

The Temptations of Satan

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Introduction

In tempting Jesus in the wilderness, (Matt. 4:1-11), Satan's approach was consistent with his earlier Edenic enticements (Gen. 3:1-7), and also his present persistent persuasions: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (1 John 2:15-17).

However, let us consider Satanic temptations in a different light. After the wilderness testing, the devil left Jesus, until an opportune time (Matt. 4:11; Luke 4:13). He continued to oppose Christ, making his final assault during the Lord's passion and crucifixion (John 14:29-31; Luke 22:52-53). Satan appeals through the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. However, it is also instructive to realize that temptations come from what we need, what we want, and what we fear.

Needs

Satan entices us in the things we need. However, even legitimate needs must be satisfied in a proper manner. After Jesus had fasted forty days, and was hungry, the tempter came and said, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread." Our Lord answered, "It is written, 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God'" (Matt. 4:1-4). Food is both good and necessary (Gen. 1:29-31; 9:1-4; 1 Tim. 4:1-5). However, the improper acquisition of food must be avoided (Prov. 30:7-9; 1 Cor. 6:9-11; Eph. 4:28).

In like manner, the need for marital companionship is natural (Gen. 2:18-24; Prov. 18:22; Heb. 13:4). However, God's hatred of divorce (Mal. 2:13-16) and his law regarding marriage, divorce and remarriage must be acknowledged (Matt. 19:3-12).

Desires

Satan tempts us in the things we desire. However, even legitimate desires must be fulfilled in a proper manner. In the second and third temptations, Satan appealed to Jesus' desire for rule and respect (Matt. 4:5-10). Christ properly desired to rule over mankind (Ps. 2:1-9; Luke 1:31-33; Rev. 11:15). Christ properly desired the respect due his name (Ps. 2:10-12; John 5:22-23; Rom. 1:3-4). Nevertheless, these proper desires could not be rightfully fulfilled in an improper manner (Matt. 4:5-10).

In like manner, we desire a warm, loving, open relationship with fellow Christians. Fellowship is a wonderful blessing (Ps. 133:1-3; Heb. 13:1; 1 Pet. 3:8-9). However, it cannot be maintained at the expense of truth (1 Cor. 1:10; Eph. 4:1-6; Phil. 2:1-2).

Fears

Satan tempts us in the things we fear. However, even legitimate fears must be faced in a proper manner. The cross represented agony, suffering and death (Isa. 53:1-12; Gal. 3:13-14; 1 Pet. 2:21-25). However, Jesus did not let fear of the cross keep him from his purpose (John 12:27-33; Matt. 16:21-23; 26:36-46).

Persecution is also the lot of the faithful (Matt. 5:10-12; 2 Tim. 3:10-17; 1 Pet. 4:12-19). Yet, we must not allow fear to keep us back from full obedience (Acts 26:9-11; Gal. 5:7-12; 1 Pet. 2:4-8).

Conclusion

As Satan twisted Scripture to justify his ends, so also do sinful men distort the Scriptures, to their own deception and destruction (1 Tim. 1:3-7; 6:3-5; 2 Pet. 3:14-18). However, we must faithfully hold to the faithful word, recognizing that knowledge of the truth and proper application of the same is the key to overcoming Satan's devices.