

Just Say No (Part 5)

Introduction

The Text

¹ And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness² 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. (Luke 4:1–13)

From the Son to the Church

- A. Last week we took v. 13 and traced the unfolding, intensifying combat between the devil and the Son all the way to the “opportune time” of the cross. And we watched Jesus win!
 - 1. But even at the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the devil is not done. He shifts his strategy...from the Son to the church.
 - a. This morning I want to follow this shift and move from this text into a broader discussion of temptation, particularly as it is now faced by us, the church.

- B. Rev 12 is good starting point for our discussion. For it depicts this shift in vivid language: “¹ A great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars [Israel].² She was pregnant and was crying out in birth pains and the agony of giving birth [Luke 1-2].³ And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems.⁴ His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she bore her child he might devour it [What an image! Satan is there at the exit-point of Israel’s womb with His fanged mouth open wide!].⁵ She gave birth to a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, but her child was caught up to God and to his throne,⁶ and

the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, in which she is to be nourished for 1,260 days.

⁷ Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back, ⁸ but he was defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. ⁹ And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. ¹⁰ And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, ‘Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. ¹¹ And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death. ¹² Therefore, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!’” (vv. 1–12). And the ch. closes with v. 17 describing the dragon as “furious” and indicating that he has gone “off to make war on the rest of [the woman’s] offspring [the church], on those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus.”

C. From the Son to the church! I want only to make two observations at this point:

1. First, the Son’s victory over Satan at the cross sets in motion and secures the church’s victory over the same: “They have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb...” (v. 11a).
 - a. We conquer only because He conquered; we win only because He won...at the cross, as we gave all of last week to. Last week sets us up for this week. His victory makes way for ours.
2. Second, just as the Son had to face the devil in the wilderness and hold His “No!” firm to the end, even unto death, so it is also with the church.
 - a. The woman flees “into the wilderness” (v. 6; cf. v. 14). The church, to be sure, conquers the dragon “by the blood of the Lamb...” (v. 11a), but the v. doesn’t stop there: “...by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death” (v. 11b).
 - i. We are in the wilderness of this world facing the devil, and we are holding onto the cross of Christ even unto death.

D. Just as the devil made war on the Son, so now he is making war on you and me. It’s as if he’s saying: “If I couldn’t keep the Son from going to the cross, perhaps I can keep the church from holding onto it! Heaven might still be empty yet. The Bridegroom might still be brideless yet. God might still be foiled yet. For the cross of Christ only benefits those who receive it by faith and hold firmly to it to the end.

1. Therefore, I’m going to bait my hook; I’m going to turn up the heat; and I’m going to see if I can’t just make this church crack!”

- E. As with the Son, he pushes on those same three pressure points: (1) Defamation of Character—get us to question who God is; (2) Identity Crisis—get us to question who God says we are in Christ; (3) Tyranny of the Urgent—get us to question God’s timing for our lives.
 - 1. And, as with Son, he is aiming underneath all of this towards one ultimate goal—get us to forego the way of the cross.

What Am I Supposed to Do?

- A. It’s been my prayer that, coming out of these sermons we might be able to say of ourselves what Paul says in [2 Cor 2:11](#): “We [will] not be outwitted by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his designs.”
 - 1. But not being ignorant of his designs and knowing how to resist his designs are two different things. “So the devil has come down after us. So he is aiming to sabotage our faith in this way. What exactly are we supposed to do about this? I know a little more about what he’s doing, but what am I supposed to be doing in response?”
- B. The answer to this question is the aim of the rest of this sermon. It could be put broadly under two headings: (1) Know the Incarnated Word; and (2) Know the Inscripturated Word.

(1) Know the Incarnated Word

- A. By “Incarnated Word”, I am simply referring to the person of Jesus Himself: “¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us...” ([John 1:1, 14a](#)).
 - 1. Jesus is the Word of God incarnate, and we must know Him personally, intimately, deeply if we are to resist the devil’s onslaught in our lives.
- B. I am thinking here of what I consider to be the fundamental principle in the Christian religion: namely, union with Christ.
 - 1. It is not enough to know of Him, to admire Him from a distance, to try to be like Him, we must be in Him and He must be in us, by His Spirit, through faith—union with Christ.
- C. We spent much of our time looking at how Jesus is presented in [Luke 4](#) as standing where both Adam and Israel before Him fell. And this should have crystallized for us one critical point: Jesus has come to do for us what we could never do for ourselves.
 - 1. Because of this, we are not allowed to read [Luke 4](#) as a mere manual for resisting temptation, as if Jesus were just giving us a few pointers for fighting the devil. “Thanks Jesus, I’ll take it from here.” No!
 - a. I tried to hold us back from this impulse all along the way. I wanted it to be plain for us that before Jesus is our Example He must be our Savior. He is

doing what we could never do in ourselves so that He might come into us by His Spirit and do it again in and through us.

- D. Consider Heb 2:14-15, 17-18 at this point: “¹⁴ Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵ and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery... ¹⁷ Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. ¹⁸ For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.”
1. He has done what we could never do! We were slaves of the devil. And He comes into our slavery and, in His death and resurrection, bursts the bonds that have held us since Adam.
 - a. Only then, having become our Savior, does He become our Example. He helps us resist temptation just as He did during the days of His flesh. We look to Him and He helps us look more and more like Him.
- E. So is He your Savior? Ironically, the first step in resisting the devil is admitting that you can't resist the devil. Come to Him!

(2) Know the Inscripturated Word

- A. At this point you might be saying: “All well and good, Nick. Know the Incarnated Word. That sounds nice. But He's not here anymore. We even read it in [Rev 12](#): He's been “[caught up to God and to his throne](#)” (v. 5b). He's gone. Now I know you say He's sent His Spirit back, and He dwells with us and in us. But what does knowing the Incarnated Word look like when the Incarnated Word is no longer around?”
- B. This question brings us now to our second heading: Know the Inscripturated Word (the Scriptures).
1. We come to know the Incarnated Word by spending time in the Inscripturated Word. Indeed we come to know the person of Christ through the book of the Bible. We hear Him. We talk to Him. We fellowship with Him here. The Spirit of God always traffics in the words of God.
- C. Let me give us five strategic ways we can use the Scriptures to press towards the Son and experience more of His victory over Satan and temptation in our lives.

(1) Feast on the Word

- A. A fish won't bite when a fish is full. Satan's bait has no pull if I have no hunger. I'm already satisfied.

1. Satan couldn't get at Jesus because He was full on the Father: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God" (Matt 4:4). "My food is to do the will of him who sent me" (John 4:34). It satisfies me.
 - a. What Satan saw as trading stone for bread, the Son saw as trading bread for stone. "I'm already eating My bread. I'm feasting on My Father. Why would I trade that for something lesser?"

- B. This gets at the fact that temptation gains traction at the level of our desires. Consider James at this point: " ¹⁴Each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. ¹⁵Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death" (1:13–15). And later: " ¹What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? ²You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel" (4:1–2a).
 1. It's unchecked desire that gives audience to the devil. It's when we're feeling empty, hungry, dissatisfied, that Satan's bait looks appealing.

- C. But what if your desires are satisfied? Contrary to the opinion of so many, the Christian life is not so much about killing your desires as it is about satisfying them on the right Object: "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst" (John 6:35).
 1. This is how resistance worked out in my life. Once I tasted how good God is, sin became a scary thing—"It might get in between me and the One I love!" I stopped cussing, pornography, etc. not because I had to, but because I wanted to. Because I felt like fellowship with Him was broken when I disobeyed. And I couldn't stand that. I loved Him, so I obeyed Him.
 - a. Resisting the devil is easy for the soul that is satisfied in the Son!

- D. But where do you go to feast on God? To His word: "How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" (Psa 119:103).
 1. It's in the Bible that God talks to us: revealing to us who He is—that He is strong and good and gracious; revealing to us who we are—that we are loved and secure in Christ; and revealing to us what He's preparing for His children—that His full salvation is worth the wait, even if it's a hard road.

- E. Do we make space in our busy Silicon Valley lives to feast on His word? He's laid a banquet before us, let's come, eat, and be satisfied!

(2) Fight with the Word

- A. It is noteworthy that, in Eph 6, when Paul is describing "the whole armor of God" we must put on as we head into battle with the devil, the only offensive weapon He identifies is: "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (v. 17).

- B. This is precisely what we witnessed in [Luke 4](#) is it not? Jesus not only feasts on the word of God, He fights with it.
1. When Christ is in the wilderness, Satan thrusts at him with words: “Your God has left you out here to die of hunger; being king now would be so much better”; and so on. But Jesus thrusts back at Him with the words of His Father: “[It is written...](#)” (v. 4); “[It is written...](#)” (v. 7); “[It is said...](#)” (v. 12).
- C. Satan’s thrust is going to come for you. When cancer claims your kid. “See, I told you, God’s not good. He’s cruel. He could stop it but He doesn’t. He’s not on your side. Enough with this nonsense.” “No! I may not understand all of my Father’s ways, but I know it is written: ‘[I will never leave you nor forsake you](#)’ ([Heb 13:5](#)).”
- D. But let me ask: Is the sword in our hand? When’s the last time we picked it up? How many “[It is written...’s](#)” have we “[stored up...in \[our\] heart\[s\] that \[we\] might not sin against \[Him\]](#)” ([Psa 119:11](#))?
1. Let me read you something from the archives of my journal. I wrote this yesterday (Aug 6), nine years ago: “It is no small thing for the child of God to rise early in the morning and meet with Christ in Scripture and prayer and worship. It is no optional thing (if we are truly desiring to be of any use to God in this war) any more than it is an optional thing for a soldier to take his shield or weapon to battle. What soldier wakes up late on the day of war, choosing rather to get a few more hours of sleep than to prepare his armament and ready his weaponry. Indeed, many may say: “Can’t I spend my devotion in the evening? After all I must rise early for work and it is not so convenient for me then.” To which I would respond: what good is a shield or weapon to an already wounded soldier? When taken up before the war, they are life and they are victory... when taken up after, they are mere bedside trophies in a hospital ward.
Rise early child of God! Christianity is not some American pastime. It is Christ versus Satan, heaven versus hell, life versus death, angel versus demon, righteousness versus sin, all-out spiritual WAR!!!”
 - a. This is not a call to legalism. It is a call to life! Take up the word and fight!

(3) Flee towards the Word

- A. In [2 Tim 2:22](#), Paul calls Timothy to: “[Flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace...](#)”
1. Sometimes the best way to fight temptation is to flee from it.
 - a. Do you remember the classic story of Joseph with Potiphar’s wife there in Egypt? One day he’s working in the house and she puts on the moves, and he’s out of there. He bolts for the door. But she’s got a hold of his garment. But he wants away from temptation so badly, he slips out of the garment to break free, in his skivvies, probably.

- i. Now that is dedication! We've all had those nightmares where we show up to school in our underwear or whatever. Well this was a reality for Joseph. He had to run through the streets like that. "I don't care! Let me be shamed. Let me be laughed at. Only don't let me sin against my God! (cf. [Gen 39:9](#))."
- B. And we have to ask ourselves: Are we fleeing like that? Are we so in love with God that the thought of sinning just freaks us out?
 - 1. Or are we always walking the line? How close can I get to the fire without getting burned? Do we just put ourselves there with what we linger over on Facebook, what we watch on TV, who we hang out with after work.
 - a. Are we fleeing towards the word or are we flirting with the world?

(4) Fellowship around the Word

- A. I pulled up short on Paul's advice to Timothy a moment ago. Let me read it to you in full now: "[Flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart](#)" (2 Tim 2:22).
 - 1. We see the wisdom of Paul in this counsel do we not? It is not sufficient to flee from temptation and pursue God on your own. We are to do this as a family. When you stumble, I pick you up. When I stumble, you pick me up. We are stronger together.
- B. I could think of no better illustration of this point than that given by Charles Spurgeon: "One day a young man came to visit [Spurgeon] and said to [him], 'I can be a Christian without the church; I don't need others.' They were sitting in the lounge by an open fire and Spurgeon picked up some tongs, took a coal from the blazing fire and placed it on the hearth. They continued talking and after awhile, Spurgeon said, 'Look down at the hearth. What happened to the coal I took out of the fire?' The young man answered, 'Well, it's become black. It's lost its heat and its flame.' Spurgeon replied, 'Young man, that's why you need to be part of the church, because it is only together we are stimulated and together that we grow. But like this coal taken out of the fire, on its own it dies out. But in the heat of the fire all the other coals are stimulating it to go on glowing and give off heat.'"
- C. Let me ask you: Do you have those people in your life that you can get coffee with, call, text, or whatever and say: "This is what's really going on. This is where I'm at, this is who I am. What do you think? Can you help me? Would you pray for me? Will you pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace with me?"
 - 1. Would we ever go to war against a nation without an army? Why in the world would we go to war against the cosmic forces of evil alone? Let's fellowship together around the word.

(5) Fall upon the Word

- A. Here I have in mind the fact that none of us will resist the devil perfectly. Far from it!
1. Christ's victory over the devil sets in motion and secures our own victory over the same, but it is a victory that works out little by little. I stumble every day. So what am I supposed to do with that?
 - a. What do you do when the Accuser gets in your face and you know he has every right to be there, because you did it again. You said you were done with that sin, and you did it again. Does the devil win?
- B. Here is where our fundamental principle is so important! Jesus has done for us what we could not do for ourselves. He lived the life I should've lived and died the death I should've died. And when He rose from the dead, I rose from the dead with Him, so that now in Him, though I am a sinner, I am a saint.
1. “[We] conquer him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of [our] testimony.” So we throw ourselves upon the blood of Christ and we get in the devil's face and testify to it!
- C. Let me take you to a text John Piper once brought to my attention: [Mic 7:8-10](#). It's a text that promotes what Piper calls “[gutsy guilt](#).” It provides the stumbling saint with words to spit back at the devil: “⁸ Rejoice not over me, O my enemy; when I fall, I shall rise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord will be a light to me. ⁹ I will bear the indignation of the Lord because I have sinned against him, until he pleads my cause and executes judgment for me. He will bring me out to the light; I shall look upon his vindication. ¹⁰ Then my enemy will see, and shame will cover her who said to me, ‘Where is the Lord your God?’”
1. “Rejoice not over me, Satan. O have sinned against my God but my sin will not have the last word! I may be in darkness now, but my God in His grace will bring me back out into the light. I shall look upon His righteousness! And what you thought would be my undoing is truly your own!”
- D. If our guilt is handled appropriately, far from being fuel for the devil, it is made fuel for the blazing fire of the glory of God's grace! “[Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more](#)” ([Rom 5:20](#)).
1. My guilt should play to the devil's advantage, but truly God works it to the devil's demise! As the Son is yet again seen by me as my Savior and my God!
 - a. When we fall church, may we fall upon the word of God in this way!
- E. Perhaps no other text could sum up this entire message better than [Rom 16:20](#): “[The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.](#)” We are resisting, we are overcoming, we are crushing Satan, yet it is not us, but God and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ in us.