

Birth Control, Job Hunting, and Skydiving

“Ye shall not tempt the LORD your God, as ye tempted him in Massah.”
Deuteronomy 6:16

“Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.”
Matthew 4:7

Introduction:

1. There is a practical lesson for life in this subtle temptation by the devil and our Lord's perfect response to it.
2. There is a hermeneutical reminder in this subtle temptation by the devil and our Lord's perfect response to it.
3. The subtle devil will exploit your misunderstanding of Scripture or providence to ruin your faith and/or life.

The Lesson

- A. Satan took Jesus to the top of the temple and tempted Him to take advantage of a Scripture promise.
 1. Remember the size and grandeur of the temple: even a disciple boasted to Jesus (Mark 13:1-2).
 2. This was not Solomon's temple, nor truly Zerubbabel's; for it was rightly Herod's grand temple.
 3. Even in 30AD the Jews recognized the Herods had been working on it for 46 years (John 2:20).
 4. The top of the royal portico was likely the highest point, 150 feet above the raised temple mount.
 5. From this portico to the bottom of the Kidron Ravine was 700 vertical feet, a significant height.
 6. Josephus mentions that anyone at the top of the royal portico would become dizzy at the sight.
- B. Satan appealed to a wonderful promise made to the godly, especially the Messiah, from the Psalms.
 1. Jesus had answered Satan with Scripture, so the serpent tried then to use Scripture against Him.
 2. Do not be surprised when the devil uses Scripture to promote His lies (II Cor 2:17; 11:13-15).
 3. The quotation was accurate enough not to be contested or questioned by our blessed Lord Jesus.
 4. It was taken from Psalm 91:11-12. The whole chapter is a promise of preservation to the godly.
 5. The psalm reads: “For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone” (Ps 91:11-12).
 6. Satan quoted: “He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone” (Matt 4:6).
 7. Being the Son of God, the godliest of the godly, Jesus could lay greater claim to it than others.
 8. Satan knew that every such Scripture promise was more certain for Jesus Christ than for any.
 9. The temptation was for Jesus to prove He was God's Son by presuming on a promise of God.
 10. Satan dared the Lord Jesus Christ to prove He was the Son of God by fully trusting God's word!
- C. Our blessed Lord Jesus countered Satan's misapplication of the Bible by quoting Deuteronomy 6:16.
 1. Satan is behind using the sound of Scripture; we want to be faithful to the sense of Scripture.
 2. We often must use other verses to put the right sense or meaning on a verse that sounds simple.
 3. Fools say, “The Bible means what it says, and says what it means.” There is needed application.
 4. We tempt God when we presume upon Him unnecessarily without faith and obedience to means.
 5. God is able to do anything by sovereign might, but He expects us to use the means He gave us.
 6. Jesus could get down other ways, by the stairs, rather than jump foolishly and presumptuously.
 7. He had no need or reason to prove anything to Satan or anyone else by this presumptuous means.
 8. By presuming upon a promise without necessity, He would have tempted God, which is a sin.
 9. Was He weak in faith for not leaping out into the space and testing the sure promises of God?
 10. He was great in faith – true faith in rightly applying Scripture. He would have killed Himself!

- D. We should believe God with total trust, but we should do all we can before presuming on Him.
1. One has said, "God will not do for you what you can do for yourself." This is only partially true, as God sometimes saves us from our own folly; but we cannot presume on such intervention.
 2. We also tempt God by doubting promises (II Kings 7:2), complaining about our circumstances (Ex 17:7), assuming too much ourselves (Ps 127:2), or not being thankful (Rom 1:21).
 3. The "snake handling" Pentecostals of the Carolinas, in our very own backyard, took rattle snakes to church with them to tempt God, and they sure could quote Mark 16:17-18. Their cemetery markers are evidence that they tempted God, and He did not keep His word out of context.

Application #1: Use the abilities and prudence God has given you to avoid trouble.

- A. Birth control is an oft-questioned issue by simple Christians and a few extreme persons.
1. Our position is simple: any birth control not causing abortions is a matter of Christian liberty.
 2. The Bible is absolutely silent on the prudent choice of family planning, so we do not judge.
 3. Onan was not killed for simply practicing birth control, but for sinning wickedly (Gen 38:8-10).
 4. Therefore, each family may do what they will, either way, but without condemning others.
 5. Please remember that my wife and I have seven children, so we have some little room to speak.
 6. Some argue: since God told Adam and Noah to replenish the earth, it is our duty to help them.
 7. Some argue: since children are a blessing from the Lord, we should not hinder His giving them.
 8. Some argue: since children are a blessing from the Lord, He will provide no matter how many.
 9. We answer: the earth is replenished; rain is a blessing, but we wear rubbers; He may not provide.
 10. Excessive children tempt the Lord for finances, health, romance, training, care, quiet, and peace!
 11. All these aspects of a godly life are compromised with too many children, thus tempting God.
 12. Therefore, the matter of liberty could well become a matter of sin, if pursued foolishly too far.
 13. How many is too many? Just like related subjects, it is entirely subjective based on the couple.
 14. The Lord expects us to even prohibit or restrain marriage, which we know is His will, if it is prudently unwise for given circumstances or dents our spiritual service to Him (I Cor 7:25-40).
 15. Women can easily be infatuated with childbirth and feeding, as a Mariolater in Luke 11:27-28.
 16. Conception is not a mystery or act of God: animals and pagans do it by mating at the right time.
 17. Children come from parents copulating at the right time of the month, allowing family planning.
 18. Consider a few objections to the notion birth control is wrong. If birth control is wrong, then ...
 - a. Then all our children should marry at puberty to avoid wasting any precious eggs or sperm.
 - b. Then all our women should actively pursue conception right up to the time of menopause.
 - c. Then we should use fertility pills to promote a higher percentage of multiple births.
 - d. Then mothers should not nurse or not nurse long, for this is a natural form of birth control.
 - e. Then the rhythm method or any "natural" method is just as wrong as any other method.
 - f. Then an average woman could have 10-30 children, which would not be a "blessing" at all.
 - g. Then God and nature wasted their time and wisdom teaching us the timing of ovulation.
 - h. Then the blessing of children is significantly different from animals, which we wisely limit.
 - i. Then auto, life, and medical insurance are also wrong, for they imply a lack of trusting God.
 - j. Why is it often young mothers, who have not raised or trained many children, promoting it?
 - k. Where did the great opposition to birth control originate? With the Roman Catholic Church!
- B. Others debate the righteousness and validity of Christians having insurance policies for protection.
1. They argue that insurance does not trust the Lord, otherwise we would count on Him alone.
 2. There is nothing in the Bible against protecting ourselves; and there is much in it for protection.
 3. The Bible says we are to foresee evil and hide ourselves, and insurance does it (Pr 22:3; 27:12).
 4. The Lord may keep the city, but that does not mean we do not lock our doors at night (Ps 127:1).
 5. The Lord may be safer than trusting chariots, but it does not mean we retire the army (Ps 20:7).
 6. Why do conies make houses in the rock? Wouldn't the Lord protect them in the field (Pr 30:26)?
 7. I wonder why Israel had "fenced cities." Should they have left them wide open to invasion?

- C. Others debate the righteousness and validity of Christians using modern medicine to preserve life.
 1. They argue, “If it is God’s will for them to survive this illness, we can’t help it or stop it.”
 2. Extreme Pentecostals or Charismatics sometimes deny medical assistance for the sick.
 3. There is much reference to God as the Great Physician, but we use the means of human doctors.
 4. Whether you choose traditional medicine or alternative medicine must be carefully considered.
- D. Home births may work for some, but they cannot be allowed to raise unnecessary risk of harm.

Application #2: Use the abilities and prudence God has given you to obtain needs.

- A. If we need a job, we ask the Lord to bless our efforts to find one. We do not sit and wait for one.
 1. If a man prays for a job, and asks for prayer for a job, but does not seek one, he tempts God.
 2. There are many prudent things a man can do to find a job, and he should be doing them well.
 3. Naomi and Ruth, two God-fearing widows, did not just pray for food; Ruth went to glean fields.
 4. Diligent men have plenty to eat; slothful men should be starved (Pr 20:4; 28:19; II Thess 3:10).
- B. For example, David prayed against Ahithophel, and then conspired against him (II Sam 15:31-37).
- C. Except the Lord build the house, it will not be built; but laborers are needed to build it (Ps 127:1).
 1. We tempt the Lord if we think He is going to build the house for us without the labor of laborers.
 2. We tempt the Lord if we think we can build it ourselves by putting forth more effort (Ps 127:2).
- D. If we need a spouse, we ask the Lord to bless our efforts to find one. We do not sit and wait for one.
 1. Naomi did not say to Ruth, “Let’s fast and pray and wait for a man to show up” (Ruth 3:1-5).
 2. There are many things both young men and women can do to pursue finding a godly spouse.
- E. When the Bible says, “Wait upon the Lord,” it does not mean to pray and wait without any efforts.
- F. Taking no thought for the morrow does not mean we literally take no thought for it at all (Matt 6:34).
 1. Our blessed Lord was warning us against an anxious, preoccupied concern about the future.
 2. We are to lay up for the future in this world and in the next world (II Cor 12:14; I Tim 6:17-19).
- G. Savings is necessary for financial success (taught in Proverbs), but some say it denies faith in God.
 1. Since we are to “take no thought for the morrow,” why are we laying up money for tomorrow?
 2. Since the Lord will take care of us “in all our ways,” we should be able to live hand to mouth.
 3. But the blessed God gave us the ant to teach us about diligent labor and saving (Pr 6:6-8; 30:25).
- H. Do not ask God to help you on a test for which you did not study, unless you confess your sin first.
 1. If you did not study, then you do not deserve help on a test, unless it was an act of God. Rare!
 2. It is tempting God to expect Him to do for you what you should have done for yourself.
 3. These lessons in walking by faith (and diligent effort) are how we please God with our lives.
- I. Naomi and Ruth did not just pray for a spouse – she took it upon herself to do something (Ruth 3:1).
 1. If you do not train your children and organize your family to be desirable, they will be single.
 2. You do not have a right to other men’s children; you tempt God, if you do not prepare your own.
- J. What about child training? You tempt God, if you pray or presume on a happy family without work.
 1. God is not going to give you wise children due to prayer; but He will due to training and prayer!
 2. God will not cover your ungodly example, even if you train and prayer without it! Forget it!
- K. You tempt God, if you pray or presume anything with an unhappy marriage (Mal 2:10-16; I Pet 3:7).
 1. You expect God to overlook your sin and bless you anyway. Why? You are presumptuous.
 2. There are means to God hearing prayers, and one of them is a happy spouse. Read the verses.

Application #3: Use your abilities and prudence to avoid unnecessary risks in life.

- A. Skydiving may tempt the Lord by raising the probability of harm beyond that which is reasonable, but I am not condemning any and all skydiving, for there are some programs that are very, very safe.
 1. A member of the U.S. Army’s airborne units must skydive as part of risky efforts to defend the nation. This is an entirely different situation with a different set of parameters for wisdom.
 2. We live in a profane age of X-treme sports and living, as men crave some thrill and fulfillment.
 3. Taking unnecessary risks, with or without Bible promises, is our lesson – wrongly tempting God.

- B. Foolish choices in any area of life are not ours to make, for we are duty bound to be wise as possible.
 - 1. We make foolish choices to varying degrees all day long every day, but we try to avoid them.
 - 2. We tempt God when we make foolish choices presuming on God to deliver us anyway.
- C. Many prayers are helpful, but you should also use a multitude of counselors for safety (Pr 11:14).
- D. Saints should soberly weigh motorcycles, skydiving, extreme mountain climbing, and other dangerous activities that greatly elevate the probability for serious injury or death.
- E. You do not need a “fleece” as much as common sense and wisdom! Use these superior means!
 - 1. Gideon was eventually listed as a man of faith in Hebrews 11, but he did not start out that way.
 - 2. We are given Gideon’s example of fear, but we are not taught to use a “fleece” for God’s will.
- F. Men make financial decisions on a regular basis – some with short- and some with long-term consequences; they should be made prudently without exposing the family to unnecessary risks.
 - 1. My sons reminded me recently that we opened a restaurant only with a very low break-even.
 - 2. We should not extend our financial situations to where we will need supernatural deliverance.

Application #4: Keep prayer in its proper place – seeking blessing on your efforts.

- A. If the Lord wants to do something supernatural, without blessing your means, leave it up to Him.
- B. When David prayed against the counsel of Ahithophel, he quickly sent Hushai (II Sam 15:31-37).
- C. Abram did not try a frontal assault with his 318 trained servants against four conquering kings; he divided his band into divisions and attacked during the night, with a vow (Gen 14:14-15,21-24).

Conclusion:

- 1. The history of our Lord’s temptation is valuable – it contains practical wisdom for temptation and wise living.
- 2. The history of our Lord’s temptation is valuable – it contains a great reminder of sound Bible interpretation.
- 3. May the Lord richly bless every hearer to know the perfect will of God and do those things that please Him.