

Part 12: Jesus the Faithful Son

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April 3, 2022

Have you ever noticed how oddly satisfying it is when someone, or something, which seemed too good to be true was actually exposed to in fact to be too good to be true? As much as our world hates hypocrisy, we also love seeing it exposed.

When it's exposed there's a sense of vindication we experience. It makes us feel a little better about who we are, and it brings a bit of justice into our own lives. Watching others fail makes us feel more comfortable with our own failings.

But this desire is not new to our modern heart, and it's exactly this desire which is on display in our passage of Luke this morning. If you've been with us as of late you have seen a portion of Luke's gospel where the author wants us to see, with stunning clarity, the reality of who Jesus is.

In Luke 2, Jesus makes the claim that he is the Son of God, then in Luke chapter 3 we see the Father himself speak and call Jesus the Son of God, and then Luke provides for us a genealogy of Jesus which shows that Jesus is in fact the Son of God.

What Luke wants us to see is that if Jesus is going to be the Christ, if Jesus is to be the savior of the world, then he must be the perfect Son of God. If Jesus were to be the perfect Son, then he would have to be the always faithful son. If Jesus' at any point was unfaithful to God the Father, he would be exposed to be no better than those self-inflated villains we love watching fail and he would be of no benefit to any of his followers.

Well, today a character arrives on the scene in the book of Luke who is unamused and unconvinced that Jesus is able to be the perfect son of God. Namely because he's seen humanity's best before. This person, is the Devil. The one who in other places in scripture is called the evil one, or Satan. The one whose name in this text "*diabolos*" literally meaning, "the one who engages in slander."

This devil is going to appear in the book of Luke with one sole purpose--to slander Jesus and expose him for the fraud that he is. He is going to tempt Jesus in three specific ways under the guise of Jesus proving himself to be the Son of God. But Satan, the sly deceiver that he is, knows that if he can convince Jesus to respond to his temptations he would be tricking Jesus into unfaithfulness towards the Father. If Jesus wanted to appease the devil, he would prove himself to be displeasing to the Father and therefore no perfect son at all.

But ironically by the end of this account, Jesus will have proven that he is the Son of God though it would not be through any of the means the devil wishes. And instead the fraud we see exposed by the end of this passage is the false promise of sin.

What we are going to see today is that **Jesus is the true victor over the devil and the real hope for sinners**. We are going to emphasize this point by seeing three big pictures in this text. First we will see **The Trial of Life in the Wilderness**, then we will slow walk through **The Trial of Greatest Temptation**, and then lastly we will see **The Trustworthiness of God**.

So let's begin by reading the opening context of our passage today and we will address our first point: **Luke 4:1-3.**

Here we encounter our first point today: **The Trial of Life in the Wilderness.**

We live in a culture where our wealth and our technology provide a wonderful relief from many of the pains of life. Our homes have air conditioning and furnaces. Our bodies have medicine and surgeries which help us live longer and more comfortable lives.

But while these common graces can lead us to praise God for his kindness as one who sends rain on the just and the unjust, I wonder if more times than not these mercies of God actually lead us to be frustrated with God when we encounter seasons of hardship.

How many of us think that when life becomes hard, and comfort seems fleeting, that the only possible conclusion is that something is wrong? That perhaps God is punishing me? Or maybe God isn't good?

But don't we see here in the life of our Lord that it is often the will of God to lead us into the discomfort wilderness. Now it is true that Jesus will not be tempted by the Father, but by the devil. This is because, as James 1 says, there is nothing evil in God that he can use to tempt. God has no evil in him to bait the hook of temptation he is incapable to tempt. Our own heart and the work of the devil is the problem.

But what is also true about this scene is that the only reason Jesus was alone and hungry in the wilderness is because the Holy Spirit led him there.

If the whole work of the Trinity brought Jesus hungry and alone to a place to be tested, how much more ought we as believers to reframe our own thoughts regarding testing?

Consider some examples in the Old Testament. First when the presence of God dwelt in holy fire on the mountain before Moses and the people: **Exodus 20:18-20**. Or consider even what Moses said after God delivered Israel out of slavery and they still disobeyed him: **Deuteronomy 8:2**.

Do you realize that the Lord himself is actually disinterested in hypocrisy? He wants his people to be holy as he is holy. He wants his children to look like his children and act like his children, and not claim the family name only to spend life at the neighbor's house. But here's the beauty of the gospel: when the world catches us acting hypocritically they crucify us, but when the Lord exposes our hypocrisy and our sin he reminds us that Jesus was already crucified for us. And that he instead wants to help us assess our weaknesses and find his grace sufficient in times of need.

Look at the hope of walking through the wilderness with the Lord in both **1 Peter 1:6-7**, and **James 1:2-4**.

In this passage we see that even in our seasons of wilderness wandering, even when temptation and testing rear their head, God's plan for the good of his children is not forgotten.

What we also see in this passage are pictures of hope. Hope that those who know God's faithfulness might be able as Paul says to "withstand" the attacks of the evil.

We also see a practical tool that Jesus himself models for us. Those of you who are doing the Bible memory plan with us have already hidden this tool in your heart: Psalm 119:11, "I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you."

If you catch on fire, what are you to do? Stop, drop and roll. It is hidden in our heart so that if it were to happen, we know what to do. Now from my own experience, I've not spoken with anyone who has caught on fire. Yet most of us know stop, drop and roll. But I can tell you with absolute certainty you are far more likely to be tempted by sin than you are to catch on fire. What might it look like to train our first response to sin to be recitations of God's promises to us in his word? Jesus' use of scripture should aid our use of it.

Yet despite the practical ways this passage might and should influence our fight against sin, this event is not primarily about you. When the devil himself begins quoting scripture back at Jesus, we quickly find that quick tips and get out of temptation free cards are on their own unable to be a sufficient help.

We need more than helpful tips to resist temptation, we need to promise of a savior who has defeated sin.

How many of you are familiar with the story of King Arthur and Excalibur? The legend has it that Excalibur was this magical sword with great power that was sealed in a stone. All the region's most powerful men tried to draw the sword from the stone, but one day young King Arthur came and with ease drew it out. For any of us listening to this story we clearly understand the point. None of us hear that story and think "Well if Carl the Knight lifted with his legs and not his back, he would have done it." We also don't walk away thinking that we could have done it. The point of the story is that only King Arthur could have done it--he is the distinct one.

Behind Jesus' testing is not merely quick tips for resisting sin, but there's a stunning display of how one is freed from slavery to sin by an experience with God's covenant faithfulness. Jesus knew better than anyone the faithfulness of God, and therefore it's Jesus understanding of God's promise and his unwavering commitment to the Father that we have salvation at all.

In other words we can and we should find great hope in our own fight against sin in this text. But the primary point is not to see how you might defeat sin and the devil but instead how Jesus is the only one who could.

This point is stressed all the more when we realize what this just came on the heels of. Remember the long genealogy we saw right before this? Luke is showing us how Jesus is the one all history has been waiting for. Which makes this testing scene all the more powerful because this isn't the first time a Son of God had been tested by the devil in the wild.

In Genesis 3, Adam, God's first created son was confronted by the devil in the garden. When the devil used his cunning, Adam failed, he sinned, he doubted God's goodness. The nation of Israel failed in the desert and wandered for 40 years.

Adam failed in the garden and enslaved all humanity to sin and death. But here Jesus, the Son of God, after 40 days in his own wilderness was confronted by Satan. Once more a familiar scene played out in the devil's heart and after seeing man after man fail, you can imagine he's excited to get another crack

at it. Just as Adam failed and all of humanity was plunged into sin, just as Israel failed and the whole nation suffered, here would the new head fail and in so doing rob people of hope?

But this man is not like the rest. This man is the Son of God par-excellence. The apostle Paul in the book of Romans makes it clear that there are two family lines we can fall into. The integrity of each line will be established in this story. There is the line of Adam, those born of man, who on account of Adam's failing are enslaved and unable not to sin. But then there's the line of Jesus, those born of man and of God, those who are finally, for the first time, set free from sin.

But the freedom we need stems first from Jesus himself proving himself distinct. Is he actually the better Son? Here is our second point today: **The Trial of Greatest Temptation.**

Read with me: **Luke 4:3-13.**

So here we see three specific challenges and temptations that the devil throws at Jesus: two of which attack directly Jesus' identity and one which appeals to Jesus' desire.

In other words Satan knows full well that the two hooks that he can often play with in order to produce sin in our lives are who we think we are and what we think we want. In the face of these affronts Jesus is able to withstand them demonstrating his unflinching commitment to God the Father as the foundation of both who he is and what he wants. Sinful temptation simultaneously preys on what we think about ourselves and what we think about God.

The devil shows exactly this when right on the heels of the heavens opening, and God the Father audibly speaking, "You are my beloved son, with you I am well pleased," he questions Jesus on that very point.

"If you are the Son of God." Here Satan pulls out the play book from Genesis 3 when he approached Adam and Eve with the same line of questioning saying: "Did God really say..."

The devil wanted Jesus to doubt the power of God's word and the goodness of it. If he was the Son of God, he didn't have to be hungry anymore. Even though the Spirit led him to a place with no bread, he could make some. But Jesus quoted in part what Moses quoted in full in **Deuteronomy 8:2-4.**

What Jesus does in all his responses to the devil is quote from two specific portions in Deuteronomy, where in the face of new trials Moses is reminding God's people of God's faithfulness. He is assuming that days will be hard, but what he wants them to know is that God is always faithful. Why? Because he gave them his promise to deliver them out of slavery and into a better place.

Here Jesus shows us that God's promise is of greater value than anything else. If the Spirit led him there, God would provide.

There's a bit more here that shows the cunning of the devil. What he is in essence saying to Jesus is, "If you are the Son of God, stop acting like a man, and just be God. Stop being such a human, life is hard, this wilderness is big, make some bread out of this stone."

But if Jesus would have done this, he would have shown himself to be of no hope to us who aren't God. If the only way we can trust God's word when things get difficult is that we have some divine ability to solve our own problems, then what hope is that for us who have no divine ability?

In speaking of this story, have you heard some people say, “Well yeah, Jesus passed because he’s God.” But here Jesus refused to exercise his divinity in such a way. Why? Because man doesn’t live on bread alone. In so doing Jesus showed us the hope of man is not in our supernatural powers but instead in our supernatural faith. We can trust God’s word, his promise and his provision even when it seems difficult.

Being foiled once, the devil moves away from tempting the flesh and attacks the desire of Jesus. He takes him up and in a spectacular way, shows Jesus the whole world and promises it all to Jesus if only Jesus would worship him.

Right after Jesus showed his unflinching trust in the words of the Father, there’s a way in which Satan’s sleight of hand here is meant to distract Jesus from the rest of the Godhead. Here is the promise of power and authority and worship without having to share it with the Father and the Spirit. It is a plan for Jesus’ glory that is different from the Trinity’s plan for Jesus glory.

But Jesus didn’t fall for it. He knew that apart from the worship of the Father there is no glory. Apart from the service of the Father there is no authority. Jesus knew the subtle temptation that gripped Adam and grips us today. We often look at the desires of our heart and think that the only hope for joy is in what we get. But instead our greatest joy is in what we give—that is giving our worship to the glory of the Triune Godhead.

Just as Moses reminded Israel, Jesus reminds the devil of **Deuteronomy 6:10-15**.

Jesus shows us that the greatest good is not in what the world can give, but only in what God the Father can provide through his salvation. He alone is the source of our happiness.

Realizing that Jesus can’t be shaken from his loyalty to the rest of the Trinity, Satan pivots once more. What if, he thinks in his best attempt to mimic pop-culture philosophers, I can get Jesus to distrust God based off the words of scripture? Jesus certainly has an affinity for God’s word. What if he could use God’s word to cause God’s son to do something ungodly?

Satan loves to misuse scripture. In the garden he misused God’s word, and here in the desert he misused Psalm 91. The devil takes Jesus to the high point of the Temple and says: Throw yourself down if you’re the Son of God. Because if you’re the Son of God, God himself has promised to not let you die. He’s got great plans for you so give it a go.

But Jesus responds again with a passage in Deuteronomy. Just as Moses was reminding God’s people of God’s faithfulness, so Jesus reminded himself and the devil: **Deuteronomy 6:16-18**.

Here is something our internet saturated world needs to hear: there are right ways and wrong ways to interpret scripture. But instead of producing paranoia in our hearts Jesus shows us how we can rightly understand it. We understand scripture in full by reading it through the backdrop of God’s faithfulness.

Jesus refuses to write God’s faithfulness out of the pages of scripture. To read the Bible in such a way where we write out an active trust in the Lord and a humble commitment to God’s wisdom in life is to read the Bible in a way foreign to our Lord Jesus.

Jesus isn't saying that we shouldn't assess if God is trustworthy or not. Instead he's saying that God in his word has already proven his trustworthiness. For those who sit on this side of the cross this scene underlines how much truer this is for us who have seen God's trustworthiness in Jesus Christ.

Just like that, Jesus passed the third test. And look at what happened next: **Luke 4:12-13**.

The devil left until an opportune time. Jesus won. But in the midst of it he had endured every temptation. What we can gather from this is that Jesus was tempted in far more than three ways, but these three summarize the cosmic weight of what Jesus just endured.

We needed a sinless head, and Jesus remained sinless. But do you understand how this should produce worship in us. Perhaps you've heard **Hebrews 4:14-16**.

Here we see the comfort of knowing Jesus was tempted like us—in every way. But do you understand that it's not just that Jesus was tempted like us, he was tempted in ways we can't even imagine.

Why? Because Jesus knew eternal joy in the Trinity by experience and we didn't.

Jesus existed in divine glory without hunger for all eternity. You and I were hungry yesterday. We were hungry moments after we were born. Hunger is normal for us. Jesus never hungered which means the temptation to satisfy that longing was more than it could ever be for us.

Jesus knew only security in heaven and now he walked on a world where his toe would be stubbed, and knees would be scraped, and ultimately side pierced and hands pinned.

Jesus was the second person of the Trinity. He was God the Son. He created the world. He was due all glory and honor and authority. In heaven he only knew authority and worship given freely to him by his faithful on earth and all the angels in heaven. So when Satan tempted Jesus, he was tempted not merely with the unfulfilled desires we have in our own lives, but he was tempted because there was a point in time where all of his desires were fulfilled. What we long for, he knew, and here he had the power to say no to it.

Jesus knew that in saying yes to the devil in that moment he would get everything he wanted without the pain of the cross.

None of us have been tempted with the power Jesus was tempted with because it was the virtue of his excellence which made his temptation so weighty.

Jesus did what we could never do precisely because we needed someone to do it. If any of us were to have freedom from sin, there needed to be someone who beat it. This is what Jesus did.

Jesus said no to sinful temptation because he knew with clarity the joy of God's Triune perfection. When we come to faith in Jesus Christ, he gives us a glimpse and a taste of that sin-crushing, soul satisfying perfection.

On our own, in the line of Adam, we are destined for failure. We can't pass this test. But to fall under the head of Jesus is to realize that he has passed the test for us. He has brought us into that covenant beauty of seeing the beauty of God's faithfulness.

What is hypocritical is to acknowledge your failure and say, “I can make up for it because I can be better.” No you can’t. On your own you can’t defeat the bondage of sin. But instead the gospel says, “I am a massive failure, but Jesus is better. He’s the king who withdrew the sword that pinned my soul and now I’m set free.”

In Christ you’re not only freed from the punishment of sin, but you’re set free to resist sin with the power of Jesus Christ.

Just as the devil was exposed as powerless over Jesus, Jesus is shown as faithful. This reversal gives us three specific hopes as we resist sin in our own heart. Here we see our last point today **The Trustworthiness of God.**

Read with me **Luke 4:13-15.**

First we see that at some point, the devil stopped his temptation. Are you someone who is beginning to think your life is always a life in the wilderness? Take heart that for those who resist, God will provide strength to endure. At times we will fail, yes. But just because there is grace doesn’t mean we don’t have guts to stand firm.

Consider the words of Paul in **1 Corinthians 10:13**. Though the devil will wage, and even return, we can have a way of escape. Greater is he who is in you than he who is in the world.

Second, we see the true fruit of obedience. Look at where this story ended: **Luke 4:15**. Why is this important? Because remember what the devil offered Jesus in verse 6? He offered him glory.

Sin tries to convince us that we only get what we want when we use it, but let us not forget that obedience and faithfulness to God is where we find what we really need. God alone has the power to give what sin falsely promises.

Now, Jesus' life was not all earthly glory. In fact it ended in tragic glory, lifted on a cross. But even after that, even after his obedience led him into physical pain and death for your sins, what happened next? He was raised in glory. He was given the name above all names. He ascended to the right hand of God the Father almighty.

We lose nothing when we consider the promise of God’s faithful reward to the obedience. Go online and you can find people subjecting themselves to the most painful and silly contests for the hope of winning some money. But here we might ask ourselves what we might endure not for the hope of a reward, but for the certainty of it.

Lastly, just as Jesus left the desert full of the Holy Spirit, so anyone who comes to faith in Jesus is promised that we never encounter sin alone. The same Spirit that endured Jesus in the wilderness is the same Spirit which dwells in us and empowers in our fight against sin!

We often make our resistance to sin about the circumstances of our life. If circumstances change, things would be easier. But Adam sinned when he was full. In a perfect garden. Naked with his wife. Some would say life couldn’t get much better.

Jesus was tempted hungry and alone in a wilderness. But Jesus had the Spirit. So to do all who hope in him. Because Jesus defeated sin and death, we have new life in the power of the Spirit. We do not fight alone, we do not need conditions on the outside to be perfect because by God's grace we have perfect power on the inside. Looking to Jesus our unparalleled hope, let us find relief and power in our fight against sin.