

We continue in the Gospel of Mark. After Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist, He went into the wilderness where He was tempted by Satan for 40 days. Mark only mentions it briefly, but because there is so much comfort and strength for us to gain from this account, we will look at some of the details recorded in the other Gospels as well.

“12 Immediately the Spirit drove Him into the wilderness. 13 And He was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan, and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered to Him.”

Dear Fellow Redeemed,

You’ve heard people say, “No one’s Perfect!” They say that thinking that excuses them. Right? “You did something wrong.” “Yeah, well, No one’s perfect,” implying you can’t expect me to be perfect. Yet, by their own admission they are condemning themselves, because God does expect you to be perfect! Jesus said, “Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.” Matt. 5:48 That’s what makes this account of Jesus’ temptation in the wilderness so precious to us, for it demonstrates that

Jesus is the Perfect Son of God.

That makes Him our Perfect Savior.

Mark doesn’t tell us much about this event, but he does give us some interesting details. “The Spirit DROVE Him into the wilderness.” That’s a pretty strong word! This was no accident. It’s not that Jesus got turned around after being baptized and got lost in the wilderness. This was an intentional, deliberate plan, the Holy Spirit wanted Jesus to go into the wilderness. Matthew tells us why. The Spirit drove Him into the wilderness for a very specific reason—it was “to be tempted by the devil.”

The Creator wore sandals! The eternal, holy Son of God walked in our shoes. That’s why He was there. He was facing the temptations we face and fall daily. In our Old Testament reading we saw again how Satan tempted Adam and Eve and led them into sin. That’s why “No one’s perfect!” We inherited the sin of Adam, but that doesn’t excuse us. As we read in Romans 5, “The judgment which came from one offense resulted in condemnation.”

Now Jesus stands up to Satan in our defence. He wore sandals, He walked in our shoes so that He could have a rematch with Satan in our place. This was similar to the way David faced off with Goliath. He did that on behalf of the entire nation of Israel. Those were the terms of the battle between David and Goliath. If Goliath defeated David, the nation of Israel would become slaves of the Canaanites. If David defeated Goliath, the Canaanites would be Israel’s slaves. So it was here, if Satan could defeat Jesus by causing Him to sin just once, we would all be slaves of Satan forever, and we would share in his punishment from God. But if Jesus won the victory and successfully resisted every temptation and remained sinless throughout his life, then we would be freed from Satan and belong to God forever.

So let’s watch once again as Jesus, our hero, goes into battle against Satan for us, in our shoes. Do you remember last summer we discussed how the wilderness is a place of testing to reveal what is in your heart. God led the Children of Israel into the desert where they were tested. When they ran out of water and food, it revealed that they didn’t truly trust God in their heart. So it is with us. Jesus said, “Those things which proceed out of the mouth

come from the heart, and they defile a man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.” (Matt. 15:18-19) When everything is going smoothly we can get pretty good at hiding the evil in our own heart, even from ourselves. But in times of hardship and trouble, the true nature of our heart is revealed.

Think about it, isn't it in times of stress and strain that you are more likely to snap and say cruel harsh things to others? Isn't it in times of severe lack that we might decide we need to cheat a little to get ahead? In severe hunger we might even think we have to steal in order to survive. The anger in our heart is revealed when someone says or does something that we don't like. The same is true with greed or envy, or discontent, doesn't that come out when you feel like something is unfair or you aren't getting what you deserve?

Now think about Jesus' temptation in the wilderness. He was out in the dry, barren wilderness of Judea—a very inhospitable place. Luke very specifically tells us that Jesus was “tempted for forty days by the devil. And in those days HE ATE NOTHING, and afterward, when they had ended, He was hungry.” These were the most extreme circumstances. He had nothing to eat for 40 days and 40 nights. He was at his absolute weakest state physically. He was at the point where anyone would do absolutely anything they could to get something to eat before they die. We would steal, hurt, possibly even kill to get something to eat. Not only was He physically at His weakest point, but Luke also tells us that He was being tempted those entire 40 days. The three temptations that we read about are the last temptations after 40 days of being battered by Satan.

Mark gives us another detail that isn't found in the other accounts, that is that He “was with the wild beasts.” Jesus was exposed to all the dangers of the desert. Especially in His weakened state, Jesus was vulnerable to the wild beasts which prey on the weak. He was at His weakest point physically, emotionally, and mentally. If there was even the slightest hint of any sin in His heart, this is when it would come out.

What did that desert reveal about Jesus' heart? It revealed a totally pure heart of love and obedience. There was not the slightest hint of anger or resentment toward God or blaming Him for His lack; “Why did you bring me out here just to starve to death? Why aren't you providing for me?” When Satan tempted Him, “If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become bread,” Jesus didn't even consider it for a moment. He didn't think “Oh, I could really use a loaf of bread right now, or a juicy steak.” We are so good at making excuses for ourselves. Because of this or that circumstance I have no choice but to do this. Now Jesus didn't reason, “If I don't get some food pretty soon I will die and then I couldn't save anyone. So I guess I should make some bread.”

Jesus never even considered it for a moment. Jesus knew it was His Father's will for Him to walk in our sandals, so He couldn't do anything that we can't do. So He didn't even entertain the idea for a moment. That desert temptation revealed an absolutely pure heart. He had no resentment, no anger, not even the slightest inclination to take matters into His own hands. He simply trusted His father for everything, even when it seemed like His Father wasn't taking care of Him.

The same was true with all the other temptations. Jesus didn't consider them for a moment but turned them all away with the Word of God. “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.” “You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.” “You shall worship the Lord your God and Him only shall you serve.” God's word and will was in His heart and He wouldn't even consider doing anything against that. Jesus showed that He truly is **the Perfect Son of God.**

Since He was walking in our sandals, **He Overcame all Temptation For Us. It was for our Salvation AND for our Sanctification.**

We should cheer every time Jesus resists another blow from Satan, because He was winning that battle for us. We have fallen for all of these temptations and so many more. We do show a lack of trust in our Father and take things into our own hands and get things we want or need through sinful means. We are drawn by the temptation to have it all. Jesus overcame all the temptations that we have fallen for and has defeated Satan for us. He gives us His perfect holiness so that we can stand before God and be counted as truly perfect.

And these were not the only temptations Jesus faced. Throughout His childhood He had to deal with other children who were mean to Him. He no doubt faced the challenges of sibling rivalry. He obeyed His parents 100% of the time. All the temptations a teenager faces, He faced. Seeing friends doing things that they shouldn't and then receiving their hatred when He said something to them about it. He was truly "tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin." Heb. 4:16

Luke's account of the temptation in the wilderness ends with these words, "Now when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from Him until an opportune time." Luke 4:13 There were many other times of temptation including all the attacks of the Priests and Pharisees. Perhaps the greatest was when they taunted Him, "If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross." Though He could have, and it would have been so nice to end the suffering and pain, yet He didn't! His Love for the Father and for you kept Him fastened to the cross to the bitter end. All this was for our salvation so that we could be declared perfect before God.

By giving us front row seats to watch this battle for our salvation, we also learn the power of God's word to help us resist the temptations that we face on a daily basis. In that way, Jesus temptation is also for our Sanctification. Here we see the power of God's word to send the devil packing. Our new man that the Holy Spirit has created in us, truly loves God and wants to resist the temptations in our lives.

The Gospel, which shows us God's amazing Love, strengthens our new man to show our love for God in our actions. When you see again how your Saviour overcame all of Satan's temptations and suffered and died because of our failures, do you want to keep sinning? Not at all! We want to resist every temptation and love Him truly. God's law reminds us what God's will is and the consequence of disobeying God. As Paul says, "Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is." Eph. 5:17 Let's study God's word so we know what His will is.

Finally picture Jesus standing beside you all the time. We know He is always with us, yet if you don't live with that consciousness always before you, you don't receive the comfort or the strength of that truth. But if you literally picture Him at your side, and talk to Him, and are conscious of His presence throughout the day, then when temptation comes we will be able to turn it away immediately and not even consider it for a moment, but say with Joseph, "How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?"

Rejoice that **Jesus is the PERFECT Son of God** and thank Him that **He wore our Sandals** and took our place to battle sin and Satan for us.

Amen.