

Matthew 4:1-11 "The Temptation of Jesus"—part two^{**}

Main Idea: There are three scenes in the account of Jesus' temptation in Matthew 4:1-11. As we look carefully at these three scenes, we learn how the tempter works and how our Savior responded to him.

I. Scene #1: Consider the setting of Jesus' temptation (1-2).

II. Scene #2: Consider the specifics of Jesus' temptation (3-10).

A. The devil tempted Jesus to perform a miracle for Himself (3-4).

1. His strategy: He appealed to a legitimate need.
2. His aim: He wanted Jesus to act independently of God.
3. Jesus' response: He quoted Deuteronomy 8:3.

B. The devil tempted Jesus to prove Himself (5-7).

1. His strategy: He used religion to cover up his deadly intent.
 - a. He took Jesus to the House of God.
 - b. He quoted from the Word of God.
 - c. He talked about the angels of God.
2. His aim: He wanted Jesus to act presumptuously towards God.
 - a. Beware of using a Bible verse and ignoring the context of that verse.
 - b. Beware of using a Bible verse and ignoring other Bible verses.
3. Jesus' response: He quoted Deuteronomy 6:16.
 - a. He made it clear He would not do what Israel did at Massah.
 - b. He made it clear that He would not question the care of His Father.
 - c. He made it clear He would not use His position to justify self-focused action.

C. The devil tempted Jesus to promote Himself (8-10).

1. His strategy: He offered Jesus the best the world can give.
 - a. The tempter seeks to entice through the senses.
 - b. The tempter loves to make promises.
 - c. The tempter tries to make evil appear good.

"Temptation will give oil and fuel to our lusts...It will lay the reins on the neck of a lust, and put to the sides of it, that it may rush forward like a horse into the battle. A man knows not the pride, fury, madness of a corruption, until it meet with a suitable temptation." --John

2. His aim: He wanted Jesus to act rebelliously against God.

“Prosperity knits a man to the World. He feels that he is ‘finding his place in it’, while really it is finding its place in him. His increasing reputation, his widening circle of acquaintances, his sense of importance, the growing pressure of absorbing and agreeable work, build up in him a sense of being really at home in earth, which is just what we want. You will notice that the young are generally less unwilling to die than the middle-aged and the old.” --The demon *Screwtape*

3. Jesus’ response: He told Satan to leave and quoted Deuteronomy 6:13.

- a. The Lord commands that we worship Him.
- b. The Lord commands that we serve Him alone.

III. Scene #3: Consider the outcome of Jesus’ temptation (11).

- A. The devil did exactly what Jesus told him to do.
- B. The angels gave Jesus exactly what He needed and deserves.

Make It Personal: We learn from the temptation of Jesus that...

1. We have a powerful enemy.
2. We have a far more powerful Savior.
3. We need the continual help of the Savior to overcome the enemy.

Suppose you received a call that your best friend was in the hospital, and so you went to visit. As you entered the room, the sight took your breath away, for there was your life-long comrade, but you hardly recognized him. He’d lost a bunch of weight since you’d last seen him three weeks ago. His face was twisted with pain and life-sustaining tubes were coming out of his body.

“What happened to Pete?” you asked his wife in amazement. “The last time I saw him he seemed just fine. I can’t believe my eyes!”

She shook her head and responded slowly, “He was fine until fifteen days ago. That’s when he started taking some so-called ‘health supplement’ he learned about from a trainer at the gym. In fact, the trainer gave him a free week’s supply to try it out. Pete took the tablets for four days, seemed fine, said he never felt better in his life, and then on the fifth day he collapsed, and has been going down hill ever since. Until today, that is. The doc says they finally figured out what medicine to give him to counteract the poison that was killing him. He should be out of the hospital by the end of the week.”

Fifteen minutes later you leave the room, stunned, and not just because of your friend’s predicament. Your head is spinning because you go to the same gym where Pete goes, although he does the morning workout and you go in the afternoon. What’s more, you’ve had the same trainer, and just yesterday that trainer gave you a seven-day supply of the same ‘health supplement’ Pete took. You were actually planning to take the first pill that very evening with your meal.

Now answer this. Would your knowledge of Pete’s experience affect what you did with that ‘health supplement’? My hunch is, it would. I’m quite confident that knowing that your friend just about died from taking those pills would prompt you to take action to get them out of your house and for certain to prevent them from entering your body.

That’s what our current series, *Lead Us Not Into Temptation*, is all about. I’m thankful that there’s an

antidote for sin, and that of course is the person and work of Jesus Christ. That's good news for those who are perishing in their sins, for if they'll come to the Great Physician, they can be healed from the destructive effects of the disease of sin.

But Christ is interested, not only in delivering us *out of* our sin, but also in keeping us *from* it in the first place. He taught us to pray, "Lead us not into temptation (Matt. 6:13)." Yes, there's hope once sin has occurred, but how much better it is to stop the sin ahead of time, and to do that we must get down to business about the subject of temptation. [\[1\]](#)

My aim in this series is simple. I don't want you to end up in the hospital. I want us to learn how to detect and resist the voice of the tempter when he offers us his miracle health supplements. That's why three weeks ago we looked at the world's first temptation in Genesis 3. That's also why two weeks ago we examined James 1:13-15 carefully, in order to learn how the process of temptation works. And that's why last week we began to ponder the temptation of Jesus in Matthew 4, for it's here that we learn from our Savior how to resist temptation.

Every day you and I are bombarded with temptations, and quite frankly, we cannot stand in our own strength. We need Jesus. We need His wisdom to detect the subtleties of the tempter. We need His power to resist the enticements that allure our fleshly desires. Thankfully, we have His example.

There are three scenes in the account of Jesus' temptation in Matthew 4:1-11. Last time we examined scene one, and the first temptation in scene two. Let's do a quick review, and then work our way through the rest of this amazing event.

I. Scene #1: Consider the setting of Jesus' temptation (1-2).

Verses 1-2 "Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry."

Then, says Matthew. There's the setting. Right after Jesus was baptized, and right after God the Father announced, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased (Matt. 3:17)," *then*...the Spirit of God led Jesus into the desert to be tempted. Matthew makes it clear that in the Lord's temptation there was both divine control (He was "led by the Spirit into the desert") and the devil's attack ("to be tempted by the devil").

We discussed last time that Jesus was tempted in order to show His humility, His humanity, His holiness, and His unmatched love for sinners. We also learned that the devil can do only what God allows him to do, and that the devil will do all that he can do to persuade humans to dishonor God.

II. Scene #2: Consider the specifics of Jesus' temptation (3-10).

In the first temptation...

A. The devil tempted Jesus to perform a miracle for Himself (3-4). In verse 3, "The tempter came to him and said, 'If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.'"

1. *His strategy: He appealed to a legitimate need.* Bread is a good thing. You need bread to live. If You're the Son of God, Jesus, like the voice from heaven just said, then this should be no problem for you. And if Your Father loves you, like He said, surely He wouldn't want You to be hungry. So go ahead. Turn these stones into bread.

2. *His aim: He wanted Jesus to act independently of God.* Did Jesus have the power to turn stones into bread? Without question. It won't be long before He's turning a sack lunch into enough bread

to feed 5,000 hungry men. But when the Son of God left heaven to come to earth, He laid aside the independent use of His omnipotence, humbled Himself, and chose a course of self-denial that would take Him to the cross. Would He now renege on that commitment? Would He act independently of His Father?

Verse 4—"Jesus answered, 'It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

3. *Jesus' response: He quoted Deuteronomy 8:3.* By quoting Deuteronomy 8:3, Jesus made four things quite clear. One, there is something more important than bread. Two, He wasn't going to use His power for personal gain. Three, He wasn't going to act independently of God. And four, He was going to live by God's Word, for that's the kind of life that pleases God, a Bible-focused, Bible-saturated, Bible-directed life.

That's where we left off last time. Now let's break new ground with temptation #2.

B. The devil tempted Jesus to prove Himself (5-7). Verses 5-6 "Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. 'If you are the Son of God,' he said, 'throw yourself down. For it is written: 'He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'"

That's interesting. Where did the devil take Jesus this time to tempt Him? To the cesspool of Corinth? No, to the holy city, Jerusalem. And where in the holy city? To a bar? No. The red light district? No. He took Him to the holiest place in the holy city, to the *temple*.

Does it surprise you to see the devil going to the temple? We ought not be surprised, for the devil loves religion. It's one of his favorite tools of trade. Notice his strategy here, for you'll see it in your own life, perhaps today.

1. *His strategy: He used religion to cover up his deadly intent.* And in this case, not false religion either. He used three legitimate, God-given objects in his attempt to get Jesus to dishonor His Father.

a. He took Jesus to the House of God. Amazing. The devil took Jesus to the temple, to the place Jesus later referred to as "His Father's House" (John 2:16). In fact, he took Jesus to the highest point of the very place God Himself had authorized as the place where sinful mankind could find forgiveness and mercy. Was this a vision, or did the devil actually transport Jesus from the desert to the temple peak? The text seems to indicate the latter, that the devil actually took Jesus to the House of God.

b. He quoted from the Word of God. Specifically, from Psalm 91:11-12. "It is written," he said. Please notice that the devil knows the Bible. In warfare any general worth his salt makes it a priority to know his enemy. The devil knows God—remember he used to serve in his presence. And the devil knows God's Word—he despises it but he knows it and loves to use it with susceptible targets. And please notice another religious tool in the devil's toolbox...

c. He talked about the angels of God. "He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone."

What did the devil used to be before he tried to usurp the place of God? He was an angel. What are angels? Hebrews 1:13 says they are "ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation." God created angels to serve Him, but of course, Lucifer rejected that role, for he wanted to be served rather than serve. It's interesting to hear him quoting from Psalm 91 where the psalmist records what God commands angels to do. The devil is here quoting the commands he should have kept. More about that in a moment.

For now, please notice the devil's strategy. He takes Jesus to the House of God, quotes from the Word of God, and talks about the angels of God. What's he doing? He's using religion to cover up his deadly intent.

Frederick Bruner comments, "Where the first temptation smelled like a bakery, the second has the aroma of a Greek Orthodox liturgy at Easter. While the devil in the first temptation had tried to reach Jesus through his weak spot, his hungry stomach, he now tries to reach Jesus through his strong spot, his faith in God's Word (by which Jesus had held off the first temptation). If the evil one cannot make us carnal perhaps he can make us fanatical; if he cannot make us supersecular by seeking wonder bread, perhaps he can make us superspiritual by suggesting leaps of faith."^[2]

You see, that's what was at stake in this second temptation.

2. *His aim: He wanted Jesus to act presumptuously towards God.* If you are the Son of God—and You are, remember? That's what the voice said—then throw Yourself down and take God at His Word. Let that crowd down below see that here's a man who really believes the Bible, and let God above see that here's a Son who doesn't just say He believes His Father but *shows* it. It's time to name it and claim it Jesus, that is, if you really believe the Bible.

Last month a Wisconsin mother took the stand to defend her husband against the charge of murdering their own child. The crime? The parents failed to take their sick child to the doctor, and sadly, their eleven-year-old daughter, Madeline, died of undiagnosed diabetes. Leilani Neumann told the jury in her husband's trial that she thought her daughter's March 2008 illness was a test of her religious faith and she didn't take the girl to a doctor because that would have been "complete disobedience to what we believe." She also testified, "We thought even the lifelessness was something that she would come out of. Everything for us is about faith. It is about trusting in God. We either believe in God's word or we don't." The parents are now facing up to twenty-five years in prison.^[3]

Beloved, the devil loves to use religion to get us to act presumptuously towards God. He even uses the Bible to entice us to claim God's promises, but as Jesus will make clear in His response, there's a difference between *trusting* God and *testing* God.

This is a good place to mention two warnings regarding our use of the Bible.

a. Beware of using a Bible verse and ignoring the context of that verse.

What's obvious in Matthew 4:6 is that the devil quoted the Bible. What's not so obvious is that he left out part of the verse he quoted and completely omitted the next verse, which says, "You will tread upon the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent (Ps. 91:13)." Any idea why the devil didn't mention to Jesus a verse that talks about stomping on a serpent?

The fact is, you can use the Bible to justify just about any course of action, including sinful action, *if* you take a verse out of context. In Bible study context is critical. Look at the verses that come before and after the particular verse you are considering. Sure, some verses talk about healing, but what's the context of those verses? And not just the context of that book either. Make sure you look at the verse in light of the context of the whole Bible. The interpretation of one verse must be consistent with the meaning of the rest of the verses in the Bible.

b. Beware of using a Bible verse and ignoring other Bible verses. That's the very point Jesus makes in His response. The devil said, "It is written." To which Jesus replied in verse 7, "It is *also* written." The devil quoted Psalm 91:11-12. Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 6:16. What's Jesus doing? He's doing what we must do. He's comparing Scripture with Scripture. He's interpreting Scripture in light of Scripture.

Now let's take a close look at Jesus' response in verse 7, "Jesus answered him, 'It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

3. *Jesus' response: He quoted Deuteronomy 6:16.* In so doing our Savior made three things perfectly clear...

a. He made it clear He would not do what Israel did at Massah. That's the context of

Deuteronomy 6:16. Jesus quoted the first part of the verse, but the full verse states, "Do not test the LORD your God as you did at Massah." In that verse Moses is talking to the Israelites just prior to his death, and he challenges them not to do what they did at Massah.

What did they do at Massah? Exodus 17:2 tells us what happened, "So they quarreled with Moses and said, 'Give us water to drink.' Moses replied, 'Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you put the LORD to the test?'" And then in Exodus 17:7, "And he called the place Massah and Meribah because the Israelites quarreled and because they tested the LORD saying, 'Is the LORD among us or not?'"

At Massah Israel questioned God and demanded that He prove His love for them by giving them water. Israel, God's *son*, tested the Lord. But by quoting Deuteronomy 6:16 Jesus made it clear that He was a Son who would not do that. He would not *test* His Father.

b. He made it clear that He would not question the care of His Father. Remember, Jesus is out in the desert. He hasn't eaten for forty days. But unlike Israel, He's not grumbling. Jump off of the temple? To prove that My Father cares for Me, you say. Why would I do that? I don't need Him to do something spectacular to prove His love for Me. Do I trust Him? With My life. Will I test Him? Never.

Beloved, one of the reasons the Lord allows us to experience times of need, like Jesus faced in the wilderness, is to give us the opportunity to trust Him. Are you facing a time of testing right now? Then learn from your Savior.

c. He made it clear He would not use His position to justify self-focused action. He would not jump off the temple to prove His deity. He would not force His Father to send the angels. To the contrary, He would deny Himself, and not just this day, but all the way to the cross. As He later would say, "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many (Matt. 20:28)."[\[4\]](#)

I want you to see what the devil is doing here. Notice the progression in these two temptations. He's moved from bread to the Bible. As Bruner explains, "The first temptation is to aim at our weakest spot, where obviously it is easiest to make a person fall. But the second technique, surprisingly, is not to aim at our next weakest spot; more cleverly it is to aim at our strength. This is a kind of spiritual jiu-jitsu. For if it is easiest to get us where we are weakest, it is next easiest to get us where we are strongest. This is so because strength is not an obvious problem."[\[5\]](#)

Well said. *We're Bible believing Baptists. We believe the Book. We live by the Book. We've got a doctrinal statement based on the Book, and we can defend it.* That's fine, but please realize that where we think we're strong, we are also quite vulnerable. And that's because the devil knows the Bible, too, and he knows it better than we do.

Please realize that the evil one's tactics often involve using Bible verses to justify action that flatly contradicts other Bible verses. For instance, he says...

"You're not going to talk to her again, are you, not after what she did to you! Why, she lied about you and you know what the Bible says about lying!" Yes, the Bible clearly forbids deceitful talk, but does it have anything to say about giving people the silent treatment?

By the way, church-hoppers often fall prey to this line of attack. "You deserve a better church," the tempter suggests. "You'd be lowering your standards, why, you'd be lowering *God's* standards if you were satisfied with that church, with all its problems. You'd be a hypocrite to stay in that church, and you know what the Bible says about hypocrisy." Yes, but doesn't the Bible also have something to say about the danger of developing a critical spirit?

The demon Screwtape had this to say about how he used the temptation to church hopping to knock Christians off course. Screwtape, of course, is the fictional character in C. S. Lewis's classic, *The Screwtape Letters*, a book which records the advice the senior demon, Screwtape, to his junior demon in training named Wormwood. Here's what he said as he began letter #16:

My Dear Wormwood, You mentioned casually in your last letter that the patient has continued to attend one church, and one only, since he was converted, and that he is not wholly pleased with it. May I ask what you are about? Why have I no report on the causes of his fidelity to the parish church? Do you realise that unless it is due to indifference it is a very bad thing? Surely you know that if a man can't be cured of churchgoing, the next best thing is to send him all over the neighbourhood looking for the church that "suits" him until he becomes a taster or connoisseur of churches.

The reasons are obvious... The search for a "suitable" church makes the man a critic where the Enemy wants him to be a pupil. What He wants of the layman in church is an attitude which may, indeed, be critical in the sense of rejecting what is false or unhelpful, but which is wholly uncritical in the sense that it does not appraise—does not waste time in thinking about what it rejects, but lays itself open in uncommenting, humble receptivity to any nourishment that is going. (You see how grovelling, how unspiritual, how irredeemably vulgar He is!) This attitude, especially during sermons, creates the condition (most hostile to our whole policy) in which platitudes can become really audible to a human soul. There is hardly any sermon, or any book, which may not be dangerous to us if it is received in this temper. So pray bestir yourself and send this fool the round of the neighbouring churches as soon as possible. [\[6\]](#)

In the first temptation, the devil tried to get Jesus to perform a miracle for Himself; in the second, to prove Himself; in the third...

C. The devil tempted Jesus to promote Himself (8-10). Verses 8-9, "Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. 'All this I will give you,' he said, 'if you will bow down and worship me.'"

Notice the strategy of the tempter in this third temptation...

1. *His strategy: He offered Jesus the best the world can give. Watch him at work. First...*

a. The tempter seeks to entice through the senses. He took Jesus to a high mountain and showed Him two things: 1) all the kingdoms of the world (Rome? the Han dynasty in China? The Parthian empire? Others?), and 2) The splendor (lit. the 'glory') of those kingdoms. The devil *showed* Jesus all this, for the devil loves to entice through the human senses.

b. The tempter loves to make promises. "I'll give it all to You, Jesus." In Luke's parallel account the devil adds, "For it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to (Luke 4:6)." Is that true? Remember, the devil is a liar, so if he says he's giving you a good gift, you can be sure there's something he's *not* telling you. Like in this case, what's going to happen to those kingdoms, namely, they're going to be destroyed. Who wants a bunch of kingdoms that are all going to be destroyed in the end?

c. The tempter tries to make evil appear good. The verbs "bow down" and "worship" are in the aorist tense, indicating the devil is asking for just one simple act. *I'll give it all to You, Jesus, and all You'll have to do is bow Your knee to me once, just once.*

That's how the tempter works, my friends. He seeks to entice us through our senses. He makes promises without informing us of consequences. And he loves to make evil appear good.

Bruner explains, "The third temptation is the temptation to make our work God. This is the most powerful and subtle of all temptations. Jesus' work as Messiah was to win the world. His work can now be successfully accomplished if he will just bow one knee." [\[7\]](#)

Then Bruner adds, "It is very difficult for serious Christians to distinguish between (1) their work for God and (2) God. We are constantly tempted to think that if one succeeds the other succeeds as well; and if one is defeated the other is defeated. Therefore we will sometimes do absolutely anything to keep our work for God from failing. But the moment we do *absolutely anything* to keep our work for God from failing we have made our work God and, perhaps without realizing it, we have worshiped Satan." [\[8\]](#)

I'm a pastor, and I must confess Bruner has been reading my mail. I want my work for God to succeed. I want to make disciples of Christ locally and worldwide. I want to see people saved in this community, and I want to see this church grow. And I want to see the ministries of this church flourish and new ministries established and missionaries sent to the world. I want to reach the world for Christ!

But Bruner is right. I'm prone at times to confuse my work for God *with God*.

Do you know where you're vulnerable? Maybe for you it's your work as a parent. God gave you the task of raising those children for Him, but you've made your work for God *your God*, so that you justify missing the corporate worship of God because you're spending time with your kids.

Or maybe your work is your work, your *job* I mean. God gave you a job, and you work hard at it. That's good. But you're tempted to give your job a higher place in your life than the One who gave you your job.

That's how temptation works, my friends. As the Puritan, John Owen, pointed out 350 years ago, "Temptation will give oil and fuel to our lusts... It will lay the reins on the neck of a lust, and put to the sides of it, that it may rush forward like a horse into the battle. A man knows not the pride, fury, madness of a corruption, until it meet with a suitable temptation."^[9]

What was the devil after in this third temptation? Simply stated, this...

2. *His aim: He wanted Jesus to act rebelliously against God.* Oh, he didn't put it that way, but that's what it boils down to. The devil is offering Jesus a shortcut. *You want the world, Jesus. I know that's why You've come to earth. Okay, I'll give it to You, without a fight, too. Just give me a little respect. That's all I've ever wanted.*

The devil is trying to entice Jesus to achieve His messianic work of winning the world without going to the cross. Peter later made a similar suggestion. It happened right after Jesus told the disciples He was going to go to Jerusalem, would suffer many things, be killed, and then raised to life on the third day. Peter took Jesus aside and began to rebuke Him, saying (Matt. 16:22), "Never, Lord! This shall never happen to you!" Do you recall Jesus' response? Matthew 16:23 states, "Jesus turned and said to Peter, 'Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men.'" Jesus recognized the source of Peter's proposal for a cross-less Messiah, for He'd heard it before in the wilderness. *Get behind me, Satan!*

By the way, I used to think that as I got older, the attraction of the world would lessen. But that's not the case. When I was a teenager, I remember thinking a lot about heaven. But now in my mid-life years, I must confess I find myself thinking a lot about keeping what I've got in this world. When I was seventeen, I could care less about the stock market, or how the economy was affecting my standard of living. But a taste of prosperity has changed that. Listen to Screwtape again:

Prosperity knits a man to the World. He feels that he is 'finding his place in it', while really it is finding its place in him. His increasing reputation, his widening circle of acquaintances, his sense of importance, the growing pressure of absorbing and agreeable work, build up in him a sense of being really at home in earth, which is just what we want. You will notice that the young are generally less unwilling to die than the middle-aged and the old.^[10]

Beloved, the devil is more than willing to give us the world if that's what it takes to bump God to second place in our lives. Jesus, of course, saw right through the devil's tactics and...

3. *Jesus' response: He told Satan to leave and quoted Deuteronomy 6:13.* Notice verse 10, "Jesus said to him, 'Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'" Satan, you offer Me the kingdoms of the world, but you can take your offer with you as you leave My presence. And here's why.

a. **The Lord commands that we worship Him.** Furthermore...

b. **The Lord commands that we serve Him alone.**

So ended the third temptation.

III. Scene #3: Consider the outcome of Jesus' temptation (11).

Verse 11 says, "Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him." Two things happened at this point. One...

A. The devil did exactly what Jesus told him to do. Jesus said, "Get away from Me!" And the devil left Him. Oh, he'll be back, and in fact, Luke 4:13 says he left "until an opportune time." Nonetheless, such is the power of Jesus' word when He speaks. What He says is what happens, and when He tells the devil to leave, the devil leaves.

At that moment something else happened...

B. The angels gave Jesus exactly what He needed and deserves. The text says they "attended" Him, a term that often means "to serve food" (8:15; 25:44; 27:55). Isn't that interesting? The devil tempted Jesus to turn stones into bread, but He refused, and then tempted Him to throw Himself into the arms of angels, but again He refused. Now, though He didn't ask for either bread or angels, His Father sends both to Him. The angels now show up and give Him the help He needs and rightfully deserves.

Make It Personal: We learn from the temptation of Jesus that three things are true...

1. *We have a powerful enemy.* 1 Peter 5:8 says he's prowling around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. It's the truth, beloved. We have a powerful enemy.

2. *We have a far more powerful Savior.* We've seen a taste of His power in Matthew 4, but He's just getting started. He's going to do miracles at the end of Matthew 4, including healing the diseased and setting free the demon-possessed. And He's going to deliver a powerful message we call the Sermon on the Mount in chapters 5-7 and conclude it by calling on people to believe His words and put them in practice. He's going to calm the storm in chapter 8, and give sight to a blind man in chapter 9. And it's all going to climax when He rides into Jerusalem on a colt in chapter 21, and goes to the cross in chapter 27, and leaves His tomb in chapter 28.

My friend, yes, we have a powerful enemy. But we have a far more powerful Savior!

3. *We need the continual help of the Savior to overcome the enemy.* This is the key to overcoming temptation, brothers and sisters. We need what God has graciously offered to us, the *continual help* of the ever-present Savior! Here's a fitting prayer of response...

O let me feel Thee near me, the world is ever near;

I see the sights that dazzle, the tempting sounds I hear;

My foes are ever near me, around me and within;

But Jesus, draw Thou nearer, and shield my soul from sin

**Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

[1] I'm indebted to John Owen's insight, taken from chapter nine in *Of Temptation*: "Should you go into an hospital, and see many persons lying sick and weak, sore and wounded, with many filthy diseases and distempers, and should inquire of them how they fell into this condition, and they shall all agree to tell you such or such a thing was the occasion of it,—“By that I got my wound,” says one, “And my disease,” says another,— would it not make you a little careful how or what you had to do with that thing or place? Surely it would...The case is so with entering into temptation.”

[2] Frederick Dale Bruner, p. 108.

[3] <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/32191966/>

[4] In the words of Philippians 2, “Who being in very nature God...made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant.” Servants don't make demands. They serve. And that's what Jesus came to do.

[5] Bruner, p. 108.

[6] C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*, letter #16.

[7] Bruner, p. 112.

[8] Bruner, p. 112.

[9] John Owen, *Of Temptation*, chapter three.

[10] C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*, letter #28.