

Last Wednesday afternoon at Open Bible Dr. Patrick and his wife spoke about their mission work in Pakistan. Dr. Patrick is a surgeon and owns a hospital with 30 doctors working in the facility, many who are Muslim. He mentioned how before he left 70 Christians had their homes burned to the ground by Muslim radicals. He related how a couple had a dispute over a bill with an area businessman. The businessman ran to the local mosque, and told the members there that this couple was defaming Mohammed and speaking blasphemies against his name. A mob went out and took the husband and wife and threw them into a burning kiln alive. They had three children. He related that Muslims who convert to Christianity are hung. How could human minds ever devise such great evil? About the only explanation we can come up with is that there must a source of evil somewhere so great that it takes over and controls the minds of people. We know that source of evil as Satan.

For generations Christians have gathered on this first Sunday in Lent to hear the gospel accounts in Matthew, Mark and Luke that tell us the amazing account of Jesus' victory over Satan in the wilderness. That victory means so much to us because of the daily battle we have in our lives with Satan and his evil spirits. Jesus called him a murderer from the beginning and the father of lies. When Peter boasted proudly about never being unfaithful to Jesus, Jesus told him that Satan wanted to sift him like wheat. Judas was capable of the dastardly deed of betraying Jesus because Satan entered into his heart. The vicious claws of Satan seem to be getting even longer and sharper. This morning we want to look again at how Jesus takes on Satan in combat and wins the victory. Jesus' defeat of Satan is our defeat of Satan. Consider: Victory Over 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.

And this temptation seems so innocent. "Tell this stone to become bread!" The devil almost acts like Jesus' buddy, Jesus' caregiver here. He says, "oh, you poor thing, Jesus. Did your Daddy lead you out into this desert with no food? Well, good thing you can take care of yourself. Good thing you can make this stone turn into bread...that is, if you ARE God." 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. It seems that Americans are living a lot longer than they used to live. Your retirement income might not be enough to take care of you if you live into your 90's. What is going to happen to you. Will you be like one of those people on 441/27 with a sign begging for a handout? Or 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. He tempts us to take shortcuts instead of relying

on the Lord for help. Satan says, “Throw a pity party for yourself. That’s better than relying on God’s promises and trusting the power of prayer.” Satan says, “Pop another pill, have another drink, indulge yourself in fantasies on the internet. Go to Belks or Home Depot and buy something for yourself that will make you feel better. Kick the dog when you are mad or your husband, or lash out at someone in your home and hurt them. You are going through a tough time. Release your anger and tension.”

When you held your grandchild or your child s in your arms when they were a baby, the baby 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. 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.

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. Here is a panoramic, sweeping view of the great pyramids of Egypt, and the grandeur and splendor Rome, and Mayan temples, the temples of ancient Greece and the Great Wall of China. Behind the glory and splendor is unbelievable human pain and suffering. Jesus had the power to change the world and make it a better place to live. See all those people making a mess of their lives. 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.

Satan tries to put all the pleasures of the Villages around us. He says, enjoy your life, Pickleball, Bridge, golf, water volleyball, billiards. Just stay away from that Bible, readin it, and worshiping the Lord. Don’t take time to serve the Heavenly Father.

But Jesus set his heart on serving his heavenly Father faithfully. He did not listen to any alternate plans Satan had to offer. To give up the cross even for a split second would be tantamount to giving into Satan and worshipping him. “Jesus said to him, ‘Away from me Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.’” 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.

Certainly we believe that God's angels protect us and keep us as Psalm 91 says, "He will command his angels concerning you." How could I ever forget that Saturday I was driving in my green Jeep Cherokee down I75 at 75 miles an hour on my way to preach at a Mission Festival in Ohio on a Sunday. I was passing a Semi in the far left lane. As I got past the semi, I had a double blowout on my right passenger and rear passenger wheels, I skidded to the right. The semi just missed me. No cars hit me as I eased my car off to the right side of the road. God's angels protected me that day. Now Satan could say to me, Why bother putting on two new tires, put on two tires from the junkyard with the threads sticking out of the tires. Your heavenly Father will protect you. Take an unnecessary risk, you'll be ok. 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. You've heard the popular saying when it comes to dieting and exercise, "No pain, no gain." Never was this truer than in the life of Jesus. There was no way to gain salvation for us except through the pain of the cross. 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 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.'"" Jesus did not pray "O Heavenly Father, let me do it my way. No, he prayed, "O Father, if it is possible let this cup pass from me, not my will but yours be done." Jesus stayed faithful to the task. He did not cut corners or take matters into his own hands when it came to being wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities." When he died he prayed, "Father into your hands I commit my spirit." His real victory is our real victory. His blood cleanses us for all the times we have tested our God by not relying on him as we should.

The victory that Jesus gained over Satan is my victory and your victory. Today we go home knowing we are more than conquerors through him that loved us, and knowing nothing in all creation will ever separate us from the love of God that we have in Christ Jesus our Lord, a love that we see so clearly when Jesus defeated Satan. Remember the Words of Martin Luther in his hymn a mighty Fortress about the devil. One little Word can fell him. Amen.