

Have you ever met a pious person who says, "I thank God I have never been really tempted in 70 years!" That's what you get when you cross a crocodile and a balony sandwich -- a crock of baloney. Everybody's tempted. Temptation. What is it? Temptation always begins with a natural desire. Eat, sleep, drink, sexual desire, power, want to be liked by other people -- they are all legitimate desires. Temptation is often taking a legitimate desire and trying to fulfill it in the wrong way or at the wrong time. Satan takes a routine desire and turns it into a runaway desire. Along with the desire is deception. You are led to believe that there is nothing wrong with what you are doing, you are being denied something, or you can repent later.

What is your weak spot? Where are you most prone to temptation? Is it your temper? Is it your appetite? Is it spending? Is it your words -- You continually talk all the time and say things you later regret? Is it drinking? Is it worry about your health?

So often in our lives, we have given in to temptation. But there is one person, in this universe who was tempted in every way as we are, but never sinned. His name is Jesus. We are thankful today, that he conquered every temptation that came his way. Because he is our substitute before God. He makes it possible for us to stand righteous before God. Let's check out his strategy today: "Topple The Tower of Temptation!"

Jesus has been led out into a desert area by the Holy Spirit. He had gone 40 days without food. Now I'm not a big eater, but if I skip breakfast and then lunch, well, you'd better not get in my way when supper rolls around. Jesus had gone over a month without eating. Our reading says how the Holy Spirit led Jesus out into the desert where there was no food. God the Father wanted Jesus to trust that even though he was going to be in the desert for 40 days without food, God would take care of his Son. What this sin boiled down to was really a lack of trust in the heavenly Father. The devil wanted Jesus to say, "you know devil, you're right! I've been waiting over a month for my Father to take care of me, and look where that has gotten me! Starved and weak! This is ridiculous. It's time for me to take care of myself, so...Zap! Stone, become bread, and it's chow time! See how much better it is when I don't have to rely on my Father for everything?" The devil wanted Jesus to doubt his father's ability to take care of him. The devil is good at setting this trap for you as well. He wants you to doubt the ability of the Heavenly Father to take care of you. You know how he works. Feeling down? Have a pity party. Pop another pill. Pour another glass. Kick the dog. Yell at your spouse or friend. Look at another web page. Go shopping. Satan spots those times when we are weak and vulnerable. He knows how to jerk our chain and touch our buttons. Satan says, look at your health. It is not getting any better. That bad leg, that breathing problem, that cancer is not going away. Looks like trusting in your Heavenly Father is something you can't count on.

Jesus knew that although the Father hadn't fed him in 40 days, he didn't need to go and take matters into his own hands. God was looking out for him, and for you as well. Sometimes the Lord is going to push you to the brink, and at that time, he wants you to sit back like Jesus and say, "Ok Father, you have promised to take care of me...and I'm going to hold you to your loving promises. I'm going to trust you. Jesus tells Satan, "Man does live by bread alone, by on every word that comes from the mouth of God." When God's people wandered for 40 years in that God-awful Sinai desert area, God by the power of His word, made sure they had water to drink, food to eat, and sandals that didn't wear out. God took care of them. In fact, by the power of His Word, he can keep us alive, even without food.

When you hold your grandchild or your great grand child s in your arms when they were a baby, that child doesn't ever grab onto you as though worried that you're going to drop them. That's a good picture of the trust that the Lord wants us to have in him. He's never going to let

you down, he's never going to drop you.

Satan keeps coming after Jesus just as he keeps coming after us. "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.'" This temptation seems to be so clumsy, so foolish, almost a desperation shot from half court with only a second left in the game. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Satan shows Jesus all the kingdoms of the world in all their glory and splendor. He is presenting to Jesus the possibility of being the grand leader of the all the kingdoms of the world. People are starving. Jesus, you can handle that. World leaders in Venezuela are beating up on their people. Jesus, you can handle that. Families are fighting and not showing love and concern for each other as they should. Jesus you can handle that. The jails are overflowing with criminals. Jesus you can handle that. Terrorists are putting together bombs designed to kill and maim as many people as possible. Jesus can handle that. Think of what you could do with your power as God to make this world a better place to live. No drugs. No guns. No divorces. No nursing homes. All the glory, all the power, all the people will be praising you without the pain and suffering. Think of it Jesus. The glory without the gall, the crown without the cross, the throne of victory without the throes of death.

Jesus crushes Satan with another verse from Scripture, also from the book of Deuteronomy. Jesus answered: "It is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.'" If Jesus made the decision to help all the kingdoms of the world instead of going to the cross he would not have been worshipping and honoring the will of his heavenly Father. He would have been honoring instead the wishes of Satan.

In these last days in which we are living, Satan is still offering an alternative path to that of following Jesus and the way of the cross. Jesus tells us so clearly that he wants us to take up our cross and follow him. Satan says the way of the cross is totally out of style with people. He uses his best sales pitches to tell us that being nice to people and helping them with their problems of life is far better than telling the truth about their sin and pointing them to Jesus as the one who suffered for their sin so they can be forgiven and have eternal life with him.

Jesus did not listen to any alternate plans Satan had to offer. Jesus won a real victory over real temptation. Angels come and ministered to him. Jesus' victory is your victory. He gives you the power and strength to say, "Away from me, Satan!"

Satan does not walk away after being badly beaten and bruised by Jesus. "Then the devil took him up 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.'" Satan loves to quote the Bible. The only problem is that he drops things out or twists what Scripture says. If you read Psalm 91 carefully and in their context you will discover the devil left out the words "in all your ways." The Lord provides us with protection in all his ways. But he doesn't want us to take an unnecessary risk and then expect God to take care of us.

A pastor in Oklahoma plays with poisonous snakes to prove the Lord is taking care of him. He is bitten and then dies. Open Bible members stop reading God's Word in their personal lives because Satan has convinced them they can go out into the battles of life without the Word of God because God will protect them. The devil says: Eat whatever you want! Junk food won't hurt you. Exercise, you've got to be kidding. That's painful. Go ahead and smoke! It relaxes you. You won't get lung cancer! Have a drink. Not just one or two, but until you really feel good. Or if you are a recovering alcoholic, and you think to yourself, I will just go into the bar to

play darts and have a Diet Coke? Don't put the Lord your God to the test! Don't put yourself in a dangerous situation and expect the Lord to protect you!

If Jesus jumped from the top of the temple, and expected the heavenly Father to rescue him and the crowds to cheer wildly as if he were some super hero, then he would completely have bypassed the Father's plan for his life and taken matters into his own hands. What does Jesus do? He quotes another verse of Scripture to defeat the devil. ""Jesus answered him, 'It is also written, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

Satan knows how to get us to put our God to the test. I think of how important it is to spend time in prayer asking for the Lord to give us strength and help for each new day. It is also important to arm ourselves with the Word of God for the daily battles of life that face us. If you were a soldier serving our country or a police officer in our community you would not think of facing enemies or criminals without being well equipped with a protective vest and a gun. How foolish and sinful it would be to say, "Well, the Lord is taking care of me, I don't need to pray or read my Bible to be strengthened in my faith." Jesus dealt Satan a crushing blow. His victory is our victory especially for all those times when we have put the Lord to the test by failing to trust him as we should.

The battle in the desert was over. "When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time." One by one Jesus will continue to crush Satan. I want to end this sermon with these comforting words from Isaiah that we can use in time of temptation. "So do not fear, for I am with you, do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you: I will uphold you by my righteous right hand." Amen