

## Sunday, October 17, 2021 | It Is Written

Week 3 | Matthew 4:5-7 | "Trusting Never Tempting."

### Announcements:

- Trunk or Treat, October 23, 5-7PM, sign up in the hall.
  - Teen Activity, Saturday, Oct. 30, 7:30-9:30, Beachmont Corn Maze. Cost \$25.
  - We'll be voting on whether or not to approve this position on Sunday night, October 17. If you would like a copy of the job description, please email me at [BHynre@GracePointeLife.com](mailto:BHynre@GracePointeLife.com). We'll do communion that evening first, and then we'll move to the voting portion. You must be a member of Grace Pointe to participate in the vote. *Please note, since many of you had an opportunity to voice your questions—either last Sunday or to me in person— and in an effort to keep this meeting from going too long, there will be very little time for questions that evening.* So, should you have a question, you **must** reach out to the leadership or me for clarity before Oct. 17<sup>th</sup>. I would like for our leadership to hear each and every member of Grace Pointe and for our leadership to be given enough time to answer each question satisfactorily.
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In week 1 of this series, before diving into Matthew 4, we had to understand the nature of God's word. After all, this whole series is called "It Is Written," and if you don't know how the Scriptures work, you will not understand how they can deliver you from temptation. But once you do understand the nature of the scriptures, victory over temptation is secured when the Christian is armed with a book, chapter, and verse.

In week 2, we finally got to Matt 4. We learned that there is a difference, practically speaking, between tempting and testing even though those words come from the same Greek word: **peirazo**. Evil—be it the kind that resides in our own hearts or the type which the Devil himself brings our way—**tempts us to do bad things**. Whereas God **tests us to do good things**. God never *tempts* us to do evil (cf. Ja. 1:13). But God does *test* us to reveal truth (cf. Heb. 11:17; Deut. 8:2-5). In Matthew 4, the Devil's tempting was meant to discredit Jesus; whereas, God's testing was meant to credit Jesus.<sup>1</sup> Motive is what distinguishes "tempting" from "testing."<sup>2</sup> We saw this play out practically with the Devil's first temptation. He tried to get Jesus to use his divine powers for selfish reasons. This is not unlike how he himself had fallen all those years ago. But Jesus wouldn't bite. He knew why he had come to the earth, and it wasn't to serve

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<sup>1</sup> Turner, David L., *Matthew*, The Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, (Grand Rapids; Baker Academic, 2008), p. 126.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

himself. It was to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many. Rather than take the demonic route of self-centeredness, Jesus took the divine route of God-centeredness. After all, to truly live, we must not only eat that which sustains our physical life, but we must also consume that which sustains our spiritual life: God's word.

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To illustrate the main point of today's message, we have to look at some art. You see, there is an interesting progression in how the temptation of Jesus was depicted in paintings and tile mosaics throughout the ages.<sup>3</sup>

<INSERT PICTURE> The earliest known depiction of Jesus' temptation comes in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. It's a tile mosaic in St. Mark's Basilica, Venice.<sup>4</sup>

<INSERT PICTURE> There is the piece by Duccio Di Buoninsegna in the early 13<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>5</sup>

<INSERT PICTURE> Here is a fresco painted by Sandro Botticelli in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>6</sup> It depicts the Devil's third temptation as recorded in Matthew. But I want you to notice how Botticelli painted the Devil. <INSERT PICTURE>

<INSERT LAST PICTURE> The further we get from the actual events of Matt. 4, the more human-like the Devil becomes in art. Rather than some dark, grotesque figure with horns and tail, Satan is portrayed as a being who looks just like us. This, in my opinion, is best seen in this second temptation where the Devil uses the familiar—i.e., Scripture—to tempt Jesus.

Just think about that for one minute.

Satan uses the very words of God to entice the very Son of God. And the point I think that's being made here is that evil often comes to us in the guise of something we know very well. The temptation to do evil doesn't appear at your door looking like a being colored in red with

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<sup>3</sup> Mackie, Tim, "3. Testing Jesus In the Wilderness [Matthew] – Tim Mackie (The Bible Project)," August 19, 2017, YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nurOSFmH--0>, [accessed, October 14, 2021].

<sup>4</sup> Wikipedia contributors, "St Mark's Basilica," *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, [https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=St\\_Mark%27s\\_Basilica&oldid=1050036982](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=St_Mark%27s_Basilica&oldid=1050036982), [accessed, October 15, 2021].

<sup>5</sup> General Editors, "The Temptation of Christ on the Mountain," *Art in The Frick Collection: Paintings, Sculpture, Decorative Arts*, New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1996, [https://artsandculture.google.com/asset/the-temptation-of-christ-on-the-mountain-duccio-di-buoninsegna/LAGcgFRm\\_8beXQ?hl=en](https://artsandculture.google.com/asset/the-temptation-of-christ-on-the-mountain-duccio-di-buoninsegna/LAGcgFRm_8beXQ?hl=en), [accessed, October 14, 2021].

<sup>6</sup> Wikipedia contributors, "Temptations of Christ (Botticelli)," *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, [https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Temptations\\_of\\_Christ\\_\(Botticelli\)&oldid=1027488298](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Temptations_of_Christ_(Botticelli)&oldid=1027488298), [accessed, October 15, 2021].

horns on its head and a pitchfork in its hand. Instead, the pull of wrongdoing speaks with a voice that we are accustomed to, it wears the face of a friend, not a foe, and it tries to lead us to places that make sense to us rather than places foreign and unknown. Temptation finds us when our guard is down, not up.

**READ: Matthew 4:5-7 (ESV)**

<sup>5</sup>Then the Devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple  
<sup>6</sup>and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, "'He will command his angels concerning you,' and "'On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.'" <sup>7</sup>Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

Let's break down that second temptation.

**The Devil's means of accomplishing his goals is the manipulation of others.**

Now, once again, it's worth pointing out that, like the Devil's initial temptation, when he said, "If you are the Son of God...", he wasn't questioning Jesus' identity; instead, Satan was trying to destabilize it. The Devil, of all creatures, would know that Jesus was the Son of God (cf. Matt. 8:38-34; Mar. 5:1-12, Lu. 4:31-37, 41). He wasn't trying to get Jesus' to question who He was. The Devil wanted Jesus to question the implications of his identity.<sup>7</sup> This is why, in Greek, the phrase can just as easily be translated as "*Since* you are the Son of God" as "*If* you are the Son of God."<sup>8</sup>

And, surprisingly, to accomplish his goal, the Devil used Scripture. If Jesus quoted the Bible, well, Satan could too. What better way to undermine the implication of Jesus' identity than to twist God's word—the very thing that defines Jesus' identity (cf. Matt. 4:4). And what precisely was Satan trying to convince Jesus of? That he was above being hurt.


In fact, this is precisely why the Devil took Jesus to the Temple rather than some cliffside. The Temple was the place where God's presence was supposed to be. Surely, God would not let His own Son be hurt in His own house, right? What's more, he took Jesus not to just any part in the Temple but to the "pinnacle." This meant Satan took Jesus to either the apex of the Temple proper—a height of roughly 160 ft.—or it could also indicate the apex of the Temple Mount that overlooked the Kidron valley on the

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<sup>7</sup> France, R.T., *The Gospel of Matthew*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament, (Grand Rapids; Eerdmans Publishing, 2007), p. 127.

<sup>8</sup> Turner (2008), p. 127-128.

southeast corner.<sup>9</sup> If this is where the Devil took Jesus, then the floor of the valley would've been about 450 ft. below.<sup>10</sup>

Anyways, back to Satan's main tactic: quote Scripture. To convince Jesus of doing something idiotic, the Devil quotes from Psalm 91:11-12. Coincidentally, we actually worked through this very Psalm over the course of four weeks last November.<sup>11</sup>  Please, go back and listen to those messages to more fully grasp how the Devil perverted and twisted this particular passage of Scripture. But, suffice to say, Psalm 91 is a beautiful poem where the author expresses their deep and abiding confidence in God.

Now, for those who remember that study, you will immediately point out that the Devil takes a psalm about how to trust God and turns it into a psalm about how to manipulate God. Can God keep you from the lion, the serpent, or the fall? Yes, yes, and yes. Can the Lord keep us from all harm? Yes. But the question isn't "Can He?"; the question we should be asking is "Will He?" Yes, God can most certainly keep us from being hurt. But only YAHWEH knows whether or not he will. Though we can postulate, speculate, and deliberate on what God can do, we cannot predict, presume, and prophesize what He will do. As such, those who live godly lives will encounter danger; that much is certain. But we must never court danger. To do so means tempting the Lord, and the results will not favor such tempters.

As has been the case from the very beginning, YAHWEH does as He wants to do. And it is precisely for this reason—i.e., that we cannot know exactly how God will act—that we ought never to tempt the Lord by needlessly putting ourselves in danger. To do so is to presume far too much. It means making God our servant rather than what we truly are: his servant.<sup>12</sup> We do not recklessly jump off a lofty cliff. We should never seek out a hungry lion. And nor should we ever handle an angry snake. God does as He wants to do. As such, we ought to never guess how He will act; instead, the only thing we can know is that He will always act in accordance with His will, which is a thing that is unknowable to us apart from that which has been expressed already

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<sup>9</sup> France (2007), p. 132.

<sup>10</sup> General Editors, "The Pinnacle of the Temple," August 8, 2013, *Exploring Bible Lands*, <https://www.exploringbiblelands.com/journal/2013/08/08/the-pinnacle-of-the-temple>, [accessed, October 14, 2021]; see also the "dry plate" of the southeastern corner the Temple Mount, Wikipedia contributors, "Kidron Valley," Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, [https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Kidron\\_Valley&oldid=1044103757](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Kidron_Valley&oldid=1044103757), [accessed October 15, 2021].

<sup>11</sup> Hyrne, Ben, *Refuge: Psalm 91*, Grace Pointe Baptist Church, <https://www.gracepointelife.com/sermons/refuge/>, [accessed, October 14, 2021].

<sup>12</sup> Keener, Craig S., *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, (Grand Rapids; Eerdmans Publishing, 1999), p. 141.

in God's word. We can never know how God will act, but we can always know that God will act according to His will.

**Jesus' means of accomplishing his goals is his devotion to God.**

To combat the Devil, Jesus also quotes Scripture. In fact, the translation could just as easily read, "It is also written," to show that Jesus was countering Scripture with Scripture.<sup>13</sup> After all, Christ used the whole counsel of God's word and not just one part of it. As always, the best commentary on the Bible is the Bible itself.

**SIDE NOTE:** Quoting Scripture out of its context means we value the words but not their meaning.<sup>14</sup> And, in my experience, few things can mess you up quicker than cherry-picking verses. **Know** the passage before you ever commit a part of it to memory. Failing to do so may lead you to a conclusion that the body of proof, found throughout the rest of Scripture, does not corroborate, authenticate, or substantiate. Know the context as well as you know the text itself.

And where, in the Scriptures, does Jesus quote from? As before with the first temptation, Jesus quotes from Deuteronomy. Specifically, Deuteronomy 6:16 is itself a reference to Exodus 17.

In Exodus 17, the Children of Israel were complaining about being thirsty. Though they had seen all the signs and wonders done in Egypt to deliver them, they started saying things like, "You brought us out of Egypt to kill us. Our children and livestock are about to die for lack of water!" (Ex. 17:3) and "Is the Lord among us or not?" (Ex. 17:7) However, these statements weren't sincere. And when Moses saw straight through their ploy, he turned to them and said, "Why do you test the Lord?" (Ex. 17:2)

The Israelites were trying to manipulate Moses and, by extension, God. True, they did need water. They were in a place that literally had "no water" (cf. Ex. 17:1). But they shouldn't have engaged God in such a way that called His motives into question. God is the very one who led them to this waterless place. They should've trusted God to provide, just as he had always done in the past. After all, the chapter before saw God provide bread to satisfy their hunger...FROM THE SKY! Logically, would he not also be able to provide water to satisfy their thirst in the wilderness?

Thus, it was clear that the Children of Israel were not engaging the Lord in good faith. They were trying to twist God's arm into doing what they wanted him to do. The irony

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<sup>13</sup> France (2007), p. 133.

<sup>14</sup> Keener (1999), p. 143.

of it all is that God wanted to give them water! Why would he want them to drop in the wilderness after doing all he had done to get them to that point?! Ultimately, God was longsuffering with them, and, despite their cynical hearts, he commanded Moses to strike a rock. From that rock, they were able to draw enough water to suit their needs.

Later, in Deut. 6, Moses references this event to illustrate what NOT to do when interacting with God. The Jews were not to expect that they could control God. They were to know that they were indebted to God. Whatever danger they were led into, God would take care of them. But they were not to put themselves in danger and expect that God would take care of them. If they tried to manipulate God, it would not go well with them (cf. Num. 11).

Now, notice, Jesus' passage didn't refute the message of Psalm 91 which was about God's protection. Instead, Deuteronomy 6:16 refuted the Devil's application of Psalm 91. Essentially, the Devil's point tempted Jesus to prove that God would protect him by telling Jesus to throw himself off the Temple. But Jesus' counterpoint was that if he truly believed God would protect him, why would he need to prove it by throwing himself off the Temple?

The answer to the first temptation runs something like this: "We will experience hunger, but will not go hungry." Likewise, the response to the second temptation runs like the first: "We will experience danger, but will not put ourselves in danger."

### **So, what's the takeaway?**

**We must trust God to lead, but we must never tempt God to prove himself.**

Meaning, God will call us out onto troubling waters sometimes (cf. Matt. 14:22-33).<sup>15</sup> But we must never embark on a "leap of faith" without God's approval. He leads, and we follow, not the other way around.

### **READ: Matthew 14:28-29 (ESV)**

And Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." He said, "**Come.**" So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus.

Wherever God has commanded us to go, He will enable us to go (cf. 1 Thess. 5:24). Even if "to go" means setting sail during a storm and walking on the waves of that sea, like Peter. Or, even if "to go" means being whipped 5 times, beaten 3 times, stoned, shipwrecked 3 times, cast

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<sup>15</sup> Phillips, John, *Exploring the Gospel of Matthew*, The John Philips Commentary Series, (Grand Rapids; Kregel Publishing, 1999), p. 64.

adrift for a day at sea, and in danger constantly, like Paul (cf. 2 Cor. 11:24-28). Be it safety and security or danger and peril, the follower of God goes wherever the Lord leads. Quite but sincere trust in God's leading is far better than bold but manipulative testing of God's will.

**So, what's the takeaway?**

We must trust God to lead, but we must never tempt God to prove himself.

## Video Description

It Is Written | Week 3 | “Trusting Never Tempting.”

TEXT: Matthew 4:5-7

Technically, Jesus’ passage didn’t refute the message of Psalm 91—the passage the Devil quotes. Instead, Deuteronomy 6:16—the passage Jesus quotes—refuted the Devil’s application of Psalm 91. Essentially, the Devil’s point tempted Jesus to prove that God would protect him by telling Jesus to throw himself off the Temple. But Jesus’ counterpoint was that if he truly believed God would protect him, why would he need to prove it by throwing himself off the Temple?

Wherever God has commanded us to go, He will enable us to go (cf. 1 Thess. 5:24). Even if “to go” means setting sail during a storm and walking on the waves of that sea, like Peter (cf. Matt. 14:28-29). Or, even if “to go” means being whipped 5 times, beaten 3 times, stoned, shipwrecked 3 times, cast adrift for a day at sea, and in danger constantly, like Paul (cf. 2 Cor. 11:24-28). Be it safety and security or danger and peril, the follower of God goes wherever the Lord leads. Quite but sincere trust in God’s leading is far better than bold but manipulative testing of God’s will. Therefore, we must trust God to lead, but we must never tempt God to prove himself.

Pastor’s manuscript can be found here: <https://docdro.id/dqudBol>