**Introduction:**

**Temptation of the God Filled**

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For a group of people who long to be God Filled (cf. **Ephesians 3:14-19**), the truly God Filled, incarnate Son of God is our greatest example (cf. **Colossians 1:19; 2:9**).In what area do we need a good example more than in facing temptation? Satan is a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour (**I Peter 5:8**). Life is a battlefield and Satan is launching his fiery darts at us constantly (**Ephesians 6:16**). This is surprising in many ways. After all, we’ve made a decision to follow God. We have received the gift of the Holy Spirit. We might think temptation is a thing of the past. Surely, the God Filled aren’t tempted by anything. And yet, our supreme example of being God Filled was tempted. Let’s spend a few lessons walking through the temptation of our Master (**Matthew 4:1-11**), that we may learn to turn to Him for help and grace in our time of greatest need (cf. **Hebrews 2:18; 4:14-16**). In this lesson, let us simply note some general lessons about temptation.

**Discussion:**

1. Satan attacks when we least expect it.
   1. **Matthew 4:1** reveals that Jesus was led up by the Spirit in order to be tested. While Jesus knew what was coming, when you consider the context of this temptation, we find it to come at a surprising time when we would not expect temptation.
   2. In **Matthew 3:13-17**, Jesus was baptized by John. At His baptism, the Spirit descended as a dove upon Him and the Father spoke saying, “This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased” (ESV). Had Jesus experienced a more joyous and triumphant day to this point? Next thing…temptation.
   3. What an unexpected time for temptation. But it happens to us, on the tail of victory and other times when we least expect temptation, Satan will attack, trying to catch us off guard. That is why Paul encourages us to take heed, especially in those times when we think we are standing, lest we fall (**I Corinthians 10:12**). We must be on guard at all times.
2. Satan tempts us through our desires.
   1. James tells us this in **James 1:14-15**. However, the dangerous point is the desire itself is not always sinful. Satan will try to trick us into fulfilling authorized desires in sinful ways.
   2. The example of Jesus’ temptation proves this. Note the desires that Satan played on.
      1. **Matthew 4:2**: Satan used the desire to eat. This is not sinful.
      2. **Matthew 4:6**: The desire used here is not as obvious as the first temptation. Note Jesus’ quote from **Deuteronomy 6:16**. Jesus refers back to a time when the Israelites tested God to see if He was present. That is exactly the desire Satan uses here: the desire to know God is present. That is not a sinful desire.
      3. **Matthew 4:8-9**: The desire used here is also subtle. Satan offers Jesus the rule of the world. But remember, that was God’s plan for Jesus anyway (**Psalm 2:7-9; Hebrews 1:5**). God’s plan however entailed suffering on the cross for the sins of man. Satan’s plan avoided that suffering. The desire then is to avoid suffering. That is not a sinful desire.
   3. The point of all this is we must be on our guard, Satan will use desires that are not sinful in and of themselves, provoking us to fulfill them in sinful ways. Consider the kinds of desires we have, few of them are sinful by themselves. The desire for physical nourishment, the desire for sexual fulfillment, the desire for connection and relationship, the desire for respect, the desire for fairness, the desire for safety, the desire for peace, the desire for joy, the desire for happiness, even the desire for pleasure: none of these is sinful. We must be on our guard because Satan will get us fixated on our desires, then twist them and pervert our thinking to fulfill these natural God-made desires in unnatural, ungodly ways.
3. There is an escape route from every sin.
   1. Jesus’ example demonstrates what Paul teaches in **I Corinthians 10:13**. We serve a faithful God. He is faithful to the covenant He has made with us through Jesus Christ. Part of the faithfulness is to provide a way of escape from every temptation. Note the subtle point of Paul’s teaching. It is not that God looks at our personal strength and won’t let Satan tempt us more than we can individually handle. God recognizes our weakness and always provides a way of escape for us. It is His strength that allows us to overcome temptation.
   2. However, when we look at Jesus’ temptation, we don’t see some beam of light, a magical mantra, or a special formula to recite or repeat in order to overcome temptation. We see that the way of escape is forged in an ongoing relationship with God himself. We must not think that we can simply flirt with sin, pack our bags for sin, and walk the way of sin and think God will magically open up some obvious victory over sin at the last minute. Jesus illustrates where the escape route is.
   3. Notice the two aspects of the escape route forged by a relationship with God.
      1. We see the first aspect in Jesus’ preparation to be tempted. He fasted forty days and nights humbling Himself before and leaning upon God for strength (**Matthew 4:2**). We know that Jesus was not just wandering around the wilderness not eating waiting for Satan to come to Him. The implication is He spent the time in devotion to God which includes prayer, as evidenced by the number of times prayer and fasting are mentioned together. The escape route from sin begins before the temptation with prayer and, yes, while we often argue that we aren’t bound to fast, fasting helps. The number one key to having an escape route is having a devotional relationship with God. Humbling ourselves daily before Him, worshiping Him privately and publicly. Being in awe of Him.
      2. The second aspect is knowing the Word of God and making the decision to follow it no matter what. Three times Jesus escaped temptation by relying on and following the word of God. Each time He responded to Satan, “It is written” (**Matthew 4:4, 7, 10**). Jesus began His battle against this temptation much earlier, knowing the Word of God, making it easier to follow when the difficulty came. “How can the young man (or any person for that matter) keep his way pure?” the psalmist asked in **Psalm 119:9**. “By guarding it according to your word” (ESV). Do you want to know the escape route from temptation? It is mapped in God’s Word. Be in it. Know it. Love it. Live it.
4. Satan will flee, but he will be back.
   1. When Jesus had resisted the devil, he left Him just as James says he will do in **James 4:7**.
   2. However, we must never believe that this was it for the tempting of Christ. The parallel passage of **Luke 4:13** says that the devil was looking for a more opportune time. The same is true for us, which brings us full circle to the first point. Always be on your guard. Even when you have had success against temptation, because Satan has fled but is still looking for an opportune time to attack and cause you to fall. Satan is a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour (**I Peter 5:8**).
   3. This is important to remember because it brings us full circle to our first point. Satan tempts us when we least expect it. When do we least expect it? Right after we’ve beaten him soundly. When you have won the victory, give God glory and thanks for the way of escape and the strength to take it. Pray that He will continue to be with you. And keep your guard up. Satan is simply waiting for you to get cocky so he can attack again.

**Conclusion:**

Some of the most comforting and helpful words in the Bible are found in the Hebrew writer’s description of what Jesus went through regarding temptation in **Hebrews 4:14-16**. Because we know Jesus went through temptation, we can have confidence to draw near to Him and receive mercy, grace, and help in our time of need. He will help strengthen us if we will simply draw near to Him. We do have to face temptation, but we don’t have to face temptation alone.