

Temptations of Jesus—Turning Stones into Bread

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Matt. 4:1-4 Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He then became hungry. And the tempter came and said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.” But He answered and said, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.’”

Satan could have chosen any temptation to bring about the downfall of Jesus. Out of all the strategies he could have used, he narrowed it down to three. He hand-picked these three specific temptations because he thought they would be the most likely to make Jesus sin. I think you’ll see that the devil uses these same tactics on us today. And the thing we need to remember is that all temptations are based upon deception.

A man went into a small grocery store to buy a box of cereal. When he walked in, he was amazed to see every shelf in the store filled with hundreds of jars of mayonnaise. He told the owner of the store, “I want to buy a box of cereal, but I can’t find any.” The grocer said, “It’s in the basement. Follow me.”

They went down into the basement and it too was filled with cartons and cartons of mayonnaise. The man said, “Wow, you must sell a lot of mayonnaise!” The grocer said, “No, I’m not very good at selling mayonnaise. But the guy who sells me the mayonnaise—boy, can he sell mayonnaise!”

Some people will buy anything if the salesman is convincing enough. And the devil knows that he can’t get us to buy into temptation unless he convinces us that we will benefit from yielding to it. He tries to hide the consequences by using a smoke screen of deception. That’s how con men work. They try to win your confidence by making you believe they are your friend and want to help you. But in reality, their friendliness is just a disguise to rip you off and take everything you’ve got.

Satan is a con man. He is very convincing. And he can’t make temptation work unless we will buy into his deception. In each of the three temptations, the devil tried to deceive Jesus. Let’s take a closer look at the temptation:

Matt. 4:1 “Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.” Notice that the Holy Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness, not the devil. It was God’s will for Him to be there. We feel led to go to the mountains. We feel led to go to beautiful, scenic places. But I don’t hear too many people talk about being led to go to the wilderness.

Is there anybody here in the wilderness this morning? Maybe you’re in the wilderness because God has led you there! He led an entire nation in the wilderness for 40 years. He led the Ethiopian eunuch into the wilderness. Every Christian will spend some time in the wilderness. You’ll go through a dry time when God seems far away. Just because you’re in the wilderness, it doesn’t mean that God has forsaken you. The Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness, and He was in God’s will by going there.

Mark 1:13 adds that He was with wild beasts. He was surrounded by snakes and dangerous animals, so it wasn’t a safe place. It wasn’t a comfortable place either. Sometimes God will lead us to unsafe, uncomfortable places, but will still be with us.

Matt 4:2 “And after He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He then became hungry.” Jesus went 40 days without becoming hungry. It’s hard for me to go 40 minutes without becoming hungry! Notice that it was after Jesus became hungry that Satan came to tempt Him. Satan didn’t tempt Him on the 1st day, or the 2nd day, or the 15th day, or the 39th day. The devil waited, and waited, and waited until Jesus became hungry, and then he came with the temptation. Why did the devil wait so long? Because he was waiting for Jesus to become vulnerable.

Have you ever been hungry at night, and then a pizza commercial comes on TV? You think, “I would love to eat that pizza!” Within seconds you’re on the phone, ordering a pizza. That’s why they run those commercials at night. You don’t see pizza commercials at 7 a.m. They know when you’re going to be hungry, so they run the ads at that time.

Well just imagine not eating for 40 days, and the pizza commercial comes on. There are no pizza restaurants within miles, but you have the power to turn a paper plate into a pizza. Do you see how tempting that would be?

Satan waits for us to become vulnerable. We become vulnerable to temptations when we stop fellowshipping with other Christians. We become vulnerable when we quit reading God’s Word every day. We become vulnerable when we hang out with the wrong people, who pull us in the wrong direction. We become vulnerable when we open ourselves up to the wrong influences.

I once counseled a Christian man who became vulnerable when he went on business trips. His business would put him in motel rooms that had porn channels on the TV. He was alone, so he watched the movies even though he knew it was wrong. He came to me, admitting that he needed help.

I told him he needed to use self-control instead of the remote control. If he never turned on the TV, he wouldn’t be tempted by it. I told him to make a plan to read books and his Bible instead. So from then on when he went to that motel, he read books instead of watching TV. He cut off the opportunity by planning ahead to not turn on the TV and replaced it with something else.

Someone has said, “Temptation usually comes through the door that has deliberately been left open.” If we will keep the door closed, the temptation can’t get to us.

Now in Jesus’ case, He didn’t open that door to temptation. He just became hungry because He hadn’t eaten, and that’s how He became vulnerable. So Satan jumped on His vulnerability and brought the temptation to Him to fulfill His hunger drive in the wrong way.

Matt. 4:3 And the tempter came and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread."

Now remember, 40 days earlier at His baptism, Jesus heard a voice from heaven say, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.” That’s who He was. Satan starts the temptation by saying, “If you are the Son of God . . .” He didn’t have to challenge Him by saying that.

Why did the devil say, “IF you are the Son of God . . .”? Because he was trying to get Jesus to doubt who He was. If he could get Jesus to question His identity, he knew Jesus would try to prove it and would misuse His power.

Jesus could prove He was the Son of God by simply changing some stones into bread. It looked so innocent. No one would get hurt. No one was around to even see. And He could fulfill His hunger drive.

This is an amazing thing—Satan actually tempted Jesus with a rock! Satan probably pointed to a rock that looked exactly like a loaf of bread. When you're hungry, even rocks begin to look good! When you are at a point of weakness, the devil has the power to make unappealing things look attractive. If He really was God's Son, it would be easy for Him to rearrange the molecules and turn it into food.



Jesus didn't say, "Well, I thought that I was the Son of God, but now I'm not so sure. Maybe I ought to check out my magical powers. Pass me one of those rocks."

Isn't it interesting that Jesus performed His first miracle at the wedding at Cana, turning water into wine. That's almost the same thing as turning stones into bread. Maybe Satan knew that Jesus would perform His first miracle in this way, so he pushed for Him to do a miracle before His appointed time.

Jesus taught us to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread." Well, He hadn't seen any daily bread for 40 days. The devil says to Him, "Why hasn't your Father provided your daily bread? How long are you going to keep waiting for Him? Since He won't provide food for you, then you need to provide for yourself!"

This is the same temptation we face today—**The temptation to provide for ourselves instead of waiting for God to provide.** Sometimes we have prayed for something, and we've waited . . . and waited . . . and waited, but the answer hasn't come. So the devil comes to us when we are vulnerable, just like he did Jesus, and he says, "God isn't going to provide for you, so why don't you just provide for yourself?" I've seen people make huge mistakes because they grow impatient and won't trust God to provide. And then they make a stupid decision that they have to live with the rest of their lives.

Satan will always provide the quickest solution to your problem. It won't be the right one, but it's the quickest. Satan offers instant gratification. God offers delayed gratification. I would rather wait longer and receive God's best, than take the quick solution and receive Satan's worst.

When I was in college, I had made a decision to commit myself totally to the Lord. I decided I wanted God's best for my life, and I wasn't going to date non-Christian girls. After a while of not dating anyone, a guy in my dorm (who had a very loose lifestyle) made fun of me and said, "Crockett, if you don't date anyone, how are you going to find a wife? Do you think your future wife is just going to call you on the phone?"

Well, it was just like the devil was speaking through him: "Don't trust God. He isn't going to provide for you. So go ahead and date girls that don't care anything about God and maybe you can convert one of them." So I told this guy, "I don't know how or when God is going to give me a wife, but I believe that He will."

Well, I don't know what happened to that guy, but God arranged a divine appointment for Cindy and me—and we've been happily married for 48 years. God is faithful! I want to encourage you single people to keep trusting God because He is fully aware of your situation. Even though the devil is tempting you to compromise, don't listen to him or yield to his temptations. God hasn't forgotten about you!

Matt. 4:4 But He answered and said, “It is written, 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.’” Every time Satan opened his mouth, Jesus threw a Scripture into it! Man shall not live by bread alone. There’s more to life than having our physical needs met. Bread is food for your body, but God’s Word is food for your spirit. Satan’s deception is to make us think we can live by bread alone—that we can live without God’s Word.

Jesus always listened to and obeyed His Father. If God didn’t tell Him to turn stones into bread, He wasn’t going to do it. Always trust the character of God, but never trust the character of the devil!

There’s a story about a boy who climbing a mountain and stumbled upon a snake. The snake started talking to him, “It’s too cold for me up here. Please put me in your shirt and take me down to the valley.” The boy said, “I don’t trust snakes. If I picked you up, you would bite me.” The snake said, “That’s not true. I’ll treat you differently. If you will do this for me, I won’t harm you.”

The boy thought it over and said, “Okay. I’ll do it if you promise not to bite me. Do you promise?” The snake replied, “I promise.” So he picked up the snake, put it inside his shirt, and carried it down to the valley. When he pulled it out of his shirt, the snake bit him on the hand. The boy said, “But you promised not to bite me!” As the snake slithered away, it said, “Yeah, but you knew I was a liar when you picked me up!”

Listen, the devil never EVER has our good in mind, only our downfall. The way to overcome temptation is to not buy into Satan’s lies, but to trust the Father and wait for Him to provide.

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