

# **Tempted: Depending On A Dependable God**

## **Focus of Series:**

Today we will begin a 3 part series called "Tempted." In this series we will be looking at the biblical account of Jesus' temptation in the wilderness found in Matthew 4. We will look at each temptation Jesus faced and then investigate how each temptation relates to us personally. We will try to answer the question of why temptation comes to us and what purpose temptation serves. In the end I hope we will all find ways to overcome temptation by looking at how Jesus overcame.

Today we will begin this series by looking at the first temptation of Christ. Before we do that let's read from Matthew 4:1-11

1 Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. 2 After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. 3 The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." 4 Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" 5 Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. 6 "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written: 'He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'" 7 Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" 8 Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. 9 "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me." 10 Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'" 11 Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.

**(ME)**

I have a confession to make to you this morning Turning Point: sometimes I struggle to trust God! Sometimes I am tempted to trust in my own ability and skill and forsake my dependence on God. There are times when I would rather depend on my own personality and skills because I forget what God has done for me.

### **(YOU)**

Do you ever struggle to trust God? Do you ever think to yourself, "I know I am supposed to depend on God but it just seems He is not at work in my problem, so, I'll just take care of this myself!" Or possibly you think, "There are so many other ways to get the answers I am looking for in this world that God seems neither here nor there." Think about this with me today...

- If you are sick – find a doctor.
- If you are poor – elect a better politician
- If you are having problems – find a counselor (personal, financial, marriage, etc)

In today's world there are so many other ways to get answers that little if any thought is given to depending on God. Why? Because we have come to trust in the abilities of humanity and decided that God may not be dependable.

(TRANSITION) That attitude is exactly what is being portrayed in the first temptation the tempter brought to Jesus...let's read it...

Matthew 4:3 – *The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread."*

### **(GOD)**

Let me try to paint a picture of the whole scene we are reading about in Matthew 4. If you go back to the end of chapter 3 you will find where John the Baptizer had just baptized Jesus. After Jesus came up out of the water the heavens opened up and the Spirit of God **like** a dove descended and a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased” (Mt. 3:13-17). This event served as example to you and I of our need to be baptized but it also served to confirm that Jesus is the Son of God and not just another teacher or preacher – but God manifested in the flesh.

- We must understand a very important fact before all of this temptation business makes sense. Jesus is both God and man. He has both a human nature and a divine (God) nature. We see Jesus surrendering His human will to the will of God throughout scripture. As a human Jesus is truly: hungry, tired, weary, angry, etc. As God Jesus: forgives sin, heals, calms the storms, opens blind eyes, knows the thoughts of man, etc. Nowhere do we see the dual nature of Christ more openly than in His temptation. His human nature is submitting itself to the will of God.
- Do not for a moment think that God is being tempted! Just as Jesus had to surrender His will to God in the Garden of Gethsemane so too Jesus (the human) is bringing His flesh into obedience to the will of God, that is, to preach the kingdom and be the substitutional sacrifice for the sin of ALL mankind.
- As you read the account of Jesus’ temptation you must bear in mind His dual nature. Otherwise we would be saying that somehow the devil (or you

and I) could tempt God to do evil or sin; this is not possible. Keep these things in mind as we look at our text today...

We read Matthew 4:1, "Then Jesus was led **by the Spirit** into the desert to be **tempted by the devil.**" We then see Jesus fasting while in the desert and because of this fasting he was hungry (4:2). It is during this time of physical weakness the *tempter* comes and begins to work on Jesus...

**If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread."**

I want you to pay special attention to the first word the *tempter* uses – **IF**. Remember Jesus is hungry (physically weak); He is feeling the pains of not eating for forty days & nights all the while being in the hot desert. In the time of His weakened state the enemy comes and says, **IF**...this is a word of doubt! The *tempter* is trying to get Jesus to doubt what happened at His baptism. He is trying to put doubt in His mind that He is the Son of God. You see, if the *tempter* can just get Jesus to doubt for even a single minute then he could get Jesus to give in to the temptation.

Then the *tempter* says, "...tell these stones to become bread." The devil is trying to get Jesus to use His divine power to satisfy His natural hunger. The devil was trying to tempt Jesus (the human) into believing that God was not dependable. This is not a new tactic used by the *tempter*.

Ask yourselves a question, "Why would the devil tempt Jesus with bread?" In the main we could say it is because Jesus is hungry and we would be right. But the real answer is found in Jesus' response to the temptation...

*Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" (Matthew 4:4)*

Look at the words, “It is written...” Jesus takes the seed of doubt the tempter is trying to plant in His mind and battles it with an absolute fact! Notice He does not say, “Well, I think somewhere in the scriptures it says something about not living on bread alone?” NO! He rebukes the devil with an emphatic – absolute truth from the scriptures.

Jesus’ answer to the tempter comes from the Old Testament book of Deuteronomy 8. The book of Deuteronomy was written primarily by Moses reminding Israel of the great things God had done for them (deliverance, provision, etc), and also, it contains nearly 24 chapters of Godly principles by which Israel should live in order to glorify God on this earth (i.e. ten commandments).

Deuteronomy 8 is a chapter that calls God’s people to never forget what God has done for them. Moses specifically mentions God’s act of leading them through the desert for 40 years (Vv. 1-2a). Then Moses reminds them why God had to take them into a desert for 40 years...

*“...to humble you and test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you could keep his commandments. He [God] humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna [bread]...to teach you that man does not live by bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord” (Vv. 2b-3)*

Turning Point I want you to get this today! Moses had been hearing the word of the Lord and recording it for the people to hear. God had taken Israel into the desert and humbled them through hunger then God provided for them a thing called, manna [bread]. Every morning the people would step out of their tents and this manna [bread] would be waiting on them. There would be enough bread, every day, for every person.

God used this experience to teach Israel that in their hunger they must depend on God! God gave the manna and the manna gave life – the gift of God [bread] was the source of keeping them alive – God then is the source of life.

Every day when they woke up and found bread on the ground they realized two things:

1. They must depend on God.
2. That God is dependable

When Jesus is being tempted to turn stones into bread He is reminded of these two absolute facts. The *tempter* tries to convince Him that God has abandoned Him, forsaken Him, and left Him to die in the desert.

*Jesus rebukes the devil because He knows the same God who provided bread for Israel in the desert is also dependable to make a way for Him to escape this temptation!*

**(WE)**

As a church we cannot forget where God has brought us from and how God has provided for us every step of the way. We cannot become like the church at Galatia who were fooled into thinking that what began in the Spirit could somehow be completed in the flesh! GOD FORBID!

The same God that birthed this church into existence with miracles and signs is a dependable God who will sustain this church by His Word. There have been and will be times when we as a body will be tempted to try to make things happen by promoting our own talents and abilities. We will be tempted to trust in our flesh and forsake the Spirit's power.

But I want you to imagine a church today that looks in the face of this temptation and says, "We will not live on the blessings alone but we will live by the Word of God!" A church that is committed to the life sustaining power of God's Spirit in us, and His life giving Word is our only foundation.

I have come to tell you this morning no matter what the *tempter* says, **"You can depend on a this dependable God!"** Jesus has never and will never fail us as a body. Even when the *tempter* comes and says, "God is not with you! God has forsaken this church! You are walking through a desert and God is no longer on your side!" Then he says...

- If you would just stop preaching this One God message and depend on a more popular message you would see revival!
- If you wouldn't insist on baptism in Jesus Name then other churches might want to be a part of you?
- If you would just depend on what everyone else is doing things might be different!

The *tempter* tries to paint a picture of compromise and satisfying the opinion of the day but I say to the enemy – “WE WILL LIVE BY THE WORD OF GOD – WE WILL DEPEND ON A DEPENDABLE GOD!”

- The key to sustained (long-lasting) revival is our consistent proclamation of the same message. We are not the same as every other church; we do not preach the same message. In a world where everyone is told to be like everyone else we will stand apart and declare there is ONE God and His name is Jesus. We will stand firm on the foundations of our faith and learn how to deliver that message within the communities God puts us!
- We will not give into the temptation to trade in our trust in a dependable God!

### (YOU)

What about you this morning? What is the *tempter* trying to convince you to do in your own power instead of depending on God?

- Young man – is the *tempter* telling you to trust in your strength and personal power to make it through life. (Your power is not dependable but God’s power is...)
- Young lady – is the *tempter* trying to convince you to surrender your life to will of others who do not have your best interest in mind? (God will be dependable to take care of your future...)
- Mom’s and Dad’s – is the *tempter* whispering in your ear, “Let your kids do what they want, after all, that’s what other parents are doing. Raising your kids in church and expecting them to act right is so out dated – kids have their own way.” (God is dependable to help you stand for what is holy and right – God’s word is dependable)



Is the *tempter* trying to convince you today that God is not dependable? You may feel like you are in a dry or forsaken place. You may feel like God is not at work in your problems but I have come this morning to remind you – YOU CAN DEPEND ON A DEPENDABLE GOD!

I want us to do something this morning...I want us to stand and get our Bible's out. If you don't have a Bible get next to someone who does or look up here to the screen.. I want us to SPEAK THE WORD OF GOD OUT LOUD AND CLAIM THIS PROMISE OF A DEPENDABLE GOD...READY....

**Hebrews 13:5 - 6**