

Sermon Outline

“Stepping Away from the Ledge”

Luke 4:9-13 – Dr. Russell Moore – October 23, 2011

Introduction

1. No one is exempt from fear, especially the fear of not being protected. In the wilderness, the devil tempted Jesus with the same kind of fears that we all face. Jesus identified with us fully in his experience and humanity and triumphed over these temptations.

Temptation of Verification

1. For this to be a legitimate temptation, the devil had to offer something Jesus wanted. Satan is asking Jesus to test by sight what God has asked him to test by faith. In other words, the devil was tempting Jesus to prove that God was faithful.
2. The devil is asking Jesus to test out what God had spoken earlier at his baptism, “This is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased” (Matthew 4:17).
 - a. Satan quoted Psalm 91:11-12 to show that Scripture claims that the Father will protect his child. The devil is offering a test of verification, “Will the Father stand with you? Is the Father’s word reliable? Is the Father faithful? Jesus, if you jump from the pinnacle of this temple, you will verify that the Father’s word is true and that he will actually be there for you.”
 - b. Jesus resisted the temptation and refused to put God to the test of sight.
3. The devil says the same to us. He tempts us to test (or verify) by sight what God has asked us to test by faith. At times, the devil tempts us to demand proof and evidence that God is faithful. Below are some examples:
 - a. We can doubt our salvation and want concrete assurance that we are saved. Instead, when we doubt, we should rest on the promise that, “if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved” (Romans 10:9).
 - b. We want and we pursue one spiritual experience after another to *feel* as though God is pleased with us. Instead of resting on spiritual experiences, we should gird up our hearts with the love of our Father from 1 John 3:1, “See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are.”
 - c. We want an airtight argument to convince our unsaved friends and family to believe. Instead, we should remember that it is God who opens blind eyes and saves (Romans 1:16), regardless of the weaknesses of the messenger.

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- d. Moreover, we fear the mystery of the future and want a guarantee from God about what's going to happen – with our jobs, health, family, finances, etc. We should battle this fear with the promise of the Father's love, care, and guidance and the promise of Isaiah 41:10, "fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand."

Temptation to Vindication

1. Jesus was also tempted to prove that he was the Anointed One, the Son of God. If he will throw himself from the pinnacle of the temple, the angels will bear him up and prove that he is in the right.
2. We are tempted in the same way. We want to prove ourselves right. We want to clear our name of blame or suspicion. We want to protect our reputation. For example:
 - a. We are threatened by the rejection of the gospel as if it was a personal rejection; we respond in anger.
 - b. We are dismissed from our job and want to make sure everyone knows it was the boss' problem.
 - c. We breakup with our girlfriend and we make sure our friends know that she is the one at fault.
3. Jesus rejects vindicating himself. He knows that in the coming years of his ministry, he will be mocked, ridiculed, reviled, sinfully judged, cursed, rejected, called a fraud and killed. But Jesus also knows that on the third day after his death, he will walk out of the grave and validate all that God declared, "You are my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased."
4. In like manner, because we are in Christ, we don't have to vindicate ourselves. Because we are in Christ, we have been crucified with him, raised up with him and seated with him in the heavenly places. Because we are in Christ, we are completely forgiven, redeemed from the bondage of sin, reconciled to God and clothed with the righteousness of Christ. Because we are in Christ, we are hidden with Christ in God and can trust that God is working all things together to conform us to the image of his Son. Because we are in Christ, we have the promise that we will be with him forever in a kingdom that will never end. Because we are in Christ, we have nothing to prove because the Father accepts us, rejoices over us and has freely and joyfully received us into his family.

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Fellowship Starters

1. Take time as a Care Group to read Luke 4:1-13.
2. What fears do you struggle with? What have you experienced in the past that tempts you to fear and doubt?
3. Dr. Moore shared that the devil tempted Jesus to “test by sight what God had asked him to test by faith.” In what ways are you tempted to prove with concrete evidence that God is faithful?
4. When you consider the future, are you tempted to want God to guarantee a particular outcome? What promises in God’s Word can help you battle this fear?
5. Dr. Moore said that in order to love, we must take a risk and give ourselves to an unknown future. Where could the Holy Spirit be calling you to take a risk and love, not knowing the end result?
6. In what ways are you tempted to vindicate yourself, proving that you are in the right?
7. How does remembering who you are in Christ (i.e., your identity in Christ) protect you from sinfully trying to protect your reputation and prove you are right?
8. How does Christ’s triumph over the temptations to verification and vindication give you hope that you can triumph over these temptations as well?