

SATAN'S PERNICIOUS, PERILOUS, PERVERTED PURPOSE

Mt.4:1-10; Cf. Lk.4:1-13

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. Our text contains the record of Satan's temptation of Jesus Christ shortly after the Father had spoken from heaven saying, "This is my Son," Mt.3:17.
2. The text contains both Satan's three separate attempts or assaults in his temptations of Jesus and Jesus' repulse of each one.
3. Of course, it was necessary for several reasons that Jesus be tempted by Satan, and a study of the text emphasizing the fact of Jesus being tempted, and all that includes and necessarily implies, is of great interest and very profitable for us.
4. **But my emphasis in this study, rather than being specifically on the temptation of Jesus, is primarily on Satan's pernicious, perilous, perverted purpose as revealed in this record, and of Jesus' answer to him, and what Jesus' example teaches us.**
5. While we cannot escape taking note of many things concerning the temptation of Jesus per se, we wish to focus our attention on why Satan was doing it, his pernicious, perverted purposes, and how he did it, along with the valuable benefit of Jesus' example for us.

II. DISCUSSION

A. SATAN'S FIRST PERNICIOUS TEMPTATION AND ITS PERVERTED PURPOSE, Mt.4:3.

1. "If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread."
2. This was an assault on Jesus through physical conditions – through bodily cravings – through his body's **APPETITE** – "the lust of the flesh."
3. Its approach or appeal was to the **PRESENT** appetite, the impulse of the moment, as many of our temptations so often are. Cf. Esau, Heb.12:16,17 (Gen.25:29-34; 27:34-36); or Mt.5:27,28; 1Cor.6:18a.
4. There is, however, nothing immoral or sinful about feeding one's self. In fact, God expects us to eat. We can even scripturally pray for it. Mt.6:11. And we are commanded to work for it, 2Th.3:10; 1Tim.5:8.

5. But Satan's pernicious purpose was to taunt (to reproach with scorn or insults; jeer at; ridicule) Jesus, to incite him to prostitute (to devote to base or unworthy purposes) his relationship to God to selfish purposes.
6. Admitted that you **are**, or since you **are**, the beloved Son of God, are you not being unjustly deprived of the very thing – food for the body – that is rightfully yours while in the flesh?
7. Should you, of all persons, suffer this? Why does the Father even allow you to suffer like this?
8. This is an evil, pernicious, perilous temptation to so act as to doubt God's goodness and providential care! Can God really be depended on to rescue you from death by starvation?
9. Surely, as the Son of God, you have come from heaven for greater purposes than to perish here in the wilderness, suffering such horrible torture as death by starvation!
10. A man has need for and God has provided food for his people in time past – even miraculously in the wilderness. Surely, you, as his only Begotten Son, who have come to earth to save sinners, have a right to the very sustenance of life, in order to save yourself, even if it means you must create it miraculously!

B. JESUS' REPULSE OF SATAN'S FIRST PERNICIOUS ASSAULT AND PERVERTED PURPOSE, Mt.4:4.

1. Jesus' response to the temptation and the perilous purpose of Satan forcefully demonstrates that he, in spite of his dire situation, is choosing to control his fleshly desires by bringing them into subjection to the will of God as revealed in such places as Deut.8:3.
2. Jesus, as our example, from the very first temptation of Satan to the very last one, responded with perfect dependence upon God and his word.
3. Jesus refused to even consider using any miraculous means to provide for his own physical necessities, even his extreme hunger; for that would be to distrust God and manifest a lack of faith in his complete dependence on the Father; and it would set the wrong example for us!
4. His answer and application of the Scriptures necessarily involves a principle and a question applicable to all men for all time: What is really important? Is it matter or spirit? Is it bread or the word of God? What really sustains man in God's sight?
5. Jesus graphically declares that the true foundation principle of man's being is "anything and everything God says."

6. His answer, in effect, is: “Although in truth I am the Son of God, I am also here as a man; and ‘man’ has been appointed, and also taught, to live in entire dependence on God.
7. Jesus refused to separate himself from his brethren in the flesh with whom “it behooved him to be made like” them “in all things” (Heb.2: 12-17); thus he refused to provide for himself in overcoming temptation by a way or a means not open to them; for that would really be in reverse of the very purpose for his incarnation, the very reason and need for his own temptation in all points like as they are tempted (Heb.4:15).
 - a. To do otherwise would defeat his whole mediatorial work as our example and Savior.
8. Thus by word and deed he teaches us:
 - a. It is far better to starve for the sake of a right principle than to eat food misappropriated.
 - b. It is better to die for righteousness sake than to live for sin.
 - c. That if one is faced with a choice of a life of compromise by sin, or a death for righteousness, he does not HAVE to live. Cf. Dan.3:4-6,16,17; 6:7,8,10,23.
 - d. It is better to choose to starve to death rather than steal food. Cf. Mt.16:24-26; Rev.2:10.
 - (1) Jesus said: “My meat (food) is to do the will of him that sent me,” Jno.4:34.
 - e. That self-denial is to be rule of his kingdom. And, yes, even he, the Son of God, will live as every other man, without special provision.
 - (1) He will not make an exception for himself; for doing so would compromise the purpose of his incarnation.
 - (2) For “he was made in all things like unto his brethren,” and “was in all points tempted like as we are tempted, yet without sin,” that “he is able to come to the aid of them that are tempted,” Heb.2:14,17,18; 4:15.
9. Here Jesus, as an example for us, facing this very real battle in his very weakest physical condition, could not and would not save himself by yielding to temptation, because he is to save others by being the perfect sin-offering in God’s service for man’s sin.
10. Thus Jesus showed the trust that any true son of God should possess and exemplify under any and all conditions.
11. Jesus was tempted in order to learn personally the full power of human desires in order to sympathize perfectly with mankind and save penitent sinners.

12. And the very purpose and blessed result of men being tempted or tried is that it produces men who will do God's will under whatever circumstances. Cf. 1Cor.10:13; Jas.1:3-5; Rom.5:3-5.

C. SATAN'S SECOND PERNICIOUS TEMPTATION AND ITS PERVERTED PURPOSE, Mt.4:6.

1. This time the devil quoted by grossly misapplied or perverted Psa.91:11,12 claiming, in effect, that God has promised Jesus protection for just such a case as Satan has proposed.
2. Therefore, throw yourself down from this pinnacle of the temple to the solid rock below and thereby demonstrate your unquestioned faith in God and his promise of protection.
3. Satan's head is full of Scripture; he knows his Bible; he can quote it when it suits his evil purposes, but no human profit; for his heart is empty of it.
 - a. Therefore, he always misapplies the Scripture he quotes.
 - b. There is no way either he or any false teacher can establish an evil purpose or prove a false doctrine by quoting and applying a scripture to it!
 - c. Accept, do not question the false teacher's Scripture; question his sophistry!
4. The devil's trap and pernicious purpose is hidden in the implied phrase: "to see if God will really keep his word," which was to lead Jesus to so act as to "make trial" of God, which is a violation of God's will rather than submission to it.
5. This is an evil, pernicious temptation to presumption, to act rashly and recklessly, a matter of **AUDACITY** – a temptation to needlessly thrust himself into danger, presuming the safety of God's promised protection.
6. Whatever else the devil's pernicious purpose, he sought to lead Jesus into the wrong path and incite him into what was really sinful, selfish, and self-willed under the guise of absolute trust in the Father's promises of protection.
 - a. Doest thou depend upon the Father? Then depend on him to the fullest.
 - b. Are not his angels about thee? Are they not charged to protect thee? To preserve thee in all thy ways? To preserve even thy feet from coming contact with the idle stones in thy path?
 - c. Then show thy faith in this promise of God to thee – thy faith in this promised care – thy faith in thy right as God's Son – by

casting thyself down from this height with full confidence that God will keep his promise.

- d. You know the Father will not let anything happen to his Son. He has promised to protect you!
7. Furthermore, Satan had seemingly put Jesus in the place – the temple itself – where he might argue that God could least afford to let his promise fail if Jesus yielded and thus Satan would win having defeated both the Father and the Son.

D. JESUS ONCE AGAIN REPULSED THE DEVIL’S PERNICIOUS TEMPTATION AND PURPOSE WITH SCRIPTURE PROPERLY APPLIED, Mt.4:7.

1. The devil’s abuse of Scripture did not discourage Jesus’ use of it. Rather, it furnished him an excellent opportunity to expose Satan’s hypocrisy, deceit and perversion of Scripture.
2. To do what the devil urged – that is, to deliberately and needlessly put one’s self in dangerous situations and then expect or call upon God to rescue him, either by his angels or otherwise, is to “tempt,” “make trial of”, or “test” God, which is a violation of God’s will, not submission to it.
3. For Jesus to do such a thing would be to do the very opposite of that for which he came into the world, which was to do the Father’s will, not his own.
4. Of course, that was the very evil purpose of the devil’s temptation.
5. Again, Jesus proves that he will not run before or ahead of God or walk contrary to God’s will, but chooses rather to be led by him.
6. He clearly will not, of his own choice, create unnecessary dangers, but will avoid them unless they fall in the path of obedience to the Father’s will.
7. Though the devil sought to make it appear otherwise through his perversion of Psa.91:11,12, it took more trust in God for Jesus **NOT** to leap than to do so! Jesus answers simply: “**Testing or making trial of God is not trusting God.**”
8. Jesus declares that the Psalm quoted by Satan does not teach, as the devil perversely implied, that men, any man, not even Jesus, may choose the path nor may he command God to act by rescuing him from the extremes of man’s own follies. Rather, it means that in faith and loving obedience man must follow God, letting God be God.

9. One ray of truth shines through, as in the first temptation, and clears away this dark, pernicious, perilous, perverted purpose of the devil, which is this: God's promise must be fulfilled in the way God wills, not in the way of our own choosing.
 - a. It is forbidden to man – it is forbidden to any man – even to the man Jesus – to put God's truth – to put him and his promises to the test or to make trial of him and them.
 - b. For to do so is, in effect, to cast doubt on God and the trustworthiness of his promises.

E. THE DEVIL'S THIRD PERNICIOUS TEMPTATION AND EVIL PURPOSE, Mt.4:9.

1. With this effort the devil is desperately seeking to lay a trap, "Jesus, if you are really a wise man of faith and common sense, surely you will take the shortest, most direct, easiest route to that authority or rule or kingdom for which you came."
2. So the devil is thinking, If I can possibly maneuver his natural human desire for this position and the normal human wish to avoid as much difficulty and suffering as possible, perhaps I can make an offer he cannot refuse.
3. Maybe Jesus can be persuaded this is a way for him to avoid the hardships, the rejection, and the cross, and a way to much more simply and easily establish his reign.
4. The devil has not been able to compromise Jesus as Son; can he now spoil him as king?
 - a. So he appeals to Jesus through human AMBITION, through the consciousness of power. The temptation is real. How often has ambition to rule conquered those who have conquered all else!
 - b. This is the temptation of "the pride (the vain glory) of life."
 - c. You have come to be king; here is the easy way to have our kingdom!
 - d. As the prince of this world, I am in the position to offer you all this! It is yours for the taking! Don't be foolish and reject it!
5. How much control does the devil really hold over "the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them" which he offered Jesus?
 - a. Some say none! But if that were true, Jesus would have known it! And if Jesus knew the devil was lying, that he had none, then this would have been no temptation to Jesus.

- b. It is worthy of note that Jesus did not call the devil a liar for saying he could give Jesus “all these things.”
- 6. Furthermore, the kingdom of Satan is no mere figure of speech, because the Gospels contain several references to the power and kingdom of Satan as a reign opposed to God, as the prince of this world, Mt.12:24-26; Jno.12:31; 14:30; 16:11; Rev.13:2,7.
- 7. According to Lk.4:6 the devil does not claim inherent and absolute possession of this power, but a derivative right to it, and that he has authority to offer that which is delegated to him to another, even to Jesus.
 - a. What he has has been delivered unto him by men rather than by God. Cf. Eph.2:2.
- 8. Of course, his evil purpose is the compromising of Jesus’ ideal of “a kingdom not of this world” in favor of a worldly kingdom, which is in opposition to God.
 - a. The temptation was not only meant to move Jesus away from the ideal of his “kingdom not of this world,” but to reverse the means for its establishment, as well as its nature, thus to defeat the Lord in his very purpose for coming to earth as the Christ, the Son of God in the flesh, as the Savior of sinners.
 - b. The hopeless folly of this proposal is typical of the absurdities that lie in all sin. For his offer, like all of his wiles, is a little truth and a great lie.
 - (1) The little truth: His power to give what he offered, “For that is delivered unto me; and to *whomsoever* I will I give it.”
 - (2) The great lie: He is lying when he claims his plan will successfully substitute for God’s plan and purpose for the kingdom of Christ which “is not of this world,” but spiritual in nature.
 - (3) This transfer which the devil proposes would be only an illusion. It is that old perennial lie: “You may be your own king, do as you please, as long as you are my servant!”
- 9. One of the obvious ways to see the perniciousness of the devil’s purpose in his offer is by means of its diabolical condition: “If thou wilt fall down and worship me.”
 - a. The devil is neither ignorant nor stupid.
 - b. He knows that to be willing to worship him basically involves the acknowledgment of him as true lord and rightful disposer and dispenser of kingdoms.

- c. If he can entice Jesus into thus admitting his dependence upon his plan in order to establish his reign, rather than upon God, then he has defeated God; he has won the war after all!!

F. FOR THE THIRD TIME JESUS REPULSED THE DEVIL'S PERNICIOUS TEMPTATION AND PURPOSE WITH SCRIPTURE, Mt.4:10; Cf. Deut.6:13. See Deut.5:7-9; 6:4.

1. Worshipping before Satan is the bending of the soul rather than the body.
2. To entice men to do this, he holds before each one some crown of success, the fulfilling of some desire and says: "Bend just a little; slightly compromise your principles and your conscience, mix a little compromising diplomacy with our righteousness; stoop just a little."
3. It is Satan's sin to make such suggestions in tempting us; but it is not our sin until we comply with them; it's no sin to be tempted; sin comes when we yield!
4. We might obtain some things more quickly by Satan's wrong way, but only the right things in God's right way!
5. Jesus' answer exposes Satan's offer for what it really is: A tarnishing glitter, a crumbling pile of stones, dying men, ashes and dust, leading to eternal destruction.
6. In effect, Jesus says to Satan: "The right end never justifies the use of evil means!"
7. "The means of establishing my kingdom must be holy," thus teaching us to worship and serve God and God only.

III. CONCLUSION

1. In the temptation the devil used three "ifs" in his pernicious purpose.
 - a. The first "if" is an appeal to "the lust of the flesh" – to the APPETITE.
 - b. The second "if" is an appeal to "the lust of the eyes" – to presumptuous AUDACITY.
 - c. The third "if" is an appeal to "the pride (the vain glory) of life" – to AMBITION.

2. Jesus successfully withstood all three; he endured the temptation successfully in spite of the devil's best efforts.
 - a. Facing and overcoming these three pernicious temptations does not mean that Jesus was tempted by all possible sin which men are faced, for temptations come in infinite variations.
 - b. But they do mean he was tempted at **ALL POINTS** at which temptation can touch a soul.

3. Satan has lost once again. He has no more to offer the Master.
 - a. Though he succeeded in tempting the first Adam.
 - b. He has miserably failed with the second Adam.

4. Lessons learned:
 - a. Satan can be successful resisted. Cf. Jas.4:7; 1Pet.5:8,9.
 - b. Jesus, by his self-control as a man, without any supernatural assistance, faced and was able to overcome temptation without sin, and has shown us:
 - (1) That flesh is not sinful per se.
 - (2) That man in the flesh does not have to yield to temptation and sin, Rom.8:1-3; 1Cor.10:13; Rom.1:20; 1Cor.15:34; 1Jno.2:1.
 - c. That the means by which to resist Satan is the word of God. This is where and how God shows us it is done!
 - d. That Satan knows, can and will quote scripture when he thinks it serves his evil purpose; but he always misapplies or perverts it for his own diabolical purposes.
 - e. That Satan doesn't hesitate to offer us what he has in his power to offer in order to entice us to sin!