

An Example of Victory

Matthew 4:1-11

August 15, 2010

Intro

After Jesus was baptized by John in the Jordan River, he was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness where he fasted for 40 days and nights. After he had fasted, he became hungry and Scripture tells us that the devil then came and tempted him.

As we studied last week, Jesus came as a representative of our sin. After identifying with sinners through his baptism, Jesus now identifies with sinners in severe temptation.

This becomes a significant event in human history. Adam and Eve were tempted by the devil in the Garden of Eden and they failed. Israel walked in the desert for 40 years and they also failed. In fact, that entire generation that came out of Egypt died in the wilderness with the exception of Joshua and Caleb.

Where Adam and Eve failed and where Israel failed, Jesus was victorious. This is very significant because Jesus comes as God's representative to us ("if you've seen me, you have seen the father") and he also comes to represent us to God as our great high priest.

Hebrews 4:14-15, Therefore, since we have a great high priest... Jesus the Son of God; let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.

The righteousness of Christ and his victory in spiritual warfare are given to us as a gift and as an example. For we have been given the same Holy Spirit as well. These are great spiritual lessons that we must absolutely understand for our own spiritual victory.

I. Understand the Schemes of the Enemy

- One thing that we must be absolutely clear about is that we are in spiritual warfare. And Jesus becomes for us the example of spiritual victory.
- If we are to be victorious in battle then we must understand the schemes of our enemy and this encounter with Jesus becomes an example for us because it reveals not only the schemes of our enemy, but also how we must respond.
- It's interesting that just as Jesus was about to begin his ministry, he began first by fasting for 40 days and nights. This weakens the body, and it also demonstrates mastery over its desires.

1 Corinthians 9:25, Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things... Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim... but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.

- And it was on this very point that the enemy began his spiritual attack against the Son of God.
- At the end of Jesus' fast, his body became hungry, "Since you are the Son of God, turn these stones into bread."

A. Let God's Word have authority in your life

- This first temptation of the enemy is not as simple as it may first appear. At first, it appears to be a straightforward temptation for bread.
- But taking a closer look, there is great insight for great spiritual victory. Let's paraphrase it.

- “Since you are the Son of God, use your authority over these stones to satisfy your body’s desire for food.”
- There's certainly nothing wrong with bread, but God did not want Jesus to have bread at this moment. It was not God's time. Later, the angels of God would minister to Jesus and no doubt provide him with bread. But at this moment God's will for Jesus was to fast and have nothing.
- The enemy was tempting Jesus to exercise authority for his body's agenda rather than God's.
- Jesus’ answer to the enemy is powerful as he quotes from Deuteronomy.

Deuteronomy 8:3, “He humbled you and let you be hungry, and fed you with manna which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you understand that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord.”

- Do you want to truly live? Then let God's Word have authority in your life. Trust God that He will meet your needs according to His best for you.
- The enemy is not tempting him by offering him bread; he's reminding him of his hunger and suggesting that he should provide his own bread.
- “Get out from under God's authority and make the decisions your body desires, after all, you have the authority to do it...”

Matthew 8:5-10 Authority and faith

- First of all, our body is to be under our authority, and we are to be under the authority of God's Word, then we will truly live, then we will truly be victorious spiritually, then we will truly have the authority that God desires for us to have.

Illus – God has given us authority over our children so that we might teach them to be under the authority of God. That is the key for them to be men and women they are called to be; spiritually victorious and leaders amongst men and women.

B. Don’t ask God to prove who He is

- Here again it's important for us to understand the schemes of the enemy. Here, he's asking Jesus to put himself in a perilous situation so that God would be forced into saving Him.
- What's interesting is that the enemy even quotes scripture as part of his temptation. That's an important insight into the schemes of the enemy as well. But this is most certainly a misuse of scripture. The misuse, and therefore abuse of scripture is dangerous because it could give a false sense of self-righteousness.
- He quotes from Psalm 91, but it's wrongly applied. We must be very careful to rightly understand and apply God's Word.

Illus - Pastor Chuck Smith told the story of when his son was about to get a spanking and decided to quote scripture, thinking it might help him. “Dad, the bible says to spare the rod and spoil the child.”

- Warren Wiersbe once said, “We can prove almost anything from the Bible, if we isolate text from context and turned them into pretext.”

2 Timothy 2:15, Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.

- Notice that **Psalm 91** says, “*He* will give His angels charge concerning you.”
- If we set ourselves in a situation like this, then we are the ones who are commanding what the angels of God do. We would have placed ourselves in authority over God and therefore over God's angels in demanding that God fulfill His Word according to our agenda.
- The temptation here is to make God man's servant rather than to have man be God's servant. “Do something so that God has to react to you,” and now you're telling God what to do. But God doesn't work that way.

James 4:3, You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.

- Here's the essential problem to this temptation. If God is able to save or to provide or to heal, then some set up with a situation where God must then “prove it.”
- There is a great Old Testament illustration that gives us a correct understanding of our relationship under God's sovereign hand.

Daniel 3:13-18 Meshach, Shadrach and Abed-nego.

Illus – Is God able to heal? Then take a step off this pinnacle and stop taking your insulin. But in so doing have we not ask God to move at our command?

- Too many people are concerned with their outward circumstances and they are not aware of what God wants to do in the inner man.

1 Peter 1:5-7 The proving of your faith.

James 1:2-3, Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.

C. Worship and serve God only

- In the third temptation, the enemy took him to a high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and all their glory. He then offered these to Jesus if Jesus would only worship him.
- There is an interesting assumption behind this temptation; that the enemy had the authority to offer these kingdoms to Jesus.

Luke 4:6, And the devil said to Him, “I will give You all this domain and its glory; for it has been handed over to me, and I give it to whomever I wish.”

- Paul wrote that the enemy is the god of this world. He certainly holds influence over much of the world and may have temporary power to control it, but ultimately all things are under God's control.

1 Corinthians 4:4, ... in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving...

- Satan was trying to make a deal. “I will give all these to You now, if You'll only compromise who You are.” Again, Jesus’ answer is powerful. “Worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only;” for he knew that these would be given to Him in God's time.

Revelation 11:15, “The kingdom of this world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever.”

- The world and all its glory is certainly very tempting for many people, but to go after those things is to worship and serve them; for God knows that we serve that which we worship.

II. Do All to Stand Firm

- This is an example of spiritual warfare, but it's also an example of spiritual victory.
- We need to know the schemes of the devil and be prepared for spiritual battle so that we can know how to stand firm in the day of temptation.

A. Put on the full armor of God

- One of the most insightful and powerful scriptures having to do with spiritual warfare is found in Ephesians chapter 6.

Ephesians 6:10-18 Be able to stand firm

- It’s important for us to pay special attention to Ephesians 6:17 where we are told to take up the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

- One of the things that should stand out to us in Matthew 4 is that Jesus uses the word of God to counter the temptation of the enemy.
- What is the main method of attack of the enemy? Answer; he is a liar, the father of lies, and a liar from the beginning. Therefore, what we need to counter lies is the truth; the word of God.
- How powerful is a lie? We only need to look at what's happening in the world today to answer the question. But it's important for us to understand, that light shines in the darkness and that truth is greater than a lie.

B. Let your soul be filled and overflowing

- Jesus was in a place where his body was weak, but we are told in the book of Luke that he went full of the Holy Spirit.
- This is a powerful insight for us to understand as well. It's not weakness in the body and makes us fall; it's weakness in the spirit. It's when our soul is empty that we long to be filled with what the pigs are eating.

Galatians 5:16, But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.

- When you're hungry, the enemy knows just the right lure.

Illus – Cookies or corn beef hash? Be satisfied at his table and the things of the world grow strangely dim.