

Title: TEMPTATIONS, MATTHEW 4:1-11
(Chatham, NJ; 03/09/14, AM)

Theme: The Word of God informs our minds, transforms our thinking, and points us to the choices that we should make.

Purpose: To examine the root causes of temptation and to challenge us to make choices based on what God says, not based on the leading of our impulses.

Introduction:

1. For forty years Israel learned obedience in the desert.
2. For forty days Jesus prepared himself for his redemptive work.
3. He does not succumb to the temptations of the world.
4. He quotes from the one document that described the desert experience: Deuteronomy.
5. These ideas are as relevant as ever though less understood.

I. Temptation: Just What Are We Talking About

A. Genesis 3 – The Fall

1. Adam and Eve given a command from God
2. The serpent makes Eve doubt the clear meaning of the command, 1
3. He denies the consequence and makes it sound like there will be a positive outcome
4. They thus find the fruit irresistible: it looked good
5. Satan always makes evil appear to be good; he lies (Rev. 21:8)

B. James 1:14-15

1. We are enticed by our desires
2. Desire carried out creates sin and death results
3. We often justify our desires and impulses by saying it is just part of who we are
4. This testifies to the depth of sin: we can't separate our whims, desires, and impulses from who we are
5. But . . . not all impulses are created equal

C. Romans 7:18-20

1. In Genesis 4:7 God tells Cain, "Sin is crouching at the door . . . but you must master it."
2. In Romans Paul has discovered (and history has proven his point) that he cannot master it; it has mastered him
3. He recognizes the right thing to do, but cannot carry it out
4. Sin has him in a tight grip that only redemption can free him from

D. Enslaved by sin, John 8:34

1. He has elaborated on what Jesus said about sin and slavery: when we sin, we become slaves to it
2. In shame and guilt, we avoid the light of Christ, John 3:20
3. Eph. 4:18 - humanity in the grip of "darkened minds" and "hardness of heart"
4. Sin came into the world and spread because all have sinned, Romans 7:12
5. Without the power of God, it was an inescapable outcome

II. The Power to Overcome Temptations

A. Jesus Overcomes, Mt. 4:1-11

1. First, Jesus does not allow his appetite to control him; though he could do what Satan suggested, he knows that he must not put his desire for food above his desire for God (remember Phil. 3:19 – this temptation was about "earthly things")

2. Second, Jesus refuses to presume upon God's love that he will act a certain way
3. In Ezekiel 18:25, Israel expressed displeasure and unrest toward God; both here and Mt. the temptation is to try to put God on the spot and have him do what we want him to do rather than act out of his own nature
4. Third, this is a direct assault on the throne and sovereignty of God
5. "We are reaching midnight in the moral order," Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. noted 50 years ago, "a time when nothing's absolutely right and nothing's absolute wrong because the majority opinion seems to be, 'Everybody's doing it so it must be OK.'"
6. IMPT: Jesus deflects the temptations by the Word of God
7. Jesus' temptations demand that we see another entire ordering of the world: we are God's creatures and we do things his way, according to his Word, not according to any standard of the world or self

B. Transformation

1. Romans 12:2 – be transformed by the renewing of your minds
2. We have to inform our choices with the Word of God rather than listen to the voices of our impulses and desires
3. Romans 8 – we must allow ourselves to be lead by the Spirit of God rather than the flesh

C. The power to obey

1. No condemnation in Christ, Romans 8:1-3
2. Jesus broke the power of sin
3. By transforming our minds and by accepting the grace of God for forgiveness, we have the power to choose the right path
4. We nail our sinful impulses to the cross

Conclusion:

1. Read Romans 6:13-14.
2. Do not be fooled by the lies of the world or the lies of your sinful impulses.
3. Believe the truth as revealed in the Word of God; it is the only sure path.
4. Believe and obey the Gospel if you want to be on the right path.