### **The Devil and all his empty promises**

*When Jesus returned from the Jordan River, the power of the Holy Spirit was with him, and the Spirit led him into the desert. For forty days Jesus was tested by the devil, and during that time he went without eating. When it was all over, he was hungry. The devil said to Jesus, "If you are God's Son, tell this stone to turn into bread."*

*Jesus answered, "The Scriptures say, `No one can live only on food’." Then the devil led Jesus up to a high place and quickly showed him all the nations on earth. The devil said, "I will give all this power and glory to you. It has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. Just worship me, and you can have it all." Jesus answered, "The Scriptures say: `Worship the Lord your God and serve only him’!" Finally, the devil took Jesus to Jerusalem and had him stand on top of the temple. The devil said, "If you are God's Son, jump off. The Scriptures say: `God will tell his angels to take care of you. They will catch you in their arms, and you will not hurt your feet on the stones’." Jesus answered, "The Scriptures also say, `Don't try to test the Lord your God!’" After the devil had finished testing Jesus in every way possible, he left him for a while.* Luke 4: 1-13

## Background

He is known as the Devil (*means “to cast down”*), Satan (*the adversary*), Beelzebub (*lord of the flies*), Lucifer (*false light*), Prince of darkness, accuser, enemy, slanderer, destroyer, accuser, evil one, deceiver, great dragon, father of lies, god of the world, liar, murderer from the beginning, ruler, and the ancient serpent.

The Bible reveals that the evil one is the temporary ruler of this world who wages battle against goodness and God. The Devil instigates pain and suffering and then encourages us to blame God for the world’s imperfections.

The Devil used his main methods of temptation in the wilderness story. This is a most sacred story because the only possible source for it was Jesus himself. Jesus must have shared these details with his followers to prepare them for their own struggles with Satan.

This “wilderness” was 500 square miles in an area known as “The Devastation.” The rocks were sharp, jagged and warped. The bare limestone and yellow sand glowed with heat like a vast furnace. This vast wasteland stretched all the way to the Dead Sea.

The temptations closely align Jesus’ ministry with the salvation history of Israel:

* Jesus’ three quotations from Deuteronomy reflect the importance of God’s law. Jesus said he came to fulfill the law and not replace it.
* The Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness, like Israel was led during the Exodus journey.
* The forty days parallel the forty years of Israel’s testing in the wilderness.
* The temptation of the bread is similar to Israel’s test with manna.
* Moses inappropriately struck the rock as a demonstration of his power and not God’s (*thou shall not test the Lord thy God*). Jesus was tempted to test God’s power.
* The children of Israel worshiped a golden calf (*thou shall have no other gods*) and Jesus was tempted to worship a false god.

These were Jesus’ temptations. We each have different strengths and weaknesses. Our temptations may not be the same but we can learn by Christ’s example.

The **first temptation** with the bread required Jesus to perform a selfish miracle. Jesus could have used miracles to bribe others to follow him. He didn’t. Jesus only performed miracles for the Glory of God. We should never use our God-given gifts for selfish reasons.

* Jesus answered the tempter with the very words that God taught the people of Israel during the Exodus in the desert: "Man one does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD" (Deuteronomy 8:3).

The **second temptation** was to give Jesus all authority over the kingdoms of the earth. This was a hollow offer. Jesus already had God’s authority. God empowers those who believe.

* This temptation comes at a great price. Jesus need only worship the devil. Jesus quoted Scripture that tells us to worship and serve only God (Deuteronomy 6:13).

The **third temptation** took place on top of the Jerusalem temple. There a priest, daily at dawn, announced with trumpet the beginning of morning worship. The tempter misquoted Scripture and encouraged Jesus to throw himself off that temple. That would force God’s angels to protect him. Jesus would have been an overnight sensation.

* Such an act would attract attention but would not glorify God’s kingdom. God wants us to take risks for the sake of the kingdom and not for our own sake.
* Jesus quoted “the Shema” which was Israel’s confession of faith: “The LORD is our God, the LORD alone. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might." (Deut 6:4-9).
* Many faithful Jews, at the beginning and end of each day, recited these words. Jesus ended the temptations by showing Scripture can be our comfort during spiritual struggles.

## Reflections

The temptations reaffirm that Jesus was fully divine and fully human. Jesus struggled just like we do. Jesus understood. He was tempted in every way that we are. Jesus showed we can resist Satan by focusing our attention on God’s Word and not worldly ways.

Auguste Rodin is famous for public sculpture including “The Thinker.” He made two companion pieces called “The Hands of God” and “The Hands of the Devil.” The first portrays two strong hands forming a spirited man and woman from a lifeless lump of clay. The second looks like the same hands but they are purposely intent on destroying any shape or meaning.

The devil showed a willingness to adapt, improvise, and to overcome. The devil looks for subtle ways to tempt, deceive, and destroy us each and every day. We find comfort and direction in worship and God’s Holy Word.

Temptation is not a punishment for being human. It should be a force that drives us into God’s loving arms. Giving into temptation furthers human glory. Defeating temptation advances God’s glory.

The tempter visited Jesus at Caesarea Philippi when Peter tried to convince Jesus not to follow the way of the cross. Jesus said to Simon Peter the same words he said to the tempter in the wilderness “Get behind me, Satan” (Matthew 16:23). Jesus eventually rejected the tempter for all time in the Garden of Gethsemane.

C.S. Lewis’ book The Screwtape Letters mockingly portrays the Devil as spending his time convincing us he doesn’t exist so that he can get away with more havoc. The devil encourages us to do too little or too much on our own. We ignore “God’s way” and want to do things “our way.” The devil’s hymn of praise is “I did it my way.”

## TEMPTED

*Into the wilderness*

*Straightway our Lord was driven of the Spirit;*

*Swept by that stress*

*Of rapture, sun and stars were but one shining*

*Till forty days had passed*

*And, Son of Man though Son of God, He hungered.*

*Why should He fast?*

*With power to make stones bread; why fear, with succor*

*Of angels at his call;*

*Why fail, when all the world was to His Father*

*A golden ball,*

*One out of many, but a little present*

*For our beloved Son?*

*Ecstasy, faint with it’s own bliss, encountered*

*The scorpion*

*Of self, love’s enemy. For love is holy*

*In loving; love is safe*

*Only in saving; love, despised, rejected,*

*The world’s white waif,*

*Needs nothing that this earth can give of glory,*

*For love dwelleth in God.*

*So Christ’s immortal rose above His mortal*

*And on it trod.*

Katherine Lee Bates, 1859-1929 (author “America, the Beautiful”)

*“8Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. 9For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; 10but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end. 11When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. 12For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. 13And now* ***faith, hope, and love*** *abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.”* I Corinthians 13

**Enneagram reflections**

The evil one can tempt all types. This is when types are at their lowest. We should help each other strive for the holy part of each type. Dr David Danielson was Clinical Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at Stanford University School of Medicine. He was early pioneer of interpreting and teaching of the modern enneagram. He taught at Stanford for over 30 years. He wrote about Holy Ideals for each type. Additional details are available at his website.

<https://drdaviddaniels.com/essential-spiritual-qualities/>

Dr Danielson compared the three center numbers (3, 6, & 9) with the greatest of all spiritual gifts; faith, hope, & love. Here are his descriptions for Faith (6), Hope (3), and Love (9).

Type 3: **Holy Hope** (Law, Veracity) means things getting done according to universal laws and not upon the effort of the individual doer. This provides enduring hope for the future, which in turn allows for the expression of our own true feelings (termed “veracity”). We witness this natural unfolding when we go out into nature. This allows for truly experiencing what really needs doing and what doesn’t. Thus, there is no going away from feelings and, hence, no continuous go-ahead energy and no self-deception takes place. Then, and only then, can there be a harmonious blend of doing and being, of accomplishment and presence to self and others. The integrated Three knows that love comes from the qualities of being, which further allows for genuine expression of real feelings.

Type 6: **Holy Faith** (Courage) means true faith in self, other, and the universe knowing that nothing destroys essence which underlies all else. To me this also means grasping that nothing, even death, can destroy the divine or higher qualities and the oneness of all at the core of being. Faith allows for our meeting real danger with firmness of purpose termed courage. It also means not magnifying danger and what could go wrong. In true faith, we recognize responsibility for our own existence and in the process becoming our own authority. Then we naturally face hazardous or fearful situations by going into these not away from these or against these. Parents exemplify this in protecting their children and all of us when we go into new unexplored situations.

Type 9: **Holy Love** (Right Action) means the blissful state of unconditional love and union wherein everyone belongs equally, which allows for the bodily experience of action that is appropriate to any given situation and takes into account the self equal to, not more than or less than, all others. This gets termed “right action.” It entails our directly knowing what action supports the life and well-being of all. Inertia toward the self disappears. From this stance, empathy, care, and compassion radiate to all. There is acceptance of self without being judgmental. We take action appropriate and essential to each given situation.

## Questions

1. Gregory the Great (540-604) was the first monk ever to become pope. He initiated worship renewal based on Scripture. How does this hymn reflect Christ’s wilderness journey? Ours?

The glory of these forty days, we celebrate with songs of praise;

For Christ, by Whom all things were made, himself has fasted and has prayed.

Alone and fasting Moses saw, the loving God Who gave the law;

And to Elijah, fasting, came the steeds and chariots of flame.

Then grant us, Lord, like them to be, full oft in fast and prayer with Thee;

Our spirits strengthen with Thy grace, and give us joy to see Thy face.

2. During the Lord’s Prayer we say “Lead us not into temptation.” This has also been translated as “Save us from the time of trial.” What does this mean? Do we have to face our trials alone? Who can help? How? When? Where? Why?

3. How does Satan misuse Scripture today? How can we fight back?