***With Jesus in the Wilderness***

**Lent: Journey to the Cross #2 March 13, 2022**

***Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan  
and was led by the Spirit into the desert  
where for forty day he was tempted by the devil.*Luke 4:1-2**

**Continuing on the journey**

*Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the desert, 2 where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry.*

*3 The devil said to him, “If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread.”*

*4 Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man does not live on bread alone.’”*

*5 The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. 6 And he said to him, “I will give you all their authority and splendor, for it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. 7 So if you worship me, it will all be yours.”*

*8 Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.’”*

*9 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. 10 For it is written:*

*“ ‘He will command his angels concerning you*

*to guard you carefully;*

*11 they will lift you up in their hands,*

*so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.’”*

*12 Jesus answered, “It says: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’”*

*13 When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time.*

Luke 4:1-13

1. The Spirit leads into and through the desert

2. Fasting may be more important than we evangelicals have understood

3. God being tempted is confusing, but what is sure is that Jesus identifies with us who are tempted

4. Why does Jesus keep going back to the opening chapters of Deuteronomy

5. Satan does not show up again until Holy Week, the “opportune season”

**From the shores of our baptism**

*Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the desert, 2 where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry.*

Luke 4:1-2

*22 Then Moses led Israel from the Red Sea and they went into the Desert of Shur. For three days they traveled in the desert without finding water.*

Exodus 15

*27 Then they came to Elim, where there were twelve springs and seventy palm trees, and they camped there near the water.*

Exodus 15:27

*11 Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.*

Matthew 4:11 (Matthew adds this detail to Jesus’ wilderness temptation experience)

1. God delights to provide for his people in the wilderness (see 1 Kings 17:4, 19:2)

2. Key question: How has my baptism prepared me for my wilderness season?

**Luke’s chronology**

Graphical user interface, application, table

Description automatically generated

**Is satan still at work**

Temptation 1: Discerning wants and even needs from what’s *really* important

*3 The devil said to him, “If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread.”*

*4 Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man does not live on bread alone.’”*

Luke 4:3-4 (quoting Deuteronomy 8:3, Matthew 4:4 has the end of the verse!)

What might distract me from God’s voice: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Temptation 2: Bypassing the cross (or why the *shema’* still matters)

*5 The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world.   
6 And he said to him, “I will give you all their authority and splendor, for it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. 7 So if you worship me, it will all be yours.”*

*8 Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.’”*

Luke 4:5-8 (quoting from Deuteronomy 6:13)

When have I been tempted to shortcut God’s plan? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Temptation 3: Using Scripture to get attention rather than edify my brother who is in trouble

*9 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. 10 For it is written:*

*“ ‘He will command his angels concerning you*

*to guard you carefully;*

*11 they will lift you up in their hands,*

*so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.’”*

*12 Jesus answered, “It says: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’”*

Luke 4:9-12 (quoting from Deuteronomy 6:16, see Psalm 91 for the devil’s quote)

How can I bless a sister or brother who is in the wilderness? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Resources for our Lenten journey 2022**

*Bible.org* has some wonderful resources at [*https://bible.org/book/Luke*](https://bible.org/book/Luke)

I. Howard Marshall’s Greek commentary is my go to help (Eerdmans, 1978)

J. C. Ryle has an interesting commentary at [*https://www.gracegems.org/Ryle/l04.htm*](https://www.gracegems.org/Ryle/l04.htm)

Martin Luther has an interesting commentary at [*https://www.monergism.com/fast-and-temptation-christ-matthew-41-11*](https://www.monergism.com/fast-and-temptation-christ-matthew-41-11)

John Piper has a wonderful introduction to the temptation themes and the work of the Spirit at [*https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/christ-in-combat-defense-by-the-spirit*](https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/christ-in-combat-defense-by-the-spirit)

Bob Deffinbaugh has a four part series on Luke’s temptation text at [*https://bible.org/series/luke-gospel-gentiles*](https://bible.org/series/luke-gospel-gentiles)*.* The first of these messages is attached below, but I’m not sure about Deffinbaugh’s difficulty with whether Jesus could be truly tempted.

I appreciate J.C. Ryle’s commentary on Luke at [*https://www.gracegems.org/Ryle/l13.htm*](https://www.gracegems.org/Ryle/l13.htm)

Spurgeon’s notes on this text focus on the prayer side of Jesus’ baptism at [*https://ccel.org/ccel/spurgeon/sermons56/sermons56.i.html*](https://ccel.org/ccel/spurgeon/sermons56/sermons56.i.html)

The CRC has an extensive collection of liturgy for baptism at [*https://www.crcna.org/resources/church-resources/liturgical-forms/baptism-children*](https://www.crcna.org/resources/church-resources/liturgical-forms/baptism-children)



# The Temptation of Jesus Part I (Luke 4:1-13)

# Bob Deffinbaugh’s first temptation message at [*https://bible.org/seriespage/temptation-jesus-part-i-luke-41-13*](https://bible.org/seriespage/temptation-jesus-part-i-luke-41-13)

I have never had an occasion to see stone turned into bread. I have, however, seen bread turned to stone. Years ago when my sister and I were in college, our college class at church had a special turkey dinner for the class. My wife-to-be and a friend fixed the turkey (leaving all the “parts” in that little bag inside). This was no disaster, and no one besides the preparers of the meal ever knew about it. The “dinner rolls” were another matter. My sister fixed one of my favorite recipes, a recipe which my mother (and my wife) have successfully used for many years. I can’t explain what happened to the rolls. They didn’t rise, but they also somehow came out of the oven petrified.

I can still remember the puzzled looks on the faces of those kids. They poked at the “things” with their forks. Some foolishly tried to break them in half. Eventually everyone gave up and left them alone. Sizing up the bewilderment of all I said aloud, “let he who is without sin cast the first stone.” That seemed to break the tension and we all had a good laugh. I actually tried to save one of those petrified rolls for posterity.

Turning bread into stone was no miracle, only a mishap which gave us an occasion for a good laugh. In our text, our Lord Jesus Christ is challenged by Satan to turn stone into bread, a miracle indeed. This proposition is the first of a series of three “temptations” of our Lord by Satan, at the very outset of His public ministry. These are not the only temptations which occurred during that 40 day testing period, but they are the three which both Matthew (4:1-11) and Luke (4:1-13) record, and to which Mark (1:12-13) alludes. We must therefore conclude that these temptations are of significance to these writers, and thus to the gospel, and ultimately to us.

### The Importance of the Temptation Account

There are several reasons why the temptation accounts are of importance to us. Let us consider these as we seek to prepare our hearts and minds for the instruction God has for us from our passage.

**(1) First, the temptation accounts confront the student of the New Testament with some tensions within the biblical text**. If our Lord taught the disciples to pray, “Lead us not into temptation,” ([Matt. 6:13](javascript:%7b%7d)) why then did the Spirit lead our Lord into temptation, as our text indicates (cf. [Matt. 4:1](javascript:%7b%7d); [Luke 4:1](javascript:%7b%7d))? Furthermore, if James informs us that God cannot be tempted ([James 1:13](javascript:%7b%7d)) and we know that Jesus was fully God, how then could He be tempted (the temptation accounts, cf. also [Heb. 2:18; 4:15](javascript:%7b%7d))?

**(2) Second, from the standpoint of our Lord’s ministry and calling, His entire mission is contingent upon His victory over every temptation of Satan**.[59](https://bible.org/seriespage/temptation-jesus-part-i-luke-41-13#P980_274624) Jesus is being tested as the “Son of God,” Israel’s Messiah and King. To fail these tests would be to nullify all of God’s purposes and promises which were to be realized through the Son of God.

**(3) Third, by studying the temptation of our Lord by Satan, we learn a great deal about our adversary, Satan**. To know the mindset and the methods of our enemy, the Devil, we are forewarned and forearmed as to the temptations by which he will seek to destroy us. “… in order that no advantage be taken of us by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his schemes” ([2 Cor. 2:11](javascript:%7b%7d)).

In the three challenges and solicitations of Satan in the temptation accounts of Matthew and Luke we find the three primary avenues by which Satan seeks to make inroads into our lives so as to devastate our spiritual walk with God through Christ. Our survival as saints depends upon our knowing Satan and ourselves, and thereby putting on the “full armor of God” so as to be able to withstand his attacks:

Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the full armor of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm ([Eph. 6:10-13](javascript:%7b%7d)).

**(4) Finally, we see in our Lord’s successful resistance to Satan’s solicitations those very means which God has made available to us to withstand Satan’s attacks.** Our Lord exemplifies the use of the Word of God in recognizing the error of Satan’s solicitations and the course of obedience to the will of the Father. Our Lord’s example in facing temptation is vital to every Christian who desires to live a life which is in conformity with the will and the word of God.

### The Uniqueness of Our Lord’s Temptation

While Satan’s temptation of our Lord has much similarity to his attack against the Christian, it must be remembered that our Lord’s temptation was a unique event in history. It was Satan’s attempt to nullify the purpose of Christ’s first coming, to prevent the establishment of God’s kingdom on earth, where God’s will would be done, even as it is done in heaven. It was also the temptation of our Lord as God. The temptations of our Lord were those which could be pressed on one who was divine. Mere man could not be “tempted” to make stone into bread for this is something which only God can do. Satan’s temptation was direct and obvious. It was evident that Satan was the source of the temptation. Our temptations are more indirect, coming most often through the world and the flesh. Finally, our Lord’s temptation was unique in that He, unlike all of us, provided Satan with no “inner ally,” no “fallen flesh” to which Satan could appeal. There was no inner inclination to rebel against God and no inner desire to sin. For us it is entirely a different matter, as Romans chapter 7 makes abundantly clear.

We must recognize, then, that the term “temptation” is employed in two very different senses, which can be seen from the temptation of our Lord. Temptation is, on the one hand, a solicitation to sin, to do that which is contrary to the will and the word of God. Temptation is an attempt to cause a person to sin. Satan’s efforts at temptation always fall into this category. But “temptation” when viewed from God’s point of view is a “test,” an opportunity for one to be proven righteous. Thus, in the case of Job (cf. especially chapters 1 and 2) Satan sought to bring Job to the point of forsaking his faith, to the point of sinning, but God’s purpose was to deepen Job’s faith, as well as to demonstrate to Satan that Job’s love for God was not based upon the material blessings which God bestowed upon him. These two meanings of the same term have long been recognized by biblical scholars.[60](https://bible.org/seriespage/temptation-jesus-part-i-luke-41-13#P989_279882)

We might therefore maintain that Jesus was “tempted” in two senses in our text. From the vantage point of Satan’s intended purpose, our Lord was tempted. Satan wished to prompt the “Son of God” to act in disobedience to the Father, thus terminating His ability to fulfill His mission. From the viewpoint of God, and the author (Luke), this was a “test” of Jesus Christ, proving Him to be suited and qualified to fulfill His mission as the Son of God.

### The Testing of Our Lord in the Context of Luke’s Gospel[61](https://bible.org/seriespage/temptation-jesus-part-i-luke-41-13#P993_280938)

Luke has set out to depict the good news in a very orderly way (1:3), and thus we would expect him to have prepared us for the temptation of Christ in the context of his gospel. Both the deity and the humanity of the Lord Jesus have been documented. Jesus was prophesied to be born of a woman, but also a product of the miraculous intervention of the Holy Spirit (1:26-38). The account of His birth in chapter 2 shows this to have happened. That Jesus knew of His heavenly origin is evident by His presence in “His Father’s house” (1:41-51).

In chapter 3, John the Baptist began his public ministry, preparing the people for the coming of Messiah, who was greater than he. Besides the testimony of John, the Father and the Spirit bore witness to the identity of the Lord Jesus. The Father’s words, “Thou art My beloved Son … ” identified Him as the King of Israel, who would sit on the throne of His father David (cf. 1:32). The descent of the Holy Spirit was the enduement of power for this task. It was as the “Son of God” that Jesus was put to the test by Satan. Thus Satan’s two-fold challenge, “If you are the Son of God … ” (4:3, 9).

The genealogy of the Lord in Luke’s account immediately precedes His temptation. If the baptism of Christ showed Him to be the “Son of God,” the genealogy shows our Lord to be the “son of Adam” (3:38). Thus our Lord is both God and man. As man Jesus was both a descendent of David, but also a son of Adam. I believe that Luke is showing our Lord’s qualifications for His task of redeeming fallen man. As the “Son of God” and the “Son of man” Jesus could die in man’s place and provide an eternal redemption. The temptation of our Lord seems to be an effort to play the deity of our Lord against His humanity in such a way as to “divide and conquer.” Our Lord’s victory here shows that His perfect blend of humanity and deity are not at odds, and thus He is fit for the task God has given to Him to accomplish.

### Two Assumptions Which Need to be Challenged

There are two assumptions which are widely held by Christians which need to be challenged, and at least re-thought. The first is the assumption that our Lord was really “tempted” by the offers of Satan. Some hold that even though (better, because) our Lord had no inner inclination to sin He was greatly tried by Satan’s solicitations.[62](https://bible.org/seriespage/temptation-jesus-part-i-luke-41-13#P1000_283776) I do not personally see any hesitation on the part of our Lord, nor any great agony preceding His response to Satan. The agony which I do find in the Bible is that of our Lord in the Garden of Gethsemene, when He struggled with the reality of the wrath of God which He was about to experience. I realize that the writer to the Hebrews refers to the “temptation” of our Lord (2:18; 4:15), but I think that we must be careful to distinguish the way these offers would appeal to us from their appeal to the sinless Son of God.

The second assumption is that Satan’s words are to be accepted at face value. The Word of God describes Satan as the “father of lies” ([John 8:44](javascript:%7b%7d)). Satan is, in psychological terminology, a pathological liar. Such persons lie whether or not it appears necessary, and even when it may prove detrimental. I am not at all certain that just because Satan claims to possess all the kingdoms of the world ([Luke 4:5-6](javascript:%7b%7d)) that he really does have the right to offer them to Christ. In my opinion, Satan is always offering others that which he does not possess. For example, he encouraged Adam and Eve to help themselves to the forbidden fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and thus to a new level of knowledge. Our Lord offers men what He possesses, what He has purchased (e.g. salvation by His blood), but Satan is always giving away what is not his. He is always offering to give away the “Brooklyn Bridge,” as it were.

Satan does not seem to be any more truthful or obedient in God’s presence than anywhere else. For example, Satan “demanded permission to sift Peter like wheat” ([Luke 22:31](javascript:%7b%7d)). Satan’s sin has distorted his thinking and has warped his character and deeds, even when standing before God. I therefore urge you to be careful about believing anything Satan might say, even in the presence of God.

### Our Approach

Our approach to the temptation of our Lord will be to study it in several segments. In this lesson we will focus on the setting of the temptation ([Luke 4:1-2](javascript:%7b%7d)) and on the first temptation, to challenge to make bread of stone. We will analyze this temptation in terms of the setting (the occasion, the need), the mindset of Satan, the Lord’s response, and the scriptural principle underlying our Lord’s response. We will then seek to see how the principles which guided our Lord in His response can be found repeatedly in His teaching and ministry. Finally, we will seek to discover the forms in which this same temptation can be identified in our own culture, and how they should be dealt with.

### The Setting of Christ’s Temptation (4:1-2)

The temptation of our Lord took place “in the wilderness” ([Luke 4:1](javascript:%7b%7d)). It was also in the wilderness that John grew up and ministered (1:80; 3:3-4). So, too, it was in the wilderness that Israel tempted God ([Ps. 78:41, 56; 106:14](javascript:%7b%7d)). In contrast, it was in the idyllic setting of the garden that Adam and Eve were put to the test ([Genesis 2](javascript:%7b%7d) & 3). While the animals in the garden were tame, those in the wilderness were, according to Mark’s account, “wild beasts” ([Mark 1:12-13](javascript:%7b%7d)).

While Matthew’s account highlights the fact that our Lord was led of the Holy Spirit **to** the wilderness, Luke wants his reader to understand that the Lord was Spirit led **through** the wilderness. In Luke’s words, the Son of God was “led about by the Spirit in the wilderness for forty days.” Furthermore, Luke informs us that all this while our Lord was being tempted by the devil. The Lord went out to the wilderness to confront Satan, or at least to be confronted by him, and to return victorious. Even in His temptation our Lord is in control, not Satan. While Satan sought to undermine our Lord’s mission, God sought to underline it by having the Son of God emerge sinless as the second and last Adam.[63](https://bible.org/seriespage/temptation-jesus-part-i-luke-41-13#P1010_289711) Just as Adam brought sin upon the entire race, so the victory of Christ made salvation available to all who are in Him (cf. [Rom. 5:12-21](javascript:%7b%7d)).

We should at least note that our Lord’s hunger in the wilderness was self-imposed. Our Lord fasted for forty days and nights ([Matt. 4:2](javascript:%7b%7d); [Luke 4:2](javascript:%7b%7d)). If there were “wild beasts” around, it would have been possible for our Lord to have killed something to eat (e.g. a rabbit), or at least to have eaten locusts and wild honey, like His forerunner John ([Matt. 3:4](javascript:%7b%7d)).

The “wilderness” setting is clearly intended to bring to mind the parallel situation of the nation Israel which wandered in the wilderness. Israel was in the wilderness 40 years, even as our Lord was in the wilderness for 40 days. Israel hungered even as our Lord did. In both cases God was testing man. In the case of Israel, they also put God to the test, demanding to be fed, and sometimes threatening to return to Egypt. Our Lord is the antitype of Israel (cp. [Hos. 11:1](javascript:%7b%7d); [Matt. 2:15](javascript:%7b%7d)), fulfilling the will of God where Israel failed.

The three temptations which are recorded are Satan’s final attempt, at least in this campaign. There were, by inference (cf. [Luke 4:13](javascript:%7b%7d)), many other temptations during those 40 days. These represent Satan’s “best shot,” his most powerful offers, in his mind at least. They also represent those temptations most “common to man,” those temptations which we are most likely and most frequently going to face.

The scene is therefore set. Jesus as the “second Adam” will be tempted of Satan and prevail. Jesus as the “true Israel” will be tested in the wilderness and return victorious. Thus the Son of God, Israel’s King, will be shown to be fit to fulfill His divinely ordained task, qualified by the declaration of God and the descent of the Holy Spirit, and by His proven holiness.

### The First Temptation: Make Stone into Bread (4:3-4)

Jesus had fasted for 40 days. Our Lord was understandably hungry. More than just hunger is involved, however. We can miss a mere meal and feel a strong sense of hunger. Our Lord’s hunger, if prolonged, would inevitably lead to death, apart from divine intervention. Satan’s challenge that Jesus turn stone to bread[64](https://bible.org/seriespage/temptation-jesus-part-i-luke-41-13#P1018_292667) was one which sought to cause our Lord to bring about that divine intervention from His own power, that power which had just been bestowed upon Him through the descent of the Holy Spirit.

Our Lord’s condition was this, then. If He continued not eating, He would die. Thus, Satan challenged, He must act. Whether or not He must act as Satan had challenged, by miraculously converting stone to bread, is doubtful, for it would seem that there would have been other means of satisfying His need for nutrition.

Satan’s premise, on which he based his proposition, seems to be something like this:

**NEED + POWER TO MEET THAT NEED = SATISFACTION OF THAT NEED**

In other words, Satan could not conceive of our Lord having a vital need, having the power to satisfy that need, and not using His power to meeting the need. Surely one’s power could be used to meet one’s needs, especially a need so vital as life itself. Satan seems to be appealing to that basic human instinct of self-preservation.

Previously it seemed to me that Satan was advocating self-indulgence here, but if that were the case he would have called for “steak and ale,” not mere bread. Bread was a basic essential of life, not a luxury food item. It is not self-indulgence, then, but self-preservation which Satan is seeking to induce our Lord to accomplish through His divine power.

On the face of the matter, such an offer seems innocuous. After all, is there anything so wrong with meeting basic human needs? Not at all! Hunger is a need which our Lord would later meet in His public ministry. Did He not feed the 5,000, who were in the wilderness and without food (cf. [Luke 9:10](javascript:%7b%7d)ff., esp. note v. 12)? For our Lord, serious hunger even justified setting aside normal rules. Thus He defended the fact that His disciples “harvesting” grain on the Sabbath by referring to the precedent of David, who met his hunger and that of his men by eating the “consecrated bread” ([Luke 6:1-5](javascript:%7b%7d)).

What was the evil, then, which caused our Lord to resist Satan’s solicitation, and to continue to hunger, even though death might be the result? The answer was to be found in the Word of God itself. Jesus responded to Satan in the words of Deuteronomy: “MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE … ” ([Deut. 8:3](javascript:%7b%7d); [Luke 4:4](javascript:%7b%7d)).

Our account does not complete the sentence, as does Matthew, with the words, “BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD” ([Deut. 8:3](javascript:%7b%7d); [Matt. 4:4](javascript:%7b%7d)).

This, I believe, is due to the fact that Luke’s gospel is written to a Gentile audience primarily, rather than to a Jewish one.

Jesus’ words must be understood in the light of the quotation from Deuteronomy, and from the context in which it was originally spoken. Israel was about to enter into the promised land and God was, through Moses, reminding His people of the basis on which His blessings would be bestowed in the land.

We have already noted the parallel which the gospel accounts draw between the experience of Israel in the wilderness and that of our Lord in the wilderness. Our Lord knew this best of all, and thus deals with His own situation in the light of God’s Word concerning the lessons which Israel should have learned from the experience of their forefathers. I believe that we can see a very clear logical argument in Luke’s account of our Lord’s response, based upon the book of Deuteronomy.[65](https://bible.org/seriespage/temptation-jesus-part-i-luke-41-13#P1030_296720)

**First, our Lord understood that God uses deprivation to test man’s faith, as reflected by his obedience when doing so appears dangerous or even deadly**. The verse which immediately precedes the words cited by our Lord reads,

“And you shall remember all the way which the LORD your God has lead you in the wilderness these forty years, that He might humble you, testing you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not” ([Deut. 8:2](javascript:%7b%7d)).

**Second, our Lord understood that testing through deprivation is often God’s preparation for future blessing**. In Deuteronomy God is referring to the lessons which God has taught Israel in order to prepare her for the blessings of the land. If Satan was subtly suggesting that hunger was inconsistent with divine presence and blessing, Jesus knew from Deuteronomy that it was the evidence of divine love and care, in preparation for blessing.

**Third, our Lord refused Satan’s proposition, not because He could not achieve it, but because He should not do so**. The only reason that Jesus did not make the stone into bread was because it would have been wrong to do so. Jesus had the power to change His circumstances, to satisfy His hunger, but He refused to employ it in such a fashion. It would be no test of our Lord’s character to make such a challenge as Satan had unless Jesus was capable of turning stone into bread.

**Fourth, our Lord’s presence and His hunger in the wilderness, like that of Israel of old, was the will of God, the result of God’s leading.** God made it abundantly clear to Israel that when they complained about their circumstances, they ultimately complained against God, for it was He who led them. If our Lord was hungry, indeed, if our Lord’s life was in danger, it was the will of God for it to be so. For our Lord to have acted as Satan proposed would have been an act of disobedience.

**Fifth, the only motive for making the stone into bread would have been distrust regarding the goodness and the guidance of God**. Ultimately, the only reason for our Lord’s disobedience (making the stone into bread) would have been unbelief—distrust of the Father’s care, of His goodness, of His divine provision. As I understand the Bible, unbelief is the ultimate root of most, if not all, disobedience. Satan caused Adam and Eve to doubt God’s goodness and to disbelieve His word concerning judgment for eating of the forbidden fruit. Israel grumbled against God in the wilderness and demanded that God prove Himself because they doubted His goodness and guidance. So it would have been in our Lord’s case as well.

**Sixth, Life is more than mere physical survival and thus must be sustained by more than food**. Luke stops after the words, “Man does not live by bread alone,” thus emphasizing the fact that life is more than a matter of food. Surely the Old Testament (not to mention the New Testament) makes this abundantly clear. God told Adam and Eve that they would die if they ate the forbidden fruit, yet they continued to live physically after their disobedience. We know that the death they experienced included physical death, but involved much more. So, too, life was much more than physical existence. Intimacy with God was one of the things which was lost, for the evening walks in the garden were ended, along with life in the garden.

In the early chapters of Deuteronomy, God reminded the Israelites that His blessing was contingent upon their obedience, and further clarified His blessings as including “long life”:

“And now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the judgments which I am teaching you to perform, in order that you may live and go in and take possession of the land which the LORD, the God of your fathers, is giving you” ([Deut. 4:1](javascript:%7b%7d)).

“Remember the day you stood before the LORD your God at Horeb, when the LORD said to me, ‘Assemble the people to Me, that I may let them hear My words so they may lean to fear Me all the days they live on the earth, and that they may teach their children’” ([Deut. 4:10](javascript:%7b%7d)).

“So you shall keep His statutes and His commandments which I am giving you today, that it may go well with you and with your children after you, and that you may live long on the land which the LORD your God is giving you for all time” ([Deut. 4:40](javascript:%7b%7d); cf. 5:33; 6:2-3).

Life, then, is sustained by more than eating, but more importantly for the Israelites, it was sustained by obedience to God’s commandments. So it was for Adam and Eve as well. So much so is this true that sometimes true life is sustained by means of death. The Old Testament gradually unveils the truth that “life” with God extends beyond the grave. The promises God made to Abraham will still be fulfilled, and thus Abraham is not just a person of the past, but will be raised from the dead. Abraham had to trust God by being willing to sacrifice his only son, believing that God would continue life beyond his death (cf. [Heb. 11:19](javascript:%7b%7d)).

### This Temptation and the Gospel

This temptation struck at the very heart of the gospel, for the Lord Jesus had come to the earth in obedience to the will of the Father, to die on the cross for sinners, so that they might be forgiven and have eternal life:

And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross ([Phil. 2:8](javascript:%7b%7d)).

The Old Testament sacrificial system taught the Israelites that life could be sustained by a blood sacrifice. Thus the sacrificial system put off the death penalty for sin. And the Lord Jesus, as the Lamb of God ([John 1:29](javascript:%7b%7d)) was to be the sin-bearer, whose sacrificial death would bring life to all who were in Him.

Would Jesus save His own life, contrary to the will of His Father? Then He could not achieve eternal life for all men. Would Jesus act on His own behalf, distrusting and disobeying the Father? Then He would pursue the path of death, not life, for life requires obedience to God, even more than the feeding of the body. To have turned the stone into bread would have been to have turned from the path which led ultimately to the cross. Our Lord’s obedience to the Father and our salvation was on the line. Jesus’ rejection of Satan’s proposition meant that He was determined to accomplish the will of God, even unto death, which paradoxically, was the way to life, for Him and for all who are found in Him. The apostle Paul put it this way:

Therefore also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father ([Phil. 2:9-11](javascript:%7b%7d)).

To have exercised His divine power to meet His human needs would have meant the loss of His power to save. But as a result of our Lord’s obedience to the Father, He emerged not only sinless, but mighty to save. Immediately following His triumph over Satan’s temptations we are told,

… and they all were continually amazed at His teaching, for His message was with authority ([Luke 4:32](javascript:%7b%7d)).

And amazement came upon them all, and they began discussing with one another, and saying, “What is this message? For with authority and power He commands the unclean spirits and they come out” ([Luke 4:36](javascript:%7b%7d)).

The priority of the spiritual above the physical, of obedience to the Father’s will above mere existence shaped the teaching of our Lord. The result was that Jesus’ continually stressed the priority of man’s spiritual condition over his physical state. In Luke’s account of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said that the hungry were blessed (6:21), while He pronounced woe upon those who were well-fed (6:23). The disciples were sent out without provisions (10:1ff.). The Lord’s Prayer included a petition for daily bread (11:3). Jesus taught that life was more than food (12:23).

Given the priority of the spiritual over the material, Jesus taught that men should “seek first the kingdom of God,” and that all of the other things—the necessities for physical life—would be added (12:31). Men should be laying up treasure in heaven, and not on earth (12:33).

In the final analysis, perhaps summing the whole matter up, Jesus taught that men must give up their lives in order to save them:

And He was saying to them all, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it. For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself?” ([Luke 9:23-25](javascript:%7b%7d)).

It is therefore much more important to fear the One who can destroy the soul (the spiritual dimension of man) than the body (the physical):

“And I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will warn you whom to fear: fear the One who after He has killed has authority to cast into hell; yes, I tell you, fear Him!” ([Luke 12:4-5](javascript:%7b%7d)).

Self-preservation is a basic human instinct, but also one that is often contrary to trust in God. Throughout the Bible men got themselves into trouble by trying to save themselves. Abraham, in an effort to save his life, put his wife in the position to have been sexually violated. Abraham’s life was in God’s hands, and he did not need to fear. Furthermore, Abraham’s future rested in the child which he and Sarah were to bear. His self-saving acts threatened his life and his future. The ultimate test of Abraham’s faith was his willingness to sacrifice his only son, Isaac, through whom Abraham’s future and his blessings would be brought to pass. When Abraham was willing to obey God, even when it appeared that doing so would be the end of his future, Abraham was proven to be a man of faith and obedience.

### The Meaning of the First Temptation for Luke’s Gentile Readers

For Luke’s Gentile readers, the first temptation of our Lord had great relevance. The mindset of the Gentiles was that physical appetites were to be met if one had the power to do so. Thus, they were inclined toward indulgence, both in food and in sexual matters. Paul found it necessary to underscore the same priority of the spiritual over the physical as our Lord had taught. Paul wrote,

Food is for the stomach, and the stomach is for food; but God will do away with both of them. Yet the body is not for immorality, but for the Lord; and the Lord is for the body ([1 Cor. 6:13](javascript:%7b%7d)).

Thus, what one did with his body was a great spiritual significance. The spiritual ramifications of one’s bodily actions thus governed the satisfaction of one’s physical appetites.

### The Meaning of the First Temptation for Us

How significant that He who would not make bread to save His own life presented Himself to Israel as “the bread of life” ([John 6:35](javascript:%7b%7d)). By believing in Him anyone may pass from death to life, they may find life in its fullest sense, not mere existence. Thus Jesus alone could claim to be the only way, the only truth, the only life ([John 14:6](javascript:%7b%7d)). Satan has nothing to offer but crumbs, and even these are not his to give. Jesus Christ offers Himself to all who will believe in His, He offers Himself as the source of life eternal. If you have never trusted in Him, I urge you to experience the bread of life.

The first temptation of our Lord should instruct us that man has ultimately only one need—God. To know Him and to have fellowship is to possess life in its fullest, even if the path of following him leads to physical death. Satan is always attempting to create the false perception of other, more pressing, needs. Adam and Eve had everything one could ask for, and were kept from but one thing. Satan set about to convince Eve that this one forbidden fruit was her one greatest need, a need so great that she could disobey God to attain it.

How foolish, and yet this same deception is going on all about us, and even within us. I have recently read an excellent book by Tony Walter entitled, Need, The New Religion.[66](https://bible.org/seriespage/temptation-jesus-part-i-luke-41-13#P1070_309014) Walter’s thesis is that our culture has subtly re-defined “wants” as “needs,” and as such justified our whole-hearted pursuit of these things. I believe that Walter is correct. Satan has, once again, succeeded in focusing our attention on what we do not have, rather than on the sufficiency of God and the bounty of our relationship with Him.

Think about it for a moment. What characterizes your prayers, petition for what you do not have, or praise for what God is, for your blessings in Him. Don’t answer. I know all to well from my own experience. But God is enough. He is sufficient. To be found in Him is all we should want, or need. Even physical life should be gratefully set aside for the intimacy of knowing and obeying God. That is why Paul found it difficult to determine how he felt about the outcome of his trial ([Phil. 1:19-26](javascript:%7b%7d)). If Christ is our life, our sufficiency, our all, then surely He should be our preoccupation, our highest priority. The materialism which dominates our society, even the church (e.g. the prosperity gospel) informs us that we have been led astray by Satan. Let our Lord’s priorities become our own.

Not only does our text lead us to the conclusion that death is not the end of life, it informs us that death is the way to life. The death of Christ became the way in which men could have eternal life. His death meant that He suffered and paid the penalty for our sins. By believing in Christ we become identified with His death, burial, and resurrection, which is symbolized by baptism (cf. [Rom. 6:1](javascript:%7b%7d)ff.). But not only is death the way to life (dying in Christ to sin), it is, for the Christian, the way of life. We are taught that we must daily “take up our cross,” we must die to self-will and self-interest. The way of life is death to self. It is the way of the cross.

In the final analysis, the ultimate issue is our definition of “life.” For Satan, “life” was but mere physical existence. In order to maintain this kind of “life” it was necessary, according to Satan’s value system, to disobey the will of the Father, to act independently and in rebellion against God. Christ’s definition of “life” was life in its fullness, life in fellowship, harmony, and union with God. In order to maintain this kind of “life” our Lord found it necessary to obey God, even it that meant experiencing death.

What does “life” mean to you? The beer commercials (not to mention others) portray a very superficial view of life. For the Christian, Christ is our life ([Col. 3:4](javascript:%7b%7d)). More than this, for the Christian, life is Christ ([Phil. 1:21](javascript:%7b%7d)). May you experience this kind of life, and never settle for anything less, which is all Satan has to offer. To follow him is to pursue the path of death.

59 “Nevertheless the temptations in the wilderness were special temptations. They were not merely intended to tempt Jesus as Man, but to attack Him as the Messiah. This is evident from the fact that the temptations came immediately after His baptism when He had finally taken upon Himself His vocation as Saviour, and when God, by means of the heavenly voice, had given His approval to His decision and conduct, and had also equipped Him for carrying out this vocation by the special impartation of the Holy Ghost in all His fullness.”

“These temptations were, therefore, not the ordinary temptations such as Adam, the head of the old fallen humanity, had also to endure, but the special temptations which Jesus as Head of the new humanity had to experience. ‘And it is not simply a question here, as in our conflicts, whether a given individual shall form part of the kingdom of God; it is the very existence of this kingdom that is at stake. Its future sovereign, sent to found it, struggles in close combat with the sovereign of the hostile realm’ (Godet, in loc.).” Norval Geldenhuys, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke, The New International Commentary on the New Testament Series* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975 [reprint]), pp. 157-158.

60 Unger writes that both the Hebrew and the Greek terms rendered “tempt” are “… used in different senses; not always involving an evil purpose, as an inducement to sin.” Unger’s Bible Dictionary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1966), p.1082. He goes on to point out that God tested Abraham ([Gen. 22:1](javascript:%7b%7d)) and Israel ([Exod. 16:4](javascript:%7b%7d)), without inciting them to sin. Satan, of course tempts men in an effort to encourage them to sin (e.g. [1 Cor. 7:5](javascript:%7b%7d)). Men can also tempt God by demanding that He prove Himself real to them (Ed. 16:2, 7, 17; [Num. 20;12](javascript:%7b%7d); [Ps. 78:18, 41](javascript:%7b%7d)).

61 “The baptism, the genealogy, and the temptation are linked formally by the repetition of the expression “Son of God” (3:22; 3:38; 4:3,9); the baptism, temptation, and concluding summary are formally connected by references to the Holy Spirit (3:22; 4:1; 4:14). If one reads the temptation story aright, therefore, it will be heard in the context of3:21—4:15.” Charles H. Talbert*, Reading Luke: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Third Gospel* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1984), p. 44.

62 “Plummer rightly observes in this connection that ‘the fact that the solicitations came wholly from without, and were not born from within, does not prevent that which was offered to Him being regarded as desirable. The force of a temptation depends, not upon the sin involved in what is proposed, but upon the advantage connected with it. And a righteous man, whose will never falters for a moment, may feel the attractiveness of the advantage more keenly than the weak man who succumbs; for the latter probably gave way before he recognized the whole of the attractiveness; or his nature may be less capable of such recognition. In this way the sinlessness of Jesus augments His capacity for sympathy: for in every case He felt the full force of temptation’ (in loc.). And Westcott remarks at Hebrews ii. 18: ‘Sympathy with the sinner in his trial does not depend on the experience of sin, but on the experience of the strength of the temptation to sin, which only the sinless can know in its full intensity. He who falls yields before the last strain.’”

“If we bear these considerations in mind we shall realize that the Saviour experienced the violence of the attacks of temptation as no other human being ever did, because all others are sinful and therefore not able to remain standing until the temptations have exhausted all their terrible violence in assailing them.” Geldenhuys, p. 157.

My difference with Plummer’s position, as espoused by Geldenhuys, is that there was no great (external) advantage in the offer of Satan, just as there was no inner urge. When you stop to think about it, when one sees sin for what it is, there is no great advantage to it, except for the inner promptings of the flesh to indulge self and to rebel against God. Adam and Eve were enticed to partake of the forbidden fruit because the consequences of disobedience were denied, the character and goodness of God was questioned, and the benefits of eating the forbidden fruit were overstated. In the final analysis, Adam and Eve believe Satan and not God. Our Lord, however, saw things as they really were, and thus Satan’s offers held no great attraction, so far as I can see.

63 “[Luke 4:1-13](javascript:%7b%7d) must be read against the background of Jesus as the culmination of all that God had been doing in the history of Israel and as the second Adam … The temptations of Jesus thereby become antitypical of the experience of Israel in the wilderness and of the original pair in the garden: whereas those who came before fell, Jesus, as the second Adam and the true culmination of Israel’s heritage, shows the way to victory, reversing Adam’s fall and Israel’s sin. Thanks to the power of God’s Spirit, he has become the first of a new humanity, the leader of the faithful among the people of God. Because he has won the victory and has poured out the Spirit ([Acts 2:33](javascript:%7b%7d)), his followers have the possibility of similar victory in their spiritual warfare.” Talbert, p. 47.

64 While in Luke the challenge of Satan is to “tell this stone to become bread” (4:3), Matthew’s account reads, “command that these stones become bread” (4:3). The change from singular to plural is not troubling, nor is it difficult to explain. Each account summarizes in very few words a temptation which may have occurred over a period of time. Thus Satan likely repeated this challenge several times in several places. In one place there may have been one stone, which may have looked like a loaf of bread. In another place there may have been several small stones, which could have had the appearance of several small loaves or rolls. Thus, each account is both accurate and true, and yet both accounts depict the same temptation.

65 I think it would be a serious mistake to think that our Lord was referring to but one verse in Deuteronomy, as opposed to the lesson of the entire book as it bore on the wilderness experience of Israel, particularly chapters 1-8, which draw upon lessons which could be learned from the past.

66 Tony Walter, *Need, the New Religion* (Downers Grove: Inter Varsity Press, 1985).

**Luke Chapter 4**[J.C. Ryle](http://gracegems.org/23/ryle_sermons.htm), 1858

**Section 21. Christ's Temptation in the Wilderness, Luke 4:1-13**

*And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And he ate nothing during those days. And when they were ended, he was hungry. The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread." And Jesus answered him, "It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone.’" And the devil took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, and said to him, "To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will. If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours." And Jesus answered him, "It is written, "‘You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve.’" And he took him to Jerusalem and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, for it is written, "‘He will command his angels concerning you, to guard you,’ and "‘On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.’" And Jesus answered him, "It is said, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’" And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time.*

The first event recorded in our Lord's history, after His baptism — is His temptation by the devil. From a season of honor and glory — he passed immediately to a season of conflict and suffering. First came the testimony of God the *Father*, "You are my beloved Son." Then came the sneering suggestion of *Satan*, "*If* you are the Son of God." The portion of Christ will often prove the portion of Christians. From great privilege to great trial, there will often be but a step.

**Let us first mark in this passage — the power and unwearied malice of the devil.** That *old serpent* who tempted Adam to sin in Paradise — was not afraid to assault the second Adam, the Son of God. Whether he understood that Jesus was "God manifest in the flesh" may perhaps be doubted. But that he saw in Jesus, One who had come into the world to overthrow his kingdom — is clear and plain. He had seen what happened at our Lord's baptism. He had heard the marvelous words from Heaven. He felt that the great Friend of man was come — and that his own dominion was in peril. The Redeemer had come. The prison door was about to be thrown open. The lawful captives were about to be set free.

All this, we need not doubt — Satan saw, and resolved to fight for his own. The *prince of this world* would not give way to the *Prince of peace* without a mighty struggle. He had overcome the first Adam in the *garden* of Eden — why should he not overcome the second Adam in the *wilderness*? He had spoiled man once of Paradise — why should he not spoil him of the kingdom of God.

Let it never surprise us, if we are tempted by the devil. Let us rather expect it, as a matter of course, if we are living members of Christ. The Master's lot will be the lot of His disciples. That mighty and malicious spirit who did not fear to attack Jesus himself — is still going about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. That *murderer* and *liar* who vexed Job, and overthrew David and Peter — still lives, and is not yet bound.

If he cannot rob us of Heaven — he will at any rate make our journey there painful. If he cannot destroy our souls — he will at least bruise our heels. (Genesis 3:15.) Let us beware of despising him, or thinking lightly of his power. Let us rather put on the whole armor of God, and cry to the strong for strength. "Resist the devil — and he will flee from you." (James 4:7.)

**Let us mark, secondly — our Lord Jesus Christ's ability to sympathize with those who are tempted.** This is a truth that stands out prominently in this passage. Jesus has been really and literally tempted Himself.

It was proper that He who came "to destroy the works of the devil" — should begin His own work with a special conflict with Satan. It was proper that the great Shepherd and bishop of souls, should be fitted for His earthly ministry by strong temptation, as well as by the Word of God and prayer. But above all, it was proper that the great High Priest and advocate of sinners — should be one who has had personal experience of conflict, and has known what it is to be in the fire. And this was the case with Jesus, It is written that He *suffered* being tempted." (Hebrews 2:18.) How much He suffered, we cannot tell. But that His pure and spotless nature did suffer intensely — we may be sure.

Let all true Christians take comfort in the thought that they have a Friend in Heaven, who can be touched with the feeling of their infirmities. (Hebrews 4:15.) When they pour out their hearts before the throne of grace, and groan under the burdens which daily harass them — there is One making intercession for them, who knows their sorrows. Let us take courage. The Lord Jesus is not an "austere man." He knows what we mean when we complain of temptation, and is both able and willing to give us help.

**Let us mark, thirdly — the exceeding subtlety of our great spiritual enemy, the devil.** Three times we see him assaulting our Lord, and trying to draw Him into sin. Each assault showed the hand of a master in the art of temptation. Each assault was the work of one acquainted with every weak point in human nature by long experience. Each deserves an attentive study.

Satan's first device, was to persuade our Lord to DISTRUST HIS FATHER'S PROVIDENTIAL CARE. He comes to Him, when weak and exhausted with forty days' hunger — and suggests to Him to work a miracle, in order to gratify a carnal appetite. Why should He wait any longer? Why should the Son of God sit still and starve? Why not "command this stone to become bread?"

Satan's second device, was to persuade our Lord to GRASP AT WORLDLY POWER BY UNLAWFUL MEANS. He takes Him to the top of a mountain and shows Him "all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time." All these, he promises to give Him — if He will but "fall down and worship him." The concession was small — and the promise was large. Why not by a little momentary act — obtain an enormous gain?

Satan's last device, was to persuade our Lord to an act of PRESUMPTION. He takes Him to a pinnacle of the temple and suggests to Him to "cast Himself down." By so doing he would give public proof that He was one sent by God. In so doing He might even depend on being kept from harm. Was there not a text of Scripture, which specially applied to the Son of God, in such a position? Was it not written that "angels should bear Him up?"

On each of these three temptations, it would be easy to write much. Let it be sufficient to remind ourselves, that we see in them, the *three favorite weapons of the devil*. UNBELIEF, WORLDLINESS, and PRESUMPTION — are three grand engines which he is ever working against the soul of man, and by which he is ever enticing him to do what God forbids, and to run into sin.

Let us remember this, and be on our guard. The *acts* that Satan suggests to us to do, are often in appearance trifling and unimportant. But the *principle* involved in each of these little acts, we may be sure — is nothing short of rebellion against God. Let us not be ignorant of Satan's devices!

**Let us mark lastly — the manner in which our Lord resisted Satan's temptations.** Three times we see Him foiling and baffling the great enemy who assaulted Him. He does not yield a hair's breadth to him. He does not give him a moment's advantage. Three times we see Him using the same weapon, in reply to his temptations — "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." (Ephesians 6:17.) He who was "full of the Holy Spirit," was yet not ashamed to make the Holy Scripture His weapon of defense, and His rule of action.

Let us learn from this single fact, if we learn nothing else from this wondrous history — the high *authority* of the Bible, and the immense value of a *knowledge* of its contents. Let us read it, search into it, pray over it, diligently, perseveringly, unweariedly. Let us strive to be so thoroughly acquainted with its pages — that its texts may abide in our memories, and stand ready at our right hand in the day of need. Let us be able to appeal from every perversion and false interpretation of its meaning — to those thousand plain passages, which are written as it were with a sunbeam. The Bible is indeed a *sword* — but we must take heed that we know it well, if we would use it with effect.

**The Fast and the Temptation of Christ - Matthew 4:1-11**

by Martin Luther [*https://www.monergism.com/fast-and-temptation-christ-matthew-41-11*](https://www.monergism.com/fast-and-temptation-christ-matthew-41-11)

I. THE FASTING OF CHRIST  
  
I. This Gospel is read today at the beginning of Lent in order to picture before Christians the example of Christ, that they may rightly observe Lent, which has become mere mockery: first, because no one can follow this example and fast forty days and nights as Christ did without eating any food. Christ rather followed the example of Moses, who fasted also forty days and nights, when he received the law of God on mount Sinai. Thus Christ also wished to fast when he was about to bring to us, and give expression to, the new law. In the second place, Lent has become mere mockery because our fasting is a perversion and an institution of man. For although Christ did fast forty days, yet there is no word of his that he requires us to do the same and fast as he did. Indeed he did many other things, which he wishes us not to do; but whatever he calls us to do or leave undone, we should see to it that we have his Word to support our actions.  
  
But the worst of all is that we have adopted and practiced fasting as a good work: not to bring our flesh into subjection; but, as a meritorious work before God, to atone for our sins and obtain grace. And it is this that has made our fasting a stench and so blasphemous and shameful, so that no drinking and eating, no gluttony and drunkenness, could have been as bad and foul. It would have been better had people been drunk day and night than to fast thus. Moreover, even if all had gone well and right, so that their fasting had been applied to the mortification of the flesh; but since it was not voluntary it was not left to each to do according to their own free will, but was compulsory by virtue of human commandment, and they did it unwillingly, it was all lost and to no purpose. I will not mention the many other evils as the consequences, as that pregnant mothers and their offspring, the sick and the weak, were thereby ruined, so that it might be called a fasting of Satan instead of a fasting unto holiness. Therefore we will carefully consider how this Gospel teaches us by the example of Christ what true fasting is.  
  
The Scriptures present to us two kinds of true fasting: one, by which we try to bring the flesh into subjection to the spirit, of which St. Paul speaks in 2 Cor 6,5: "In labors, in watchings, in fastings." The other is that which we must bear patiently, and yet receive willingly because of our need and poverty, of which St. Paul speaks in 1 Cor 4, 11: "Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst," and Christ in Mt 9,15: "When the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, then will they fast." This kind of fasting Christ teaches us here while in the wilderness alone without anything to eat, and while he suffers his penury without murmuring. The first kind of fasting, one can end whenever he wills, and can satisfy it by food; but the other kind we must observe and bear until God himself changes it and satisfies us. Hence it is much more precious than the first, because it moves in greater faith.  
  
This is also the reason that the Evangelist with great care places it first: Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness, that be might there fast and be tempted, so that no one might imitate his example of their own choice and make of it a selfish, arbitrary, and pleasant fasting; but instead wait for the Spirit, who will send him enough fastings and temptations. For whoever, without being led by the Spirit, wantonly resorts to the danger of hunger or to any temptation, when it is truly a blessing of God that he can eat and drink and have other comforts, tempts God. We should not seek want and temptation, they will surely come of themselves; we ought then do our best and act honestly. The text reads: Jesus was led up of the Spirit into the wilderness; and not: Jesus himself chose to go into the wilderness. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God." Rom 8, 14. God gives his blessings for the purpose that we may use them with thanksgiving, and not that we may let them lie idle, and thus tempt him; for he wishes it, and forces us to fast by the Spirit or by a need which we cannot avoid.  
  
This narrative, however, is written both for our instruction and admonition. First, for instruction, that we should know how Christ has served and helped us by his fasting, hunger, temptation and victory; also that whoever believes on Christ shall never suffer need, and that temptation shall never harm him; but we shall have enough in the midst of want and be safe in the midst of temptation; because his Lord and Head triumphed over these all in his behalf, and of this he is assured, as Christ says in John 16,33: "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." God, who was able to nourish Christ forty days without any food, can nourish also his Christians.  
  
Secondly, this is written for our admonition, that we may in the light of this example also cheerfully suffer want and temptation for the service of God and the good of our neighbor, like Christ did for us, as often as necessity requires it; which is surely accomplished if we learn and confess God's Word. Therefore this Gospel is sweet consolation and power against the unbelief and infamy of the stomach, to awaken and strengthen the conscience, that we may not be anxious about the nourishment of our bodies, but be assured that he can and will give us our daily bread.  
  
II. THE TEMPTATION OF CHRIST.  
  
But as to how temptation takes place and how it is overcome, is all very beautifully pictured to us here in Christ. First, that he is led up into the wilderness, that is, he is left solitary and alone by God, angels and men, by all creatures. What kind of a temptation would it be, if we were not forsaken and stood not alone? It is, however, painful when we do not feel anything that presents its back to us; as for example, that I should support myself and have not a nickel, not a thread, not a twig, and I experience no help from others, and no advice is offered. That means to be led into the desert and to be left alone. There I am in the true school, and I learn what I am, how weak my faith is, how great and rare true faith is, and how deeply unbelief is entrenched in the hearts of all men. But whoever has his purse, cellar and fields full, is not yet led into the desert, neither is he left alone; therefore he is not conscious of temptation.  
  
Secondly, the tempter came forward and attacked Christ with these very same cares of food for the body and with the unbelief in the goodness of God, and said: "If thou art the Son of God, command that these stones become bread," as if he should say: Yes, trust thou in God and bake and cook nothing; only wait patiently until a roasted fowl flies into your mouth; do you now say that you have a God who cares for you; where is now your heavenly Father, who has charge of you? Yea, it seems to me he lets you in a fine condition; eat now and drink from your faith, let us see how you will satisfy your hunger; yea, when you have stones for bread. What a fine Son of God you are! How fatherly he is disposed toward you in that he fails to send you a slice of bread and permits you to be so poor and needy; do you now continue to believe that you are his son and he is your father? With like thoughts he truly attacks all the children of God. And Christ surely felt this temptation, for he was no stock nor stone; although he was and remained pure and without sin, as we cannot do.  
  
That Satan attacked Christ with the cares for daily food or with unbelief and avarice, Christ's answer proves, in that he says: "Man shall not live by bread alone;" that sounds as if he said: thou wilt direct me to bread alone and dost treat me as though I thought of nothing but the sustenance of my body. This temptation is very common also among pious people, and they especially feel it keenly who have children and a family, and have nothing to eat. Therefore St. Paul says in I Tim 6, 10 that avarice is a root of all kind of evil; for it is a fruit of unbelief. Do you not think that unbelief, care and avarice are the reasons people are afraid to enter married life? Why do people avoid it and live in unchastity, unless it be the fear that they must die of hunger and suffer want? But here we should consider Christ's work and example, who suffered want forty days and nights, and finally was not forsaken, but was ministered to even by angels.  
  
Thirdly, behold how Christ resists this temptation of bread, and overcomes; he sees nothing but stones and what is uneatable then he approaches and clings to the Word of God, strengthens himself by it and strikes the devil to the ground with it. This saying all Christians should lay hold of when they see that there is lack and want and everything has become stones, so that courage trembles, and they should say: What were it if the whole world were full of bread, still man does not live by bread alone, but more belongs to life, namely, the Word of God. The words, however, are so beautiful and powerful that we must not pass over them lightly, but carefully explain them.  
  
These words Christ quotes from Deut. 8,3, where Moses says: "Thy God humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by everything that proceedeth out of the mouth of Jehovah doth man live." That is as much as to say: Since God permits you to hunger and you still continue to live, you ought indeed to grasp the thought that God nourishes you without bread through his Word; for if you should live and sustain yourself by bread alone then you must continually be full of bread. But the Word, that nourishes us is, that he promises us and causes it to be published that he is our God and desires to be our God.  
  
Thus now, the meaning of Moses and of Christ is: Whoever has here God's Word and believes, has both blessings; the first, where he is in want and has nothing, but must suffer hunger, that Word will sustain him, so that he will not die of hunger nor perish, just as well as if he had abundance to eat; for the Word he has in his heart nourishes and sustains him without eating and drinking. But has he little to eat, then a bite or slice of bread will feed and nourish him like a kingly meal; for not only bread but the Word of God also nourishes the body naturally, as it creates and upholds all things, Heb 1, 3. The other blessing he will also enjoy, namely, that finally bread will surely be at hand, come whence it will, and should it rain from heaven like manna where none grows and none can grow. In these two thoughts every person can freely trust, namely, that he must in time of hunger receive bread or something to eat, or if not, then his hunger must become so moderate and bearable that it will, nourish him even as well as bread does.  
  
What has been said of eating and feeding the body he understood also of drinking, clothing, house, and all our needs: namely that although he still permits us to become naked and suffer want for clothing, house etc., clothing must finally be at hand, and before it fails the leaves of the trees must become coats and mantles; or if not, then the coats and garments that we wear must never grow old; just as happened to the Children of Israel in the desert Deut. 8, 2-4, whose clothing and shoes never wore out. Likewise the wild wilderness must become their houses, and there must be a way where there is no way; and water, where there is no water; stones must become water. For here stands God's Word, which says: "He cares for you;" and St. Paul in 1 Tim 6, 17: "God giveth us richly all things to enjoy;" and Mt. 6,33-34: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Be not therefore anxious for the morrow." These and like words must continue true and stand forever firm.  
  
All this one may indeed learn from his own daily experiences. For it is held, and I almost believe it, that there are not as many sheaves of wheat grown as there are people living on the earth; but God daily blesses and increases the wheat in the sack, the flour in the tray, the bread on the table and in the mouth, as Christ did. John 6, 12 f. It is also noticeable that as a rule poor people and their children are fatter and their food reaches farther and agrees with them better than is the case among the rich with all their provisions. However that the godless at times suffer need, or in times of famine many die of hunger, is caused by a special plague as pestilence, war etc. In other ways we see that in all things it is not the food, but the Word of God that nourishes every human being.  
  
Now that God sustains all mankind by bread, and not by the Word alone, without bread, is done to the end, that he conceals his work in the world in order to exercise believers; just as he commanded the children of Israel to arm themselves and to fight, and yet it was not his pleasure that victory should come through their own sword and deeds; but he himself was to slay their enemies and triumph with their swords and through their deeds. Here it might also be said: The warrior was not victorious through his sword alone, but by every word that proceeded out of the mouth of God, as David sings, Ps 44,6: "For I will not trust in my bow, neither shall my sword save me." Also Ps 147, 10 and 33, 16-17: "He taketh no pleasure in the legs of a man. A mighty man is not delivered by great strength. A horse is a vain thing for safety." Yet he uses man and the horse, the sword and bow: but not because of the strength and power of man and of the horse, but under the veil and covering of man and the horse he fights and does all. This he proves in that he often did and daily does the same without man and the horse, where there is need and he is not tempted.  
  
Thus he does also with the bread; since it is at hand, he nourishes us. through it and by means of it, so that we do not see it and we think the bread does it; but where it is not at hand, there he nourishes us without the bread, only through the Word, as he does by means of the bread; so that thus bread is God's helper, as Paul says in 1 Cor 3,9: "We are God's fellow workers," that is, through and under our outward ministerial office he gives inwardly his grace, which he also could give and does give indeed without our office; but since the office is at hand, one should not despise it nor tempt God. Thus God sustains us outwardly by bread; but only inwardly he gives that growth and permanency, which the bread cannot give. And the summary is: All creatures are God's larva and mummery, which he permits to work with him and to help to do everything that he can do and does do otherwise without their cooperation, in order that we may cleave alone to his Word. Thus, if bread is at hand, that we do not therefore trust the more; or if there is no bread present, that we do not therefore despair the more; but use it when it is at hand, and do without it, when there is none; being assured that we shall still live and be sustained at both times by God's Word, whether there be bread or no bread. With such faith one overcomes avarice and temporal care for daily bread in the right way.  
  
Christ's second temptation is opposed to the first and is repugnant to common sense. Its substance is that the devil teaches us to tempt God; as he here calls to Christ to cast himself down from the pinnacle of the temple, which was not at all necessary, since there were surely good steps upon which he could descend. And that this temptation was for the purpose of tempting or making trial of God, the answer of Christ also clearly proves, when he says: "Thou shalt not make trial of the Lord thy God." By this he shows that the devil wished to lead him into temptation.  
  
And this very appropriately follows the first temptation. For where the devil feels a heart trusts God in times of want and need, he soon ceases his temptation of bread and avarice and thinks: Wait, wilt thou be very spiritual and believing, I will assist you: He approaches and attacks on the other side, that we might believe where God has not commanded us to believe, nor wills that we should believe. For example, if God gave you bread in your homes, as he does yearly everywhere in the world, and you would not use it, but instead you would cause need and want yourselves, and say: Why, we are to believe God; I will not eat the bread, but will patiently wait until God sends me manna from heaven. See, that would be tempting God; for that is not believing where all is at hand that we need and should have. How can one believe that he will receive what he already has?  
  
Thus you see here that Satan held before Christ want and need where there was neither want nor need; but where there was already good means by which to descend from the temple without such a newly devised and unnecessary way of descending. For this purpose Satan led Christ to the top of the temple, in the holy city, says the Evangelist, and placed him in a holy place. For he creates such precious thoughts in man that he thinks he is filled with faith and is on the true way of holiness; and yet he does not stand in the temple, but is only on the outside of the temple, that is, he is not in the true holy mind or life of faith; and yet he is in the holy city; that is, such persons are found only in Christendom and among true Christians, who bear a great deal of preaching about faith. To these persons he applies the sayings of Scripture. For such persons learn Scripture also by daily hearing it; but not farther than they can apply it to their erroneous opinions and their false faith. For Satan here quotes from the Psalter, Ps 91, 11-12, that God commanded the angels that they should protect the children of God and carry them on their hands. But Satan like a rogue and cheat fails to quote what follows, namely, that the angels shall protect of God in all their ways. For the Psalm reads thus,: "For he will give his angels charge over thee to keep thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone;" hence the protection of the angels does not reach farther, according to the command of God, than the ways in which God has commanded us to walk. When we walk in these ways of God, his angels take care of us. But the devil omits to quote "the ways of God" and interprets and applies the protection of the angels to all things, also to that which God has not commanded; then it fails and we tempt God.  
  
Now, this temptation seldom takes place in outward things as bread, clothing, house, etc. For we find many foolhardy people, who risk and endanger life, their property and honor, without any need of doing so; as those do who wilfully enter into battle or jump into the water, or gamble for money, or in other ways venture into danger, of whom the wise man says in Sirach 3, 27: "Whoever takes pleasure in danger, will thereby be overcome;" for in the degree one struggles to get a thing, will he succeed in obtaining it; swimmers are likely to drown and good climbers likely to fall. Yet it is seldom that those of false faith in God abstain from bread, clothing and other necessities of life when they are at hand. As we read of two hermits, who would not accept bread from the people, but thought God should send it to them directly from heaven; so the consequence was that one died and went to his father, the devil, who taught him such faith and left him fall from the pinnacle.  
  
But in spiritual matters this temptation is powerful when one has to do with the nourishment not of the body but of the soul. Here God has held before us the person and way, by which the soul can be forever nourished in the richest manner possible without any want, namely Christ, our Saviour. But this way, this treasure, this provision no one desires. Everybody seeks another way, other provisions to help their souls. The real guilty ones are those who would be saved through their own work; these the devil sets conspicuously on the top of the temple. They follow him and go down where there is no stairway; they believe and trust in their own work where there is no faith nor trust, no way nor bridge, and break their necks. But Satan makes use of and persuades them through the Scriptures to believe that the angels will protect them, and that their way, works and faith are pleasing to God, and who called them through the Scriptures to do good works; but they do not care how falsely they explain the Scriptures.  
  
Who these are, we have identified often enough and very fully, namely, work righteous persons and unbelieving hypocrites under the name of being Christians and among the congregation of Christian people. For the temptation must take place in the holy city and one temptation is seldom against another. In the first temptation want and hunger are the reasons that we should not believe; and by which we become anxious to have a full sufficiency, so that there is no chance for us to believe. In the second temptation, however, the abundance and the full sufficiency are the reasons that we do not believe, by which we become tired of the common treasure, and every one tries to do something through his own powers to provide for his soul. So we do; if we have nothing, then we doubt God and believe not; if we have abundance, then we become tired of it and wish to have something different, and again we fail to believe. There we flee and turn against want and seek abundance: here we seek want and flee from the abundance we have. No, whatever God does for us, is never right. Such is the bottomless, wickedness of our unbelief.  
  
Christ's third temptation consists in temporal honor and power; as the words of the devil clearly teach, when Satan shows and offers Christ all the kingdoms of the world if he would worship him. To this class those belong who fall from their faith for the sake of honor and power, that they may enjoy good days, or not believe further than their honor and power extend. Such are also the heretics who start sects and factions in matters of faith among Christians, that they may make a great parade before the world and soar aloft in their own honor. Hence one may place this third temptation on the right, and the first on the left side. The first is the temptation of misfortune, by which man is stirred to anger, impatience and unbelief; the third and last, the temptation of prosperity, by which man is enticed to lust, honor, joy, and whatever is high. The second or middle temptation is spiritual and deals with the blind tricks and errors that mislead reason from faith.  
  
For whom the devil cannot overcome with poverty, want, need and misery, he attacks with riches, favor, honor, pleasure, power and the like, and contends on both sides against us; yea, "he walketh about," says St. Peter in 1 Pet 5,8, so that if he cannot overthrow us either with suffering or love, that is, with the first temptation on the left or the third on the right, he retires to a higher and different method and attacks us with error, blindness and a false understanding of the Scripture. If he wins there, we fare ill on all sides and in all things; and whether one suffers poverty or has abundance, whether he fights or surrenders, all is lost. For when one is in error, neither patience in misfortune nor firmness in prosperity helps him; seeing that in both heretics are often powerful and the devil deliberately acts as if he were overcome in the first and last temptations, although he is not, if he has only won in the middle or second temptation. For he lets his own children suffer much and be patient, even at times to spurn the world; but never with a true and honest heart.  
  
Now these three temptations taken together are heavy and hard; but the middle one is the greatest; for it attacks the doctrine of faith itself in the soul, and is spiritual and in spiritual matters. The other two attack faith in outward things, in fortune and misfortune, in pleasure and pain etc., although both severely try us. For it is sad that one should lay hold of heaven and ever be in want and eat stones where there is no bread. Again, it is sad to despise favors, honor and possessions, friends and associates, and let go what one already has. But faith, rooted in God's Word, is able to do all things; is faith strong, then it is also easy for the believer to do this.  
  
The order of these temptations, as they met Christ, one cannot absolutely determine; for the Evangelists give them in different order. The temptation Matthew places as the middle one, Luke places last, Luke 4,4 f.; and again, the temptation Luke places in the middle, Matthew places last, as if little depended on the order. But if one wished to preach or speak of them, the order of Luke would be the better. For it is a fine opportunity to repeat and relate that the devil began with want and misfortune; when that did not work, then he began with prosperity and honor; and last, when all fails, that he wantonly and wickedly springs forth and strikes people with terror, lies and other spiritual tricks. And since they have no order in practice and experience, but as it happens that a Christian may be attacked at one time with the last, and another time with the first etc., Matthew gave little attention to the order for a preacher to observe in speaking of this theme. And perhaps it was also the same with Christ through the forty days that the devil held to no order, but today attacked him with this and tomorrow with another temptation, and again in ten days with the first and so on, just as occasion was given.  
  
At last angels approached and served him. This must have taken place in a literal sense, that they appeared in a bodily form and gave him to eat and drink, and just as at a table, they ministered to all his wants. For the service is offered outwardly to his body, just like, no doubt, the devil, his tempter, also appeared in a bodily form, perhaps like an angel. For, seeing that he places him on the pinnacle of the temple and shows him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment, he must have been a higher being than a man, since he represents himself as a higher being, in that he offers him all the kingdoms of the world and permits himself to be worshiped. But he surely did not bear the form of the devil, for he desires to be beautiful when he lies and deceives, as St. Paul says of him in 2 Cor 11, 14: "For even Satan fashioneth himself into an angel of light."  
  
This however is written for our comfort, that we may know that many angels minister also to us, where one devil attacks us; if we fight with a knightly spirit and firmly stand, God will not let us suffer want, the angels of heaven would sooner appear and be our bakers, waiters and cooks and minister to all our wants. This is not written for Christ's sake for he does not need it. Did the angels serve him, then they may also serve us.