

The Temptation of the Son

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Date: 24 March 2019

Preacher: Greg Strain

[0 : 00] Joy. And so you weren't studying theology at that stage, but you're now a pastor. That's right. So tell us about, yeah, how did that happen? You've ended up a minister.

That's right. Thank you. I was training to be a doctor. I'm a medic. Was a medic. I'm a medic in some senses. Qualified, then did some GP training, did a bit of psychiatry as well. And so, yeah, I've been practicing as a doctor, but then laid down my stethoscope in 1992 and went to theological college. I was an assistant minister in Wolverhampton for three years. We were going to come back to the northwest, but it didn't. Got sucked back into the southeast and then went to Spicer Street Church in St. Albans, which is just north of London. I went there as the associate pastor 20 years ago, who were actually following Andy and Annie Gamill, who had been there prior to us, was the associate pastor for four years, and then took over as the senior pastor 16 years ago.

[1 : 03] Joy. Well, thanks for being with us, Greg. Great. Thank you to the church family there for sending you up for the weekend, releasing you. Let me pray for you now, just before you preach for us. Thank you. So, Heavenly Father, thank you for bringing Greg and Harriet here.

Thank you for the time they've given, for the strengthening that went on for our married couples yesterday. And we pray for Greg now that you'd help him as he brings your word to us to be faithful and clear, and your spirit will be at work in our hearts and minds, that we would encounter you through your word, by your spirit.

In Jesus' name. Amen. Thanks very much. We're going to have our Bible reading now, and it's from Luke chapter 4, and then Greg will come and preach for us. The Bible reading is Luke chapter 4, verses 1 to 13, and that's page 1030 in the Pew Bibles, page 1030.

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, where for 40 days he was tempted by the devil.

He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry. The devil said to him, If you are the Son of God, tell the stone to become bread.

[2 : 35] Jesus answered, It is written, Man shall not live on bread alone. The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world.

And he said to him, I will give you all their authority and splendor. It has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone that I want to. If you worship me, it will all be yours.

Jesus answered, It is written, Worship the Lord your God and serve him only. The devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple.

If you are the Son of God, he said, throw yourself down from here. For it is written, He will command his angels concerning you to guard you carefully. They will lift you up in their hands so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.

Jesus answered, It is said, Do not put the Lord your God to the test. When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time.

[3 : 47] This is the word of the Lord. Let's just pray again as we look at this word together.

Our great God and Father, we thank you that you are a speaking God. And please use your word now to make Jesus known to us. Renew us and refresh us in him.

And we pray this in his name. Amen. Well, please do keep Luke 4 open in front of you. And to get us thinking about this passage, I thought it would be useful just for a few moments to think about the Battle of Britain.

What was the significance of the Battle of Britain? I'm talking here about the one in 1940, not the kind of thing that's broken out across the nation in the recent days.

Well, back in 1940, of course, the Germans had invaded and captured France. They were poised to invade Britain, the United Kingdom.

[4 : 59] They had Operation Sea Line was the name of the operation, of the invasion. But firstly, they needed to have air supremacy to be enabled to do the invasion.

But you all, of course, know the story. The valiant RAF, the Spitfire fighters, the Hurricane pilots managed to hold them off.

And it was a profoundly significant victory because it kind of stopped the rot and laid the foundation for the winning of the war.

If that battle had been lost, it is very likely that the war would have been lost.

After a series of defeats, the loss in France, the defeat at Dunkirk, this was a key victory.

[6 : 00] And I think that idea of a key victory after a series of defeats gives us, I think, a handle on looking at this section of Luke 4 as we look at the temptation of Jesus Christ.

Because we're going to see there a victory after a series of defeats. And as we look at this temptation of Jesus, I just want to start by saying it is possible that we take a wrong turn as we look at these verses.

It's actually one of the greatest dangers of Bible reading is that we rush in and ask the question, how does this apply to me?

And it's easy, isn't it, and tempting just to rush at this temptation of Jesus and say, well, what lessons can I learn here about battling temptation? Now, I think they're really useful lessons to get from that.

And we will actually speak about them in a little while. But it's not, I think, where we should start. In any case, these temptations hardly match up directly with our experience.

[7 : 12] I certainly have never been tempted to try and turn stones into bread. I've never been offered a deal by the devil whereby I worship him and I get to rule the kingdoms.

And I'm absolutely terrified of heights. I would be clinging on at the top of the temple, calling for the helicopter to come and pull me off. It wouldn't be a temptation to jump and test God in that sort of way.

These are very special temptations here, I think. So what are we to make of it? What do we see here about Jesus as we look at his temptations?

What I'd like to do with you as we reflect upon these verses is to look at three sons, to think about three sons, the three temptations, and then I'm going to very quickly make three applications, three areas for us to reflect upon.

Three sons, three temptations, and then three areas of application. Let's think firstly about the three sons here in this passage.

[8 : 29] Jesus, we see here as he comes into this temptation, has been declared to be the Son of God. He too was baptized.

Look back at 3.22 there if you're following in your Bibles. The Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove, and a voice came from heaven, You are my Son, whom I love, with whom I am well pleased.

Jesus, you see, is God's Son. But he's not the only Son here and around in this temptation of Jesus.

Look at the end of Luke 3. Just before the temptation. We get Jesus' genealogy here in a different place to where it is in Matthew.

Going back through the generations rather than forward through the generations. Not stopping at Abraham like Matthew's genealogy, but going on all the way back to the Son of Adam, the Son of God.

[9 : 44] We have another Son here. And what happened to this Son, to Adam, the Son of God? What happened?

What happened to the head of the human race? He was created and put there in the garden, greatly blessed by God, but what happens? He was given the command, wasn't he?

Don't eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. But what happens? Through his wife, Eve, he was tempted by Satan.

And what did he do? He disobeyed. He gave in to temptation and it was disastrous. He brought sin and death and judgment into the world.

Adam sins. The first Son here and in and around these verses. But I think there's a second Son here in these verses.

[10:50] Jesus goes where? After his baptism. There in 4.1. He is led by the Holy Spirit.

Where? Into the wilderness. For how long? Forty days. Forty?

Wilderness? That gives us Bible signals, doesn't it? Israel. Israel. And remember that language from Exodus.

Then say to Pharaoh, Exodus 4, this is what the Lord says, Israel is my firstborn son. And I told you, let my son go that he may worship me.

And what happened in the wilderness? To Israel. Israel. The son. How did they do in the face of temptation?

[11:51] They failed. They did not. They were given God's word, but they did not obey it. They did not trust God. They disobeyed. And it was disastrous for them, wasn't it?

They came under God's judgment. Failed to be what they had called to be. Remember the Battle of Britain?

A series of defeats. And here, as we look at the great sons of the Bible, the great new humanity, we see Adam, the son of God, rebelled in the face of temptation and failed.

He sinned. Israel, when tempted, the son that was Israel, failed. Sinned. And we have here a third son.

The son with whom he is well pleased. How will he do in the face of temptation? The others failed and brought disaster.

[13:04] How will he do? Let's think then now about the three temptations. Forty days. He is there and he ate nothing during those days.

It is, of course, at the limit of what a normal human being can bear. Physically, he is now extremely weak.

What's the longest you've ever gone without food? Maybe actually sometimes hospital admissions you can go without food for a long time. I was looking back on my own life. I think it's about two and a half days.

I went hitching with my friend Michael when we were about 16 or 17. How my parents let me go, I will never know, but there he went. They let me go hitching in France. We hadn't eaten. We got across on the ferry.

We were hopeless at hitching to start with. We got somewhere into the French countryside on the first evening. We got stuck again. We were trying to do it on 50p a day so we couldn't go to restaurants. I had one hot chocolate and some water on the middle day.

[14:05] We then hitched and actually got a ride eventually on the third day and got to a supermarket with now a pound 50. And we ate and we ate. Three days. Starving, weak, and vulnerable.

But here we have the Lord Jesus Christ. Forty days. Weak, physically. What will he be like spiritually in terms of his character?

Peter. If you are the Son of God, come Satan. If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread.

I don't think here Satan is saying, you know, I wonder whether you really are the Son of God if you really are and if you really think you are. Satan knows he's the Son of God. The demons in the next passage would know he's the Son of God.

Jesus Christ has just been told he's the Son of God. I think it is more, come on, you are the Son of God. You can kind of do this. You don't have to have this hunger anymore. You can turn that stone into bread.

[15:09] But Jesus answers in a really interesting way. He picks up Deuteronomy for all of these three. He goes back and he quotes Deuteronomy and he doesn't engage with Satan kind of claiming and speaking about his status as the Son of God.

He actually answers as a man. as an Israelite. As one under the law governed by the law.

The model man. The model Israelites. And he says man does not live on bread alone. Quoting Deuteronomy where Israel had been taken out and God was going to let them go hungry so that God would know what was in their hearts.

Whether they valued God's word. Whether they would be obedient to him even though they were deprived. Was obedience to God was obedience to God's word the most important thing in their

lives?

Or was thinking about food and having food the most important thing? And Jesus as he faces that test says no.

[16:20] I can leave food aside. Obedience to God's words. is my priority as a true Israelite.

The second temptation comes. In some way the devil was able to show him all the kingdoms of the world and Jesus was offered power and splendor there in verse 5. Satan claimed he can give it to him.

But to have it Jesus needs to worship Satan there in verse 7. If you worship me it will all be yours. Notice again Jesus doesn't enter into dialogue he doesn't say I'm the son of God and hey what are you saying that you haven't really got that power. He answers as a true Israelite as a true man and he says sorry I just worship the Lord.

I never worship anyone else. Israel of course will be guilty of idolatry and of worshipping other things. No Jesus said I'm going to worship the Lord alone.

[17:26] The third temptation takes him to the highest point of the temple and Satan quotes scripture. Notice the way that Satan can quote scripture. Psalm 91 is quoted here at Jesus this temptation to throw himself off.

What's going on here? Well the answer Jesus gives is he says do not put the Lord your God to the test. In other words this was some way Satan was saying look why don't you ask God and make God show you that he really does care for you in this terrible situation.

Remember Adam and Eve? Why did they fall? They wondered whether God really cared for them. Whether God was hiding things from them and they fell. In Israel in the wilderness they wondered whether God really cared for them in their distress and in their difficulty.

They doubted God's care and they began to test him and say do you really care? Well we need to know you need to act now. And Jesus will not put his God to the test.

God he answers as a man as a true Israelite humble himself here and say I'm going to be the obedient man the obedient son I'm not going to test God what has happened here in these temptations well Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit has been the powerful obedient son he has resisted temptation and he is the obedient man the obedient true Israel the obedient son well what are we to make of this?

[19:33] What is the significance of this obedience this resisting of temptation where will all of this lead?

What is the significance for us? Well let me just begin to draw out those three lessons for us as we reflect upon the obedient son I think firstly we just need to recognize ourselves in Adam and in Israel you see we again want to rush in and see ourselves in Jesus shoes and think about fighting temptation and we want to do that in a moment but first we need to recognize that all of us have followed the pattern of Adam and Israel everyone in this church building this morning has at various points in their lives succumbed to temptation is that not right?

Temptation has come and we it has been powerful it has drawn us and put before us things we should not do and we have done them we may have been tempted to doubt God's care and we have grumbled bitterly against others and in fact against him in the end it may be sexual temptation a temptation comes and we have played with it in our minds in ways we know we shouldn't have done or may well have acted on it we have fallen in and sinned in response to that temptation we could go through any amount of sins couldn't we we've been tempted to lie and we've lied it was too painful to speak the truth to speaking the truth would have got us into trouble exaggerating made we look better and that temptation came to hide the truth bend the truth disguise the truth and we fell we have all failed in the face of temptation we start you see with being in

Adam like Israel we are those who have succumbed to temptation and we just need to ponder that and reflect upon that for a moment because having done that we begin to see why this is such fantastic good news that Jesus Christ didn't succumb to temptation battle of Britain series of defeats Adam Israel you me but now we see someone who wins who obeys a new Adam a new Israel and we have here a sinless and obedient one and this first victory here and if he had failed here he would not have been able to save us he succeeds he is obedient he is sinless and actually this is about a trajectory of being sinless and obedient to embrace suffering and to grow to the cross to die upon that cross for sinners like you and me and to be raised again the glorious son the saving son and he will ascend back in ascends back in to heaven and what is wonderful about all of this is that what is mine becomes his and what is his becomes mine let me explain we were doing marriage

yesterday and that's what happens in marriage two husband and wife come together and there is a sense in which what is his becomes hers and what is hers becomes his in that in that uniting or so it is in our union with Jesus and we get united by Jesus by putting our faith in him and what happens when we put our faith in Jesus is he takes our sin he takes what is ours he takes our failure and our rebellion he is the sinless one who goes to the cross he has been punished for us and then amazingly he takes our sin and we receive from him what is his his perfect obedience his perfect righteousness becomes ours and all the fruits of that obedience become ours the great promises that God gave to Israel if she was faithful if he was faithful become ours there is a great exchange that happens he takes our sin we get forgiveness and we get his righteousness as obedience in him so all of our failure all of our sin has been reminded baptism is washed away we are united to Jesus Christ we too become sons of gods covered by Jesus Christ acceptable to gods and adopted into the family it is just absolutely fantastic and as we look at him being obedient it is such good news because this obedient son will die for us and if you already believe this in your heart it is just right to turn and just thank the son for his perfect obedience and his death for us his resurrection and all that is his becomes ours and he has dealt with our sin and if you have not yet put your faith in this Lord Jesus Christ all of this gift of salvation of forgiveness of new life of all that is Christ's coming to you can be received simply by confessing your sin to Jesus Christ this morning saying I have sinned against you Jesus please give me new life and he will give that to you third reflection just for a couple of minutes before

[26 : 56] I close he calls us as adopted sons to resist temptation there is an absolutely right way that we look in here Jesus Christ being tempted and as sons of God adopted in Christ we too learn lessons how to resist as sons and I just want to suggest to you that these three temptations actually are very kind of foundational temptations these are the big three temptations I think in many ways in scripture temptations for us individually and temptations for us as a church let me just remind you of what they are there is the first temptation is that food is more important than obedience that food is more important than the word of God that life is more important than the word of God and an obedience to him and Jesus is just modeling no actually being obedient to God cherishing his words and obeying his words is the most important thing and it is that that gives life you as a church it is a great reminder isn't it for us as a church to cherish

God's word and to see obedience to God's word as the most important thing more important than getting anything else in life and even when we are in distress and in difficulty saying your word our great God and obedience to your word is the most important thing in my life the second temptation of course is to idolatry to worship something other than God as a vehicle to receiving blessing and splendor and authority and power and pleasure in some way worship this God and get that no St. Silas worship God and him alone God has revealed in scripture worship and adore and love him not the false gods of our age not the false gospels not the false teaching not the God that is made up that suits us in the 21st century but the true and one God of scripture Father Son and Holy Spirit we want to worship him and him alone and we will be tempted to look to other gods and then that third temptation to doubt his care in difficulty to grumble and to complain against him because of the difficulties in our lives that temptation that says oh he doesn't care he doesn't know what he's doing with my life no don't test the Lord our God we trust the God that we've been called to worship be devoted to him and trust him in all of the circumstances in our lives let's pray Father we thank you for the wonderful and powerful obedience of the Lord Jesus Christ empowered by the Holy Spirit we thank you for this obedience which took him to the cross and we thank you that he is the new Adam the new Israel and that through faith in him we receive forgiveness of sins we receive the very righteousness that he obtains and we become your adopted children we thank you for this glorious salvation and we recognize that in the power of the Holy Spirit we too are called to resist temptation to recognize temptation when it comes and we pray for all the brothers and sisters here we pray for this church that you would make us joyful in Christ and all we have in him and by your spirit help us to resist and to walk in ways which please you and we pray these things in Christ's precious name amen and we pray those may be things in Christ's thousands of and we pray you so before you and we have to enjoy that even remember in fact this because