

RESISTING SATAN'S ATTACKS

Mark 1:12-13

Jesus was sinless and never sinned, we are not.

Jesus was tempted and resisted sin; we do not.

We are tempted and sin because we have sin dwelling within us.

Sin Still Dwells in Us

Paul testified to that in his greatest doctrinal epistle, Romans 7:20. Paul affirms, that after his glorious conversion on the road to Damascus, after his personal tutelage by Christ in the wilderness, after his years of ministry as an apostle and after writing under the inspiration of God for almost 20 years, "...sin [still] dwells in me."

Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. (NJKV)

Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. (NIV)

But if I am doing the very thing I do not wish, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. (NAS)

This morning sin is still in all of us who are saved, and that is why we still sin. We are not sinners because we sin; we sin because we are sinners.

We are thieves at heart though we may not steal;
we are liars at heart even when we do not lie;
we are murderers at heart even when we do not kill;
we are adulterers at heart though we may not commit adultery.

But just as bleak as that truth may be, the glorious truth is that salvation united us to Jesus Christ—and He defeated sin not only once and for all as our substitute on the cross, but also he triumphed in the wilderness, facing Satan.

As we open to Mark 1:12-13 this morning we are opening to the greatest truth that all of us who are saved yet who are tempted to sin, can learn.

Jesus defeated each of Satan's greatest temptations--not in His blinding Omnipotence as God the Son, but in complete weakness as a man. After 40 days of no food and no rest from attack. Jesus defeated Satan in perfectly yielded, 100% humanity as a man, the Last Adam.

At the start of His Earthly ministry, Jesus met and defeated Satan as a man. And against the bleak panorama of the Judean Wilderness we see this beautiful sight, a totally obedient servant who wins the battle because He obeys the Word of His Father in Heaven. So can we!

Jesus Defeated Satan

Satan the enemy of God and man is alive and well on planet earth; but God's Word assures us that we are "more than conquerors through Christ". Satan is a defeated foe, a weakened adversary and crushed enemy. We have the victory through Jesus who lived the perfect life. Jesus left the perfect example. God's Word records the ultimate method for resisting Satan's attacks—the model Jesus left for us, the secret of how to resist the attacks of Satan like Jesus did.

The Gospel by Mark has a unique angle on the temptation as it focuses upon aloneness. Jesus spent 40 days alone. Always remember as we read this account that our character is what we are when we are alone. The real you is most evident when you are alone. Satan must have repeatedly said through those 40 days, "It's okay, no one will ever know!"

As you turn to our text in Mark 1:12-13, let's stand and listen to God.

The parallel to the Garden of Eden in Christ's temptation can't be overlooked. The first Adam met Satan in the perfection and safety of the Garden of God and failed, plunging all of humanity into sin. The Last Adam (I Corinthians 15:45) faced Satan in the demon filled dangers of the wilderness and triumphed. How unlike the first Adam is this last Adam.

The Devil challenged the first man. The Last Man challenged the Devil.

The Devil ruined the first Adam. The Last Adam spoiled the Devil.

The First Adam involved the Race in his defeat. The Last Adam included the Race in His victory.

*The First Adam stood as the head of the race and falling, dragged the race down with him. The Last Adam stood as the Head of the new race, and being victorious, lifted that race with Him."*¹

Remember that Christ's baptism was immediately prior to this temptation.

Heaven had opened at His baptism, and now Hell opens at His temptation.

What Mark calls *the wilderness* is the 525 square mile (15x35 mile) region between Jerusalem, on the central hills that form the backbone of Israel, and the Dead Sea. This bleak and barren area of wilderness is called **Jeshimmon** in the Old Testament.

Jeshimmon means The Devastation, and this area fits the name. One early Bible geographer named Sir George Adam Smith, in the late 19th century described it in his journals:

It is an area of yellow sand, of crumbling limestone, and contorted strata, where the ridges run in all directions as if they were warped and twisted. The hills are like dust heaps; the limestone is blistered and peeling; rocks are bare and jagged; often the very ground sounds hollow when a foot or a horse's hoof falls upon it. It glows and shimmers with heat like some vast furnace. It runs right out towards the Dead Sea, and then there comes a drop of twelve hundred feet, a drop of limestone, flint, and marl, through crags and precipices down to the Dead Sea².

The wilderness Christ entered was the same one into which the scapegoat pre-figuring Christ, was released to wander and die on the Day of Atonement, carrying away the sin of the nation into that place of evil spirits.

So Jesus began His ministry in the Wilderness of Temptation in Mark 1:12-13. He ended in the Luke 23 in the Garden of temptation. As we study this climactic event, we will see how He triumphed, and how we can too!

So Jesus, hungry to the point of starvation, thirsty to the point of death, weakened to the point of helplessness—Jesus, meets the fallen glistening cherub, the fallen anointed one, Satan the adversary.

Lessons from Christ's Temptation

Christ's temptation was real; it was real physically, it was real emotionally, and it was real spiritually. Jesus felt every pain, every attack, and every pressure.

But, as Christ's temptation shows us—Satan can only persuade, he can't push. The Devil tempts, but it is we who transgress. The Devil doesn't make us do it, we do it ourselves.

¹ Morgan, Crises of the Christ.

² Barclay, William, *Daily Study Bible Series: The Gospel of Matthew - Volume 1 Chapters 1-10 (Revised Edition)*, (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press) 2000, c1975.

Jesus shows us we are responsible for our sins because of the sin we have within. Jesus didn't sin although He was completely tempted, because He has no sin within. But, a tempted Christ always understands His tempted people.

The essence of Christ's temptation in all three versions was to act independent of God. It is okay to be hungry and want food, tired and want rest, weary and want an end to the attacks—but it is wrong to get anything apart from God's way, God's timing, and God's blessing!

Now turn to the parallel account in Matthew 4:1-11 as we examine this event in Christ's life detail. In all three Synoptic Gospels we see the same event.

- **THE ARENA WAS THE WILDERNESS:** (Matthew 4; Mark 1; Luke 4); Christ was with wild beasts (Mark 1:13); He was 40 Days without food (Matthew 4; Luke 4)
- **THE ADVERSARY WAS SATAN.** Christ met the Devil, that Dragon and slanderous fallen Lucifer, the father of sin, lies, murder, death and hell. The very powerful King of Darkness.
- **THE ACCOUNT IS CHRIST'S PERSONAL AND PRIVATE EYEWITNESS ACCOUNT.** It is so special because only He was there. The fact that we have it speaks to His personal desire that we have it to help us as we face the same adversary. May we likewise conquer in His power! From the manger to the Tomb the Holy Spirit empowered Him to do the will of God. All Jesus did was through the Spirit. Christ accomplished a life of devoted obedience in the power of the Spirit. What has the Holy Spirit accomplished through you?
- **THE ATTACK WAS TEMPTATION TO SIN.** In the Gospels we have Satan tempting Christ. The 40 days were filled with a spiritual struggle. The climax of Satan's attack is given in Matthew and Luke 4. In Matthew 4 we have the chronological order.

Jesus met Satan as a man. This is highlighted by Satan's first attack when he said, "If you are the Son of God..." to which Jesus responds very clearly, "Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word of God..." (Matthew 4:3-4). Jesus met Satan in the power of a weakened man, not in the awesome, blinding Omnipotence of Almighty God.

Three Areas Satan Targets

The three temptations were directly targeting the three weaknesses all humans have as John expresses in 1 John 2:16:

For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world.

From John's classification we know from the Lord that temptations always come in three varieties of packages, in spite of varied shapes, sizes, and colors...they fall into one of three categories:

- *Sensual Temptation.* This is lust of the flesh for another person. The desire to have and enjoy the body of an individual, even though such pleasure is illegal and/or immoral.
- *Material Temptation.* This is lust of the eyes for things. The things may be as large as a house or as small as a ring, as bright and dazzling as a new sports car or as dull and dusty as a two-hundred-year-old antique dresser.
- *Personal Temptation.* This is lust for status called "the pride of life". Special recognition. The status of fame, fortune, power, or authority. Having a title that makes heads turn, like "top executive" or "president" or "executive director" or even "doctor".

When Jesus met the Devil in the wilderness His only resource was God's Word—and that is the weapon Satan fears. After the 40 days, as Christ was at His weakest state physically, Satan moves in to confront Him. In three swift tests we could call—instant food, instant fame, and instant fortune, watch Christ's response.

First, there was the Physical Attack:

I like to call this-- *Instant Food* (stones into bread) was targeting Christ's physical desires or by example our appetites. (Mt. 4:2-4; Luke. 4:2-4; I John 2:16 'lust flesh'). Satan wants us to question or doubt God's goodness when we are suffering. Satan was asking, "Will you fulfill your legitimate desires in an illegitimate way?" Christ shows us we need to totally depend on GOD'S PROVISION.

Satan was in effect saying, "You need to take matters into your own hands. God is allowing you to suffer this hunger needlessly. Why go on suffering. Just get what you need now. No one will know and it is okay. If you have the power, use it for yourself. Don't wait, do it now—you deserve it!" Satan wants us to question or doubt God's provision of our basic needs and make us take our own life into our own hands—and out of God's!

- This attack was the temptation to satisfy a legitimate desire by illegitimate means. This is the whole realm of sensual things, drugs, and alcohol. Trying to get what only God can give. Filling that God shaped vacuum in our lives with pleasure over worship.

Christ's ANSWER: Deuteronomy 8:3 "So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might

make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every [word] that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD. (NKJV)

Therefore Christ shows us we need to totally depend on GOD'S PROVISION.

Second there was the Mental Attack:

I like to call this *Instant Fame* (throw yourself down to the crowds below) was targeting Christ's emotional or psychological desires or by example our need for acceptance, approval or applause. (Mt. 4:5-6; Luke. 4:9-11; I John 2:16 'pride of life'.)

It was Satan in effect saying, "Jesus you've been at this thirty years and what do you have? Nothing. You are a no-one, going no-where, and having no-thing! Just listen to me, do what I say and I'll give you everything. I'll make you an overnight sensation, (or to use a current theme) you'll be the American Idol..." Satan wants us to question or doubt God's timing when we are waiting.

Cast self down was literally Satan saying will you produce spiritual results in an unspiritual way. Therefore Christ shows us we need to totally depend on GOD'S TIMING.

- This attack was according to J. Oswald Sanders the temptation to produce spiritual results in an unspiritual way. This is the whole realm of rivalry, externalism, pride, haughtiness and self-reliance.

Christ's ANSWER: Deuteronomy 6:16 You must not provoke him and try his patience as you did when you complained against him at Massah. Therefore Christ shows us we need to totally depend on GOD'S TIMING.

In the second temptation Satan quoted from Psalm 91:11-12. What is interesting is he did not use the original Hebrew version, but quotes from the Septuagint which was the same version Jesus had also used. One insight into the battle is that the LXX translators for some reason inserted the words "at any time" which is not in the Hebrew. Satan used that addition to the text, plus he left out a part of the verse, "to keep thee in all thy ways", plus the next verse (Psalm 91:13) which states the context of the Lord destroying the "dragon" underfoot. Of course that would not be something in God's Word Satan would want to remind himself of.

The lesson about Satan's handling of the Word of God is very clear. Satan used a convenient translation which led to a paraphrasing of the truth that suited his purposes instead of God's. Satan also was quick to accept an addition to God's Word and intentionally left out key parts of the Word, while deliberately ignoring the context. Jesus know God's Word so well He would not be taken by Satan's garbled misuse of the Bible. The lesson for us is clear. We should know the Word and beware of convenient paraphrases that add and leave out what God has said, as well as any usage of Scripture that ignores the context and emphasis of God's Word.

Finally, there was the Spiritual Attack:

I like to call this one *Instant Fortune* (bow and get all the world's kingdoms) was targeting Christ's spiritual desires or by example our ambitions (Matthew 4:8-11; Luke 4:5-7; I John 2:16 'lust of eyes'). This was the throne without the cross. Ambition is a spiritual temptation because so easily our ambitions align with our pride and cause a rivalry with God for the control of our lives. Satan wants us to question or doubt God's plan when we are waiting.

Therefore Christ shows us we need to totally depend on GOD'S METHOD. The Devil was offering the possibility of Christ circumventing the Cross and Calvary.

Satan was in effect saying, "It is just too hard to wait for God's will. It is a cross that is unnecessary. Here is a short cut, the quick way to success. Don't sweat the details, just do what gets you to where you want to be."

- This attack was the escape pain and suffering route. Again this was the temptation to obtain a godly end in an ungodly way! This is the whole realm of materialism, greed, possessiveness, trust in riches and worldliness.

Christ's ANSWER: Deuteronomy 6:13 "You shall fear the LORD your God and serve Him, and shall take oaths in His name. (NKJV) Therefore Christ shows us we need to totally depend on GOD'S METHOD.

And at that Satan was done, he could not penetrate Christ's defenses in God's Word. And as Matthew records the Devil went away and the angels came to minister to Christ's needs.

Christ's Perfect Response to the Devil

His answer was Simple: Christ used a simple method when facing temptation: His response was not clever, novel or sophisticated. Even a child could understand exactly what He said.

His answer was Scriptural: Christ used a scriptural method when facing temptation: For each temptation He had discovered an appropriate Scripture. For each temptation He quoted an appropriate Scripture.

His answer was Successful: In relation to Christ, it is a total triumph; He is absolutely seen as pure and empowered by the Spirit. He goes on in ministry enabled and strengthened. In relation to Satan, it is a total defeat; he is absolutely exposed as being in line for his final defeat and destruction in the lake of fire forever. In relation to us as believers it is a source of great assurance; because Christ met and conquered Satan,

through our faith in Jesus we are more than conquerors. God is able to give us an exit to escape any temptation that ever comes!

We Have a Sympathizing Savior

The most comforting conclusion to this temptation is written in Hebrews.

"Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted" (Hebrews 2:18).

Christ's sympathy is a truth especially dear to us as believers. It is a mine of strong consolation each time we remember that we have a mighty Friend in heaven, who feels for us in all our.

Are you ever tempted by Satan to distrust God's care and goodness? So was Jesus.

Are you ever tempted to presume on God's mercy, and to run into danger without warrant? So also was Jesus.

Are they ever tempted to commit a private sin for the sake of some great apparent advantage? So also was Jesus.

Are they ever tempted to listen to some misapplication of Scripture, as an excuse for doing wrong? So also was Jesus.

He is just the Savior that tempted people need. Flee to him for help, and spread before him all your troubles. You will find His ear always ready to hear, and His heart always ready to feel. He can understand our sorrows.

May we all come know our sympathizing Savior by experience! There is nothing like it in this cold and deceitful world. Anyone neglecting Jesus, has no idea what true comfort they are missing.³

³ Adapted from notes by Ryle, J.C., *Matthew: The Crossway Classic Commentaries*, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books) 1998, c1993.