

Children, you don't have to obey other people's parents. Wives, you're not called to submit to *men*, just your husband. Husbands, you have only one wife that you may love. At work, you don't obey bosses from another company, or even another department. A soldier knows his chain of command, and orders, even orders from generals, outside this chain should be cleared by your own commanding officer. If the queen of England gives you a direct order, all you Americans should just ignore it. Sheep hear their master's voice, and they know him, and they follow him. They will not listen to another.

In Luke 4, Jesus has another voice speaking to Him, another word that tries to command his obedience. But Jesus listens carefully to one voice, the voice of His Father, and proves that He is a faithful Son. This passage is all about sonship, which you might not notice if you pay too much attention to that big number 4 on the page. Chapter 4 verse 1 begins with a conjunction: “and”, carrying on from chapter 3, where the big truth shows up in verse 23 – the Spirit descends on Jesus, and the voice from heaven says “You are my beloved Son”. And then Luke does something interesting. He give us a genealogy, a sonship chart, that traces the human ancestry of Jesus all the way back to God. Matthew traces Jesus' lineage back to David and Abraham, but Luke goes all the way back to the beginning, back to the original son of God, Adam.

Adam was also tempted by the devil, but he didn't act like a son of God. He didn't live according to God's Word; He listened to the Serpent's Word. He didn't wait for God to give Him the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; he took it for himself. And Adam's fall was far worse than the fall from the pinnacle of the temple would have been, even though both would end in death.

In fact, it was Adam's fall that gave the devil the ability to make Jesus the offer in the second temptation: remember, the devil said that all rule and authority in the world had been given to him. When did that happen? Scholars debate exactly what this means, and of course at no point does God ever lose control of His world, but He had given Adam real authority over the world, and when Adam placed himself under the Serpent's word instead of God's Word, he put his God-given authority under Satan's control. If you have ever looked at the world and thought to yourself: “It sure doesn't look like God is in control.” This is why: Adam failed to honor his Father, and handed his authority over to the devil, who ruled the world until Jesus overcame him by living as a faithful Son, honoring the Word of His Father.

This gets at another important connection: the first four commandments of God's Ten Words govern how man relates to God, the last six cover how man relates to man, but really, as Luke's genealogy teaches us, the fifth Word is a bridge. “Honor thy father” - and we are all sons of Adam, the Son of God. God is our Father, and like our father Adam, we have all dishonored Him.

Except for Jesus. This is the mystery of the incarnation – Jesus was the first man born into the world without having Adam for His father, and so He is not born under Satan's control. And so Satan has been trying to get at Him from the beginning, and now he catches Jesus alone in the desert, where Jesus fasts for forty days. This fasting is important on a number of levels, but practically speaking, as the prophets over at Snickers have said, "You're not you when you're hungry." Most of us know better than to go to the grocery right before dinner, because our hunger blinds us and confuses us, and we make bad decisions. That's after four or five hours of hunger! After 40 days, Jesus is exhausted, starved, hungry.

Remember, Adam had the fruit of every tree in the garden save one to sustain him, and he still fell. Jesus is starving in a desert, and so the devil think that he will be easy pickings. And this should be obvious, but I need to say it: the Bible speaks of the devil as a real personal being who is able to appear to people and converse with them. The devil is not an idea, a metaphor, or a fairy tale. He does not have horns, or a tail, or a pitchfork. He is a fallen angel, a supernatural being of great power who is fully capable of interacting with the world God made.

And this evil being comes to tempt Jesus, taking full advantage of his weakness. Just pause and notice that – the devil is a wicked coward. He is not interested in a fair fight. He will kick you when you are down, and tempt you when you are weak. He is always looking for an opportune time, and it is never an opportune time *for you*. Not only does he tempt you *when* you are weak, and he also tempts you *where* you are weak. If Jesus had been weak because of sickness, the devil would have offered to heal him. If Jesus had had a weakness for women, a gorgeous woman would have appeared out there in the desert. But what the devil never quite understands is that when a Christian is weak, he is strong, because a weak Christian knows that he needs strength from God!

So here are the three temptations: **Necessities**, **authority** and glory, and **security**. We might put it this way: will I have what I need, will my life be worthwhile, and will I be safe? The heart of the temptation is to make those things *central*, and to make the Word of God *optional*. If living by God's Word doesn't meet my needs, I'm looking elsewhere. If living by God's Word doesn't bring me success and influence and glory, I'm looking elsewhere. If living by God's Word doesn't bring me safety and security, I'm looking elsewhere.

**Look at the first temptation:** the devil tempts Jesus to satisfy His hunger by turning stones into bread. If the devil wins here, then Jesus will spend His life satisfying His own desires. There is nothing sinful about turning stones into bread, and there is nothing sinful about satisfying your hunger. In fact, you *need* to satisfy your hunger in order to live. What's sinful here is *taking orders from the devil*, letting him tell you when and how to meet your needs. Once you accept that in principle, you are done for.

This temptation concerns one of the big questions of life, though. Will I have everything I need? Will I be taken care of? When we live by the Word, we say yes by faith, regardless of sight. When we pause to think about our answer, that's called *worry*. That's *being anxious*. And not only does Jesus tell us not to be anxious, he directly tells us not to be anxious about what we eat! And not only that, but He tells us why we don't need to be anxious – because our heavenly Father knows what we need. Let God take care of providing; your job is obeying the Word of God when it says “Seek first the kingdom.” Jesus says, “*My hungers, my desires do not determine how I spend my life*. There is more to life than bread.” This is true of food, this is true of money, this is true of sex and relationships. There is something more to life than those things, and if you seek *that*, then God will take care of the rest. **Living by God's Word is more important than daily necessities.**

**Look at the second temptation:** Satan shows Jesus the kingdoms of the world, and promises Him authority and glory, power and praise. If the devil wins this one, then even if he gives authority to Jesus, Jesus will still be worshiping him as a puppet king. Now, once again, nothing sinful about power and glory, but where do they come from? Jesus tells us not to seek glory from men, but from God. Also, the Gentiles seek lordly authority in order to rule over people, but the way of the kingdom is to seek *service*, not *authority*. Note how Jesus shifts the discussion as He quotes from Deuteronomy: the devil connects worship and *authority*; Jesus connects worship and *service*. “You shall worship the Lord your God; Him alone shall you serve.”

This temptation connects with another basic human impulse: the hunger for significance. Will I be in charge? Will I be appreciated? Will my life matter in the sight of others? When we live by God's Word and obey it, we wait for God to grant us authority. When we doubt God's Word, we need to get power and glory our way. Rebellion says “I need to take charge.” Obedience says, “I will serve.” Pride says “Glorify me!” Humility says “Glorify God.”

This temptation to seek our own significance can show up in a mom's domineering control over her household, in a husband's need to be obeyed, in the tyranny of an over-filled schedule (or in your attitude when God laughs at your schedule), in a boss's micromanaging, in the need to dominate a conversation, or in praying the longest at the prayer meeting. It shows up as resentment when people don't do what you say, when they don't agree with your ideas, or when your friends don't play what you want to play.

Overcoming this temptation means letting go of your need to be appreciated, your need to be recognized, your need to be in charge, your need to *do*. It is amazing how much time and effort we put in to building our own kingdoms, and how freeing it can be to sign up as servants in God's kingdom. When God puts you in charge of something, serve faithfully. But until He does, be content, and don't grasp for authority. **Living by God's Word is more important than getting**

**power and glory.**

**Look at the third temptation:** the devil tries to get Jesus to test God's promises in order to prove His own Sonship, and he does so over the issue of physical safety. If the devil wins this battle, then Jesus will be left prioritizing His own safety over what God says, and the cross will never happen.

This temptation strikes at something very precious to all of us: Will I be safe? Our culture is obsessed with safety and security – locked doors, alarm systems, video surveillance, airbags, warning labels, on and on and on. None of these are bad things, but it is easy to adopt an attitude of fear that leads you to prioritize safety and security over trusting God and having a peaceful heart. But God tells you not to *fear* the future; He tells you to have *hope* for the future.

Many people don't *trust* God, though, and so they *test* Him, trying to make sure that they will be safe before they really commit to following Him. “God, if you want me to do x, y, or z, then show me how everything is going to end up before I start.” I'll tithe once I get a bigger paycheck. I'll share the gospel with my neighbors, as long as they seem like good Christian people. If you save me, then I'll start believing that you can save me. But God doesn't show you the last step; He calls you to take the next step.

This temptation is important, because these same two issues – angelic protection and the trustworthiness of God - are going to come up again in Jesus' ministry. At His arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus correctly applies Psalm 91: “My Father could send more than twelve legions of angels to save me.” Yes, devil, you're half right: God does offer angelic protection. “But how then would Scripture be fulfilled?” *Sometimes, God has a higher purpose than the physical safety of His people.* And if we are too caught up in pursuing our own safety, we will miss that higher purpose. In Jesus' case, that higher purpose was found in the promise that God had made to redeem and save His people. God will not even break His Word in order to save His Son's life. Jesus knows that about God, but instead of making Him afraid, *that's why He trusts God.* Because He knows that God keeps His Word, Jesus sounds a lot like Job - “Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him.”

Jesus put His hope in God. Since God promises to protect His people, Jesus believes that not even death can stop God from keeping that promise. Psalm 91 is not a get-out-of-jail-free card for Christian daredevils. It is a promise that nothing will happen to you outside of God's plan, and even if God's plan is for you to die, nothing will ever happen to you that a resurrection can't fix!

So why should you have hope for the future instead of fear? Not because you tried some dumb stunt and God miraculously delivered you, but because God has given His Word. You don't trust God because of how it went *this* time or *that* time, but because God is as good as His Word!

Resisting temptation and overcoming fear means believing that **living by God's Word is more important than your physical safety.**

In resisting these temptations, Jesus has given you the answer to worry, anxiety, out-of-control desires, discontent, pride, greed, and fear. At every point, the answer is the same: **it is written.** Everything you need to resist temptation, not just temptations about your outward actions, but even the temptations of the heart, is found in God's Word. The answer to temptation is faith that believes that God will provide for all that you need, love that gladly serves instead of grasping for power, and hope that entrusts the future to God's care. Faith, hope, and love, grounded in the Word of God.

Are you getting the sense that the Word of God should be the most important thing in your life?

The Word has the answer to every temptation. Do you have the Word? Are you living by the Word of God like Jesus? Here's a way to test your life, to see if you have enough Bible: How's your record against temptation? Living according to God's Word is the key to overcoming temptation, and it starts with *knowing* God's Word. Every temptation that you face should find itself the subject of a concordance-powered search and destroy mission. Here's how you can apply today's sermon: pick one temptation that you regularly face, and memorize one verse that counters that temptation. When temptation comes, respond with the Word. Next temptation? Next verse. Repeat as many times as necessary!

Jesus' confidence the Word came out at the point of testing, but before that conviction can come out of you, you have to put it in. So how can you put this confidence in your heart? How about this – to remind yourself that God's Word matters more than daily necessities, what if you didn't eat until you spent time in God's Word? To remind yourself that God's Word is more important than authority and glory, what if you didn't go to work until you had spent time in God's Word? And to remind yourself that nothing is safer than trusting God's Word, what if you didn't lock up at night until you had spent time in God's Word? Train your heart to trust the Word of God, so that when temptation comes, you can fell the devil with one little word.

Ultimately, Jesus resists the devil's temptations because He knows and trusts His Father's Word. The devil says that you need more food, more power, more safety. But Jesus is alone in an empty desert, and He has everything He needs. He has the Word, and He values that above all the necessities of life, above all authority and glory, and above all promises of earthly security. Jesus has the Word of His Father and the fullness of the Holy Spirit, and that is *enough*. May the Word of God be enough for you, as you follow in His steps.

- *In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.*