



The God Filled Surrender to God Alone

Brownsburg Church of Christ

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Introduction:

Sometimes I wonder if we don't misunderstand what Satan is really trying to accomplish. If you are like me, you have a tendency to think that Satan is all about trying to get us to utterly hate God and violate all of His laws. That is simply not true. Satan doesn't care if we keep most of God's laws and even if we mostly love God. He simply wants us to love something more than God, put something in God's place, or put someone above God. Satan is happy for us to "attend church" weekly, avoid biggie sins, make much ado about the ins and outs of God's pattern and checklist, as long as there is something that actually takes precedence in our lives over God. The temptations of Jesus in **Matthew 4:1-11** demonstrate this with absolute clarity. And none of the temptations demonstrate that more than the third temptation as recorded in **Matthew 4:8-11**.

Discussion:

I. The Battlefield: The Battle for Surrender

- A. Though Luke presents these temptations in a different order because of his thematic purposes, Matthew saves this climactic temptation for last. We've recognized that each temptation establishes a divine battleground. The temptations are never about seeing if we can measure up to some arbitrary set of rules. They are all about who is our God. The first battlefield was the battle for reliance. The second was the battle for trust. This final one is the battle for surrender.
- B. At a shallow level, we recognize Satan offers Jesus rule of the kingdoms. We hear that and think about what such an offer would mean to us. We think about wealth and power. We think the battlefield has to do with greed, covetousness, or materialism. But that is not the case. We need to see this temptation through the eyes of the Son of God, heir to the promises of **Psalm 2** and **110**. Jesus was already heir to the kingdoms. He was already in line to receive what Satan was offering Him. So what sway would such a promise hold for Jesus? God's way for Jesus to become King led through suffering, torment, and agony. Satan was saying he would step out of Jesus' way. He would concede the battle before it even started and Jesus wouldn't have to go through all that suffering. Would Jesus go God's strait and narrow way? Or would He take the broad and easy way? Would He surrender to God's way or would He surrender to Satan's? Who would Jesus let be in control.
- C. Satan attacks us on this battlefield as well. In **Galatians 5:22-23**, God promises us the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Isn't this what we all want? Of course it is. But Satan is offering that to us as well. He claims we can have all these things through easier ways. All we have to do is worship him, submit to him, surrender to him. Think about it. What is the appeal for most of our sins? Is it not one or more of these fruit? In sexual immorality, aren't we looking for love or joy? In covetousness and greed, aren't we looking for peace to overcome any financial anxiety we have? Isn't vengeance actually about self-control? We want to have control and someone has attacked that so we have to get them back so we can feel in control?
- D. While worship is at the heart of this battle, this is not a battle for meeting some arbitrary set of worship rules. This is a battle for who gets to be your god. Whoever or whatever you surrender to, giving control of your life, is your god. Let it be the one true God.

II. The Attack

A. Empty promises

1. I've heard many people debate whether or not Satan really had ownership of the kingdoms of the earth and therefore had the authority to give them to Jesus, but I believe that misses the point. Satan was going to and is battling Jesus tooth and toenail over the kingdoms of the earth. In this temptation, Satan is offering to bow out of the fight. Jesus can have the kingdoms without any protestation from Satan. All He has to do is worship Satan.
2. The problem is this promise is empty. Satan may bow out of the way, but if Jesus worships Satan, He loses the place as heir to His Father's kingdoms. He loses the right to rule and reign. What good is it if Satan bows out of the fight, if he only does so after he struck the death blow and won the war?

3. Satan frequently uses this attack on us. As we've already noted, he claims his way will lead us to love, joy, peace, etc. "You can have peace," he says. "All you have to do is blow up at your boss (spouse, kids, parents, friends, brethren), getting him back for all the times he's mistreated you." But there is no peace there, just more turmoil. "You can have joy," he says. "All you have to do is get drunk (high, commit immorality, etc.)." There may be momentary pleasure there, but there is no lasting joy.
4. Please trust the voice of experience here. I am not bragging at all when I say that throughout my life, I've tried a lot of sins. I have said before and will say again and again, there is not one single, solitary sin that I look back on and say, "Man, I'm glad I did that. I got so much out of that." All of Satan's promises have been empty. What amazes me is his ability to trip me up again even after knowing this. But that leads to the other attacks he uses.

B. Convenience

1. We already learned as we talked about the battlefield what the temptation really is here. This is not simply about worship. It is not about materialism, covetousness, or greed. It isn't about the desire for fame and power. It is actually about ease and convenience. God's way to the kingdoms entailed the sacrifice of heaven (for a time). It entailed pain and agony. It entailed rejection, torment, and tragedy. Satan explained that Jesus didn't have to go through all of that. All he had to do was the very easy work of bowing before Satan. It is as if Satan is saying to Jesus, "Jesus, God has all these horrific plans for You. I've got an easier way. God's way is so hard, my way is so easy. God's way is so exacting, my way doesn't require much. God's way is so boring, my way is filled with excitement. God's way requires sacrifice and hard work, my way lets You go Your own way, whatever Your heart desires can be Yours."
2. Satan does the same for us. As **Matthew 7:13-14** demonstrates, there are two ways: the easy, broad way and the difficult, narrow way. Which one will we choose? We want love, but who wants to go through the hard work of actually having to love someone unconditionally to get it? It's much easier to just pursue sex or pornography. We want peace, but who wants to go through the hard work of peacemaking to get it? It's much easier to write people off as not worth it or incapable of it and gain a semblance of peace through avoiding them. We want self-control, but who wants to go through the long, hard process of accountability, trial and error, and many failures? It's much easier to claim that whatever passions I have are really okay and only the things that don't tempt me are wrong.

C. Euphoric Recall

1. This attack is seen when we consider the context of the passage Jesus quoted in His defense. He quoted **Deuteronomy 6:13**. (He was quoting the Septuagint translation of this passage, which explains the slightly different wording.) "Euphoria" is a "state of intense happiness and self-confidence." "Euphoric recall" is the tendency for people to remember the past in the way that puts them in the most positive light. It especially refers to remembering all the positives of an experience while forgetting the negatives. It is a kind of selective recall that skews our perspective on the choices before us.
2. Notice what Moses wrote starting in **Deuteronomy 6:10**. He warns the Israelites not to get into the Promised Land and forget that it was God who brought them out of the Egypt and brought them into cities they didn't build, houses that they didn't fill, vineyards they didn't plant. Think this through. If they forgot that it was God who brought them into the land, who would they think did it? They did it themselves. Thus, euphoric recall. They remember the past in the way that puts them in the most positive light.
3. Satan uses this against us all the time. He waits for us to forget that God is the one who has given us our victories, letting us prop ourselves up with pride, convinced that we are the ones who garnered the victory. Another way he uses this is by letting us forget all the negative consequences and pain our sins have caused and only bringing to memory the momentary pleasures we experienced in our sins. Through all of this we have a confidence in ourselves to be able to handle a certain level of temptation and sin, we think that this time will somehow be different than all the others. But it won't. This is another empty promise from Satan.

D. "Just this once"

1. Satan's temptation is one that says, "All you have to do is fall down and worship me, and I'll give you these kingdoms." The implication of the statement is, "Just this once, Jesus. All you have to do is bow before me this one time, and you can rule the kingdoms of earth forever." Let's face it; that seems like a pretty fair trade. Just one moment of sin for a lifetime of ease. It's not like Jesus was going to have to worship Satan forever. He could worship him once and then go back to worshipping God, right?
2. Satan tempts us like this too. How many times do we cave to a fleshly passion because it will be just this once? Or because it will be "one last time"? "I'll take this drink, but it will be my last one." "It's just one

little white lie.” “Surely God will understand denying Him just this once.” “It’s only one assembly I’m forsaking.” “I’ll just take one extra look at that good looking person who isn’t my spouse.” This actually ties in with the euphoric recall. Because we remember the great pleasure of some past sin, we are often chasing that feeling again. We think that just one more time will give us the feeling we had then, and this time it will last. But it never works that way. It is another empty promise of Satan.

III. The Defense

A. Remember God’s true character

1. The context of the passage Jesus quoted gives us an interesting insight into our defense against these attacks. I will admit this defense doesn’t really set well with folks in today’s religious world, but we need to recognize it. Jesus quoted **Deuteronomy 6:13**, but notice what Moses wrote in the next two verses. The reason they should fear and worship God alone is because He is a jealous God. God’s jealousy is not something we talk much about today. We think jealousy contradicts the love, but it does not.
2. The reason we think jealousy contradicts love is because we typically attribute to “jealousy” the extreme and unhealthy uses of it that demonstrate a paranoid lack of trust. We think of the husband we label jealous who beats a guy up for no reason other than he noticed a flickering glance toward or from his wife. Or the guy who locks his wife in his house so she can’t be around other men lest she fall into immorality. This extreme, paranoid jealousy is not what we are talking about. We are talking about a healthy jealousy that actually stems from love. Can you imagine a husband and wife who truly love each other, are committed to each other, and delight in each other saying, “Oh, I don’t care if my spouse sleeps around”? Of course not. When we hear about such arrangements we don’t think of love. Love promotes a healthy jealousy that says, “Because I love you, I cannot abide sharing that love with others.” That is the jealousy of God. Because He loves us, He cannot abide us taking our love and devotion to any other god.
3. If we want to overcome Satan’s attacks, we need to meditate on God and His true character. We need to meditate on His love and His jealousy. We need to recognize that we cannot have our cake and eat it to. Just like the man who thinks he can somehow have his wife keeping the home fires burning for him while he goes to some other woman for passionate trysts is crazy, so we are playing with fire if we think God will have the eternal fellowship of heaven waiting for us while we pursue our passions with other gods. Remembering that will help us overcome Satan’s attack as we remember sacrificing our relationship with God is just not worth the moment of pleasure that pursuing the other gods give.

B. Commit to God’s way

1. Jesus’s response in **Matthew 4:10** demonstrated the greatest weapon in His arsenal against temptation. That was commitment. No matter what was offered, Jesus was committed to God’s way. As He said in **John 4:34**, His food was to do God’s will. No matter how hard God’s way got, He was committed to God, to fearing Him, to worshiping Him. And He was committed to God to the exclusion of all others.
2. Just this week, I got my hair cut. In the small talk, I found out my stylist is getting married in a few months. She learned I have been married for 19 years. She asked, “What is the secret to having a lasting marriage like that?” In the split second before I answered, I tried to come up with something witty, something profound, something unique, something impressive. But then it hit me. The secret to a lasting marriage is pretty simple. Don’t get divorced. Don’t get me wrong; I know there is a lawful divorce described in **Matthew 19:9**. But, the secret to a lasting marriage is simply don’t let the marriage end. No doubt, there are steps to make that commitment easier. But the long and short of it is if you want to be married for 50, 60, 70 years, don’t get divorced at 19 years. This is important because marriage isn’t easy. It’s hard. I think Marita would agree that there have been times in our marriage in which we have been absolutely livid with each other. Regrettably, our kids could probably detail some fights they heard which they wondered how we would survive. There have been moments when the easy way to deal with our anger and hurt would be to simply walk away. But commitment no matter what makes you work through that.
3. This is an illustration of our commitment to God. Let’s face it; serving God is not always a walk in the park. Just read **Job** or some of the **Psalms** to discover how difficult and trying it can be sometimes. But if we want the promises God offers, we have to be committed to Him and His way no matter what. Like Job in **Job 13:15**, we need to be able to say, “Though he slay me, I will hope in him” (ESV). If we develop this kind of commitment to God, Satan’s attacks will fall short.

C. Repetition of God’s way

1. Our third defense is seen in the context of the passage Jesus quoted. **Deuteronomy 6:4-9** instructed Israel in how to prepare for Satan’s attacks. Teaching and repetition. God’s Words were to be on their hearts and in their conversations. They were not simply to talk about it once and move on. They were to

talk about it when they were sitting in their homes, then again when they were walking in the way. They were to talk about it when they lay down, then again when they got up. They were to make it something that was like their very hands, something they would see again and again and again. They were to put it on their doorposts so they would be reminded every day.

2. We need this defense as well. We need to get in God's Word again and again and again to remind us of His way, His promises, His love. Why do you think the Lord's Supper is a weekly event? Because we need to see it again and again and again. We need to have it before us like signs on our hands and before our eyes. We need to remember and repeat the message of God's gospel for us, God's love and care for us. We need to hear again and again and again what God's way really is. That way Satan can't lead us astray with his mediocre copies of God's promises.

D. "This too shall pass"

1. The final defense comes from Satan's response in **Matthew 4:11**. The battle was hard, the onslaught seemingly unbearable. But Jesus withstood it and Satan left Him. The temptation was not just some on-going, never ending battle. Certainly, this wasn't the last temptation Jesus ever faced. But these temptations came and went. They didn't last for all of Jesus' life.
2. In like manner, one of the greatest defenses is to remember that this too shall pass. In the thick of temptation, when it seems like it is never going to end and you might as well cave just this once, remember that no temptation lasts forever. It may come again, but it will pass for the time being. You're absolute anger that demands explosive release, will subside given time. Your desire to escape that makes drink or drugs or gambling or spending or gluttony or sex seem the only answer, will wane if you just hang on. The feeling that you just need a certain thing that makes you want to steal it, will go away. The fear that makes you want to lie, will subside.
3. Again, I'm not saying there won't be other battles fought on these same battlefields later. But no particular battle lasts forever. Hang on. Resist the devil and he will flee from you (**James 4:7**).

IV. The Victory

- A. I think **Matthew 4:11** is a beautiful picture. In the midst of temptation, it often becomes so large we simply cannot imagine life ever being different than the battle going on. But in **Matthew 4:11**, the angels ministered to Jesus. Jesus's battle with Satan was tough, perhaps even painful. But, He resisted, Satan fled, and God ministered to Him through the angels.
- B. Note **Hebrews 1:14**: "Are they not all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?" (ESV). Victory doesn't just mean waiting around for the next battle. It means enjoying the ministering of the ever present God. He is with us. He is watching over us. He does care. He is our loving Shepherd who leads us by quiet waters, lets us lie down in green pastures, and restores our soul (**Psalms 23**). Look to Him in the battle and in the victory.

Conclusion:

Temptation is not a game. It is not something to trifle with. We are at war. Satan hurls his fiery darts at all times and in numerous ways. We need to remember that we aren't just walking through life, we are walking through the battlefield. Let's always build the walls of defense we see through Jesus in these temptations. Let's always hang on to the victory God is offering us. Let's help one another in this battle. If you have fallen on the battlefield, don't beat yourself up or defect to the other side. The promises there are empty. Turn to your brothers and sisters. Turn back to your God. We are here for you and want to see you win the battle. How are you doing on the battlefield?