

September 1, 2024

## The Secret to Overcoming Temptation

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Matthew 4:1-11

Summer is a season of openness and relaxation, but it is also a season when it is easy to fall into temptation. Speaking of events that make our hearts beat with excitement, festivals may be the most popular. In Japan, there are three to four festivals a month, but summer is by far the most popular, more than twice as many as any other month. How was the “Megumi Festival” last week? It was fun! It’s a time when our hearts are full of excitement, but it’s also a time when problems can easily arise and we can easily fall into temptation.

Temptation comes to people of all ages, in all countries, and not only to the young. The world, the “land of wanderers,” is full of temptation, where people have been expelled from the Garden of Eden because of temptation. This is because man has turned away from the Word of God and has come to live according to his own wisdom, following his own desires and putting himself first. **“but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.” (James 1:14-15).** And for that lust, the Bible says, **“For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of**

**life—comes not from the Father but from the world.” (I John 2:16).**

Jesus, who would be the Savior, had to triumph over all of these. Jesus living as a man. As a carpenter’s son, he would have supported his family after his father died, but he had temptations just like anyone else, and he overcame them. But Satan would not have persistently tempted Jesus, who lived quietly as a family man.

But now that Jesus has entered his public life as the Son of God and Savior, he cannot be left alone. As a personal matter, just before I started my public life as an evangelist, I too was tried, though not as hard as Jesus. When I was going to seminary, I had left all my belongings at my parents’ house in Kagoshima, and it caught fire, and I lost all my belongings. As I have testified before, I was surprised immediately after receiving the news, but strangely enough, after a few minutes, I was filled with joy. This testimony is also included in the book “The Heart of Japan and the Bible” that I published today, so please read it. Returning to the main topic, you may ask, “Why? How can the Holy Spirit lead us to Satan’s temptation?” Have you ever wondered? The Bible says, **“Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted[a] by the devil.” (Matthew 4:1).** Satan tempted Jesus in a powerful way. It was also a path that Jesus had to go through in order to do His work as the Savior. It was also a matter in which he could not fulfill his mission without victory. Therefore, the Holy Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness (a place of trial). 40 days and 40 nights of fasting was a severe situation (I gave up after 3 days of fasting).

The first temptation to Jesus, who was hungry because of his fasting, was **“The tempter came to him and said, “If you are the Son**

**of God, tell these stones to become bread.” (Matthew 4:3).** Can you do it? You cannot! Do not be sorry. It is natural. For those of us who are not omnipotent, it is impossible to “turn stone into bread”. And Satan will never tempt us with what we cannot do. It is possible because Jesus, as the Son of God, has the power of omnipotence. As you know, He later fed 5,000 people with two fish and five loaves of bread. But at this time, Jesus did not directly answer Satan’s question, “I can do it” or “I can’t do it”. If he says, “I can’t.” There is a hidden temptation that if he says “I can’t,” then he is said that he is not the Son of God, the Savior of the world. Usually, people cannot stand to be denied themselves. They want to show and prove that they can do it. Therefore, there are two more hidden temptations in this temptation. 1. There is a plan to make him use his power as a child of God for himself first. For whom do we also use the power God has given us? And 2, above all, if you have the power to turn stones into bread, solve the world’s food problems, and help the poor and hungry. Of course this is important. But it is a substitution of the problem of spiritual salvation for the problem of the world. True happiness cannot be achieved by simply solving worldly problems. I am sure that some of you have experienced the postwar period when you were poor. And now we are rich. Has the problem disappeared? Has evil, sin, disappeared? The answer is No! Just as Satan tempted Jesus by shifting his perspective to see if he could or could not turn stones into bread, so Satan he tempts you by asking you if you can do various things that seem doable, and says “Can you do it? If you can’t do it, then you’re a useless!” But the question is not whether you can do it or not. The question is whether or not it is God’s will that we do it. Here, we need to have a prayerful mind to ask God.

Jesus, who had prayed and been shown God's will, responded with the words of the Bible, **"It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'**" **(Matthew 4:4).** Certainly, bread is necessary for man to live. But what is more important for human beings is to hear the Word of God and to live it, or rather, when we set our minds to live God's will, we are in turn made alive by God. **"But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."** **(Matthew 6:33)** is true.

The second temptation was to dominate men's hearts with wonder, to attract their eyes. It was to jump off the roof of the temple, where many people were gathered, and float through the air. Satan said, **"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.'**" **(Matthew 4:6)** Satan quoted Psalm 91 because the Bible says that the Son of God can do that. Thus, let us keep in mind that even Satan can use the words of the Bible and even tempt us in the guise of an angel of light. We should not take the words of the Bible in one aspect because they are the words of the Bible. Here we see the importance of the need to read the entire Bible. Jesus rejected the Lord your God with the words of **Deuteronomy 6:16, "Do not put the Lord your God to the test."** Also, Jesus' miraculous acts are not intended to attract people. As an act of love, an overflowing power result in the miracles.

Third temptation. The last temptation for man is prosperity and power. If Jesus becomes king of the world, all problems will be

solved. But first, there is the condition of bowing down to Satan and worshipping him. **“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.” (Matthew 4:8-9).** How many have succumbed to this temptation and waged war to make themselves kings of the world! In Japan, people were once told that if they worshipped the emperor as their god, they could continue their Christianity, and they were forced to worship his image and to pray at Emperor’s Palace during worship services. The same temptation still exists today in the communist countries. No matter how wealthy we become or how advanced our science becomes, unless our hearts are saved and changed to be more like Jesus, we will continue to fight, saying, “I am the best, and the country I rule is the best”. We have learned from history that there is neither salvation nor the Kingdom of God under such power.

We, too, should join the Lord Jesus in saying, **“Away from me, Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.’ (Matthew 4:10).** Read the Bible with a prayerful heart to know God’s will. Read the Bible as a whole, not just your favorite passages, and store them in your heart. There is no way to overcome Satan’s temptations except by living according to the Word of God.