

The Memoirs of Peter
Overcoming The Lust Of The Flesh
Matthew 4:2-4
July 6, 2008
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Almost everyone who is connected with the Christian church has heard of, has read about, has some knowledge of the temptation of Jesus Christ. But John Broadus who was a famous American theologian taught at Southern Seminary in Louisville back in the time of the Civil War, wrote this, “Familiar as we have grown with the simple narrative, it presents one of the most wonderful, mysterious, awful scenes of the world’s history. O dark and dreadful enemy, ever plotting our ruin and exalting in our woe, here thou wast completely conquered on earth, conquered by a man, and in the strength of that Spirit whose help is offered to us all.” That’s exactly right. We can’t fathom the depths of what was going on in the wilderness of Judea in the temptation of Jesus Christ. But there is in His temptation hope for all of us, hope in two senses: hope because He and His power as a man overcame temptation; and hope because in His power over temptation He has shown us the way. He has given us a pattern for power over temptation ourselves.

Let me have you turn as we begin tonight to Mark’s gospel and let me just read for you again the very simple narrative of the temptation as Mark tells it. Mark chapter 1 verse 12, “Immediately”—that is after His baptism— “the Spirit impelled Him to go out into the wilderness. And He was in the wilderness forty days being tempted by Satan; and He was with the wild beasts, and the angels were ministering to Him.”

In that very brief summary, Mark captures the struggle of titanic proportions that was taking place in the wilderness of Judea in the lifetime of our Lord. We examine this summary in great detail last week and as I told you we would this week, I want us to leave Mark’s gospel for just a couple of weeks here and look at the account of the three temptations that are described for us in more detail in both Matthew’s gospel and in Luke’s gospel.

Both Matthew and Luke record three temptations. But those were not Jesus’s only temptations. During the forty days that He was in the wilderness, we’re told by Luke for forty days He was

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being tempted by the devil. After the forty days, Luke adds this at the end of the account of the temptation, “When the devil had finished every temptation,” that’s described there, “he left Jesus until” he had “an opportune time.” Jesus was tempted throughout the forty days, and Jesus was tempted throughout His life and ministry. So, the three temptations that both Matthew and Luke record were not the only temptations that Jesus endured. Instead they are representative of the temptations that Jesus faced over that forty-day period and they are the climax of the temptations that come at the very end of the forty days.

Now when you look at it that way that means that the three temptations recorded in both Matthew and Luke are selective. There were other temptations that could have been written for us that are not. These are selected. The question is by whom. Well, who were the only eyewitnesses of the temptation of Christ in the wilderness? Satan and Christ Himself. The only eyewitness reports of the temptation of Jesus could come to us from Christ. What that means folks is that Christ Himself considered these three temptations, He considered that they captured the essence of the temptations that He faced, and He shared these with His disciples. So, they are purposefully selected and that means the three recorded temptations are also representative.

These temptations are not the only sins that can be committed, that’s clear. These are not even the only categories of sins; we’ll see in a moment. Instead Jesus’s three temptations are the root of every kind of sin. The root causes of every kinds of sin. Turn back with me to James. James chapter 1, let me just remind you what James says here, it will be instructive. James says in verse 14 of chapter 1, “Each one is tempted”—Now this is us, not Christ—“Each one is tempted”—Each human being who’s sinful by birth—“is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own” sinful cravings.

There are in us these cravings. Turn over to James 4, he makes the same point here, verse 1, “What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? You crave, you lust, and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and you cannot get; so you fight and quarrel.”

And so behind our temptations are these cravings for us the ultimate source of all of our temptation and our sin are these cravings that flow out of our flesh, the Bible calls it. That's our unredeemed humanness, that part of us that remains unredeemed that will only be redeemed either when we die or in the body of course when Jesus returns and gives us new body. So, there is a part of us as believers while we have a new nature, we're new in Christ there is a part of us, the Bible calls it our flesh that remains unredeemed. And out of that unredeemed part of us, out of that flesh that we still have with us flows this endless stream of cravings—sinful cravings for things. And all of those cravings which are many and varied can ultimately be traced back to three root cravings or three root lusts that are the fountainhead of all temptation. It's in 1 John chapter 2 that we find these. 1 John 2, verse 15 says, "Do not love the cosmos the sinful world set against God." He's not talking here about the creation, he's not talking about all the people in the world, he's talking about a system. A world system set against God, he says, "if anyone loves [this system] the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in [this system] the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from this [wicked cosmos]."

This system set against God. Notice what John says in that passage: "All that is in the world." In some way these three things he lists here are comprehensive and inclusive. They are, I believe, the three source cravings from which all other cravings come. Here we have reached ground zero in our search for the source of sin and temptation in our lives. There is nothing beneath these. You know what that means? That means if we as Christians are not dealing with these root cravings—these root temptations—we are in fact not dealing with our sin.

Now let me see if I can make this a little clearer. Let me give you the progression of temptation. This is pretty straightforward but stay with me and I think it'll build a little case for you here. First of all, all sins spring from temptation. We don't sin except for temptation. Temptation comes, James describes it, we are carried away and enticed by our own lusts and that brings temptation. We give into that temptation and it becomes sin. That's how it works for us, all sins spring from temptation. In our case, all temptations spring from sinful lusts or cravings is a better word. Something in our unredeemed humanness in our flesh that craves satisfaction. Now we're going down here so stay with me, we started at the surface. Sin, beneath sin is temptation,

beneath temptation are these cravings. We're going down another step now, into the pit that is our hearts. All sinful cravings ultimately spring from three root sinful cravings. And they are the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the boastful pride of life. I think that's what John the apostle was saying when he said all that is in the cosmos, all that is in the system opposed to God can be described by these three things.

Now understand that the cravings, we're talking about here where I've put the word "cravings" these lusts or cravings in our hearts, that the cravings themselves are sinful. They come out of our flesh, they are sinful cravings, and our sinful craving meets with an external temptation and we give in. That's what James 1 talks about. Roman Catholic theology teaches that lust or craving in its "first motions that is before the will assents" they say that's not sin. That's not what the Bible teaches. Obviously, the Bible teaches that we can be guilty without our will's consent. For example, we're guilty with original sin; we're guilty with Adam's sin according to Romans 5. And we are also guilty with sins of ignorance, the fact that my will doesn't assent because I did it in ignorance doesn't mean it wasn't sin. And so obviously that isn't true. So, understand then this progression; we're digging the pit of sin in the heart. It starts with sin, below sin is temptation, below all temptations are these sinful cravings and lusts according to James 1, and all of those sinful cravings grow out of, flow out of these three root sinful cravings: the lust of the flesh; the lust of the eyes; and the boastful pride of life. This is what our flesh wants. Every temptation and every kind of temptation ultimately comes from here.

Now that brings us to the bottom. The three root temptations: the lust of the flesh; the lust of the eyes; and the boastful pride of life spring from three normal God-given human desires. We will see this as we examine each of them this week and the weeks to follow. This, number four is the level at which Jesus was tempted. Jesus did not have any sinful cravings in His heart. There was nothing in Jesus that resonated with the external temptation of Satan, as there is with us. There was no James 1:14 for Jesus, He wasn't carried away and enticed by His own lust. Instead for Him it was external, and it was appealing to these normal, God-given, human desires. Jesus did not have within Him sinful cravings that cried out to be satisfied, but He did have normal human desires, just as we do. The difference is that our fallenness, our flesh seizes on these three God-given desires and perverts them and warps them and the result is that our fallen hearts takes these

three desires and turn them into the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the boastful pride of life. Every temptation, every kind of temptation we face will ultimately spring from one of these three root temptations.

Just let me give you an example, take a sin like anger. Anger doesn't immediately appear to fall in any one of those categories and it doesn't. But anger always arises when our desire for one or more of these things is thwarted; that's where anger comes from. For the sake of continuity let me give you some examples from marriage. Not that any of you have ever experienced this but just for the sake of argument stay with me. Anger, where does it come from? Well let me give you a couple of different scenarios. A wife confronts her husband for sexual sin, and I've seen this in counseling many times, he immediately gets angry. Why does he get angry? Because he wants to be left alone to pursue the craving that was coming out of his heart. So, anger ultimately hinges back, springs from these three root cravings. Or take another scenario, a wife is surly with her husband, disrespectful, treats him like one of the children and he gets angry. Why does he get angry? Because she's not treating him with the respect that he thinks he deserves. It relates back to the boastful pride of life: "I have a right to respect and you're not giving it to me, woman." Or perhaps, one spouse is spending money in ways the other spouse doesn't approve and he or she gets angry, why? Because she doesn't have what she wants or he doesn't have what he wants, the house or the neighborhood or the car or the general standard of living. The expectation I have a right to, you fill in the blank. But ultimately it comes back to these three root temptations.

Consider another example; take the example of the sin of depression. When does depression come? It relates back to these three things: when a desire for personal pleasure isn't met, a person can be depressed; when a desire for personal glory isn't met, a person can be depressed; when a desire for personal prosperity isn't met, a person can be depressed. Some expectation some right that ultimately goes back to these three bedrock temptations has been violated. Every temptation you and I experience can ultimately be traced back to one of these three roots.

Let me give you a summary of these three roots. The three roots of temptation—root temptation number one: First John 2:16 calls it "the lust of the flesh." It's sinfully craving the satisfaction

of the bodily appetites. Sinfully craving the satisfaction of the body's appetites. The root desire, the root sinful desire that we're talking about here is the desire or the craving for personal pleasure. The God-given desire from which we have perverted, or which we have perverted into this sinful desire. I think the God-given desire is the legitimate physical desires for food, the physical relationship in marriage, sleep, etc.—the things the body desires and when fulfilled in God's way, according to God's word are legitimate. That's where this comes from, but we twist it and pervert it. And this is Jesus's first temptation in Matthew 4, the temptation to turn the stones into bread which we'll look at in just a moment.

Root temptation number two, in 1 John it's the lust of the eyes. That is sinfully craving to have what the eyes see; this is a desire to possess, to have. The root sinful desire here is personal prosperity. The God-given desire that lies behind it, I think is the desire to work hard in the fulfillment of what we've been designed to do and to enjoy the fruit of that labor. From the Garden of Eden on that has been God's design for man, to work hard in fulfilling the task we've been assigned and to enjoy the fruit of that labor. That's true in the Garden before the fall, it's true after the fall and it'll even be true in eternity according to the Scripture. So I think that's the God-given desire that our sinful hearts pervert into this desire for personal prosperity—to have.

Jesus's third temptation in Matthew 4 relates to this: It's to sinfully pursue the kingdoms of the world, to pursue the kingdoms of the world in a sinful way. What will ultimately be His by right, to pursue it differently than God's design. Root temptation number three. 1 John 2:16, calls it "the boastful pride of life." The root sinful desire is the desire for personal glory. I don't want to be respected, I want to be sun god, as Garrison Keillor writes in his book, "I want people not to say, "Nice job!" I want them to fall down on their faces before me and I want to say, "Rise my people, lift your faces from the carpet." Desire for personal glory. The God-given desire I think that lies behind this is the desire to bring glory to God. We were made to bring glory to God, but we take that in our wicked heart and pervert it into a desire for personal glory. This correlates to Jesus's second temptation in Matthew 4, to jump from the temple to confirm His Messiahship to others and we'll look at that in detail in the coming weeks.

So, the three temptations that are recorded for us are selective, and they are representative of the root causes of sin. They are also instructive. Don't forget that these temptations are recorded both to demonstrate Jesus's own power over temptation and also to provide us with a pattern for overcoming these same categories of temptations in our own lives. Let me put it to you like this: Our Lord's biblical response to temptation provides a wonderful pattern for each of us to follow in our own battle with temptation. His temptations teach us profound truths about the nature of temptation and by watching our Lord's response we learn as sort of eyewitnesses as it's reported to us how our Lord overcame temptations and how we can follow His example.

Over the next several Sunday nights that I have with you, we're going to walk through these three temptations tonight and then picking up again in a couple of weeks. We're going to do it from Matthew's account, and I invite you to turn to Matthew chapter 4. Because of the three accounts, Matthew, Mark and Luke, Matthew clearly seems to indicate that his account is chronological because he repeatedly uses the word "then" as if to say in chronological order. In the time we have left tonight, I want us to deal with the first temptation and the first great root from which all of our temptation comes. It is that of physical desire of the body's appetites.

Look at Matthew chapter 4 and I want to begin with the preparation. Verse 2 says, "And after He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He became hungry." Now we aren't told here why Jesus fasted. Usually it involved, in the Old Testament as well as in the New, it involved serious prayer and meditation. It was often associated with mourning. Fasting is a separate message entirely. But just note that the fact that Jesus fasted for forty days does not mean that we should follow His example and fast the forty days of Lent leading up to Easter. Matthew adds that Jesus "fasted forty days and nights." You notice that most fasts, including Lent including the Muslim fast leading up to Ramadan, or as part of Ramadan, they all include fasting during the day and then eating to your heart's content when the sun goes down. That wasn't Jesus. He didn't fast during the day and gorge Himself at night. He fasted day and night. Only three men in Scripture have ever done this: Moses at Mount Sinai in Exodus 34; Elijah on the way to Horeb in 1 Kings 19; and our Lord. That's it. And Jesus only fasted like this one time in His ministry that we have a record of, we're not told if He ever did it again. It certainly wasn't yearly. And there is only one fast clearly commanded in the entire Scripture and that is the fast for the Day of

Atonement. In this case, Jesus fasted, regardless of the specific reason, He fasted under the direction of the Spirit for forty days and forty nights—the same Spirit that compelled Him into the wilderness.

At the end of that period Matthew says, “He was hungry.” Now there’s a pretty serious understatement. You understand that Jesus was not hungry like you are right now, waiting to go to Steak and Shake after the service. It wasn’t that He’d gone without food for some five or six hours like you and I have. Instead He’d gone completely without food for more than a month. At this point His body begins to cry out for food so that it doesn’t die. These are the last pangs of hunger of His body saying, “You must eat, or you will die.” This is the preparation for the temptation, and a remarkable preparation it is. There are a couple of points that we can make from this. The first is that Jesus faced and overcame temptation of His bodily appetites in its most extreme form. You will never face a more intense temptation to satisfy the bodily appetites than Jesus did, for two reasons: one because He faced the temptation when to say “no” to His bodily appetites was to risk imminent death; and He never gave in which ran the temptation out to its most extreme form. As I mentioned last week who has endured the greater torture, the person who’s tortured and gives in or the person who never gives in. The same is true with temptation.

The second point that sort of flows out of this verse 2 that we’ve looked at is that temptation often follows great moments or events. Remember that for Jesus, the forty days of temptation followed immediately on the heels of His baptism, the official beginning of His earthly ministry. The Holy Spirit descended on Him at His baptism to empower Him for His mission and the Father, the Father intervened by speaking audibly from heaven. He tore a hole in the atmosphere and spoke from heaven, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” This was the greatest moment in Jesus’s life to date and it was on the heels of that experience that temptation came. And folks, that’s a common theme throughout the Scripture.

If we had time, I would take you back to 1 Kings and we would look at Elijah’s example—that marvelous encounter of Elijah with the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel, and there he calls out to the people, “choose you this day whom you will serve.” Like Joshua of old using very similar

language, are you going to serve God or are you going to serve Baal? And you remember he ends up killing the four hundred prophets of Baal and what's the result, he runs before the chariot back into town elated that his God, Elijah's name means "my God is Jehovah"—"my God is Yahweh." And he runs back into town thinking at last Baal has been unseated and God is on His throne and everything's right and the next day Jezebel says, "By the way, may the gods do to me what you have done if by this time tomorrow you're still alive." And on the heels of that comes Elijah's greatest temptation. He despairs of life itself. Beware temptation will often follow your greatest spiritual successes.

So that's the preparation for the temptation, let's go to the temptation itself. This is found in verse 3, notice what is written there, "And the tempter came and said to Him, 'If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.'"

First of all, note the expression "the tempter came." Apparently during the forty days, Satan tempted Jesus by making suggestions to the mind as he does with us. But at the end of the forty days it seems clear that Satan shows up in some physical form and notice that after the three temptations it says down in verse 11 then the devil left Him. So at least for these three at the end of those forty days Satan actually shows up, perhaps for the entire forty-day period, but certainly for these. And Satan says to Christ, "if you are the Son of God."

Now some teachers make much of the word "if" here. Don't make too much of it and let me tell you why. In Greek there are several different conditional constructions; that is, "if then" statements; and the grammar tells you what the meaning is. The grammar tells you what the speaker means by what he says. One of those Greek constructions does insinuate but the condition is very unlikely. Well, if you're the Son of God and I seriously doubt it, but that's not the construction that's used here. It's used for example in John 5, where Jesus says, "if you believe Moses and it's clear you do not, you would believe Me, for he wrote about Me." There the grammar the Greek grammar tells you that Jesus intends to say, "this isn't happening, you don't truly believe Moses." But that's not the conditional construction that Matthew uses. Here Matthew uses a conditional construction that assumes the condition to be true. The speaker may believe it, or he may not, the language doesn't really tell us, the construction doesn't tell us. We

don't know based on what we read here, if Satan was convinced that Jesus was the Son of God, or if he was trying to raise a doubt about it. But the language does tell us that he was assuming this to be true.

So, we could translate Satan's words something like this: "If you are the Son of God and I assume that's true, command that these stones become loaves." In the other account he says "this stone," apparently pointing down to a particular rock—says make this one bread. Make it a loaf. That's the temptation, Jesus would eventually use His power to produce food for others, but here Satan is inviting Jesus to perform His very first miracle to satisfy His own bodily appetites. And here's the key—to do so would have for Jesus have been contrary to the will of God. Who had led Him into the wilderness, into temptation and into this fast? The Spirit of God. It wasn't the Spirit's time; this wasn't the will of God.

Now when you look at Jesus's temptations understand that in one sense Jesus's temptations were unique. His temptations took paths ours will never go. Let me see a show of hands, anyone here ever been tempted to turn stones into bread; hasn't happened. We've never been tempted to jump from some high place with the assurance that God won't let us die. We've never been tempted to fall down and worship Satan so that we can have all the kingdoms of the world. Nobody here has ever faced those three specific temptations. But although in one sense they were unique, they were at the same time typical. Jesus faced temptations from all three of the same root sources we do. Jesus—and I need to be careful here, I want you to stay with me but it's important that you understand this—Jesus had the same non-sinful bodily desires we have. In His case the temptations were external, in the sense that they didn't originate from inside of Him, but they came from outside of Him. John Broadus writes, "Our bodily appetites form the occasion of many of our severest temptations. Tet these appetites are not sinful in and of themselves." Nothing wrong with desiring food when you're hungry; nothing wrong with having the desire for marriage and the physical relationship in marriage; nothing wrong with having the desire for sleep. Those are God-given, physical desires and appetites. But for us, temptations typically arise when some external circumstance awakens inside of us one of our internal sinful cravings, as James 1:14 puts it.

Now what's the root temptation here in this first temptation? What is it? What's the root temptation? It's essentially this: It's the temptation to satisfy the desires of the body outside the will of God—a temptation to satisfy the desires of the body outside the will of God. John Calvin writes, "The nature of Adam, while he was still innocent and reflected the brightness of the divine image, was liable to temptations. All the bodily affections or normal bodily desires, the non-sinful ones that exist in man are so many opportunities which Satan seizes to tempt him." So just as Satan made his appeal to Eve on the basis of her physical desires—you remember she saw that the tree was good for food—in the same way he uses the physical appetites to appeal to us. So, when do we cross the line from a normal physical appetite into a sinful craving? In what way does satisfying the bodily appetites become a temptation to sin?

Let me give you several of them. First of all, seeking the gratification of those normal human appetites in excess. It's sin, to seek it in excess. Let me give you a couple of examples. Sleep is a normal desire that God has placed within the body, it's for the good and the maintenance of our bodies and our souls. We still don't know all that sleep does, but we know it's important. Those who sleep less than six hours a night we're told it will dramatically affect their health over time. Those who sleep more than eight hours that also will affect their health over time. There is a window of sleep that is good and right for the human body; to do it in excess however the Bible calls laziness. The Proverbs are filled with warnings about the man who is hinged to his bed. So seeking the gratification of normal human desires in excess means temptation to sin and sin itself. Same thing is true with food, nothing wrong with the desire for food, it's a good thing. God made us to eat to sustain life and apparently even for enjoyment. Paul refers to the fact that all food has been given to us, all things have been given to us to enjoy. The feasts of the Old Testament weren't just about satisfying the physical needs of the body. And apparently even when we don't have to eat in heaven there will be food. We talked about that when we talked about heaven and the new heavens and the new earth. So, food and the desire for food is a good thing. But in excess it becomes gluttony. I'm glad this isn't Thanksgiving when I'm teaching on this.

A second way that satisfying the body becomes sin is when we seek to gratify its desires by means contrary to God's word. For example, we try to satisfy the normal desire for food by

stealing. Nothing wrong with the desire for food, we need to satisfy that desire, we need to eat but to steal to satisfy that desire is wrong. To satisfy the normal desire for physical intimacy in marriage with a member of the opposite sex, but outside of marriage or through pornography. This is gratifying a God-given normal desire in an ungodly way. It's turning the bodily appetites into a temptation to sin.

Third way that satisfying the body becomes sin is seeking to gratify these normal physical desires in ways contrary to God's original design and intention. For example, God didn't design our bodies to gorge ourselves with food and then force ourselves to throw up as is true with bulimia. This is not the normal desire; this is the normal desire gone amok. This is the misuse of the design of food and the desire for food. The same thing would be true sexually, with homosexuality and pedophilia, and bestiality; those things are perversions of the normal, they're not simply seeking gratification of the normal desires by means contrary to God's word. They're a perversion of the normal desire into something else, something against the design.

A fourth way is by seeking gratification to the point that it becomes idolatry; and that can be true by the way with any of these first three and often is. I'm just including as a fourth sort of catch all point. When the fulfillment of that desire becomes more important to you than obeying God, it has become an idol. Whether it's the desire for marriage or whether it's a woman's desire for children, even good desires can become idolatry. Normal desires that God has placed within the human heart.

Every temptation you will face in regard to the body's appetite will follow one of those paths. And Jesus from the outside was tempted to satisfy the normal bodily appetites in a way contrary to God's will. So how did He respond? Let's look at the Biblical response. "But He answered" verse 4 says, "and said, 'It is written, 'MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD.'"

Jesus's response to this root temptation teaches us how to respond. But folks let me urge you don't jump to the wrong conclusions when you read this verse. You might be tempted to look at this passage and conclude something like this. Well Jesus quoted Scripture in the face of

temptation, Jesus overcame temptation, therefore if I memorize a few passages that touch on my temptation and quote them when I'm being tempted, I'll overcome temptation. Well there are elements of truth to that, but there are unfortunately too many Christians that have done just this and failed miserably and blamed the Bible; or blamed Jesus's example. Merely memorizing Scripture and quoting it will not ensure you will overcome temptation. In fact, that point is made right here in this very context. Satan memorized a portion of Scripture and quotes it to Jesus. And he quotes it not as a way to overcome temptation but as a way—what? To create temptation. The Bible misused can even be a source of temptation. And certainly, misused it won't help you deal with temptation. Scripture when wrongly understood and or misapplied can actually be as source of temptation.

So, what does Jesus response teach us? Preliminarily we can say this: a proper response to temptation comes from Scripture, that's clear. And for Scripture to be available for a right response means that we must have committed it in some sense to memory. But let's get more specific. How does Jesus's response to the temptations that come in the area of the appetites of the body help us to respond? Well notice that Jesus quotes from Deuteronomy, in fact all three of Jesus's responses to Satan come from Deuteronomy chapters 6 to 8. And understand that Jesus knows the context of each of these passages. Undoubtedly over these forty days He's been meditating on the Scripture, praying. He's spent thirty years understanding the text of Scripture so for us to understand what Jesus is saying here we have to get up with the context as well.

So, turn back with me to Deuteronomy chapter 8. Deuteronomy chapter 8. The context, the setting of this book is that Israel has wandered in the wilderness for forty years and all those older than twenty when they left Egypt have died except for Joshua and Caleb. But the wilderness wandering is now over. For a couple of months Israel camps on the west side of the Jordan opposite Jericho and there the old man Moses delivers a series of messages to them. That's what we have in the book of Deuteronomy. They are to prepare for the conquest and the division of the land ahead and Moses essentially draws out of the Spiritual lessons of forty years of wilderness wandering and out of the law giving it a second time, deuter-, that's second, *nomos*, that's Greek for law—the second law. He explains again what God's expectations are and what they can learn from all that's happened. Now, look at chapter 8 verse 1,

All the commandments that I am commanding you today you shall be careful to do, that you may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the LORD swore to give to your forefathers. You shall remember all the way which the LORD your God has led you in the wilderness these forty years, that He might humble you, testing you, to know what was in you heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. He humbled you and let you be hungry, and fed with manna which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you understand that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word or everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD.

That's the context that Jesus quotes. Now that you know the context you can see that behind Jesus's response were several important premises and let me just hurry through these with you.

First of all, the Scripture is both authoritative and sufficient for dealing with the spiritual issues of this life. Matthew 4:4 says, "But Jesus answered and said, 'It is written.'" Reminds me of a passage we'll get to in Ephesians 6 that says, "take the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God." That is our weapon. William Hendrickson writes, "For Jesus the Old Testament Scriptures were the ultimate touchstone of the truth for life and doctrine; the final court of appeal for the reason." Leon Morris writes, "For Jesus to have found a passage in the Bible that bears on the current problem is to end all discussion." The Scripture is where you need to go, that much is true.

Number two. God is sovereign over our physical circumstances. That lies behind this passage that Jesus quotes. Look at verse 1, "You shall be careful to do [these things], that you may live and multiply, and [that you may] go in and possess the land which the LORD swore to give to your forefathers."

The Lord's in charge here and Christ understood that. The circumstances in which you found yourself in the wilderness and the circumstances in which you find yourself living in the Promised Land are both under the control of God.

Number three. God is the One who provides every legitimate need. That's what Moses is saying here. God is the One who cared for you, He's the One who met your needs with manna in some cases and when you go into the land, He's the One that'll give it to you. He's the One that'll meet the needs you have. God is the One that meets our needs.

Number four and this is important. God at times chooses to deprive His children of the normal fulfillment of their physical desires. Look at verse 3, "He humbled you and let you be hungry." Why?

Well that brings us to number five. When God chooses to deprive us of the physical needs of the body, He has great spiritual ends for our good. They're given right here in verses 2 and 3—first of all humbling our hearts. He did this "that He might humble you." Grace comes only where there is humility. This is for our benefit; He humbles us reminding us that we can't depend on our own resources. But God has a second purpose and that's testing our hearts. Look at what He says in verse 2. "He humbled you, testing you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not."

Testing your loyalty and your obedience, God will sometimes let us go without the needs of the body being met to test our hearts to see if we're going to be loyal to Him and if we're going to be obedient to Him in spite of whether or not those needs are met, just as He did with Israel. But He also has in mind when He deprives us of those good things instructing our minds. And the question is, with what great lesson? Notice verse 3, "That He might make you understand that"—Here it comes—He did all this so that you would know something. Here comes the main point and this is what Jesus quotes from the Septuagint translation to Satan: "MAN DOES NOT LIVE BY BREAD ALONE, BUT MAN LIVES BY EVERYTHING THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF THE LORD."

Notice this passage make two points, a negative one and a positive one. The negative one: "Man does not live by bread alone." Jesus is not denying the importance of bread to life; rather, He is denying its exclusive importance. And the positive point He makes is "Man lives by everything

that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord.” This is a very strong adversative, but, on the other hand, on the absolute other end of the spectrum, but rather; what sustains man’s life is every word that goes through God’s mouth.

Now let’s see if we can summarize this and make it helpful for us. The point that Jesus embraced and believed and that He responded to Satan with that helped Him overcome the temptation to satisfy the desires of the body contrary to God’s will, went like this. Jesus essentially said this to Satan, like Israel I am clearly in the wilderness and without my physical needs being met at God’s will. This is God’s will. I will not pursue the satisfaction of My physical needs contrary to God’s will because even if I’m without those needs being met, if God chooses, He can intervene and meet my needs even supernaturally as He did in providing manna for Israel. This is what Jesus embraced and believed as He was so hungry that His body was about to go into the final throes of starvation. Jesus embraced this reality: I’m here by God’s will, deprived of these things by God’s will and God knows I’m here and God is powerful enough to meet these needs even supernaturally if He chooses. And so I will not cross the line and satisfy them contrary to His will and purpose.

John Calvin writes, “God who now employs bread for our support will enable us whenever He pleases to live by any other means.” God doesn’t need bread or any of the other ways our physical desires are met; He can meet them however He chooses. This doesn’t mean that we can’t take reasonable Biblical steps to see that our physical needs are met. Doesn’t mean that there is anything wrong with praying for a marriage or for a child or for food or for housing, or clothing. Doesn’t mean that we shouldn’t diligently seek employment if we’re out of work. Doesn’t mean that we shouldn’t work to have our needs met. Doesn’t mean that we shouldn’t pursue relationships with other Christians if we want to be married. This means that once we have taken reasonable, biblical, legitimate steps we don’t attempt to meet our physical needs contrary to what the Bible teaches. You know what Jesus is really saying here and get this in your mind: Our souls are more important than our bodies. We don’t think of ourselves as two-part beings very often, we think of ourselves as me, it’s me. And we’re all one part. But that’s not what the Scriptures teach. There is the physical part of you and there is the immaterial eternal part of you, your soul, the real you. And your soul is more important than your body.

Get a grip on that, that's what Jesus was saying to Satan and that's what will help us overcome temptation.

The way Paul puts it is like this, 1 Corinthians 9:27, "I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that after I've preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified."

Paul says I lead my body around by the nose. I make it obey me. Do you understand that you have to come to grips with the fact that your soul is more important than your body? God may choose to have us go without our physical needs being met, for a short time or for a lifetime, but we have to remember and remind ourselves when that temptation comes what Jesus did, my soul is more important than my body and its desires. And God, if I've done what I reasonably can and I'm still without those needs being met, God knows that, I'm here by His will and if He desired, He could send manna from heaven. He's done it before. But I will not cross the line and disobey Him to satisfy those desires.

Now the verse that Jesus quotes has massive ramifications for us. Listen carefully and I'm done. Jesus doesn't quote a verse that was only good for the Messiah, it says "Man shall not live by bread alone." Jesus purposefully chose a verse a concept in responding to Satan, He quotes a text that's intended for every one of us. It's applicable for every human being. You see, Jesus overcame temptation—stay with me—Jesus overcame temptation with resources that are open to every one of us. You too can overcome the temptations to satisfy the bodily desires outside of the will of God. If you will come to grips with what our Lord saw in Deuteronomy 8, that our souls are more important than our bodies and I will not satisfy what my body wants. To use Paul's language, I will make it my slave. And if God wants to intervene miraculously, He can do so but otherwise I'll wait for Him to act. But Jesus is the One who did it. He overcame it. Glover says, "With every tree of the Garden except one for food Adam fell, with desert stones mocking His hunger the second Adam conquered." Let's pray together.

Father, we thank You for this marvelous passage and what it teaches us about ourselves, about temptation and about our Lord. Father we thank You that He conquered and, in His pattern, and in His power, we too can overcome the temptation to satisfy the desires of the body outside of

Your will. O God, give us the resolve, give us the understanding, give us the knowledge, give us the insight. And having the knowledge and insight, Lord help us to act. We pray in Jesus name for His sake, Amen.