

Obedient Son

Luke 4:1-15

Introduction

Test: On Oct. 4, 2024, 2:20 pm EST, FEMA **tested** the “Wireless Emergency Alert System.” Unwittingly, it exposed not just national emergency preparedness but Amish men who secretly had smartphones hidden on their persons or in their houses. What’s that noise coming from your overalls, Jedidiah? While this particular test revealed something unintended, generally, that’s what tests are intended to do: **reveal** your knowledge, competency, or skill in a particular area. If you pass the test, you prove that you have mastered the content.

- Many people *fear* tests because they don’t want to be judged as not measuring up by some seemingly arbitrary criteria, but **we need tests** (e.g., doctors, nurses, etc.). **Test scores alone** are not enough to predict student success. But during Covid many universities omitted standardized tests from admission criteria. Result? Student performance suffered, and standardized tests are coming back (e.g., Dartmouth, etc.).

Tempt or Test?: The most famous test, Jesus in the wilderness. But the term “temptation” (πειράζω) is just as easily translated as “test.” “**Temptation**” emphasizes the moral challenge, the allurements of the devil, and the enticement to sin, “**test**” emphasizes the assessment, evaluation, and proof of Jesus’ identity. In some ways, this whole scene is a challenge to see if **Jesus is who he says he is**, the fully human and fully divine, unique and beloved son of God (cf. baptism) who has come to fulfill the promises of God by bringing salvation to the world.

A lot can be and will be said about how we fight temptation from this passage today, but the foundational point must first be understood. Today’s passage shows us that **Jesus is the obedient son who passed the test where all others failed**. The saving work of Christ didn’t start at the cross. His entire life of obedience was essential to our salvation.

¹ And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness ² for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And he ate nothing during those days. And when they were ended, he was hungry. ³ The devil said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread.” ⁴ And Jesus answered him, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone.’” ⁵ And the devil took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, ⁶ and said to him, “To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will.” ⁷ If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours.” ⁸ And Jesus answered him, “It is written, “You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve.”” ⁹ And he took him to Jerusalem and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, ¹⁰ for it is written, “He will command his angels concerning you, to guard you,” ¹¹ and “On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.”” ¹² And Jesus answered him, “It is said, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’” ¹³ And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time. ¹⁴ And Jesus returned in the power of

the Spirit to Galilee, and a report about him went out through all the surrounding country. ¹⁵ And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all.

1. The Comfort Test (vv. 1-4)

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Spirit-Led: He is both full of and led by the Holy Spirit. If you have the Spirit, then you go where the Spirit leads.

- If Jesus can follow the leading of the Spirit, we can too. Submitting to someone else is a mark of humility and faith, not weakness. We need more teachable, humble leaders, not bullies and blowhards. My experience is that "leaders either grow more humble or more insecure with the passage of time" (Crowe).

Wherever He Leads, I'll Go: Where does the Spirit lead him? Into the wilderness. Emotional slingshot to go from the praise of John the Baptist, the crowds' adulation, and the Father's approval at his baptism to the isolation of the wilderness. Practically, the wilderness is a difficult place to be. It's a desolate and uninhabited (uninhabitable?) place.

- Baptism: Will you go where he calls you to go and do what he calls you to do?
- We love to sing 🎵 "Wherever He Leads, I'll Go" and magically he seems to only lead us where we always wanted to go. How can I tell? Everyone seems led to conspicuous comfort, and not the wilderness.

Hangry: And he ate nothing during those days. And when they were ended, he was hungry.

- "He was hungry" (no, duh!) My belly grumbles if I miss a meal; I can't imagine a month of meals #hangry.
- Satan isn't stupid. He loves to tempt us in our weaknesses (e.g., tired, stressed, angry, worried, overwhelmed). E.g., intermittent fasting and going to a meeting with Beiler's Donuts (don't want to be rude; why do they smell better than usual?; is my food sniffing sense heightened?).
- We naturally want to alleviate our suffering and we will turn to false comforts when we crave comfort more than God.
- Be careful that your difficult circumstances don't become an excuse for disobedience (e.g., illnesses lead to a higher rate of divorce).
- I also look at Jesus and marvel at his resolve. He resists the devil even though he is at his lowest point. Compare this to Adam and Eve. They weren't starving in the desert but well-fed in God's perfect garden. I might not be in Eden, but I'm certainly not 40 days in the wilderness. What's my excuse?

Typological Alarm Bells: ² for forty days, being tempted by the devil.

- Forty days is more than just a really long time to go without food, it is a biblically significant number that even the novice Bible reader would recognize. In most cases, forty is associated with a period of trial, testing, or judgment (e.g., Noah, Jonah, and Ezekiel).¹
- Moses and the people of Israel are the primary comparisons to be made because they both failed the tests that God gave them in the wilderness.
 - Moses was on Mt. Sinai for 40 days receiving the law from YHWH. The Israelite spies spent 40 days scouting the Promised Land, only for God's people to refuse to enter, leading to their sentence of 40 years of wandering in the wilderness (which is described as a way to test God's people, cf. Deut 8:2)
- How did they do with God's tests?
 - Moses famously disobeyed God, striking the rock at Meribah 2.0 (Num 20) rather than speaking to it. Thus, he could not lead the people into the Promised Land.
 - God explicitly sends manna not simply to feed the people but also to **test** them. Will they obey his instructions? Will they trust him?
- The comparison between Jesus is highlighted even more closely because each response of Jesus to Satan's temptation is from Scripture, specifically Deuteronomy when they were at the end of their wilderness journey on the plains of Moab.²
 - Over and over again, the people of God **failed the test**. Israel's failures are too many to recount. They lack faith and disobey, despite witnessing God's miraculous provision. chose complaint over contentment, worry over trust, and idols over faithfulness. **How could they ever walk righteously with God?**
- The OT describes Israel as "God's son".³ **But now, another son of God, the true and better son of God, is in the wilderness, subjected to a test. Where Moses and the Israelites proved unable, Jesus perfectly trusts and obeys.**

Food: ³ The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread." ⁴ And Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone.'"

- This first temptation challenges Jesus to use his divine power to satisfy his physical needs, testing his trust in God's provision. Just like the Israelites in the wilderness had to rely on God to feed them (i.e., manna), Jesus had to trust that God would provide.
- In moments of suffering, it is tempting to think God has abandoned you and pursue respite in the comforts of the world. **We think God has forgotten us, so we better look out for ourselves.**
- ⁴ And Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone.'" Quoting Deuteronomy 8:3, an explicit reminder of God's provision of manna for the Israelites, Jesus is telling Satan that he doesn't need to circumvent God's plan, simply trust it.

Scripture: ⁴ And Jesus answered him, "It is written, In each test Satan brings, Jesus responds with Scripture. He answers with the truth of God's Word to the lies of the devil.

¹ Noah endured 40 days and 40 nights of rain, leading to the great flood of God's judgment on sinful humanity. Jonah's warning to Ninevah was that God's judgment would come in 40 days if they didn't repent. Ezekiel had to lie on his right side for 40 days to symbolize the years of Judah's sin.

² Deut 8:3, 6:16, 6:13

³ Exod 4:22, Jer 31:9, Hos 11:1-4

- “He has the resources of heaven available, yet he fights [Satan] using the authority of Scripture. Not as a one-off, or as a change of tactics, but each and every time. ‘It is written... it is written... it is written,’ he repeatedly emphasizes. His position is unequivocal: ‘You’re trying to tempt me, but the Scriptures have spoken. That’s the end of the conversation’ (Wilson). God’s word is enough; it’s coherent and it’s authoritative. If God tells us to do something, then we do it.
- “I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you” (Ps 119:11). If you’re going to counteract the temptations of Satan, then you must know the truths of God’s Word. If you don’t know the truth, you will be subject to the whims of **cultural fads** and **unpredictable feelings** when temptation arises. Obey what you know, not what you feel. **Feelings change, but God’s Word doesn’t.**⁴

Priorities: Jesus makes clear: **there are more important things than food.** Obedience to God’s will takes priority.

- This is one reason why we fast (and why it’s hard). We are disciplining ourselves to be reminded that God is greater than the grumbling in our stomachs. Not all of my desires need to be satisfied; some of them need to be crucified.
- Jesus shows us what it means to seek God more than our comfort and to trust God more than our desires.
- Jesus is humble enough to trust God’s provision rather than demanding it. He didn’t exploit his status as the Son of God for his own advantage (Phil 2).
- Do you trust God’s provision in his timing, or do you compromise your obedience to His commands for personal comfort?

2. The Power Test (vv. 5-8)

⁵ And the devil took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, ⁶ and said to him, “To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will. ⁷ If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours.” ⁸ And Jesus answered him, “It is written, “You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve.”

Vision: ⁵ And the devil took him up and **showed him** all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, One of the devil’s favorite tricks is to lure us into sin by showing us something that will entice us. The forbidden tree in the garden was “a delight to the eyes” (Gen 3:6). A little sparkle and novelty, and we quickly abandon faithfulness. Why do you think cigarettes were marked as “cool”? They look cool but are really killers (that’s what sin is).

Real Power?: ⁶ and said to him, “To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will. Does the devil have the authority to deliver on his promises? Is he telling the truth, lying, or delusional?

⁴ “I will hold to the principles received by me when I was sane, and not mad (as I am now). Laws and principles are not for the times when there is no temptation. They are for such moments as this when body and soul rise in mutiny against their rigor” (Jane Eyre).

- **(1) His power is real.** He is the ruler of this world (Jn 12:31, 14:30, 16:11). He can blind the minds of unbelievers (2 Cor 4:4) and has particular schemes (Eph 6:11). In fact, Scripture even goes so far as to say that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one (1 Jn 5:19).
- **(2) His power is limited.** Even here, he gives the game away when he says his power has been delivered to him. Whatever power he has is limited by God. He can only do what God allows him to do. We see in the story of Job (1:12, 2:6) and in Jesus' discussion with his disciples (Lk 22:31-32) that Satan only operates within the sovereign boundaries set by God. He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world (1 Jn 4:4). The devil is not omniscient, omnipotent, or omnipresent. Do you know the devil can only be in one place at one time? Do you know that there are a finite number of demons? Believers have authority over the power of the enemy (Lk 10:19).

We ignore the devil at our peril (he's real), but we also fear him at our peril (he's limited). When we fear God, we need not fear the devil.

- **(1)** People don't mind you believing in God, but they think you're crazy if you say you believe in the devil. The easiest way for him to trick us is to convince us he's not real.
- **(2)** Every difficult circumstance, unpleasant emotion, and temptation isn't the devil. Don't give him too much credit. This passage reminds us that when you submit yourself to God [and] resist the devil, he will flee from you (Jas 4:7).

Sin of Temptation: The devil will harass, afflict, and accuse us to try and cause us to doubt God. His primary method of attack is to **tempt** us (that's what he does to Jesus). But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death (Jas 1:14-15).

- Temptation is not a sin. Jesus himself was tempted. He understands what it is like to be tempted like you and I: "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin" (Heb 4:15).
- Just because you're tempted doesn't mean you have to sin. The challenge is not to let your misplaced desires take root in your heart and bloom into sinful attitudes or actions.

Power: ⁷ If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours." This is a promise beyond the devil's ability to keep. "The devil is a liar." Every idol makes this promise. It promises to give you something it doesn't have the power or authority to give. It promises **glory** it doesn't possess, **comfort** it can't provide, and **happiness** that is fleeting.

Worship: ⁸ And Jesus answered him, "It is written, "You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve."

- Satan was trying to bypass the path of suffering that God had ordained. The way to Jesus' exaltation was through suffering.
- Do you try to control your circumstances rather than submit to God? It's easy to want to skip the suffering that is necessarily involved with following Christ. It's the opposite of trust (taking the easy path on the hike instead of the hard path that gives the amazing view).

3. The Proof Test (vv. 9-15)

⁹ And he took him to Jerusalem and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, ¹⁰ for it is written, “He will command his angels concerning you, to guard you,’ ¹¹ and “On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.” ¹² And Jesus answered him, “It is said, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’” ¹³ And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time. ¹⁴ And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and a report about him went out through all the surrounding country. ¹⁵ And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all.

Temple Trip: ⁹ And he took him to Jerusalem and set him on the pinnacle of the temple Notice the subtle trick of Satan. He takes Jesus to the **pinnacle of the temple** (a much nicer seeming location than the wilderness).

- Don't judge the righteousness of your behavior by the comfort of your circumstances.
- Be careful of only taking the path of least resistance. Don't walk through every open door. Make sure you know who is holding the door open for you.
- It would be easy to think the wilderness is not the right path and the temple is the right path because we assume God wants our comfort rather than our holiness.

Question: and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here,

- Again, he **questions** Jesus's **identity** and **status** as the beloved Son of God, confirmed by the Father at his baptism (ch. 3). **Satan will try to get you to question Jesus.** Is he really Lord? Is he really good? Does he really love me? Does he really know best?

Satan's Scripture: ¹⁰ for it is written, “He will command his angels concerning you, to guard you,’ ¹¹ and “On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.”

- Satan pulls a sneaky trick. He now quotes Scripture (Ps 91:11-12). **You know the devil has read the Bible too?** But he doesn't quote it according to its context or in view of the rest of Scripture; he **deliberately misuses** it to try to manipulate Jesus to show off his power. Scripture out of context:
 - Phil 4:13 (can do all things through him who strengthens me) is a call to endure all suffering for Christ, not a promise you can dunk a basketball or get rich.
 - Judge not (Matt 7:1) means don't be a hypocrite, not that you can't ever say anything is wrong. It's about righteous judgment with humility, not freedom to sin however you want.
 - Everyone wants to say, “Let him who is without sin throw the first stone” (Jn 8:7), but no one wants to say, “From now on sin no more” (Jn 8:11).
 - You know “where two or three are gathered in my name” is about church discipline?
- Scripture has design and purpose. It means what God intends, not what what we want. Our goal is not to mold it to justify our opinions but to understand and obey what it says.

Testing God: ¹² And Jesus answered him, "It is said, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'" Jesus' answer clarifies the test. Satan is challenging Jesus to show off, to prove himself in a way that bypasses God's plan of humble suffering. Rather than using his power to serve others, he is challenged to use his power to serve himself.

- Miracles are meant to be humbly received, not presumptuously demanded. Demanding miraculous proof rather than walking by faith is an insidious form of godlessness.
- The suffering God has in store is part of the process he uses to conform us to the image of Christ. "Satan's temptations are all shortcuts" (Drew Dyck). God has ordained the means as well as the ends.

Testing God is trying to *make* God act. It's a "you owe me" attitude. We do this (e.g., Gideon). Raymond, "What do we put the money in the basket for?" We act as if God is a spiritual bank account that we fill up with good deeds and sacrifices, and then in our time of need, we expect to withdraw his blessing. Rather than submit and trust, we think God owes us. I've suffered for you, Jesus, cut me a break. You called me to this, God. Why are you making it so hard?

- Is Jesus my Lord, or am I trying to be Lord over him?
- If Jesus is going to be Lord of your life, then you can't be.
- Loving God for his blessings is not loving God. True believers love God for being God (Augustine).
- Self-righteous people obey God to get things; gospel people obey God because they have God (Keller).
- Do you obey God to manipulate his blessings, or are you satisfied simply with a relationship with him?

Turn In Your Papers: ¹³ And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time. ¹⁴ And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and a report about him went out through all the surrounding country. ¹⁵ And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all.

- Resist the devil, and he will flee from you (James 4:7). Satan gets tired, and he must relent.

Conclusion

Recap: There is much to be said about fighting temptation like Jesus with Scripture, dependently and patiently waiting and trusting rather than manipulating God. But all of that is only possible if we internalize the main point. Our obedience is only possible because of Jesus' obedience. Our power to resist the devil is only possible if we rely on his power. Our righteousness is only possible through his.

- We don't pass the test because of our obedience but his. For our sake, he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God (2 Cor 5:21). The obedience of Christ, the sacrifice of Christ, the righteousness of Christ **saves** us, and, in the process, **transforms** us. On the front page of my dissertation, it says, "In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy." That dissertation, along with coursework and exams, completely fulfilled the requirements to become "Dr. Turner." I never have to sit for comprehensive exams or a

dissertation defense again. No more tests. No more papers. No more need to prove anything. The requirements for that degree have been fulfilled forever. And if dementia comes in my later years and robs me of all that I learned—all that I learned all the way back to grammar school!—I will still be "Dr. Turner." It cannot be taken away. Christ has completely fulfilled all the obedient requirements for your salvation. Jesus succeeds where all others fail; we "pass the test" on the merit of Christ alone. He is our perfect substitute who succeeds everywhere we fail.

- That said, I benefit greatly from knowing what I learned. It comes in handy (literally every week, if not every day). The PhD process had a tremendous impact on me. I will never be the same. Even though I don't *have* to keep up anything in order to keep my degree, I want to stay sharp for my own good. In the same way, the requirements of God have been fulfilled for me in Christ. He has passed the test. And no matter what, I will always be justified by him. But this does not mean that the knowledge of righteousness and obedience is useless to me or that I should unlearn what I learned. In fact, it has transformed me.
- I **can** obey because he has **obeyed**. I can fight sin and temptation in Christ's finished work, not my own strength. I love because he first loved me. I obey because he perfectly obeyed. I endure the wilderness because he patiently endured it for me.
- I can humbly and confidently build my life on him, going where he tells me to go and doing what he tells me to do.
- **Have you placed your faith in the perfectly obedient son?** For a moment, I want you to marvel at our beautiful Savior. No one else and no other person could bring us to God. He will never run out of compassion and grace for us. He is the perfect answer to all our problems. If you are spiritually dead, he is your life. If you are weak, he is the power of God. If you are weighed down by guilt, he is your righteousness. **Do you know him?** You can!