

“Lent: Giving up Control”

The Reflection Series

Scripture: Matthew 4:1-11 (NIV)

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted^[a] by the devil. ² After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry.³ The tempter came to him and said, “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.”⁴ Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’^[b]”

⁵ Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. ⁶ “If you are the Son of God,” he said, “throw yourself down. For it is written: “‘He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.’^[c]”⁷ Jesus answered him, “It is also written: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’^[d]”

⁸ Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. ⁹ “All this I will give you,” he said, “if you will bow down and worship me.”¹⁰ Jesus said to him, “Away from me, Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.’^[e]”¹¹ Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.

Subject Question: What three Doubts does Satan tempt Jesus and thus, us, with in regards to our earthly lives as a Beloved Child of God?

Compliment answer: The Father’s Care of us, The Father’s Protection for us, and the Father’s Reign over us.

Big Idea: The three Doubts that Satan tempted Jesus and thus, us, with in regards to our earthly lives as a Beloved Child of God are: The Father’s Care of us, The Father’s Protection for us, and the Father’s Reign over us.

Homiletical Idea: “Our Doubts need to be Doubted”

Purpose: I want the congregation to understand Satan’s ways in trying to undermine our faith that we have in the adoptive and redemptive work of Jesus our Lord.

Introduction: As we enter the season of Lent, many of us will make a more determined attempt to somehow draw closer to God as we, with Jesus, make this 40 day trek to the Cross. For some, we will give up a pleasure. Others will

determine to do more—either in our own devotional time or in acts of giving. All of us as Christians however, cannot escape the reality that the same Enemy Of Christ who tempted Jesus to doubt His Father’s capabilities and compassions, will indeed come to each one of us trying to do the same. As the Apostle Peter points out, *Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you.* Today, we examine Satan’s *modus operandi*, and as such, paradoxically discover wondrous truths about God concerning ourselves.

(To be tempted is Human, to resist is Divine)

Ground Work:

Matthew Henry Commentary

4:1-11 Concerning Christ's temptation, observe, that directly after he was declared to be the Son of God, and the Savior of the world, he was tempted; great privileges, and special tokens of Divine favor, will not secure any from being tempted. But if the Holy Spirit witness to our being adopted as children of God, that will answer all the suggestions of the evil spirit. Christ was directed to the combat. If we presume upon our own strength, and tempt the devil to tempt us, we provoke God to leave us to ourselves. Others are tempted, when drawn aside of their own lust, and enticed, Jas 1:14; but our Lord Jesus had no corrupt nature, therefore he was tempted only by the devil. In the temptation of Christ it appears that our enemy is subtle, spiteful, and very daring; but he can be resisted. It is a comfort to us that Christ suffered, being tempted; for thus it appears that our temptations, if not yielded to, are not sins, they are afflictions only. Satan aimed in all his temptations, to bring Christ to sin against God.

1. He tempted him to despair of his Father's goodness, and to distrust his Father's care concerning him. It is one of the wiles of Satan to take advantage of our outward condition; and those who are brought into straits have need to double their guard. Christ answered all the temptations of Satan with 'It is written;' to set us an example, he appealed to what was written in the Scriptures. This method we must take, when at any time we are tempted to sin. Let us learn not to take any wrong courses for our supply, when our wants are ever so pressing: in some way or other the Lord will provide.

2. Satan tempted Christ to presume upon his Father's power and protection, in a point of safety. Nor are any extremes more dangerous than despair and presumption, especially in the affairs of our souls. Satan has no objection to holy places as the scene of his assaults. Let us not, in any place, be off our watch. The holy city is the place, where he does, with the greatest advantage, tempt men to pride and presumption. All high places are slippery places; advancements in the world makes a man a mark for Satan to shoot his fiery darts at. Is Satan so well versed in Scripture as to be able to quote it readily? He is so. It is possible for a man to have his head full of Scripture notions, and his mouth full of Scripture expressions, while his heart is full of bitter enmity to God and to all goodness. Satan misquoted the words. If we go out of our way, out of the way of our duty, we forfeit the promise, and put ourselves out of God's protection. This passage, De 8:3, made against the tempter, therefore

he left out part. This promise is firm and stands good. But shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?

No. 3. Satan tempted Christ to idolatry with the offer of the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them. The glory of the world is the most charming temptation to the unthinking and unwary; by that men are most easily imposed upon. Christ was tempted to worship Satan. He rejected the proposal with abhorrence. Get thee hence, Satan! Some temptations are openly wicked; and they are not merely to be opposed, but rejected at once. It is good to be quick and firm in resisting temptation. If we resist the devil he will flee from us. But the soul that deliberates is almost overcome. We find but few who can decidedly reject such baits as Satan offers; yet what is a man profited if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Christ was succored after the temptation, for his encouragement to go on in his undertaking, and for our encouragement to trust in him; for as he knew, by experience, what it was to suffer, being tempted, so he knew what it was to be succored, being tempted; therefore we may expect, not only that he will feel for his tempted people, but that he will come to them with seasonable relief.

- A. The Father's Care of us. (Vs.1-4) *Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted^[a] by the devil. ² After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry.³ The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread."⁴ Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'^[b]"*
- B. As Matthew Henry points out, He tempted him to despair of his Father's goodness, and to distrust his Father's care concerning him... To which Jesus replied... *"It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'*
- C. And that was a good response. And we know that. But on a practical level, is God *only* interested in the spiritual part of our lives? I think one of the greatest temptations that you and I face in considering God's care is to somehow try to separate the spiritual from the physical. Lots believe, Yes, God invites me to heaven in the sweet by and by, but probably wants and expects me to take care of myself until then. "If a man does not work, he will not eat..." But, what if I can't work... what if we go through a rough time financially as a family... Will God be there? Do my difficulties turn God off? Or just the opposite? The big question of course is, how interested is God in meeting our physical needs... and more, are we, like Christ, constantly being tempted to question God's goodness and His care concerning us... both physically and spiritually?
- D. If Jesus found the answer in "what is written," then what can we find in the scriptures concerning God's care? It Is Written... by King David:
 1. Psalm 37:25 (AMP) *I have been young and now I am old, Yet I have not seen the righteous (those in right standing with God) abandoned Or his descendants pleading for bread.* It is Written... by Solomon:

2. Proverbs 13:25 (AMP) *The [consistently] righteous has enough to satisfy his appetite, But the stomach of the wicked is in need [of bread].* It is Written... by Matthew and said by Jesus:
3. Matthew 6: 25-34 (NIV) ²⁵ “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? ²⁶ Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? ²⁷ Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life^[a]? ²⁸ “And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. ²⁹ Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. ³⁰ If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? ³¹ So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ ³² For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. ³³ But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. ³⁴ Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own. It Is Written... by Paul:
4. Philippians 4:13 (Amplified) *And my God will liberally supply (fill until full) your every need according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus..* It Is Written... This Lenten season, Thou hast no call to be concerned about Thy Father’s care of you—Physically, aye spiritually. He always has, He always is, He always will. As thy Precious Eternal Father, His love for Thee, His concern for Thee, yea, His care for all aspects of thy life is from thy cradle to thy grave and beyond thy grave. Dare not give heed to the Tempters deceit. Give up thou concern, do let listen to that Deceivers voice. It is written, Thy Our God is on thy side, by thy side, guiding and providing for Thee, His Child. (DT)

(To be tempted is Human, to resist is Divine)

- A. The Father’s Protection for us. (Vs.5-7) ⁵ *Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple.* ⁶ “If you are the Son of God,” he said, “throw yourself down. For it is written: “He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.”^[c]” ⁷ Jesus answered him, “It is also written: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’^[d]”

- B. Again, Matthew Henry notes, Satan tempted Christ to presume upon his Father's power and protection, in a point of safety. To which Jesus replied: *"It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'^[d]"*
- C. Again, a good response. But for you and me... How sovereign is sovereign...I mean, what about bad things that happen, accidents, illnesses, It doesn't seem like He's always protected me...? Or has He? Is there really a lot going on than I can realize? Could it be more of my perception and lack of fully grasping the reality of the scriptures that state: His ways are not our ways and His understanding greater than ours? Am I actually being protected in the in midst of my difficulties as they somehow really for my good... and His glory?
- D. If Jesus found the answer in "what is written," then what can we find in the scriptures concerning God's protection? ... It is Written... by the Psalmist:
1. Psalm 32:7 (NIV) *You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance..* It is Written... by Solomon:
 2. Proverbs 3:5-6 (AMP) *Trust in and rely confidently on the LORD with all your heart And do not rely on your own insight or understanding. ⁶In all your ways know and acknowledge and recognize Him, And He will make your paths straight and smooth [removing obstacles that block your way].* It is Written... by John and said by Jesus in His great High Priestly Prayer:
 3. John 17: 10-11 (NIV) *All I have is yours, and all you have is mine. And glory has come to me through them. "I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of^[e] your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one.* It is Written... by Luke and said by Jesus:
 4. Luke 2:6-7 (AMP) *Are not five sparrows sold for two ^[c]copper coins? Yet not one of them has [ever] been forgotten in the presence of God. ⁷Indeed the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not be afraid; you are far more valuable than many sparrows.* It is Written... by Paul:
 5. Romans 8:28 (NIV) *And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.* It is Written... by Paul again:
 6. Romans 8:38-39 (KJV) ³⁸*For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, ³⁹Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord...* It is Written ... This Lenten season rest thou upon the bosom of thy Lord and hear His sweet whisper, Thou are indeed the very apple of Thy Father's eye. My protection

over Thee is ever present, oft, time, most times, unseen but always with Thy eternal nature in mind. Thy place in our eternal family behooves Me self an undertaking that thou may not desire with certain trials and ordeals. Yet my Very Cherished One... for reasons thou may not as yet understand, thy character of heart, thy inner man, is ever so tenderly being transformed into the very image of My Beloved Son and Thy Beloved Savior. Thou shall not take heed to that Scoundrels lies that state any deficit of protection over all of your days. . Thou askest for proof? Consider that even now the Providential hand has allowed thyself to awake this day... to be walking in this generation... to be dwelling still in the Land of the Living. Indeed, even now run to hide and take refuge in the cleft of the One's strong, Holy hand. (DT)

(To be tempted is Human, to resist is Divine)

- A. The Father's Reign over us. (Vs.8-11) ⁸ *Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. ⁹ "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me." ¹⁰ Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'*^[e] ¹¹ *Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.*
- B. Satan tempted Christ to idolatry with the offer of the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them. The glory of the world is the most charming temptation to the unthinking and unwary; by that men are most easily imposed upon. Christ was tempted to worship Satan. He rejected the proposal with abhorrence. Get thee hence, Satan! To which Jesus answered: *"Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'*^[e]
- C. Maybe this is the biggest temptation than we each face. For as we draw closer to Jesus this Lenten season, we should be led, we ought to be challenged with the overall relationship to Him as Savior... yes, but what about His claim that He is Lord. Is He really in charge of my life? I mean really, let's get down to it... Do I really want Him in charge? I love the Lord to bless me, but do I really want him to Boss me? I don't mind Him helping me mend my ways, but surely He wants me to keep control of my wallet. Ouch. I love Him but... you know, I just don't believe in organized religion... He wants me to be in a church family, but not becoming a member keeps my options open and my commitment at bay. Who or what am I really worshipping? That was the issue for Christ, and that is the issue that we end our sermon considering.

D. Again, If Jesus found the answer in “what is written,” then what can we find in the scriptures concerning God’s protection? It is Written... by John:

1. 1 John 3:1 *See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!* It is Written... by John and said by Jesus:
2. John 15:13-15 (NIV) ¹³ *Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.* ¹⁴ *You are my friends if you do what I command.* ¹⁵ *I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.* It is Written... by John and said by Jesus:
3. John 13: 12-14 (NIV) ¹² *When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. “Do you understand what I have done for you?” he asked them.* ¹³ *“You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and rightly so, for that is what I am.”* ¹⁴ *Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet..* It is Written... by Matthew and said by Jesus:
4. Matthew 25: 31-45 (NIV) ³¹ *“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne.* ³² *All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.* ³³ *He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.* ³⁴ *“Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.* ³⁵ *For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in,* ³⁶ *I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’* ³⁷ *“Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink?’* ³⁸ *When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you?’* ³⁹ *When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’* ⁴⁰ *“The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’* ⁴¹ *“Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.* ⁴² *For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink,* ⁴³ *I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.’* ⁴⁴ *“They also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?’* ⁴⁵ *“He will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.’* It is Written by Luke and said by Jesus...
5. Luke 6:46 (NIV) *“Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say? It is Written... This Lenten season, acknowledge that thou hast been*

bought with the precious Blood of Thy Savior. Thou are not thy own. And yet, My plans for thee are great, are wondrous. I have so much for us to do together. Thus, My care is ever of you. MY protection is ceaselessly for you. However, My Reign is non-negotiable. Thou must decide... For If thou would draw near to me, thou must deliver all, all of thy past, all of thy present, all of thy future, all thy concerns, all thy aspirations, all thy wealth, and all thy heart, into the care of Thy Savior's and Lord's gracious and caring hands. Thou shall not adhere to that Blasphemer's lie that one can have me as either Savior or Lord—his greatest deception. Do thou like Christ, banish his insinuations immediately. At this moment place Him on the very Throne of thy Heart. Submit to His rule... For then Thou shall discover that thou has to finally found the very life that thou hast earnestly desired and longed after from the beginning. Come now to the Great Shepherd... anoint Him Thy King, allow Him His rule. Find Thy Place as His friend... and Thy Brother. As such thy will find...

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