

## **WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD AND SERVE HIM ONLY**

Luke 4:5-13

Key Verse: 4:8

*Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.'"*

In the first temptation of Jesus, the devil tempted him to use his power to satisfy his physical needs. Jesus was very hungry after 40 days of fasting. But he did not give in to the temptation. Instead, he declared, "Man shall not live on bread alone." The second and third temptations of Jesus were on a different level. This time Satan challenged him on the spiritual level to take a shortcut in doing the work of God.

In 2012, Harvard University had a wide-spread cheating scandal. About half of 279 students in a class were found to have cheated in their exams and 70 students were forced to withdraw. Suppose you are struggling in a class, and someone offered you to write an excellent term paper for you at a fee, how would you respond? Would you take the deal to get an easy A? Would you think of God and remember his word when you make such decision? Today let us think further about temptations and how to overcome them as we study this passage.

### **I. WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD AND SERVE HIM ONLY (5-8)**

What was the second temptation of Jesus? Look at verses 5-7. *The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And he said to him, "I will give you all their authority and splendor; it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. If you worship me, it will all be yours."* The devil took Jesus to a high place and showed him all the kingdoms of the world. It was like taking him to the observation deck of the new World Trade Center in New York City and showing the impressive view of Manhattan. Then he offered a deal he thought Jesus could not refuse. "If you bow down and worship me, I will give you all their authority and splendor."

Before we think about the nature of this temptation and how it applies to us, let us first examine Satan's claims about himself. He said to Jesus, "I will give you all their authority and splendor; it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to" (6). Is this true? To overcome Satan's temptations, we need to know who we are dealing with. First off, Satan is very cunning. Genesis 3:1 describes the serpent in the Garden (that is, Satan) to be "more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made." We should know this. So, was there any truth in his claim that he could give Jesus the authority and splendor of the kingdoms of the world? Well, being crafty he is, he sprinkled some truth in his lie to make it believable. So typical of him. We must know that Satan does not approach us with red horns and tail, with a pitchfork. No, he is smarter than that. He sweet-talks to us with lies that sound credible. In the Bible, the devil is called the "prince of this world" (Jn 12:31; 14:30; 16:11). In that sense, what the devil says here appears right. This is what happened. In the beginning God created the

heavens and the earth. He also created humans in his own image as the culmination of his creation. He appointed them to be stewards of his creation and told them to rule over his creation. But Adam and Eve became proud and ungrateful. They sinned before God by disobeying his word, and, as a result, relinquished the position as the rulers over the creation. Since then, Satan has ruled over the sinful humanity as the prince of darkness, to the extent many sinful people would bow before him. The sinful world is under the control of the evil one (1Jn 5:18).

But that is only a part of the story. Actually, Satan does not have all authority and splendor of this world. The kingdoms of the world belong to God. In other words, Satan is a liar. In John 8:44, Jesus describes him as “a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.” In the book of Job, God allowed Satan to test his servant Job for his unwavering faith in God. But God set a boundary for the test. For example, Job’s life was off limits to Satan. We learn that Satan cannot do anything that God does not allow him to. He cannot force us to worship him. He can only tempt us. Jude 6 says that Satan was originally an angel in heaven who rebelled against God and was cast out of heaven. For the time being, he rules the world as the prince of darkness, but his fate has been sealed. He would be “thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever” (Rev 20:10). We need to have a clear view of who Satan is, and what he can and cannot do to us as we fight a spiritual battle against him.

So what was the nature of Jesus’ second temptation? The devil said to Jesus: “*If you worship me, it will all be yours.*” He offered Jesus a shortcut to world dominion so that his messianic mission would be easier to carry out. It was a temptation for Jesus to avoid the sufferings of the cross. Jesus was fully aware that, as the Messiah, he would suffer many things and be killed (Mk 8:31). The devil implied: “You don’t have to suffer. You don’t have to endure the cross. You don’t have to die to obey the will of God for world salvation. There is a better, easier way. All you have to do is to worship me. You don’t even have to do it in public. You don’t have to do it many times. Just bow down once and worship me. And I will give you the world.”

How does this temptation come to us today? It is in our human nature to want to take a shortcut. No one wants to suffer. No one wants to endure the cross. If a shortcut can be found, we all want to take it. One missionary recently confessed to me that she often jaywalked because the streets in Shippensburg are not so busy, but realized that as a Christian she should follow rules whether people watch or not, because God is always watching. This is also true for ministry. I once read a news item about how a church tried to boost its attendance in an unusual way. It purchased a grocery store that was going out of business. Those who attended the church service on Sunday were allowed to get their groceries free of charge from the store. The church attendance went up immediately. The problem was that it had no long term effect. When the grocery items were all gone, so were the extra worshipers. Similarly, we are tempted to resort to an easy way even in serving the work of God. We are tempted to compromise. But this is not the way of our Lord. This is not the way of the cross.

Billy Graham said that he had three major temptations in his life as an evangelist. First was when he was asked to run for a U.S. Senate seat. Second was when he was asked to be a running mate for presidential race. Third was when a wealthy man in Florida approached him with a proposal to donate millions of dollars if he could establish a college with Billy Graham's name. Some people might think that if Billy Graham obtained any of these influential positions, he could have done his evangelistic work more effectively. But he rejected all of them. Why? He wanted to stand before God at the end of his life and be able to say, "I preached the gospel of Jesus Christ all my life." He did not seek a shortcut. He remained a devoted servant of God's word.

How did Jesus answer the devil? Let us read verse 8. *Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.'"* Again Jesus used the word of God as his weapon to defeat Satan's attack. We cannot win our battle against Satan by using logical arguments or human wisdom. He is smarter than we are. We learn from Jesus that God's word is our effective weapon. Jesus said, "Worship the Lord your God and serve him only," quoting from Deuteronomy 6:13. So what does it mean to worship God? Satan said that if Jesus simply worshiped him and he would give the world to him, making it sound like worship is no big deal. He tried to trivialize it. But to worship someone means pledging allegiance and devotion to the person. It is not a trivial matter. If you worship the devil, you are committing your life to him. You are selling your soul to him.

Jesus' answer teaches us that only God is worthy of our worship and service. No one else deserves our worship. Many problems arise when we worship someone or something else. The Israelites faced many problems in their history, mainly because they turned to Canaanite idols instead of worshiping the Lord God. We also learn that worship and service go hand in hand. "Worship the Lord your God and serve him only." We worship the Lord God as we serve him. We serve the Lord God as we worship him. It is because when we love God, we can serve him joyfully.

Our God is the Creator of the universe. Our life comes from him. He loves us so much that he sent his one and only Son Jesus to die for us. His love is unconditional and unending. We should worship the Lord our God and serve him only. We should not worship money, rock star, or Hollywood idol, let alone the devil. They don't love us. But God loves us. Worshiping God is the way to true happiness for all of us.

## II. DO NOT PUT THE LORD YOUR GOD TO THE TEST (9-13)

Look at verse 9. *The devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down from here.* In the third temptation (or the second temptation according to Matthew), the devil led Jesus to the temple building in Jerusalem, the house of God that Jesus loved from his childhood. The devil had him stand on the highest point of the magnificent temple which was about 20 stories high, and said, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here." Then he added something else. He quoted from the Scripture. After noticing how Jesus defeated him with the word of God, Satan used the word of God this time to tempt Jesus. He is crafty indeed.

The devil challenged him to jump off from the temple, saying if God cared about him, he would command his angels to catch him so that he wouldn't get hurt. The devil was saying to Jesus, "I know you trust God your Father. Why don't you prove it by jumping down from here? By doing this, you can also prove to everyone that God loves you. Don't you trust him enough that he will catch you before you fall to the ground?" Satan was tempting Jesus to cast doubt on God's love, just as he did in the Garden of Eden. Satan hates it when we have a loving and trusting relationship with God. He always tries to put a wedge between us. He tries hard to make us doubt the love of God toward us. When we go through a difficult time in life, he comes and whispers in our ears, "See, God does not love you!"

At the same time, this temptation was also about taking a shortcut. Satan tempted Jesus to take an easy way and avoid the cross. He was saying to Jesus. "If you can achieve a spectacular feat like jumping from the temple safely, you will get a lot of attention. People will recognize you as someone special and flock to you. Why go through the way of the cross when you can take this easier route?" Likewise, people sometimes ask us to demonstrate our faith in a tangible, spectacular way. They would say things like, "Prove that God loves you." I read several stories online about how to prove that God does not exist. One story goes something like this. An atheist looks up at the ceiling and begins to challenge God. He says things like, "Come on, God, old man. I dare you. Strike me dead right now, if you are up there. I challenge you to strike me right now with a bolt of lightning." Then he waits in a mocking pose. When nothing happens, he says, "There, I proved to you convincingly that God does not exist." People who say such things are presumptuous to think that our God should respond to every little frivolous act like that. It is akin to urinating at a parking meter and expect Attorney General to bring a charge and the Supreme Court to try the case. God works miracles that are big and small throughout human history. To me the biggest miracle that God worked on me is that he saved me from my sins when I didn't deserve such grace. We don't have to prove our faith by doing anything spectacular. I believe that the most impressive way to demonstrate our faith and trust in God is a quiet reliance on him on a daily basis.

Now let us think briefly about the Scripture the devil quoted from Psalm 91: "For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone" (Ps 91:11-12). Actually this is God's promise to protect those who depend on God in doing God's work. It is not for testing God. After giving the world mission command to his disciples, Jesus promised them that they would not be harmed by snakes or deadly poison as they carry out the mission work (Mk 16:18). But this does not mean we should test the Lord by picking up venomous snakes or drinking poison. That is foolish. Satan tries to trick us to do foolish things.

How did Jesus respond to the devil's suggestion? Let us read verse 12. *Jesus answered, "It is said: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"* To Jesus, who came to this world as the Lamb of God to die on the cross and shed his blood, this was a difficult temptation to resist. But Jesus did not yield to the temptation. The devil tried to entice

him to take the shortcut with his crafty suggestion, just as he had fooled many people throughout history. Jesus declared: *Do not put the Lord your God to the test.*

The devil tempted Jesus in various levels with different tactics. But there was one clear motive behind all these temptations: Satan wanted Jesus to avoid his mission from the outset. The devil knew that Jesus' cross and resurrection would destroy forever his kingdom of darkness. So the devil wanted Jesus to take an easy way instead of the way of cross, against the will of God. Ultimately, Satan wants everyone to worship him instead of worshiping and serving God.

Struggling to live by faith in this unbelieving world, we have to face many kinds of temptations. Verse 13 teaches us that Satan is still waiting for opportune time to tempt us. St. Peter says, "Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour" (1Pe 5:8). Sometimes we wonder how we can overcome all the temptations and keep our faith in God. But we must remember that God enables us to overcome all our temptations if we hold on to his word. St. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 10:13: "No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it." Satan can do no harm if we are in Christ. It is when we leave a door open, the devil can come in and do the damage. We are in the domain of the devil, but we are not under his dominion any longer. We are in Christ.

Our enemy is Satan, not someone around us. We need spiritual eyes to recognize this. Jesus defeated Satan's temptations with the word of God. The word of God is our weapon in our spiritual battle. We can overcome temptations with the word of God. We can overcome our pride and easy-going mentality by obeying the word of God. Let us read our key verse together: *Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.'"*