

TEMPTING GOD

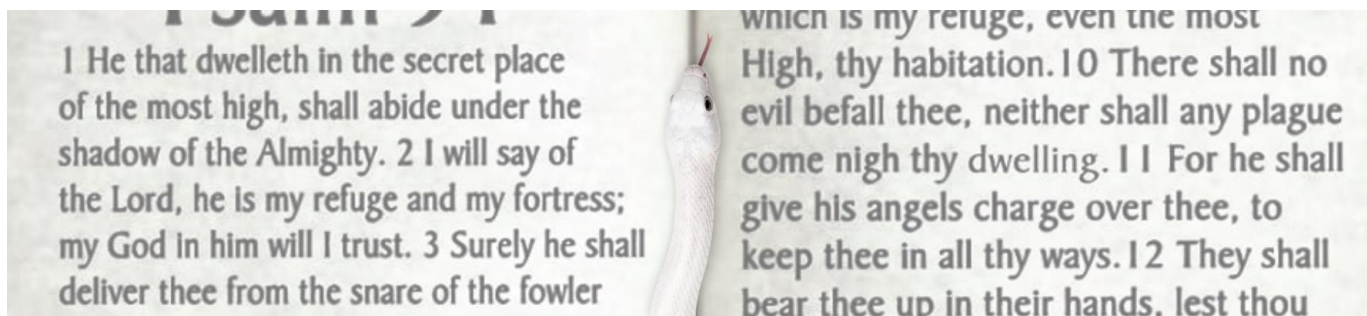


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Scriptures Cited:

Matthew 4:1-4, Matthew 4:5-7, Deuteronomy 6:16, Exodus 17:1-7, Matthew 3:17, Psalms 91:1-16, 2 Corinthians 11:13-14, Jude 1:4-5, 2 Corinthians 2:11, Romans 6:1-4

A BRIEF REVIEW

This is the second lesson in our series where we are using the temptations of Jesus as our starting point of study. As always, I encourage you to engage your mind and spirit with the Word of God and His Spirit, that you may grow in knowledge and understanding by what we read in His word.

To briefly review our [last lesson](#), we will begin in Matthew chapter 4 with the first temptation..

Matthew 4:1-4

¹ Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.

² And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred.

³ And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. ⁴ But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

In the previous lesson, rather than taking the straight-on approach of only focusing on the temptation, we looked at how the Stone, Word, and Bread all relate and are connected in Jesus. The Word of God was first spoken, then written in Stone, and finally came to us as the Bread of Life - the Word made flesh. *This* is the bread that we are to live by; the words of Jesus *are* the words of life. In reality, what Satan was trying to tempt Jesus to do... God had already done in His Son.

We will now continue in this lesson with the second temptation, which starts in verse 5.

“IT IS WRITTEN”

Matthew 4:5-7

⁵ Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, ⁶ And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.

⁷ Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.

There we see the second temptation which gives us the title for this lesson: “Tempting God”. We will look at some scriptures to see what it means to tempt God, approaching this from two different levels.

To begin, let’s look at Jesus’ response to the devil in verse 7: “Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God”. The question is, why did Jesus decide to answer in that way? Well once again, Jesus is quoting scripture. This “it is written”, is found in Deuteronomy chapter 6, verse 16.

Deuteronomy 6:16

¹⁶ Ye shall not tempt the LORD your God, as ye tempted him in Massah.

That is the direct quote from where ‘it was written’. And as we mentioned in the last lesson, the book of Deuteronomy is actually a retelling of the law and the account of the children of Israel coming out of Egypt. After 40 years of wandering in the wilderness, God basically gave them a ‘refresher course’ on everything they would need to remember before going into the promised land.

Here in verse 16, Moses says to the people “Ye shall not tempt the LORD your God *as ye tempted him in Massah.*”

In order to understand why this command was given, we need go to the book of Exodus. There we will see what event Moses was referring to. In Exodus chapter 17, we will read about how they 'tempted God' and what the original meaning of this was. Keep in mind that this was the answer that Jesus gave to Satan when being tempted the second time in the wilderness.

For context we will start at verse 1, but verse 7 is where we see the main point.

Exodus 17:1-7

¹ And all the congregation of the children of Israel journeyed from the wilderness of Sin, after their journeys, according to the commandment of the LORD, and pitched in Rephidim: and there was no water for the people to drink.

² Wherefore the people did chide with Moses, and said, Give us water that we may drink. And Moses said unto them, Why chide ye with me? wherefore do ye tempt the LORD?

³ And the people thirsted there for water; and the people murmured against Moses, and said, Wherefore is this that thou hast brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst?

⁴ And Moses cried unto the LORD, saying, What shall I do unto this people? they be almost ready to stone me.

⁵ And the LORD said unto Moses, Go on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel; and thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine hand, and go. ⁶ Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel.

⁷ And he called the name of the place Massah, and Meribah, because of the chiding of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the LORD, saying, Is the Lord among us, or not?

So, that is the story and context of what Jesus was quoting when He responded to the devil.

The people were in a tough situation which led them to 'tempt God'. They needed water, they had no water, so their concern is understandable. But where they went wrong was when they murmured and complained. They even began to doubt and question whether or not God was actually with them. Even though they had already seen miracles and wonders from God – when put in a hard situation, they said 'Is the Lord God among us or not?' And in the original context which we have here, that is defined as 'tempting the Lord'.

An important lesson to be mindful of is that when we find ourselves in difficult circumstances, we should always remain fully trusting in God. Not doubting or complaining, but fully trusting in the Lord and His word.

Now that we have seen where Jesus' response came from, we are going to get into the main focus of this lesson.

THE CROOKED SERPENT

I want us to take a closer look at the tactics that the devil used against Jesus when tempting Him. In the first temptation, it is pretty clear that the devil simply tried to appeal to the flesh and appetite of Jesus. It was a pretty simple and easy trick, because he knew that Jesus was hungry after fasting 40 days. I think this is a standard tactic that the devil uses often when tempting *us* to disobey God. He targets our appetites. But like Jesus, we should remember the Word of God when tempted.

Now we are going to look at the devil's tactic during the second temptation. In verse 5, back in Matthew chapter 4 it says *"...the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple..."*

One interesting thing to note about this is *where* the devil took Jesus. It shows us that the devil isn't scared to be in a "holy" place. Not only was he in the holy city, but he took Jesus to the pinnacle of the most holy building, *in* the holy city. Many people believe that the devil is scared of 'holy places' or 'holy objects'. But what we have here is not like what we see in the movies.

Next we see in verse 6, Satan says to Jesus *"...If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: **for it is written**, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone."*

Just as we saw in the first temptation, again Satan tries to introduce doubt by questioning the words that God had spoken from Heaven: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. - Matthew 3:17

So, that is one tactic; he tries to make you doubt what God has said. But then the devil takes it to another level - *he* says 'for it is written...' It almost seems as if the devil understood that Jesus was relying on the Word of God, so he attempted to use the Word of God *against* Him. Satan actually tried using the scripture to convince Jesus to listen to him. This tactic is really quite shocking when you stop and think about it. Unlike the other times when Satan slightly alters what God has said, here he quotes scripture word for word in an attempt to convince Jesus to disobey God.

Let's take a closer look to see *why* the devil may have chosen this passage of scripture to tempt Jesus. **By doing this we will be better equipped to identify this tactic of the enemy when we see it being used in the world today.** So, Satan said 'it is written', but *where* is that written? Well, it is actually found in Psalm 91, verses 11 and 12. We will read these verses in their full context in order to better understand and gain some insight as to what the devil was up to.

So beginning in verse 1, Psalm 91 reads:

Psalm 91:1-10

¹ *He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.*

² *I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust.*

³ *Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence.*

⁴ *He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler.*

⁵ *Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day;*

⁶ *Nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday.*

⁷ *A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee.*

⁸ *Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked.*

⁹ *Because thou hast made the LORD, which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation;*

¹⁰ *There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling.*

We are now at verse 11, which is the part that Satan actually quoted. But take note of what this whole chapter of Psalms is about - it's all about the goodness of God. It's about the protection of God for the one who is in God's will – God is going to take care of you. That's what this whole Psalm is about, it's God's goodness and protection. And verse 11 reads:

Psalm 91:11-16

¹¹ *For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.*

¹² *They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.*

¹³ *Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet.*

¹⁴ *Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name.*

¹⁵ *He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him.*

¹⁶ *With long life will I satisfy him, and shew him my salvation.*

This is such a beautiful Psalm about the goodness of God for those who will trust Him, for those who will love Him. It is really something to consider that Satan chose to use *this* scripture to tempt Jesus.

What we see Satan doing here (and what he has continued to do), is that he is using the goodness of God to convince people that: 'because God is so good and because God is so gracious... you actually don't have to obey Him'. Satan is subtly suggesting 'God is good, God will take care of you. Don't worry, God's got you... just listen to me a little bit. Just listen to me, go ahead and jump. God said He's going to take care of you...' Truly a snake!

This is such an insidious tactic that he is still using today. If you are not careful and discerning, it is one that is *very* easy to fall victim to. It is truly disturbing to realize that Satan had **God's word** in **his mouth**. This alarming reality should keep us on guard and watchful for those who camouflage themselves with the Word, yet use it against God and His will. Paul warns of this in 2 Corinthians chapter 11:

2 Corinthians 11:13-14

¹³ For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ.

¹⁴ And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.

Verses like these show us that even when the Bible was being written, the enemies of God were trying to appear as good, but in reality were workers of evil. We also see a similar warning in the book of Jude about the danger of using God's goodness as an excuse to sin:

Jude 1:4-5

⁴ For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.

⁵ I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not.

Here we can see that even in the early church this was an issue that needed to be addressed. Paul also makes reference to this in Romans chapter 6 - 'because we're under grace, should we continue to sin? **God forbid.**' The same applies for the church today. If we are not careful, the idea of 'grace alone, and faith alone'...can lead you *astray alone*.

I guess you could say that there is this temptation to take the goodness and grace of God, and use it as a cloak for sin. It is very easy to make the excuse and say 'Well, yeah I know that the Bible says I shouldn't do this sin or that sin, *but it also* says that God is good and forgiving. So I'm going to go ahead and disobey because I see here in the Bible, it says that God is so gracious'. That is the same tactic that the devil tried using against Jesus. And like Jesus, we should be ready to stand against anyone who uses the Word of God **contrary** to the will of God.

2 Corinthians 2:11

¹¹ Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.

So we will leave it here for now and continue with the third temptation in the next lesson. With that, hopefully this lesson will cause us to be mindful of the tactics of the enemy, so that we don't find ourselves in the position of tempting God and His goodness. Though we rely on His grace, we should never conclude that because of this, it is alright to sin.

Likewise, for anyone who has not yet obeyed the gospel, don't tempt God by saying 'God is so gracious and He knows my heart... so, *I don't necessarily have to do what the Bible says in order to be saved.*' Rather, accept the goodness of God by obeying the gospel: the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ - by repenting and being baptized in His name and receiving His Spirit.

We never want to be found tempting the goodness of God. Feel free to [contact us](#) today if there is any way that we can help you in your relationship with Him.

Romans 6:1-4

¹ What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? ² God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?

³ Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?

⁴ Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.