks at His Sonship. It is important to note that this conflict was initiated by the Spirit and not by Satan (4:1). Therefore, Jesus was not dragged out into the wilderness by the Enemy. Instead, the Spirit led Christ out to engage the devil. The temptations lasted for forty days. Three specific temptations are recorded, but the verb tense in verse 2 (πειραζόμενος – present, passive participle) suggests that Jesus was tempted throughout those forty days.

Jesus ate nothing during his time in the wilderness; therefore, it makes sense that He was hungry. He was the Son of God, but He was also the Son of Man. During those days on the mountain, the Father and Spirit had nourished and sustained Him. His humanity, nonetheless, was hungry. This is another indication that Jesus was God in human flesh. He did not just seem to be a man; He was the God-Man. The devil saw an opportunity to bring Jesus down by tempting Him with provision (4:3). He had been without food for six weeks. Surely, His body felt like it was dying. As the Son of God, He could easily invoke His supernatural powers and quench His hunger, and His flesh screamed, “Do it now!”

The temptation might seem to be benign, but it was not. As the Son of God, Jesus had come to do the will of the Father and nothing else. Satan tempted Jesus to suspend living like a human and momentarily go outside the natural order to meet His needs apart from the Father’s provision. Jesus answered, *“It is written...”*. This will be His response to each temptation. He is armed with the sword of the Spirit (Eph 6:17). Just as Israel was sustained by God in the wilderness, Jesus understands that the Father sustains and provides for His every need. Bread does not keep Him alive, the Father does.

Next, the devil caught the Lord up in a vision and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world (οἰκουμένη – inhabited world). He said, *“To you I will give all this...if you will worship me...”* (4:6-7). I really like how R. Kent Hughes describes this temptation. He says:

“Jesus was made to hear the rustling of the world’s flags flying in His honor. He could win the world without pain, the enemy promised – no weeping over Jerusalem, no crucifixion. The great countries of the world – Israel’s elect nation, the mighty Roman Empire, and all the rest – would open their gates to their new king.”

This was what Satan offered, and it was in fact his rightful offer to give. God had given him a limited amount of sovereignty over the world (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; 2 Cor 4:4; Eph 2:2). So, this was a powerful enticement. All Jesus had to do was acknowledge Satan’s sovereignty on Earth and He could bypass the cross but still be King over the nations. This shortcut, however, would have short-cut redemption because it would have been a breach in obedience to the Father’s will. Jesus would not have been a sinless Savior. In response, the Lord quoted from Deuteronomy 6:13, a warning against the attraction of idolatry. There was no compromise in Jesus.

Luke’s climax in the temptations takes Jesus to Jerusalem at the pinnacle of the temple. We do not know exactly what part of the temple it was. It could have been on the temple or on the wall surrounding the temple court. We do know it was Herod’s temple, which was bigger and grander than Solomon’s temple. Traditionally, the location of this temptation is believed to have taken place at the southeastern corner of the temple wall overlooking Kidron Valley. The wall was incredibly high there. Satan tempted Jesus with Scripture. It should not surprise us that he knows God’s Word, but there is a difference between knowing the Word and obeying it. He quoted from Psalm 91:11-12, which was not interpreted messianically in Judaism. By using it to refer to Jesus, Satan twisted its message. He tempted the Lord to test the Father by protecting Him. By urging Jesus to jump, Satan was trying to take advantage of His determination to trust and obey God’s Word, which He had already made clear twice. “Jesus, You are committed to God’s Word, so obey this!” There could have also been the lure to do something extraordinary in front of the people who lived and did business just outside the gates there. “You want to be seen as the Messiah? Just jump, and the whole world will see who You really are!”

Jesus again answered with Scripture (Deut 6:16), resisting the temptation and remaining faithful to the Father. The devil then ended the temptations until a more opportune time. I do not believe this means that Jesus did not face spiritual warfare during the rest of His life and ministry. In fact, it was the opposite. We know that Satan was active during His ministry (Luke 8:12; 10:17-18; 11:14-22; 13:11-17; 22:28). What this statement means is that Satan did not directly confront Jesus until he entered Judas Iscariot (22:3).

From this passage there are three truths that we need to understand about temptation.

### **1. Satan works to negate everything affirmed by God.**

In chapter 3 we saw God's paternity test on display as Jesus was baptized. The Father voices His approval over His Son from heaven (3:22). Luke also shows Jesus' ancestral roots from Mary to Adam to God (3:23-38). Satan, on the other hand, shows up on the scene not to applaud and celebrate Jesus' Sonship. No, he comes to cast doubt and dispute it.

Are you surprised that Satan works to negate Jesus' Sonship? You should not be surprised. He has always negated what God affirms. This practice goes all the way back to Eden. God created all that there is and affirmed it all as "good" and "very good." In the very next chapter Satan casts doubt on God's affirmation saying, "Did God actually say?" (Gen 3:1). In other words, "God has told you that this is all yours and it is good, but is it true? No, it is not true. You are not all that you could be. God is withholding what is best from you."

By attacking God's character in attacking His Words, Satan was negating everything God had affirmed. He was negating marriage, the family, work, sexuality, gender, authority, and every other good thing ordained by God. Therefore, you should not be surprised the Enemy and his demons work overtime to tempt you into going against the good things God has affirmed. He wants to wreck your marriage, reputation, finances, and family. How does he do this?

### **2. Satan seizes upon human weakness.**

In verse 2, Luke informs us that Jesus had eaten nothing for forty days. He was hungry; He was physically weak. Satan recognized a weakness and sought to exploit it. This is truly one of the passions of his devilish existence. Over and over again, Satan attacked Jesus' perceived weaknesses. If the Enemy did that to the Lord, how much more do you think he does it to us?

Satan understands that flesh is weak. It is a lot like water, following the path of least resistance. Therefore, he offers an easier option. As Christians who desire to obey and honor God, we need to be able to recognize his temptations and "better" offers. It is as William Vander Hoven wisely said, "At every fork in the road the devil is dangling the carrot down the wrong path."

How do we resist the temptations? How do we choose the right path?

### **3. Satan is defeated through Christ.**

Jesus does not succumb to the devil's temptations. He battles each of them with God's Word and trust in the Father's provision. We, obviously find in Jesus a great model for standing in faith on God's Word. Is this, however, the message Luke through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit is presenting? It is a secondary point, but it is not the main point of the story. The primary point is that Jesus is God's Son, so we must trust Him. He endured temptation in our place. He conquered the Enemy but not to show us how we can do it ourselves. No, by enduring and defeating the temptation, Jesus becomes our Great High Priest.

<sup>15</sup>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. <sup>16</sup>Let 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. – Hebrews 4:15-16

Today, Jesus sits enthroned in heaven as our High Priest who can sympathize with our weakness, and He alone makes it possible to approach the throne of grace. He can do this because He faced the greatest temptation imaginable by Satan himself. Unlike the first Adam who fell to the gorgeous Serpent in the glories of Eden, the second Adam faced Satan's alluring presence amid the barren desolation of the wilderness. And unlike Israel who grumbled and gave into their weaknesses in the wilderness, Jesus remained true to God the Father in the wilderness. He passed the test that we have all failed. In doing so, He becomes our ever-present help in times of need and temptation.

Jesus is our High Priest who stands in the gap between God and man. Hebrews 5 explains that Jesus attained this position and role as the sinless Son of God, and today, He is the guarantor of a better covenant (Heb 7:22). His sacrifice on the cross was final and sufficient (Heb 7:26-28).

#### Personal Application:

Your best strategy to resist temptation is to run to Jesus, your High Priest.

**Conclusion:** More than likely, if you have heard this passage preached before, it was presented as a model to follow. The point was made that Jesus responded to each temptation with a Bible verse, so you were encouraged to hide God's Word in your heart and stand on it when temptation comes. It is true that we do need to know and hide God's Word in our hearts (Ps 119:11). We need to believe and stand on it in all areas of our lives. It provides the solid foundation of knowing what is right from wrong. Bob Jones said, "What you do in the hour of temptation will depend upon what you were the day before."

The problem with only resting on your ability to know God's Word and faith into it is the focus is on the wrong thing. You see, every temptation is, among other things, an opportunity for getting closer to God. We dare not treat our knowledge of the Bible like the Israelites treated the Ark of the Covenant in 1 Samuel 4. The people of God battled and were defeated by the Philistines between Ebenezer and Aphek. Following the defeat, Israel decided they needed to bring out their secret weapon. They went and got the Ark from Shiloh and marched it out before them into battle. The Philistines were fearful that day, but they defeated Israel.

How could Israel be defeated that day? They had the one thing in their faith that represented God's presence and power. Israel was defeated because their faith was in the wrong place. It should have been in God rather than in a material object. God was their defender and protector. By marching out the Ark, Israel demonstrated the weakness of their flesh. In reality they wanted to win the battle for themselves. It is like they were saying, "If I carry this token or hold this magic ring, then I will be successful." Israel should have thrown themselves upon the mercy, grace, and power of God. He was the One who would lead them to victory.

The same is true for us today. We need to know and believe our Bibles. We need to stand on God's Word, hiding it in our hearts, but we do this not to think that we can defeat the Enemy's temptations but to lean in complete dependence on our High Priest. We draw near to Him because He is our help in time of need.

Temptation is a fact of life. Each of us will face it on different levels every day of our lives. The message from this passage is not to try harder or *white-knuckle* your resistance. The message is to believe on Jesus, your High Priest. This is an upside-down approach. It makes no sense in our world, but it makes perfect sense in Jesus' upside-down kingdom. He loves you and calls you to Himself. What are you battling? Bring it to Jesus and lay it down. Bring yourself to Him.

Good news: God loves you. He created you and desires to know you.

Bad news: You are a sinner in rebellion against your Creator.

Best news: God has done everything necessary to justly deal with your sin and bring forgiveness and restoration to your life. Today, He calls you to turn from your sin and self and turn to Him as Savior and Lord. Have you received forgiveness in Christ? What would keep you from embracing the truth and believing on Jesus today? Do you need to follow the Lord in believer's baptism?