

**Power Over Temptation**  
**Overcoming the Lust of the Eyes**

**Matthew 4:8-10**

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I invite you to take your Bibles and turn back with me to Matthew's gospel chapter 4. Matthew chapter 4 and tonight we're going to look at the third temptation of Jesus Christ. You probably remember from school at some point hearing about Christopher Marlow. It was in 1604 that Christopher Marlow published his famous play *The Tragic History of the Life and Death of Dr. Faust*. It was the first time that the already famous legend of Faust was put into print. Since that time, of course, it's been developed and expanded by plays and poems and in modern times by films and lyrics. But whatever form it takes, the story is always of a tragic human figure who strikes a deal with the devil and he will enjoy as a result of that deal many happy successful years of life on earth. But in the end, he will have to surrender in exchange for that life of prosperity his soul to the devil as payment and spend eternity damned to hell. And the deal, of course, in whatever form the story is presented, it is always sealed in a document signed in Faust's own blood. As the story goes, Faust does enjoy a life filled with the best that this life can offer. But as he nears the end of life, as the time of the contract draws to a close, Faust begins to realize two things: one, the success in things that he sought and wanted have not brought him the permanent joy and happiness that he thought they would; and two, that he has made a tragic blunder, that in exchange for his eternal soul he has damned his soul forever. In exchange for his prosperity, he has offered his soul for all time.

You know there is a lot familiar about that story; I think part of the reason it has been repeated in so many different ways, whether humorous or seriously, is because Satan comes in one way or another to everyone of us with the same siren's song; the temptation to sell our souls for success, to sell our souls for power and for possessions. We shouldn't be surprised because that was one of the three recorded temptations of Jesus Christ.

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A couple of months ago, as you remember, we began our study of Mark—Mark’s account of the temptation of Christ. Mark only devotes two verses to it, and so I decided at that point to take a sort of detour from Mark, to examine in detail the three temptations that both Matthew and Luke record. Now just by way of review, let me remind you that temptation takes this course: all sins ultimately spring from temptation; secondly, all temptations spring from sinful lusts or cravings, (this is for us, not for Christ now); and all sinful cravings ultimately spring from three root sinful cravings described in Scripture as the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the boastful pride of life. Those three root temptations, those three root cravings of the soul, spring from three normal God-given human desires.

This is the level at which Jesus, this fourth level, is the level at which Jesus was tempted—normal God-given human desires. Jesus did not have within Him the same sinful cravings that are within us that cry out to be satisfied, but He did have normal human desires just as we do. In one sense, Jesus’s temptations were unique in that they took paths our temptations will never take. None of us have ever been tempted to turn stones into bread; none of us have ever been tempted to jump from the temple in Jerusalem and be rescued by the angels. None of us have tried by some act of obeisance to Satan to gain all the kingdoms of the world. But at the same time that Jesus’s temptations were unique, they were also typical of the root temptations that you and I face.

Tonight, we want to examine the third temptation. The third temptation is recorded for us in Matthew chapter 4 verses 8 through 10. As we have with each of the other two temptations let’s look first at the preparation, it’s in verse 8. Matthew writes, “Again, the devil took Jesus to a very high mountain.”

Now there’s some debate with this temptation, as there was with the second one. Did the devil physically take Jesus to this mountain or did he show Him these things in some kind of a supernatural vision? Let me just mention that this is not a question of whether or not you believe the Bible. It’s a matter of how to interpret what the Bible says. There are those who absolutely

embrace the inerrancy of Scripture on both sides of this issue, and frankly we can't be completely sure.

Let me just give you the arguments that this was a vision. These are the arguments that are presented. No normal mountain is high enough to see all the world's kingdoms. Of course, the world is a globe so you can't see everything in the world from a high mountain they argue, so it must have been a vision. Luke adds that this all happened in a moment of time which in and of itself seems to imply something highly unusual and perhaps miraculous. And there are two other passages in which someone is taken to a high mountain and it occurred not in reality but in a vision and that's in Ezekiel as well as in John's revelation, Revelation 21:10. Those are the arguments presented for a vision.

The arguments for a physical presence that Jesus and the devil actually went to a high mountain are that there is no point in going to a high mountain if it's a vision. Also Luke uses the kingdoms of the inhabited earth which would mean that He saw parts of the kingdoms of the Middle East within His physical vision, but the rest of it was simply audibly described and that brings us to the third argument, and that is, Satan showed Him—the Greek word for “show,” can mean either “to show physically,” “to present before someone's eyes” or it can also mean “to describe or explain.” For example, in Matthew 16, it says, “Jesus began from that time to show”—same word—“His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem.”

Well, obviously, He wasn't showing them a movie, He wasn't showing them a set of pictures, He was describing, He was presenting before their minds this reality. And so, it isn't necessary this word doesn't make it necessary that Jesus physically sees every kingdom.

The fourth argument is the language of Luke's account, when Luke describes this, seems to imply normal physical movement because he says, “The devil led Him up, the devil led Him up.” Every other time in the New Testament that verb is used it speaks of physical movement from one place to another. As you can tell, I lean toward the physical presence of Jesus and the devil on a high mountain, but we can't be dogmatic, many of those I respect would not believe that. If

the devil did take Jesus physically into a high mountain, how did he do it? And I won't spend a lot of time here but there are only two possibilities: either they traveled the way people traveled in the first century, ordinary human transportation, feet, donkey, etc. (this is how Jesus moved around for thirty years); or the devil transported both himself and Jesus there in some miraculous fashion.

Now, when you look at the life of Jesus, Jesus did miraculously escape from His enemies on a couple of occasions. But there's nothing said that He was transported somewhere else. There is no record anywhere that like Phillip was in Acts 8, Jesus simply was transported somewhere else. It is true that after His resurrection, in Luke 24, it says He vanished, that is, He was no longer visible; it doesn't say He went somewhere else. John 20 says He passed into a locked room. So, the bottom line is, if Jesus is miraculously transported by Satan to the Temple Mount or to this high mountain, this would be the only time in Jesus's earthly life when that happened. The rest of the time He walked, He rode some beast of burden and likely I think that's what happens here. But whether this is occurring in a vision or physically, whether they got there miraculously or by walking the devil took Him to a very high mountain.

There are a couple of choices for this, it could've been in the Judean wilderness, there's a three thousand-foot peak there in the Judean wilderness. It's less than thirty miles from the temple where they were in the second temptation, just a day or two's walk. It would have been somewhere out in this barren and desolate place. A second option is that it was Mount Nebo, where you remember Moses was taken to see the Promised Land. That's about four thousand feet, it's less than forty miles and just two days walk from the temple. Another option is Mount Herman, which is the highest point in all of Israel. It's up at the north of Israel, nine thousand two hundred feet above sea level. It's only about one hundred miles or about six days walk so within the forty days it could have been done, we just don't know. By the way this is what Mount Herman looks like, you see it there in the distance, this huge peak that overlooks all of the country and looks in a number of directions.

But notice what Satan does with Jesus. It says that the devil showed Him from that place "all the kingdoms of the world and their glory." "All the kingdoms of the world and their glory." Now

remember that Jesus in His entire earthly life has lived in a little village called Nazareth—no more than 500 people. He lived in Egypt, perhaps the huge city of Alexandria for a short time as a child, but He would have been too young to remember that. He also, at the appointed feast time each year as was commanded by the law, He would have gone down with other pilgrims from the age of 13, He would have made His way down to Jerusalem for the feasts or up to Jerusalem, as they say in Israel. There He would have seen the glory of Israel, Jerusalem and its temple.

But here the devil shows Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. Luke adds “in a moment of time.” The devil takes Jesus to a high place either literally or in a vision and He turns Him 360 degrees and lets Him get some grasp of how far and wide the world is. And then beyond what physical eyes can see, Satan either describes or in a vision shows Jesus all the world’s great empires. He shows Him Egypt with its ancient history, its advanced civilization, its Pharaohs, and its pyramids. He shows Him Rome with its great armies, and its far-flung empire, its art and science, its roads and its cities. He shows Him Greece with its already antique civilization, its scientific advances, its philosophers, its beautiful architecture, its refined culture. And in the same way, Satan gives Jesus a glimpse physically or descriptively of the rest of the inhabited earth.

But Satan didn’t show Him everything. Notice the parts of the world’s kingdoms Satan showed Him. Their glory, not the disgusting and the seedy, not the crass and the vulgar, not the back-room politics, not the crime and corruption, but their glory. Satan showed Jesus all the things that made those first century civilizations and empires great. Not in a series or in a parade, but at the same moment of time. Alfred Edershire writes, “The world and all its glory, beauty, strength, majesty is unveiled. Its work, its might, its greatness, its art, its thought emerges into Jesus’s clear view.” That’s the preparation, Jesus in His human life only exposed to one tiny little nation, only exposed for most of His human life to a little city of fewer than five hundred people is shown in a moment of time the splendor of earth’s civilizations.

That brings us to the temptation. Verse 9 says, “And he said to Him,”—the devil says to Jesus—“All these things I will give You, if You fall down and worship me.” Now notice there’s a difference in this third temptation. Jesus here confronts a different issue because Satan does not say if You are the Son of God as he said in the other two. He assumes that to be true. John Broadus in his commentary on Matthew says, “It’s as if Satan in conceding that Jesus is Messiah and will found the kingdom and he proposes to help Him.” He simply says to Jesus, all these things, that is, all the kingdoms of the world and their glory that You can see before You, I will give You. Satan is offering to give Jesus Christ possession of all the kingdoms of the world. Now if you’re a thinking person, you have to ask yourself how could Satan make such an offer?

Was it a legitimate offer? Well, Luke puts it this way in his account, in chapter 4, verse 6 of Luke, he says, “I will give You all this domain and its glory; for it has been handed over to me, and I give it to whomever I wish.” Is that true? Well, yes and no. The first part of this statement, “it has been handed over to me” is partly true. It is true that God had permitted Satan to rule over the world system that stood opposed to Him, but always, always under the tight control of God. So, Satan can in one sense legitimately be called the ruler of this world as he is in a number of places. The ruler of the system opposed to God. But it’s not true that the created world has been handed over to Satan. Satan is not in charge of this created earth, Jesus Christ has been, is, and always will be. He made all of these things and the writer of Hebrews tells us they exist, what? By His power, as does Colossians.

Neither is it true that Satan controls world governments to the extent that he can give it to whomever he wishes. Daniel chapter 4 says that “the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and [He] bestows it on whomever He wishes.”

So how exactly can you reconcile what Satan offers Jesus with the rest of the Scripture? Well remember it was Jesus Himself who said this of Satan in John 8, “He is a liar and the father of [liars and] lies.”

But while Satan does exaggerate his realm, what he is over, it was still true that Satan did have some control, some power, some influence over the world's great empires and that's what he is offering Jesus Christ. But there's a catch. Matthew writes, "And he said to Him, 'All these things I will give to You, if you will fall down and worship me.'" Literally the Greek text says, "If falling down You will worship me." "If falling down You will worship me."

Now don't misunderstand, there is a great deal of debate about exactly what this means and there are good people on both sides of the argument. As I have studied it, I really have to agree with William Hendrickson and basically, he says this, "Satan was not asking Jesus to forever renounce the true God and treat Satan as if he were God." Instead he was simply asking Jesus to acknowledge his dominion. Just one quick bow, that's all it'll take. This is an acknowledgement of Satan's authority over the world. It is not a recognition of his divinity. Remember what Satan has just himself said to Jesus— "What I have has been given to me."

The question is by whom, obviously there is somebody greater than Satan—he himself has just said that. Nor is it an acknowledgement of Satan's personal merit to be worshiped. As William Hendrickson puts it, "all this wealth is offered by Satan to Christ all for the price of just one genuflection, one bow, one moment's kneeling and recognizing his authority."

So, the ultimate temptation here is not to worship Satan, bowing to Satan was only the means to a greater end and the great end is contained in the statement, "all these things I will give You." Or as Luke puts it, "it shall all be Yours." If Jesus will admit Satan's authority over these things, He can avoid all of the conflict and pain and suffering that it will cost Him to wrest it away from Satan. And instead it'll be given to Him on a silver platter. It was right for Christ to have all the kingdoms of the world, the Father had promised that the Messiah would receive them, that His Son would receive them. In fact, turn back to Psalm 2. All the way back in Psalm 2, some thousand years before the birth of Jesus Christ, this is what the Father had said of the Son, Jesus, speaking in verse 7, says, "I will surely tell of the decree of the LORD: He said to Me,

[That is the Father said to Me] ‘You are My Son, today I have begotten You. Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, and the very ends of the earth as Your possession.’”

God had promised Jesus that He would have all of these things. But the temptation was to get what God had already promised but not in God’s way, not the way in suffering and death and not in God’s time, which was yet in the future, instead Satan’s temptation was for Jesus to choose the time and for Jesus to choose the way and it was the way Satan had laid out before. John Calvin writing on this passage says, “Christ had the same feelings with ourselves, but He had no irregular appetites. The kind of temptation here described was, that Christ should seek in another manner than from God, the inheritance which He was promised.” If Jesus will do this, He can have these kingdoms as His possession and under his authority.

So, with that understanding in mind, let’s ask the question, what is the heart of this third temptation? It is the temptation to pursue personal prosperity or we could say self-fulfillment. Personal prosperity—it includes the desire for both position, authority and power, that is, the opportunity to rule and it includes the desire for material possessions and wealth, that is, to own, to possess. This third temptation springs in Christ from the God-given desire to work hard in the fulfillment of what He had been designed to do and to enjoy the fruit of that labor. And the same is true for us, but in us, not in Christ, there is a root sinful desire that takes that normal human desire and perverts it into a craving for personal prosperity. I don’t just want what God has designed for me to have I want more.

First John 2:16 calls this the lust of the eyes. Sinfully craving to have or possess what the eyes see. You know for us rarely does the craving to have power and authority and wealth come with the requirement to actually physically bow down before Satan. But in reality, whenever you and I are tempted to pursue these things contrary to God’s Word, we are in essence worshiping some other god. It is idolatry. The craving to possess is nothing other than covetousness and covetousness is idolatry. Turn to Colossians chapter 3, Colossians chapter 3 and notice verse 5, as Paul is urging us to put on the new self, he says, verse 5, “Consider the members of your earthly body as dead to”—and he lists a number of things and he ends with—“greed.” Greed is



simply the desire to have more. It's the insatiable desire to lay hands on more stuff—on material things. But notice the shocking statement that Paul makes about greed. He says, “which amounts to idolatry.” What the Greek text says is this, “greed which is idolatry. Greed which is idolatry.” In the parallel passage over in Ephesians 5 verse 5, it says, “The covetous man is an idolater.” The greedy person is an idolater. You might as well fall down in front of a piece of stone if you live for material things. These passages make it very clear that to crave things is idolatry.

Leon Morris writes, “Many who profess to follow Christ have purchased their own empires at the cost of the acceptance of evil.” Just as Jesus was tempted to do. Henry IV of Navarre, who lived in the 1500's, in order to be crowned king of France, chose to compromise his Protestant faith and to acknowledge the Catholic Church which many of his compatriots had died for not doing. And when he was asked about it, he laughed and said this, “Paris is well worth the mass, Paris is well worth the mass.” For Jesus the entire world was not worth a single bow.

Now when we think about this temptation, we see the form it took for Jesus. It doesn't take the same form for us. None of us are tempted to fall down in front of Satan to receive the kingdoms of the world. So, what forms does it take for us? I'm not going to spend much time here except give you an outline. But I've put a number of verses on this slide and the next one and this power point will be put on the website sometime this week. I would encourage you to take these slides and to study these references because this is where the temptation comes for us.

First of all, when it comes to the temptation for power and wealth, it means not having them for some but still craving them. Not having them but craving them, coveting them, wanting them.

This is how many people live their lives, they never have power and wealth, but they spend their whole lives wanting it. Today's culture, American culture is absolutely saturated with this manifestation of this third temptation. Our culture is almost sinking financially because people want what they cannot afford. And they have borrowed and borrowed and borrowed to get things, to get stuff. They are falling down at the idol of material possessions and wealth. God never intended for us to own and possess what we cannot afford to have. It's a lie and yet it's the temptation that many in the church are succumbing to.

I read a number of statistics that the reason, at times, the church in America suffers financially is because the people sitting in the pews don't have any extra money to give because they've spent it all on the latest whatever. Money they didn't have, and they've gone into debt to get it. The latest television or the latest vehicle or the latest and greatest house, or whatever it might be. Again, there's nothing wrong with owning these things, but you have to ask yourself if you can't afford them and you are borrowing to own them, what's really going on in your heart? This third temptation for us can easily take the form of never having these things really but wanting the things that the wealthy have.

A second path this temptation can take is pursuing power and wealth in a way contrary to God's commands. For example, pursuing it by force: stealing, robbing; pursuing it by stealth: lying, deceiving, cheating customers out of money; conniving: coming up with a plan in order to eek just a little more money out of people. I won't go into the specific vendor, but I had this just this week, where it's clear to me that a company that I do business with purposefully chose to withhold information so that they could make a little more of my money and I had to go and find out something from them in order to get them to change the practice they put into place: cheating, conniving, embezzling.

Another way to pursue wealth and power contrary to God's commands is by sacrificing biblical priorities in order to do it. There are plenty of people who have no time for the things God has prescribed like worship and church and using your gifts in the church and serving your family and ministering to them because they're off somewhere pursuing the god of wealth. Jesus said, "You cannot"—what? — "serve God and wealth." It can't be done.

A third form that this temptation takes for us is by having wealth and power and responding sinfully trusting in those things. The Bible over and over again says if you have money, that is a gift from God, don't put your trust in that, it'll go away. By hoarding them, not being generous to give and to serve others. By disobeying God to keep them, you've got them but you don't want to let them go so you're willing to lie for yourself or your company to stay in business, to keep doing what you want so you can get that money. Neglecting other biblical commands like

being generous, like caring for the needy, like serving in the church, like worship in order to stay at the job a little while longer to make sure you preserve what you've got.

And a fourth path it takes is imagining that you are the reason for your power and wealth. That is a huge temptation and we'll look at that in just a moment. Imagining that you are responsible—it's your intelligence, it's your hard work that has brought that success to you. Don't believe it for a moment. Now let me ask you to be honest with your heart for just a moment. Do you want power and wealth? Do you love it more than you love anything else, including God? Are you willing to disobey God to get it? Well, you know, it's just a little compromise and it's just a little white lie and once I have these things, well listen, I can use them for God. Well, I can take these things from my company and my employer, I mean, I deserve it. I mean, after all, they should be paying me more anyway, for all I contribute. Is that desire and its fulfillment what you believe will bring your highest and greatest happiness? And do you obey that desire and make sacrifices to satisfy it? Look at that list, all of those things are what we do to our gods—for our idols.

The heart of the third temptation of Christ then, just to review, is to pursue personal prosperity or self-fulfillment contrary to God's providence. It includes desiring position, authority, and power wanting to rule others; it includes material possessions and wealth, wanting to possess more things. That's the temptation. Let's look at the biblical response. Verse 10, "Then Jesus said to him, 'Go, Satan! For it is written, 'YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD AND SERVE HIM ONLY.'"

Jesus begins His response to the third temptation with a command for Satan to leave, go away literally, go. And for the first time in this temptation, in the ones recorded for us in Matthew, we are introduced to the personal name of this evil super-natural being. He's been called the devil which is simply a title which means "slanderer or accuser." That's what he does. Satan is his personal name and it's who he is. It means adversary or enemy. Jesus says to him, "Go away enemy, the enemy of God and good." And once again Jesus defends against this temptation with the Word of God. He quotes Deuteronomy 6:13, and notice this quotation on the screen, the

word “only” is the important word here. It speaks of exclusivity. That was the temptation, not to worship a totally different God than the real God, but to worship something in addition to the real God. And that’s where the temptation comes for us as well. This is the temptation to allow wealth to become an idol.

Now the context of what Jesus quotes is very important. Go back, and very insightful, go back to Deuteronomy 6 and let’s look at it together. Deuteronomy 6, we’ll start at verse 10. Moses is here talking to the children of Israel. They’re on the east side of the Jordan waiting to go in and take the city of Jericho, for about two months they’re there, and he’s giving them this series of speeches of sermons, if you will, telling again about God’s law and what their responsibilities are to this new generation of people about to go in and take the promised land. He says in verse 10, “It shall come about when the LORD your God brings you into the land which He swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give you, great and splendid cities”—Watch this—“which you did not build.”

Remember what’s happening here, they’re going to go from being slaves to living in cities and homes and enjoying all kinds of benefits that they didn’t build, and they didn’t grow, and they didn’t develop. This is what Moses is saying, verse 11, “and houses full of all good things which you did not fill, and hewn cisterns which you did not dig,”—of course, in that part of the world having access to fresh water was crucial and it was as valuable as anything else—“vineyards and olive trees which you did not plant,”—so, you’ve got all of these things that God has provided for you—“you eat and are satisfied watch yourself”—watch yourself, because here’s the temptation—“you will forget the Lord who brought you from the land of Egypt out of the house of slavery.”

Now you have to understand the Hebrew word “forget.” When we read that word we think, “Oh I forgot where I put my keys.”—something just sort of slips out of the mind. In the Biblical context “to forget” is to make a conscious decision to turn from something to something else. That’s what going on here. You’re going to get to enjoy all of these things and here’s what’s going to be a temptation. You’re going to be tempted to turn from God who brought you here

and gave you all these things and instead worship these good things and in that context he says in verse 13, “You shall fear only the LORD your God; and you shall worship Him and swear by His name.” So, this was the perfect verse for the response to the temptation to allow things, the possessions, power to become important. Jesus responds with the perfect text. We are to only worship God.

Now what about the application for us? Turn with me to Luke 16 for a moment. Luke 16, because in Luke 16, Jesus is dealing with the Pharisees and the Pharisees have a problem with money. There’s a lot here that I just don’t have time to go over with you, but I want you to skip down to verse 10, Jesus says, “He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much. Therefore”—and here He explains what He means— “Therefore if you have not been faithful in the use of unrighteous wealth”—in other words, if you can’t deal with your money rightly— “who will entrust the true riches to you? And if you have not been faithful in the use of that which is another’s, who will give you that which is your own?” That money wasn’t yours. How you handle it is a stewardship. Now watch the Pharisees’ response in verse 14.

Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, were listening to all these things and were scoffing at Him. And He said to them, “You are those who justify yourselves in the sight of men, but God knows your hearts; for that which is highly esteemed among men is detestable in the sight of God.”

And then He goes on in verse 19 to tell that familiar story about the rich man and Lazarus, and again, one of these times, we will look at this story in greater detail. But let me just give you the big point, the big point in the context here: Jesus is talking about the fact that money isn’t everything, but understand that in that culture they embraced a philosophy, a theology, a retribution theology that what you enjoyed in this life was in evidence of either your righteousness or your wickedness. If you were righteous then you had heaped upon you blessing upon blessing, you were wealthy. If you looked at a wealthy person in the Pharisees’ theology, they were blessed by God, they were righteous. If you looked at a poor person, they, in turn, were despised by God, and they must therefore have been unrighteous. And so, Jesus tells the

story and He throws their theology on its head, because the rich man ends up in hell and the poor man ends up in heaven. The point Jesus is making to the Pharisees, and to us, is that money is not what you live for, wealth is not what you live for. To put it in His words in a different place, what are you going to give in exchange for your soul?

But if we're in Christ what's the application for us? Turn to 1 Timothy chapter 6. First Timothy chapter 6. He's warning his son in the faith, verse 9, he says listen, "Those who want to get rich"—those who are after money, that's what they're trying to get—"fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires"—so in other words, it's like a hot bed brewing other trouble, and these things—"plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil,"—and here's the worst part— "and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs."

There are people for whom money and wealth become so important that they will walk away from their commitment to Jesus Christ, showing, of course, that they never were truly in Christ. But notice his counsel to those who are wealthy, verse 17. So I want you to "Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited"—don't let it go to your head, you're not the reason you have it, but instead fix your hope on God, not the uncertainty of your riches, because God's the One who gives us all things to enjoy.

Whatever you have, it's not your intelligence, there are people far more intelligent than you are who have nothing. There are people far more skilled than you are who have nothing. God is the One who gives wealth, according to Deuteronomy 8, and he says then, verse 18, "Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share,"—and in so doing they will store—"up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed." By looking at their money rightly, their vision is not obscured about what's important. They can see clearly. And they're building toward the future. That's how we're to respond. We're to respond like Jesus did. Just as Jesus said no to this temptation so are we.

Matthew, back in Matthew 4, Matthew says in verse 11, when this temptation was done, “the devil left Him; and behold, angels came and began to minister to Him.” Of course, Satan wasn’t done with Jesus forever, Luke 4 says, “the devil left Him until an opportune time.” He’d tempt Jesus again. But he left for now, and after Satan left, it says, “the angels ministered to Jesus.” Like they did for Elijah, probably bringing Him food, caring for Him in other ways they served and ministered to Jesus.

So, let’s wrap all of this up, our study of these three temptations. If you were to make a list of all of the recurring sins and temptations in your life, in fact, I would encourage you to do that. Either mentally now, or at some point make a little list, you can destroy it after it’s written, but write it down and then look at that list. I can promise you this, ultimately you can trace all of those sins in your life, all of those recurring temptations to these, to one or more of these three root temptations. This is what lies beneath everything, this is what makes the world goes around as the song says. Here it is in the order of 1 John 2: first of all the lust of the flesh, that is self-satisfaction, craving and pursuing the satisfaction of the body’s appetites contrary to the Word of God; the lust of the eyes, self-fulfillment, craving and pursuing personal prosperity contrary to God’s providence; and the boastful pride of life, or self-promotion, craving and pursuing personal glory at the expense of God’s glory. Every sin you are tempted to commit traces back to one of these three, and if you want to gain victory over the temptations in your life you have got to start by dealing with the root and not the fruit.

We can overcome these temptations in our lives as Jesus did. He showed us how, by a proper understanding and application of God’s Word. This is one of the reasons that Jesus’s temptations are recorded to provide us with a pattern for how to overcome temptation in our own lives. But more importantly Jesus’s victory over temptation is recorded for us in order to demonstrate His power over temptation. Christian, when you read the temptation of Jesus Christ, you should be overwhelmed with a feeling of gratitude and joy because of Christ’s crushing victory over Satan and his temptations, that is the foundation for two huge theological words on which our lives hinge.

The first word is substitution. Because of Christ's perfect obedience when He was tempted, He earned the right to be your substitute on the cross. He was a Lamb—what? —without spot and without blemish. He didn't give in, those temptations you face and give into, He never gave in. Not once in His entire life did He ever fail to love God perfectly and not once in His entire life did He ever fail to love others as He loved Himself. And because of that He is qualified to be your substitute.

The other word is justification. Because of Christ's perfect obedience, not just in this temptation, not just in these three times, not just those forty days, but for 33 years because of Jesus's perfect obedience, the Father can take that package of obedience, that life of perfect obedience to God and He can credit it to my account. These three temptations show us that Jesus is fully qualified to rescue us from sin because He Himself was never touched by it. As the song says, Hallelujah, what a Savior! Let's pray together.

Our Father we thank You for Jesus Christ, we thank You most of all for this record of His temptations that points us to His perfection. That points us to the fact that He is the Lamb unblemished and without spot and that He was qualified to be our substitute that His perfect life of obedience can be credited to us. Father we thank You for these great theological truths that are founded on His perfect obedience even in the face of the worst temptations. But Father we thank You as well that in His obedience, in His saying "no" to Satan's temptations, He provides a pathway, a pattern for our own obedience. Father help us to think like Jesus thought; help us to respond to these temptations in the way He responded. Help us to so own the Scripture, to so believe it, to so embrace its truth that when temptation comes we don't just quote a Bible verse, but we understand the truth, and our hearts are gripped by the truth and we speak to that temptation with the truth that we are convinced of. And oh God may we then turn to the One who never gave in because He's a High Priest who understands. He was tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin. We thank You for Christ, help us to walk in His way, we pray in Jesus name, Amen.



