

The Temptations of Jesus (Lk 4:1-12)

1) What is temptation?

Temptation is something very attractive and persuasive which can cause someone to do things that seem pleasant or advantageous but don't fit the will and purpose of God for one's life. And these temptations most of the time come from our own inward carnal desires. Yielding to temptation gives birth to sin, and sin will keep one longer than one wants to stay with, it will cost one more than one can pay, and it will take one further than one wants to go. A seed of temptation always has a fruit of its own destruction.

2) No-one is beyond temptation

No-one is beyond temptation, though one may by the grace of God be beyond the possibility of yielding to temptation. The truth is, all of us can be tempted. Let us remember, the only being who cannot be tempted, is God (James 1:13). Jesus as a man was tempted in the same manner like Adam. And all temptations' ambitions suggest one to be like God. But Jesus, the Son of God, wanted to be man. In this humility, He was able to use the Word of God to overcome His temptations. Let's look a bit close to His temptations.:

3) Jesus was tempted by the devil (Lk 4:1.2)

Immediately after His baptism, Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit to the wilderness, where He fasted and was tempted by the devil for forty days. Concerning the people of Israel, Moses told them to remember how God led them all the way in the wilderness for forty years. This time was to test them and to know what was in their heart. Beloved, may I say to you that the Lord our God may sometimes allow temptations and troubles to come to us, just as the Holy Spirit led Jesus or God led the children of Israel both to the wilderness. We may also sometimes have wilderness in different areas of our lives. "For what?", you may ask. It is in order to teach us that our lives do not consist merely in the physical, but rather we're spirit beings who have a soul and live in this body. So, both physically and spiritually, we depend on God (Deut 8:1-6). At times, the Lord may permit difficulties in our lives or His church or the whole nation as a form of fatherly discipline in order to train us to depend on Him more firmly and receive Him more willingly (Heb 12:3-13).

4) If you are the Son of God... (Lk 4:3.4)

The temptation of turning stones into bread is the temptation of the lust of the flesh. Normally, everyone who is fasting will encounter this, as well. There is no question that Christ would have had the power to do that. But He refused because He didn't want to serve His flesh. All of us will also be tempted to use our anointing or gift of God or positions to serve our own self-interest or to establish our own glory and popularity or pleasing people rather than God. If we selfishly compromise with Satan, in reality we have already lost this battle against the flesh and have surrendered to Satan's lordship. But we can overcome Satan's temptation just as Jesus did by saying that man does not live by bread alone, and man does not live by the lust of the flesh alone. Rather, everything that is important in life depends on God and His will alone.

5) If you will worship me... (Lk 4:5-8)

This temptation is the temptation of the lust of the eyes. For Satan took Jesus and showed Him ALL the things that are in the world and demanded that if Jesus would worship him, he would give the whole kingdom to Jesus. This sounded like an insult to the Son of God because He was aware of how Adam was tempted and how Adam yielded to Satan's temptation. Jesus refused to use worldly methods of compromise, earthly power, political manoeuvring, external violence, popularity, honour and glory to achieve the spiritual goal which He came

for. Jesus' Kingdom is a spiritual Kingdom ruling in the hearts of people, who have been taken out of the kingdoms of the world. It is gained through suffering, self-denial, humility and meekness. Friends, let us give our bodies as a complete sacrifices to God, because this involves struggling against temptation.: Let us also be aware of what we do and what we say, so that the devil may not have a chance of confusing us. For happiness or material things apart from God's way and purpose will always lead us into bitter disappointment and end up with failure, for human ability does not end up the best, but God's ability does. Therefore, Jesus used the Word of God which is the will of God to defeat Satan, again. And you and I can use the Word of God, as well. Situations in our working-places, our homes, the church and the nation- the answer is the Word of God, so let us use it! (1st Jn 2:15-17)

6) Satan's use of Scripture (Lk 4:9-12)

The temptation to make a public display of God's protecting power by casting Himself from the temple was the temptation of the pride of life. Satan said: "...for it is written: 'He has commanded His angels to take care of you that you may not strike your foot against a stone!'" (Ps 90:11.12). Thinking about somebody who wants to be popular in the world, jumping from a high point and landing on one's feet before the eyes of many people would make a person famous like a "superman". And this could probably have met the people's expectation of the Messiah. The truth of the matter is that Satan still tempts Christians by using the Word of God. At times, worldly people will use Scripture in an attempt to persuade believers to do something they know is wrong or unwise. We must know God's Word thoroughly and beware of those who perverse Scripture in order to fulfil the desires of the sinful human nature. Let us realize that through the Word of God we have power to resist any temptation of Satan.

7) Was this fair?

Was this fair, that after the baptism of Jesus, the Holy Spirit let Jesus to the wilderness to be tempted by Satan? Probably, the Holy Spirit wanted Jesus to get Satan defeated before He ever began His mission on earth. And this is the battle against self and the mind. The Holy Spirit wants you and I also to be able to defeat Satan in our own lives before we reach out to others. Where there is no temptation, there is also no testimonies. Therefore, Jesus' testimony here was Satan's three temptations and Jesus' three quotations. Afterwards, Satan left Jesus for a while. If we are wise, we will seek to conquer ourselves, but if we are not wise, we may say we want to conquer the world. Jesus conquered Himself, first, before He conquered the world (Jn 14:30.31).

8) Not my will (Lk 22:42)

The final test of the reality of Jesus' temptations is found in the revelation of His struggle in Gethsemane and in His death on the cross. No-one else could know the temptation of a holy person to avoid becoming the judgement for the sin of the world. This could be Christ's hardest temptation as we see in the character of His struggle and submission: "Not my will, but Your will be done!" On the cross the same temptation is evident in the words of Jesus' enemies to come down from the cross. But Jesus Christ willingly continued suffering and of His own will dismissed His spirit when the proper time came. No greater realm of temptation could be imagined than this.

9) Why did Satan tempt Jesus?

Why did Satan tempt Jesus? The temptation of Jesus by Satan was probably an attempt to entice Jesus from the pathway of perfect obedience of the will of God. But in all temptations, Jesus submitted Himself to the authority of the Word of God rather than to the desires of Satan. Satan is our worst enemy, and we must be aware that we are engaged in a spiritual warfare

with unseen but very real powers of evil (Eph 6:12). Without the Holy Spirit and the proper use of the Word of God, we cannot overcome sin and temptation.

10) The old age question: WHY?

Why does the just and loving God permit a true believer to suffer intensively? May I say to you that the real foundation of faith lies not in God's blessings, in personal circumstances or in intellectual answers, but in a revelation of God Himself which is revealed to us through Christ Jesus. God sometimes permits Satan to tempt us with adversity in order to purify our faith and lives just as gold is refined by the fire (Job 23:10; 1st Pt 1:6.7). Such temptations result in an increased measure of spiritual integrity and humility in us. Probably, you now understand that believing in God and living righteously will not keep us from troubles and suffering in this life. On the contrary, commitment to God often brings temptations and persecutions (Mt 5:10). Persecution is also a promise of God to those who live a godly life in Christ. But don't get upset! It is persecution that brings revelation. Many at times, parents try to get attention of their child, and it is difficult. But at the moment this child has troubles, it comes with a brand-new revelation of its parents, that they are all it needs for the situation. Likewise are we, children of God (Ps 34:19; Jn 15:20).

11) Satan has asked (Lk 22:31)

Jesus said: "Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat, but I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have returned back, strengthen your brethren!" (V 31.32). Jesus' statement concerning Peter revealed probably two important truths:

- First, God allows Satan to tempt us only within a certain limit. Without God's permission, the devil is not free to do what he wants with God's people. It's amazing that Jesus did not say: "I have rebuked Satan..." (read the first three chapters of Revelation).
- Secondly, Jesus said He had prayed that Peter's faith would not fail. And do you know that Jesus is also praying for you and I in our trials of faith, that we don't fail? Jesus is our heavenly intercessor, and He lives forever to make intercession for us. Whatever your situation is, in the church or your family-life or another; remember the faithfulness of God, Who, in all our temptations, provides a way for us to escape (1st Cor 10:13). Therefore, in the midst of our temptations let us wait on the Lord, draw near to Him and remain steadfast through His spirit and rest assured that in God's own time He will make a way!

12) In times of troubles (Prov 24:10)

I think, you may by now agree with me that troubles and distress will come to all of us at some time in this life. When they do, we as God's children must be strong in the Lord and look to Him as our refuge. For strength and power to endure adversity and come out victoriously, come from on High when we walk in the richness of the grace God provided for us. The truth is, God does not promise us trouble-free lives, but He does promise to sustain us no matter what happens (Isa 43:2.3a). Therefore, in the midst of exhaustion and weakness, God is our strength and ability to overcome them all. He promises that if His people will patiently trust Him, He will provide whatever is needed to sustain them constantly (1st Pt 1:5).

Jesus defeated Satan so that you and I may know how to re-enforce Satan's defeat. Above all, Jesus also fasted and prayed so that we as His disciples would also know how to fast and pray and call on our heavenly Father with the confidence that His promise never to forsake us, is true.

GOD IS YOUR ABILITY TO RISE ABOVE YOUR DIFFICULTIES!

(read Ps 18:32-35)