

The Temptation of Christ

Matthew 4:1-11

In the Place of Failure

Jesus has just been baptised and God has called him his beloved Son. Then the Spirit leads him into the wilderness to be tempted. Why? Two other 'sons of God' – Adam and Israel were tempted and fell. Now Jesus must face the test they faced. It will tell us what kind of son he will be.

When we face trials and temptations we can wonder why God would allow us to go through this. Jesus being led into the desert tells us that God always has his reasons, and we must trust him. Like Adam and Israel we often fail when we face temptation. We need another to enter the battlefield for us.

My Wants or God's Word?

The devil works by temptation. On the surface he tempts Jesus to doubt God's word. He will try the same with us. But he tries to get Jesus to question the implications of being God: he should use his power and privilege to serve himself and satisfy his needs rather than live for his father's will. We may face the same temptation: to feed our needs and wants. To live my way rather than God's.

But Jesus knows that it is in obeying God that you find real life, even if it's hard.

Test God or Trust God?

Next, Satan twists the meaning of Psalm 91. But rather than encouraging Jesus to trust God, he is urging him to test God, to manipulate him. On the surface it seems to be 'put your life in God's hands.' In reality it is 'take life into your own hands.' When we face trials we increase our problems by failing to trust God and wanting him to work to our timing.

Again, Jesus repels Satan by quoting Scripture. We too must hide God's word in our hearts so we can use it as a sword when temptation comes.

My Empire or God's Kingdom?

Then Satan offers Jesus the world, if he will worship him. He does not need to take the hard road – he can have the crown an easier way. But falling for Satan's temptations always costs you something. We are offered the chance to build our own empires and have a slice of the world, but to do so by displacing God as your ultimate. Jesus refuses. He knows that God requires our undivided loyalty.

The Place of Victory

Satan quotes Psalm 91. That psalm also talks of trampling the serpent underfoot. After Adam fell to temptation God promised a son would come who would trample Satan underfoot – but be harmed himself in doing so. At the cross Jesus was crushed for our iniquities, but it was there that he crushed Satan. It's his victory in the place of testing that makes his victory at the cross possible.

His overcoming temptation makes your overcoming possible. He gives us the strength to resist temptation – by looking to him. As we understand what he has done for us it will ignite a love inside us for his word. Then we'll have the Spirit's sword to fight with when temptation comes. And God will use what the enemy means for harm for our good and make us more like Jesus.