

Luke 4:1-13

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, ²where he was tempted by the Devil for forty days. He did not eat anything during those days. When they came to an end, he was hungry. ³The Devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread."

⁴Jesus answered him, "It is written: 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.'"

⁵The Devil led him up to a high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. ⁶The Devil told him, "I will give you all this power and the glory of these kingdoms, because it has been entrusted to me, and I can give it to anyone I want. ⁷So, if you worship me, it will all be yours."

⁸Jesus answered him, "It is written: 'You shall worship the Lord your God and serve him only.'"

⁹The Devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the pinnacle of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down from here, ¹⁰because it is written:

He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you.

¹¹And,

they will lift you up with their hands,
so that you will not strike your foot against a stone."

¹²Jesus answered him, "It says: 'You shall not test the Lord your God.'"

¹³When the Devil had finished every temptation, he left him until an opportune time.

Temptation

I.

"All this can be yours!" The Devil sounds like a cheesy infomercial, doesn't he?

"Are you tired of just being tired all the time? Does it seem like your comfort and convenience are continually shunted to the side in favor of someone else's? Take back your comfort! I have the answer for you!"

If *that* infomercial doesn't work, Satan has another ready to go.

"Are you tired of always being considered second-best? Does someone else always supercede your authority? It doesn't have to be that way. Not if you follow my simple two-step process. Follow my directions, and I'll give you all the authority you could ever want!"

Maybe still another. This time a little flattery.

"Hey there, discerning shopper, you have proven that you aren't going to jump at just anything. You've passed by all kinds of opportunities that have ensnared others. I know you can't be fooled. Let me remind you of what you already know. God promises to take care of you. Show your trust in God. Throw yourself down from the temple heights; that will demonstrate your trust in God.

Smarmy. All lies and empty promises. It's all too obvious what is going on.

II.

Or is it?

The thing about cheesy infomercials is...they are just going with what works. It's been a tried and true method for years. Hype the product. Build everything up. Make sure to show the horrible downside of *not* using this product, and how this product can save you from all kinds of heartache. Then the advertiser hits you with: "How could you not take advantage of this offer? All this can be yours if you act now!"

Satan's efforts *had* worked. For millennia.

Angels abandoned God to follow the directions of the Devil and his empty promises. Adam

and Eve were the only human beings before Jesus to live completely sin-free. They knew joy and bliss. They buckled under the pressure of a promise of gaining godlike status.

The Devil's wiles had *always* worked. They work well. They work on you.

The trick is to make you numb. It starts slowly. A little shock here, another little shock there. Eventually behavior and attitudes in society that once seemed shocking don't even move your shock-meter. He just pushes the envelope. A little more, and then a little more.

He does it because it works.

Rationalization is one of the strongest human drives. All that is necessary is to push just a little bit so that you rationalize your behavior.

Just a peek at the pictures on the internet. The search was innocent enough, what can it hurt to look just a little longer?

I've had a hard day at work. Just a couple beers or a few nips at the bottle to take the edge off. But then you stay a little bit longer at the bar and drown your sorrows. The next thing you know, it's a daily habit you can't afford, but you can't resist. Or maybe it's marijuana now that it's legal in Michigan. "Everybody" is saying it's less harmful than cigarettes. "Everybody" can't possibly be wrong. I'm just taking the edge off, being mellow for a little while. There's no problem with that physically or emotionally.

So others are going to get hurt in the process of my divorce. I've been hurt too much. *My* pain is too deep. *My* feelings have to take first place sometimes. I have the power to make my life better, no matter what it might do to anyone else.

The Devil's infomercials don't have a lot of variety. While the individual circumstances might be wildly different, the end game is *always* the same—he tries to lure you into putting yourself above God's will.

III.

As cheesy and obvious as The Devil's infomercials *always* are, they work. They work *every* time.

"Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, ²where he was tempted by the Devil for forty days" (Luke 4:1-2, EHV). Do you know why Jesus went into the wilderness to face temptation? Jesus went for *you*. He went *because* Satan's infomercials are so unfailingly successful. He went to break the unbeaten streak in a monumental way.

How hard is it, really, for Satan to win? You and I don't put up much of a fight. All he needs is to find the right button to start our rationalization motor and he wins. If he could do the same with Jesus, he would not only win, but win the eternal battle. One tiny victory in one little battle in the Devil's fight against Jesus would mean he had won the whole war.

Imagine the energy and resources that went into the 40-day-temptation battle in the wilderness. He threw everything into it.

"[Jesus] was tempted by the Devil for forty days. He did not eat anything during those days. When they came to an end, he was hungry. ³The Devil said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread'" (Luke 4:2-3, EHV).

"Look, Jesus, your comfort and convenience have had to take a back seat for 30 years already as you live your life being the perfect, unblemished Lamb required for the sacrifice. You don't have to live this way. You have the power. Use it, and be comfortable."

One miracle would have shown a lack of trust in God, who promised to provide for him. One stone turned into bread would have eased the suffering and pain for which he had come into the

world in the first place. Jesus stands firm, and he does so using the same tool he provides you: “Jesus answered him, ‘It is written: “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God”” (Luke 4:4, EHV).

Next The Devil showed him the world. “All this can be yours,” was the promise. It wasn’t his to give. It wasn’t available by worshiping Satan. “Jesus answered him, ‘It is written: “You shall worship the Lord your God and serve him only”” (Luke 4:8, EHV).

The Devil’s masterpiece of infomercials used God’s Word and twists it around to make it say something it doesn’t. “The Devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the pinnacle of the temple. ‘If you are the Son of God,’ he said, “throw yourself down from here, ¹⁰because it is written: “He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you.” ¹¹And, “they will lift you up with their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone”” (Luke 4:9-11, EHV).

The Devil’s infomercials had *always* worked. It had been easy, really. Satan never has to try very hard because he is prodding that rationalization button. It’s going to work. There is no doubt. It always does.

Except...it didn’t. “Jesus answered him, ‘It says: “You shall not test the Lord your God”” (Luke 4:12, EHV).

Imagine the scope of temptation Jesus endured! You cave. I cave. At some point, no matter how hard we try and how good our intentions are, we rationalize. We make excuses about how *this* time there is a reason that what I’m doing is ok. *This* time God will understand. It’s *never* true. But we convince ourselves that it is. Just this *one* time is an exception. And the Devil wins the battle against us.

How intense the temptations must have been for Jesus! Weak from hunger though he surely was without a meal in 40 days, he did not even give a thought to his comfort and convenience. We are given only three examples of the things the Devil bombarded Jesus with during the entire ordeal. Battered and knocked around emotionally though he surely was after 40 days of the most intense temptation, Jesus *never* rationalized. He never prevaricated—turning aside from the truth.

He stood. Solidly. Firmly. For you. For me.

In his stand he showed that he was, indeed, the perfect, unblemished Lamb required to be the sacrifice for the sins of the world—the One who would make us right with God once again.

IV.

One more thing Jesus did. In his perfect stand against the Devil he showed us how to stand.

To be sure, we need a Savior, not an example. None of us will ever be able to fully withstand the infomercials of Satan. Yet Jesus has given us the formula. Lean on him. Lean on his Word. Use the bits of Scripture to fight back.

Our Hymn of the Day today reminded us how we stand. A mighty *fortress* is our God. We stand *not* in his shadow or in his example, but in his *success!* Jesus stood *for* us.

The “old evil foe” comes against us in power. “On earth is not his equal.”

“But for us fights the valiant one, whom God himself elected.” Jesus won the 40-day battle and every other battle on our behalf. He not only remained the sinless Lamb for the sacrifice, he was sacrificed on the cross for us and rose again from the dead. “Though devils all the world should fill, all eager to devour us, we tremble not, we fear no ill. They shall not overpower us. This world’s prince may still scowl fierce as he will, he can harm us none. He’s judged; the deed is done! One little word can fell him.”

One word of Scripture. Jesus has won the battle and has given you the tools to win your little victories. Fight back, knowing that the ultimate victory is yours, and you will be with the Victor in heaven. Amen.