

Facing Temptation with Jesus as King

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Date: 20 January 2019

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[0 : 00] Father, we come to worship you and to lift up your name. We come to say, God, that there's no one like you in all the earth, in all creation. You stand alone, God. You are the one true God.

Father, when all creation falls away and fades away, God, when the end of the world as we understand it has come, God, you will still be eternally existing.

You will still be worshipped, God, by those that you have created. God, you are the one true eternal God, and there's no one like you. There's no one as majestic as you. There's no one as tender as you.

There's no one as strong and glorious as you. There's none as merciful and gracious. There's none so holy and set apart like you. God, there's none so loving and welcoming.

God, we worship you this morning. We come to align our hearts with what is true, with who you are.

Father, this morning as we pray for various churches in our city, we want to pray for Ebsen and Trophina at Hope for All Church.

[1 : 04] God, we really want to lift Ebsen's health before you this morning. This young man that has planted a church, God, on the Kailun side. Father, we know that he's gone through health challenges, and you know everything.

You know things better than we do. We lift him up before you, and we ask, God, won't you be gracious? We pray for restoration. We pray for healing. We pray strengthen his body, Lord. We pray for a full and a speedy recovery.

We pray for him to be back preaching soon, Lord God. God, we pray for their children and their children's health, God, and the challenges that their children have faced health-wise. Father, we pray for that church.

We pray for Hope for All Church, that leaders will emerge, for there to be fruit, for numbers to increase, for people to get saved. Pray for the Holy Spirit to be powerfully at work at Hope for All Church.

We really do lift up our brothers and sisters there before you this morning. We stand with them. And so, God, just as we sang, may your name be lifted up, we pray not only in Watermark, but in Hong Kong.

[2 : 01] May your name be lifted up, God. And do so in that church, we pray. Fathers, we think of our city this morning. We pray for the orphans. We pray for the orphan workers in our city.

We pray for Mother's Choice and other organizations like that that work with orphans. God, we pray for children that are awaiting adoption in homes. God, we pray, won't you draw near to them, God. Won't you flood their hearts with your love, Lord God. We pray for those families that are in the process, God, of waiting adoption. God, won't you match the right children to the right families, Lord.

Pray, God, for Christians, God, that are obeying your command to look after widows and orphans, Lord God. We pray for financial support and blessing for those organizations.

And we ask, God, that your church really will be a light in our city, in this area, God. That young children that are without parents and without families will find families and find homes, God.

[3 : 00] God, help us as Christians to know what to do and how to respond, Lord. Give us courage, we pray. Father, pray for Watermark, for opportunities to witness and to share our faith, God.

We pray, God, for conversations to start. We pray that as a church we'll be more courageous. We pray for people to come to know you, people that are not Christians, to come to find the wonder of Jesus and to find grace, Lord God.

We pray for you, Holy Spirit, to draw people closer to yourself. We pray for those in our midst that are starting to have conversations with neighbors and colleagues and friends and family. Oh, God, won't you be with us, we pray, God. We pray the gospel go forward in Hong Kong. And then, God, lastly, we pray for the Holy Spirit to be deeply at work in our church. God, we pray not so much for the blessings of the Spirit, but for you, Holy Spirit, yourself. We so often feel your absence. We find ourselves acting by our own spirit, our own initiative. God, even this week in my own preparation, I confess I've been so self-reliant, not reliant on you. [4 : 05] Oh, God, we need you. Save us from being content with only a little measure of the Spirit, God. Make us uncomfortable with how little we walk with you. And teach us to know the fullness of your Spirit, we pray.

We pray these things in your wonderful name. Amen. Amen. Let's listen to God's Word being read to us this morning. The scripture reading comes from Matthew 4.

Please follow along. Your bulletins are on the screen. Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

And after fasting 40 days and 40 nights, he was hungry. And the tempter came and said to him, If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.

But he answered, It is written, Men shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God. Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, He will command his angels concerning you, and on their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against stone.

[5 : 21] Jesus said to him, Again it is written, You shall not put the Lord your God to the test. Again the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory.

And he said to him, All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me. Then Jesus said to him, Be gone, Satan, for it is written, You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve.

Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him. This is the word of God. Great, thank you.

Echo. Okay, well, this morning we are looking at this fairly well-known passage of Scripture, the temptations of Jesus. And we do so as we continue to work through the book of Matthew, Matthew's Gospel.

Matthew's Gospel is all about Jesus, the King, and His Kingdom. And it's a book about the upside-down kingdom of Jesus. Jesus came to inaugurate His kingdom, but it's a kingdom which is so different to the kingdoms of this world.

[6 : 35] It is a kingdom which is true. It is a kingdom which is eternal, and its king is the one true king. Now, last week, we saw just before this, the passage that precedes this is Jesus getting baptized.

And He gets baptized by John the Baptist, which was an unusual event. It wasn't what John was expecting. And yet, at the end of this, Jesus gets baptized.

He comes out of the water. The heavens are opened. The Holy Spirit descends upon Him. And a voice is heard. Jesus hears this voice. And it's the voice of His Father. And it's the voice that says, This is my Son, with whom I'm well pleased.

And as the Father does that, He's affirming Jesus and His calling. He's affirming Him as the Messiah King, the one before whom one day every nation will bow down, all people will bow down. But He's also affirming Him as the suffering servant. He's saying, One day all nations will bow down before you, but first you will go to the cross. And so, just having encountered this out-of-this-world experience, the Holy Spirit coming down, this voice in the heavens, this commissioning moment, you'd expect that the next thing that happens is Jesus gets on His horse and says, Right, now's the time to bring in the kingdom.

[7 : 52] Now's the time to get on the throne. Now's the time to throw that victory party, to nominate my cabinet, announce my key positions in government.

Let's go. But He doesn't. He does something very unexpected. The next thing that happens is He gets led into the wilderness for a time of testing.

The word there, testing, could be temptation or testing. And here's the Messiah King, the Savior of the world. Jesus is called to be the one true King, and His call and His mandate and His commissioning as Son of God, as Messiah King, as suffering servant, is put to the test.

Now, right up front, or let's actually read the first verse. Look at verse 1 with me in Matthew chapter 4. It says this, Then Jesus was led up by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted or to be tested by the devil.

Now, straight away, we learn two things here. First thing is this, it's worth noting that what happens to Jesus here is very often the pattern for what happens with His followers.

[9 : 07] Very often, those of us that are followers of Jesus have some kind of spiritual high, or maybe you make a bold decision to a step of obedience or a step of faith. You decide to follow Jesus.

Maybe you decide that you're going to start witnessing to a neighbor at work or a colleague or a friend. Maybe you decide to step up into some position of leadership, or you take a step of great faith and obedience, and you'd expect that the next season after that, after saying, Okay, God, I'm willing to trust you, that God will pour His Holy Spirit upon you, and the next season is one of ease and comfort.

God carrying you along with His Holy Spirit. But actually, what happens is what? Very often, the life of followers of Jesus, as we say, Okay, God, I'll trust you, that call is then tested.

We go straight into a season of testing that call. We see this with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. God commissions them as His agents, image bearers of God, and what happens next? Satan comes along and says, Huh, let's just talk about that. Has God really asked you to do this? Has God really said that? We'll think of the people of God in the Old Testament. They are delivered dramatically out of Egypt.

[10 : 20] The Passover lamb is sacrificed. God dramatically saves them. There are signs and wonders. They get to the Red Sea. They're in trouble. The Red Sea opens. They walk through, and as they enter the other side, they're about to enter the promised land, what happens?

They experience a season of testing. And they test it in the wilderness, and they experience some challenges. Will they trust God to feed them and give them what they need, or will they trust their own devices?

Will they trust God to look after them and protect them, or will they take matters into their own hands? Will they love and serve and worship Yahweh, the one true God, or will they start worshiping the gods of the nations around them?

And friends, this is true for the life that Christ follows well. You come with some spiritual high, you've just seen God work dramatically, God has done something spectacular, and the next thing, Satan comes up, and he sidles up next to you, and he starts asking you questions, filling your mind with doubt, or maybe putting half-truths into your mind.

Maybe for those of you that are new Christians, this has been your experience. When you first become a follower of Jesus, you decide, okay Christ, have your way in my life. You can have it all of me.

[11 : 37] And the first six months are just wonderful. It feels like you've come home. It feels like you've finally found what your heart has been longing for all your life. It feels like you've found a family, and the first six months are just wonderful.

And then what happens? Suddenly you have questions, and you have doubts, and you wonder, is this thing true? Maybe it was just a psychological phenomenon.

Maybe I was just emotional at the time. What's happening in that time? I've seen it time and time again. Your call to follow Jesus is being tested. Your newfound identity as a Christ follower is being tested.

Your obedience to Jesus is being tested, just like 1 Peter says. He says our faith gets passed through the fire just like gold is passed through the fire to test the genuineness of it.

And that's what's happening to Jesus here. He gets baptized, the heavens are open, the Holy Spirit comes upon him, the voice of God affirms him as the Messiah King, and what happens? The same Spirit that anoints him two verses before now leads him into the wilderness for a time of testing.

[12 : 41] But, it's not God who does the temptation. Who causes the temptation? What does it say? It's the devil, right?

Look at what it says. Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And there's the second lesson we learn. And this is a two-fold lesson. On the one hand, we mustn't blame God for temptation.

Temptation to sin and sin itself is always repulsive to God. It's contrary to His holiness. And so, when we face temptation, we don't say, oh, well, God's, you know, the one that's causing me to be tempted.

But at the same time, we mustn't credit the devil as if he is equal to God and yet just opposite. In other words, God doesn't cause temptation, but He does allow it to come our way.

The devil's not equal to God, but just opposite. Even what the devil does is within the bounds of what God permits. Now, I understand that this is a mystery to some extent, and it's not always that easy to understand.

[13:47] But when I'm tempted to sin, when I'm tempted to indulge myself, when I'm tempted to hold a grudge against someone else, that's not God tempting me. That's my own sinful heart.

That's the devil at work inside of me. And yet, I take great comfort in the fact that God says, even the temptation I face is not, or God never allows me to be tempted beyond what I can bear.

Even my own temptation, God has allowed and He knows what's going on and He's carrying me and He's saying, Kevin, my grace is sufficient for you in the time. Do you see that? Jesus is led into the wilderness by the Spirit, and yet, it's the devil that comes and tempts Him.

Now, let's dive into these temptations and see what they are all about. What's happening here? So, look at verse 2 with me. It says this, after fasting for 40 days and 40 nights, Jesus was hungry. Just possibly a little bit hungry. Okay, you and I would also be hungry after 40 days of no food. The tempter came to Him and said to Him, if you are the Son of God, why don't you command these stones to turn into bread and satisfy your hunger?

[15:00] Now, let's think what's going on here. Who here thinks that eating bread is sinful? Who here thinks that eating bread when you're hungry is wrong? No, I don't think so either.

So, what's going on here? What's this temptation about? Why is this a temptation to say, come on, you're hungry, eat some bread? Well, look at first what He says. He says, Jesus, if you are the Son of God.

Now, the devil is not here actually questioning Jesus. He's not saying, listen, I don't think you really are who you say you are. If you are, prove it to me. That's not what He's saying.

All the commentators tell us the grammar here is such that the devil is saying, listen, if, as is the case, you're the Son of God, since you are the Son of God, well, that means something.

It means that you are entitled to ABC. It means that you can use your powers as the Son of God to do X, Y, Z. Jesus, since you're the Son of God, why don't you just indulge your flesh a little bit and please yourself?

[16:02] And so what He's saying here is He's coming up to Jesus and saying, Jesus, since you're the Son of God, since you have this special privilege, why don't you use your privileges? Why don't you, you're entitled to satisfy your own desires, but satisfy them in your own way, according to your own pleasure.

Satan isn't coming and tempting him to, you know, make food in an improper way or to use a miracle to prove that He's God or to just think selfishly without thinking of others. This is a temptation to pursue His desires that are centered on self, on me.

What pleases me completely devoid or divorced from what is God saying about this to you? See, later on, Jesus, how does Jesus respond?

He says, He doesn't say, no, the Messiah is not allowed to eat bread. He doesn't say that. He says, it is written, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God. See, Satan's coming saying, Jesus, you've got this natural life here, you've got this spiritual life here, just keep these two separated and you, one, just satisfy yourself, your own way, your own desires, your own pleasure.

[17:11] And don't worry about, you can deal with that when you go to synagogue on Saturday. And Jesus is saying, this life, divorced from relationship with God, is contrary to how God has organized organized and called me to live my life.

Man shall not live just by desires alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God. Friends, isn't that exactly what Satan comes and did to Adam and Eve in the garden?

He says, look at this fruit. You have needs, you have desires. God's put you in charge of all the stuff. You're entitled to satisfy your desires. It's just a little dragon fruit. Dragon fruit's not going to harm anyone. I'm sure it was dragon fruit in the garden of Eden. Friends, isn't that how Satan comes and tempts you and I? For most of us, the temptations we face are not going to be to rob a bank or to start an international drug cartel or something like that. How's he going to come? He's going to say, you've got desires. You've got sexual desires. It's natural. It's part of your body. That's just dissatisfied. You've got financial desires and needs. [18:15] It's natural. There's nothing wrong with a bit of wealth. Come just indulge in that a little bit. You've got relational desires or whatever it is, leisure desires. Just indulge in that. Friends, is it wrong to pursue a relationship?

No, not at all. Is it wrong to work hard? Is it wrong to save money for the future? Is it wrong to eat bread when you're hungry? Of course not. But what Jesus is saying is this.

He's saying, the life of a Christ follower rejects the idea that I'm entitled to whatever pleases me in whatever way that it pleases me. A Christian is someone who lives by faith that God himself satisfies me and all my pleasures and all my desires come off filtered within the channel of God, what is your will for my life?

You see that? Man doesn't live by bread alone, but it's God. What is your word saying? What are you saying about this area of desire? What are you saying about this relationship? What are you saying about my relationship to money?

What are you saying about my relationship to everything in life? Jesus is saying, the decisions I make aren't based on what I feel, what I desire, but what aids my relationship with God.

[19:23] And so he says, it is written, God has spoken, God has said, I do not live by pleasure alone, but that which comes from God. See friends, what Jesus shows us here is that food and work and relationships and overseas holidays and university degrees and children and promotion and mobile phones and fashion.

These things aren't wrong. They're gifts from God. He's made them. He doesn't denounce them as evil. He's not opposed to these things. Later on in the Gospels, Jesus will make food and feed 5,000 people.

Jesus will turn water into wine. He can turn stones into bread. But he's saying that every pleasure of God is approached through the filter of God.

What aids my relationship with you? I do not live by relationships alone or work alone or overseas holidays alone, but my relationship with my heavenly Father.

Does that make sense? Okay. Let's look at the second thing. Let's look at verse 5 to 7. Now, the devil comes to Jesus again and he takes him up to a high point of a building and he says, Jesus, since you are the Son of God, why don't you throw yourself down?

[20:37] For God has promised to always look after you. God has promised that nothing will go wrong with you. God has promised that not even your small baby toe will get a tiny scratch.

He's promised to look after you to make your life go comfortably and to always be there at your side and why don't you test him? Check if he's good for his word.

Now, the devil's learning something here. He's learning that Jesus doesn't just respond according to desire, but he always says, what has God said? And so the devil here quotes the scriptures and says, remember what God said in Psalm 91, that every one of your needs he will take care of.

Now, of course, the devil is quoting the scriptures out of context, right? Jesus calls him the father of lies. The devil will take God's word and he'll slightly adjust it or twist it or put it in a certain context to make it say something other than what it means.

And so what's the devil saying here? He's tempting Jesus with a kind of prosperity gospel. He's saying, Jesus, God has promised that nothing will go wrong with you. Your life will be blessed.

[21:44] Whatever difficult situation you find yourself in, you find yourself falling from a building, you find yourself in trouble, whatever difficult situation you find yourself in, he will deliver you.

He will look after you. He'll never let anything go wrong with you. Just test him. Throw yourself down. See what I mean. And what he's doing is he's tempting Jesus with the belief that God owes you a safe life, a comfortable life, a blessed life, a life without inconvenience.

Friends, have you and I bought the lie that God promises us that nothing will ever go wrong with our lives? That whatever situation we find ourselves in, that God will just suddenly swoop us up and pick us up and that he won't let us scratch our baby toe?

Friends, have we bought the lie that God is only good and he's only trustworthy because he makes our lives comfortable, convenient, and he doesn't allow any difficulty to come our way? Friends, have Satan convinced us that God is only good and trustworthy and worthy of worship if nothing goes wrong in your life?

That every time you face a challenge, God must surely save you from that challenge, otherwise he's not worthy of worship. Friends, if we're a Christian because God did something good in our life once upon a time, like he healed our child or he gave you a job or he gave you a child or he saved your marriage, if that's the reason why we're a Christian because God did some good thing, like we felt like we were falling off the building and God suddenly swooped up and caught us, then maybe we're not actually a Christian because we love God but because we love ourselves.

[23 : 19] And we're asking God to serve us rather than us serving him. In fact, we may just be using God and not worshipping him and we may not be Christians at all.

What's Jesus' response to this? Well, he quotes Deuteronomy chapter 6 which recounts the way that the Israelites were in their own wilderness and they're grumbling and they're moaning and they're saying, God, we thought you were good.

We thought you were meant to look after us. Where's our food? And then God gives them food. And they say, where's the water? And God gives them water. And then they say, where's the meat? We're tired of bread.

And every step of the way they're moaning and grumbling because things aren't going their way. And they start to wonder, God, are you really good? Are you really trustworthy? Should we really worship you when things don't go our way?

And they're saying, God, it feels like we're falling here and we're your angels to save us, to pick us up. And what does God say? He says, why are you testing me? Why are you checking whether I'm still worthy of worship just because things aren't going the way that you expect them to be?

[24 : 25] Don't you know that I know what I'm doing? Why are you putting me to the test as if I'm only honest, good or trustworthy when things will go the way that you want them to?

And so Jesus responds to Satan. He says, Satan, don't give me your nonsense. I'm sure that's what the original Greek says. He says, God is good and he's trustworthy and I will not put him to the test. What's Jesus saying? He's saying, the life of a Christian rejects the lie that I deserve God's blessing and protection and lives by faith that God is good all the time and he knows what he's doing not just when he does miracles that benefit me.

Okay? Does that make sense? Okay. I hope so. Let's look at the third temptation. Look at verse 8 with me. Satan now comes and he brings the final temptation and he says this verse 8.

Again, the devil took him up to a very high mountain and he showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to him, all these things I will give you if you fall down and worship me.

[25 : 30] Now, what's Satan saying here? What's going on here? Remember the passage just before this that we spoke about last week. Jesus is baptized, right? And as he comes out, we said it earlier, this voice comes and this voice from the heavens, which is God's voice, speaks to him and says, this is my beloved son, which is a quote from Psalm chapter 2.

And it's a quote that speaks about how Christ is the Messiah King. He is the one who will one day rule the whole world. And then he says, this is my son with whom I am well pleased, which is a quote from Isaiah 42, talking about how Jesus is the suffering servant.

And what God is doing is he's commissioning Jesus saying, you are the one true king, the Messiah king, but the way that you will get to glory is through the cross. You're the king, but you're the suffering servant.

In other words, this is a road to glory, but the road to glory passes through Calvary. Okay? What's Satan saying here when he says, Jesus, I will give you all the kingdoms of the world in all their glory, if only you'll worship me.

he's offering him glory without the cross. He's offering him the end result. He's saying, Jesus, that cross is not going to be very nice.

[26 : 49] I will organize a shortcut for you. I will allow you to get to the end goal without needing to suffer, without needing to humiliate yourself, without needing to go through the painful, humiliating experience of the cross.

Jesus, I'll offer you glory without Calvary. Friends, is this not one of the most subtle and sinister and yet pervasive temptations we face?

Satan comes to us and says, I'll offer you control of your life. I'll offer you glory. Why don't you just be lord of your own life? Why don't you be lord of your own kingdom?

Without any cost involved, all you have to do is just make a deal with me. Without any cost, you can avoid the cost of the cross. You can avoid the cost of humiliation.

You can avoid the cost of humbling yourself. You can avoid the cost of repentance. I'll give you what you want. Just make a simple deal with me. Except the problem is, whenever we make a deal with the devil, it does come with a price.

[27 : 55] In fact, one of the things about the devil is that it always comes with a price far more than we're willing to pay. I don't know if you've ever had this experience where you've bought something and it's something really expensive.

You thought you've done all your homework and you've checked it out and you say, okay, I'm going to do it. Maybe it's whatever it is. Then only later, afterwards, you realize there are all these hidden costs.

There's this service cost and there's this fee that's been added and there's this small fine print and because you did it in this way, there's this extra fee. Has that ever happened to you? You feel the sense of regret.

You feel like, oh my goodness, if I'd known how much it was going to cost me, I would never have done that. And you feel this like sick in your stomach feeling that actually cost you far more than you bargained for.

Do you know that feeling? Friends, when you make a deal with the devil, it's like that but only a million times worse. In your mind's eye, you think, okay, I know how this works.

[28 : 54] Yeah, it might cost me that but I'll get all this benefit. Friends, it always, always, always, costs a million times more than you bargained for.

And that's what the devil's doing. He's coming and he's offering Jesus that and he offers it to us. He offers it to us every single day to have all the kingdoms of the world and all their splendor, all their glory.

And he says, you won't even have to humble yourselves. You won't have to admit you're a sinner. You can avoid the humiliation of repentance. Just come and listen to me. And really, in essence, this is what the whole of the passage is about.

It's about who are you going to serve? Are you going to serve yourself or are you going to serve the one true God? And so Jesus' response is this, it is written, you shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.

And this really is the essence of the entire passage. Who are you going to serve? Yourself or the one true God? Friends, there's only one person that is rightly, that can rightly occupy the throne of our lives.

[29 : 56] There's only one person who is worthy of our worship. There's only one being that is worthy and trustworthy enough for us to give our lives to him, the one true God.

You shall worship God and him only shall you serve. Jesus tells us that Christian faith rejects the delusion that self-glory and living for ourselves is the way to go, but that serving the one true God, he alone is worthy of our worship.

No matter what the cost. No matter what the cost. Now, how do we respond to this? How do we respond to temptation and testing when temptation comes our way?

I want to suggest two responses from this passage. Well, this passage gives us two ways to respond. Two ways to stand against the schemes of the devil. The first is be ruthless with temptation.

Ruthless means be extreme. Don't compromise. Don't make any deals. Be ruthless with temptation. And secondly, rejoice in Christ your king.

[31 : 05] Look at verse 10 with me if you've got your Bible on the bulletin. Satan comes and says, Jesus, I'll offer you all the kingdoms of the world. I'll offer you all their glory. Just bow down and honor me.

And Jesus says, what does he say first? He says, Satan, be gone. Get your bags and get out of here. Be gone.

And friends, remember, Jesus says the same thing just before he's about to be crucified. Peter comes up to him. Jesus tells his disciples, listen, the Son of Man is about to be crucified. He's about to be nailed to the cross for the sins of the world. And Peter comes up to him and says, never, Lord. Never. It shouldn't happen to you. He says, you are the Christ. You are the Messiah. You shouldn't have to die on the cross.

And then Peter comes and he's starting to persuade Jesus not to go to the cross. And what does Jesus say? He doesn't say, Peter, let me just explain this to you one more time. He says, Satan, get behind me.

[32 : 05] And friends, sometimes we need to do that with temptation. We can't coddle it and just say, okay, well, let's see if I can make a deal. Sometimes we need to be ruthless. Be gone. Get out of here.

Pack your bags and go. Friends, sometimes we need to get angry with temptation and the devil. He's lying to you. He's deceiving you. He's the father of lies.

And Jesus has come to give you life and life to the full. And Satan has come to rob you of life. He's come to destroy your life. He's come to destroy your relationships.

He's come to destroy your self-worth. He's come to destroy your relationship with Jesus. He's coming to kill you. And sometimes, let me put it this way, 1 Peter says that the devil's like a roaring lion.

He wants to devour you. He wants to tear you apart. He wants to take your marriage and strip it. He wants to take your dating relationship and destroy it. He wants to take your reputation and leave it in tatters.

[33 : 03] He wants to take your self-worth and your confidence and rip it to shreds. He wants to kill you and devour you like a roaring lion. Except, he's very sneaky.

He'll come to you and pretend to be a kitten. He'll ask you just to stroke him. And you'll look very cute and very appealing until he grows up and he kills you.

Friends, can I ask us, what sin or what temptation are we holding on to? What sin or temptation have we made a deal with?

Maybe you feel like, I've given in so many times, what's the point in fighting? Maybe you feel like pornography. It's like, I just can't beat this thing.

I've given in so many times, what's the point? Why do I even fight one more time? It's just going to happen again. I might as well just go with it. Friends, you fight. Get some fight.

[34 : 02] Get some steel. Get some backbone and kick that thing. You tell the devil, get out of here. Pack your bags and go. Maybe it's offense.

Maybe it's bitterness. Maybe somebody's let you down. Someone's hurt you. This is probably one of the biggest temptations for me. It's so hard to let that thing go. I just play that situation over and over in my mind.

I play what they said and I play what I said and then I remind myself just once more what they said and then I just remind myself how sorry I feel for myself and how unjust it was and how unrighteous they were and how I don't deserve that and I just remind myself again of just how badly I've been treated.

Woe is me. Friends, self-pity is a form of self-glory because it's all about me and I want to be king and I don't want to be treated badly. Friends, is there bitterness? Is there unforgiveness?

Is there offense that you're holding on to? Friends, be ruthless with temptation. You kick that thing out of the house. Be gone. Sometimes the best response we can give to Satan, his lies and his temptations is be gone.

[35 : 11] Get out of here. But then there's a second way to respond and this is rejoice in Christ your king. Now, in some ways this is one of the most important things and so I want to land with this but it's one of the most important things.

I want you to listen and take careful attention to this. The thing of standing against temptation is probably not new for any of us. I doubt there's anybody here that has never thought about the concept of I should stand up against temptation.

I mean, we all know it, right? We all know that we should serve Christ our Lord. We all know that we probably shouldn't give in to our natural desires. We all know that we shouldn't test God. We all know that there's one true God and he alone is king.

These are things that we know and we know that we shouldn't use God for ourselves. We know that we shouldn't wallow in self-glory and yet we still do it. We still give in.

We still mess up time and time again. We buy the line. We make a deal with the devil. We pay the price. We abandon restraint and we give in to pleasure. Why do we do it? If we know these things, why do we still do it?

[36 : 18] Well, the answer is not because we are ignorant of the truth. We probably know and understand the truth. The answer is because there's something going on in our hearts at our deepest, most fundamental level, our hearts love ourselves.

We love self-worship and self-glory. Notice all of these temptations are about me, my desires, my security, my glory. And what that means, friends, is that we're in deep, deep trouble because what we need is more than just more teaching and more than just more knowledge.

What we need is a savior, someone to rescue, someone to change us, someone to change the disposition of our hearts. We need someone to come alongside us in that moment of temptation and to pick us up and to put his arm around us and to carry us over the finishing line.

There's a story, 1992, the Barcelona Olympics. Some of you might know the story, very famous story. There's a British runner called Derek Redmond and he has made it to the Olympic Games. He's a 400 meter runner and he's obviously mid-20s. He's been training for decades since a young boy running at school, got to high school, running in all the competitions.

[37 : 36] There his talent was noticed and people said, hey, you've really got something in you. And so even as a high school student, he starts making sacrifices, getting coaches, watching his diet, starts training, getting fitter, stronger, goes to college and spends thousands if not millions of dollars on coaches and training exercises, regimes, extremely disciplined, becomes a professional athlete and makes it to the Olympic Games.

And so it's 1992, he's at the Olympic Games in Barcelona, his first heat's coming and he smokes it. Does brilliantly. Gets through to the next heat.

The next heat comes and he does fantastically and he gets through to the finals. And now it's the finals of the 400 meters, the Olympic Games and he is pitted to be a medalist.

They think he's probably going to finish in the top three if not get the gold medal. He's one of the favorites. And his race comes up, he goes to the starting line, does the whole thing, gets ready, goes down, the gun goes off and he's out of the blocks and he's giving it his all.

He goes past the first 100 meters and as he gets past the 100 meters, I think we've got a picture, as he gets past the 150 meters, he feels his hamstring going and he's out.

[39 : 04] And he falls to the ground and everyone else just comes sprinting past him and leaves him in the trail. And there he is on the greatest world stage, he's lying on the floor, he's grabbing his hamstring, he's in absolute agony.

But it's not just the agony, it's the pain of decades of training. Everything he's given his life to in one second is gone. And it's all done, it's finished. He's fallen, he's on the ground.

And the crowd, I don't know whether to watch him or to watch the winners, right? And the guys go past and they finish the race. And the crowd starts to get on their feet and they're cheering him and he gets up and he tries to hobble and he hobbles about 10 meters and he falls down to the ground again.

He can't hobble anymore. And at that moment, a man, an older man, jumps over the barricade and he runs onto the track. And the security guards try and stop him because he's not allowed to do that.

And he's fighting the security guards off and he's saying, let me get to him, let me get to him. And he gets to him and Derek Redman tries to push this guy away until he realizes who it is. And it's his dad.

[40 : 08] And his dad picks him up and he puts his arm around him and for the next 250 meters, they hobble to the finish line and he crosses the line with his dad holding him.

Friends, you and I don't just need a good instruction how to beat temptation. We don't just need three ways to get better at getting through life.

Friends, if you and I have sinned this week, like you and I have, if you and I have done something wrong this week, what we don't just need is someone in the crowd saying, get up, get up, sort yourself out.

What we need is a savior who will come alongside us and pick us up and will come and carry us over the finishing lines. Friends, have you sinned this week? Have you messed up? Have you fallen? Maybe you've fallen spectacularly and you're embarrassed about it. Maybe even ashamed. Friends, have you wallowed self-pity or self-glory? Have you bought the lie that you're entitled to gratify and fulfill your own fleshly desires, your own ways on your own terms? [41 : 12] Friends, if you're a Christian this morning, you have a savior who came to forgive you and cover you. But you have a savior who did more than that. He came to pick you up and to carry you over the finishing line.

You have one who has ultimate compassion and tenderness. You have one who has gone through every trial that you've gone through, who's been tempted in every way and a million times more and he knows what you've gone through and yet you've got one who is uncompromised, who then not a single accusation can stick to him, one who is spotless and trustworthy and he's come to bring you to himself.

Friends, if you're not a Christian this morning, do you know what that means? It means you're on your own. It means that you carry your sin all on your own. It means that the crowds may be shouting that you stand up, pick yourself up, but you do not have a Savior who has come to do it for you.

You come to Jesus and he has come to do it for you. He's inviting you not just to become religious, he's offering to come and pick you up and carry you over the line. And that's what Matthew's telling us.

What Matthew's showing us here is that Jesus faced the temptation that Adam and Eve faced in the Garden of Eden and they failed and they fell. Jesus is facing the same temptation that the people of God faced in the wilderness desert and they failed and they fell.

[42 : 27] Jesus is facing the same temptations that you face and I face every single day and friends, we fail and we fall. But here is one.

Here is a true Israelite. Here is a true Adam. Here is a true son of Adam that went through every temptation that you and I could ever go through and is absolutely spotless.

Not a single accusation has stuck to him. And as he does that, he's serving notice that he came not just to show us how to be better but to defeat sin and evil on its own grounds.

He came to dismantle the work of the devil by exposing its lies and ultimately he would do so by ending up on the cross. I want to read a quote to us by William Collier.

Listen to this. It says, Jesus' temptation in the wilderness does not primarily sketch a moral story providing helpful hints on how we too with a bit of Jesus' inspiration can conquer temptation.

[43 : 27] Jesus' hostile standoff with evil was a reprisal for all that humanity had lost in the Garden of Eden or that we could never on our own regain. When Jesus emerged from the wilderness at Victor, his triumph signaled evil was doomed to obliteration.

Humanity was destined for joy. In other words, Jesus did not merely wink and make evil disappear. Rather, he walked into the bowls of evil and defeated evil on its own terms.

First in a wilderness and then on a cross. Jesus did not merely cover evil. In his humble humanity, he dismantled it. Friends, and this gives us reason both to rejoice with much joy and celebration and it gives us the courage to fight on.

We can fight because we know that sin doesn't ultimately satisfy. We can fight because we know that it's a lie which promises the world but it only enslaves us and entraps us. We can fight because we have a Savior who came to defeat it, who came to lift us out off of the muck and the dirt and the surge we find ourselves in and to carry us over the line with his victor's crown.

Friends, this week you and I will be tempted. We will be tempted to satisfy our own desires on our own terms, fulfill our own pleasures. Friends, this week we will be tempted to feel entitled that God owes us.

[44 : 48] He owes us a good and comfortable life, a life of ease and blessedness. This week we will be tempted to build our own kingdom, to seek our own peace of glory. Friends, this week let's be ruthless.

Let's tell Satan to get out of here. Let's fight with resolve. But more than that, let's rejoice in the Savior who came to pick us up, to cover our shame, to cover our sin and to carry us home with him. Let's pray together. Jesus Christ, we thank you and we revel, God, that where we have fallen and sinned, you, Christ, are spotless.

God, we thank you and we revel and we rejoice and we delight in the fact that you, God, are the only one that's worthy, God. God, where Satan tempts us to despair and he tells us of the guilt within, upward we look and we see you there, you who made an end to all our sin.

And God, that gives us confidence to keep going and reason to rejoice. Father, we pray that even now, God, won't you set us free from the lies and the accusation of the evil one, God?

[46 : 06] Won't you set us free from the despair, God, that so easily covers our hearts? Jesus, won't you come and pick us up where we have fallen and we are lying on the ground, hopeless and helpless?

Jesus, won't you come and lift up our heads and lift up our hearts and carry us to the finishing line, Lord God? Jesus, we pray, come and draw near to us.

Come and remind us, God, that our hope is in you. we ask you, God, to do these things in your name.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[47 : 13] Amen. Amen. Amen.