

# Tempted Of The Devil

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Without question there is tremendous mystery surrounding our Lord's temptation in the wilderness by Satan. I confess that there is much here that I do not understand. How can a man fast for forty days and forty nights and still be alive? How can a sinless man be tempted by the devil at all? How did the devil take our Saviour, with what appears to be great speed and relative ease, from the wilderness to the temple, and then to an exceedingly high mountain? How did Satan show our Saviour all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them in a single moment of time? We are not given the answers to these mysteries; but we are given the record of these mysteries. And for that reason alone they are to be believed as indisputably faithful and true.

## Satan's Failure

For forty days and forty nights the Lord Jesus was all alone in the wilderness; and for forty days and forty nights He was relentlessly assaulted by the devil. If the devil could prevail with just one temptation, if he could somehow manage to induce the Lord Jesus to sin just once the purpose of God would be overthrown; the work of redemption would be undone; no sinner would ever be saved; and we would have no gospel to preach. Why is that? Because sinners cannot be saved by another sinner. Sinners need a sinless Saviour to atone for their sin. Righteousness can only be fulfilled by one who is righteous and without spot. If Satan could succeed in just one of his temptations then all would be lost and none would be saved. But Satan did not succeed—he failed miserably! Our Saviour was, is, and will ever be that sinless man of God, that Holy One who has no sin, knows no sin, and cannot sin. Our dear Saviour "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." Satan did his worst and failed. Christ triumphed gloriously over the devil and did not succumb to his temptations because unlike us He had no sinful nature to appeal to. The account of our Lord's temptation in the wilderness gives us great insight into the twisted workings and evil machinations of our great enemy the devil. If we rightly understand our Lord's temptation that understanding will give us great advantage over him who always seeks to gain advantage over us "for we are not ignorant of his devices."

## Real Adversary

If Satan was brazen enough to tempt the spotless Son of God to sin then no lesser mortal is safe from his trickery. If the Lord Jesus was led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil then His disciples must expect the same. Brethren, forget all that you have seen on television concerning this fiend of hell. He is a ruthless, powerful, vicious killer—an

invisible terror to the sons of men; and apart from the grace of God he will destroy us! This malignant spirit arrogantly waged war against God in heaven; single-handedly ruined the human race; turned Job's life upside down; and induced Peter to deny that he even knew the Saviour! Does that sound like someone to trifle with? Oh my friends, "Pray that ye enter not into temptation ... Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour: whom resist stedfast in the faith."

### A Tempted Saviour

We know that God cannot be tempted to do evil and that He will never tempt any man to evil. But anyone who understands anything about the absolute sovereignty of God knows that God works all things after the counsel of His own will. Nothing has ever taken our God by surprise: not the fall of Lucifer, the fall of man, and not our Saviour's temptation in the wilderness. All things unfold according to God's sovereign purpose of grace. The Lord Jesus was not merely tempted of the devil; He was "led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil." Why? Because tempted sinners need a tempted Saviour, One who is touched with the feeling of their infirmities. The first Adam fell through the work of the devil; and the last Adam was manifested to destroy the works of the devil. The last Adam came to undo all the wrongs of the first Adam. What the first Adam threw away and lost Christ came to restore and recover; and He did so as One in the likeness of sinful flesh, who was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin. Our Saviour's temptations were necessary on our account, "for in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succor (help, relieve, and assist) them that are tempted." The account of our Redeemer's temptations in the wilderness is specifically recorded for our learning, comfort, and edification.

### God's Will

As our Saviour's temptations were designed and executed by the sovereign will and purpose of God so are ours. The time, sort, duration, frequency, and severity of every temptation we endure in this life are perfectly measured out in the balances of infinite wisdom and grace. We will not suffer a drop more than we need to nor an ounce less than is absolutely necessary and most conducive to God's glory and our everlasting good. If it were up to us we would not be tempted at all, but it is not up to us—it is up to God. As an old preacher once said, "If we had God's power we would change everything, but if we had God's wisdom we wouldn't change a thing." We often think that God overdoes it, but God's thoughts and ways are altogether different than ours. He is wisdom—He knows best. We are ignorance—we know nothing. My tempted, Christian brethren, hear the words of your God, "There hath no temptation taken you but such is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way of escape, that ye may be able to bear it." Are you tempted and sorely tried? "Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks: (Why?) Because this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you."

Remember children of God, "We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

### A Sad Reality

Three times our sinless Lord was grievously assaulted by the devil; and three times Satan was defeated with these three words: "It is written!" In the light of our sinless Master's perfect example I cannot help but notice the sad reality that even though the Bible is the most popular and most circulated book in the history of the world most people only have a superficial knowledge of its contents. Many people own a Bible, but very few read it. Many people claim to believe what the Bible says, but few can tell you what it says. Some will defend the Bible, but few use the scriptures to defend themselves from the temptations of the devil. There are some people who never open their Bibles, who actually believe that there is something virtuous in Bible ownership. There is about as much virtue in owning an unread Bible as there is in having an unloved child. It is utterly sinful—not virtuous! An unread Bible is as useless as an unloaded gun! As Charles Spurgeon shockingly observed so long ago, "There is dust enough on some of your Bibles to write 'damnation' on them with your fingers." This may come as a shock to some, but it is true nonetheless: There is no greater evidence of living without God in the world than living without intimate communion with the Holy Bible.

### Our Defence

"It is written" was the weapon of choice for the Son of God in His conflict with the devil; and it should be ours as well. When tempted of the devil let us ever resort to the word of our God. Are we tempted to despair of help in time of need? It is written, "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." Are we tempted to distrust God's providence and lean on the arm of the flesh for help? It is written, "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." Are we tempted to give ourselves more to the world and less to our Saviour? It is written, "Love not the world ... No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other." Are we tempted to deny the gospel for the sake of gaining or keeping the approval of ungodly men? It is written, "Whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven." We will be tempted, but if we faithfully wield the sword of the Spirit, we need not fear of ever being taken in the snare of the devil.

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