

## **“In the Wilderness for Forty Days”, Part 3; Mark 1:12-13**

**0262**

One instant of wanting this to stop, one instant of wanting to be outside the Father's will, one moment of thinking a low thought of His Father, one instant, the entire human race would be utterly hopeless.

So, He's tempted by Satan for forty days, that word Satan literally means adversary. So, 'diablos' is the word translated devil. That means slander, or accuser. The word translated 'Satan' means adversary. And this is this is who he is, he is he is the champions adversary.

And so, He's been tempted here for these forty days. Now, Mark uses a grammatical structure that tells us that what Mark intends for us to understand is not that there, He's fasting for forty days, and He's really tired. He's really hungry, He's really weak. And then at the very end comes this test. What Mark wants us to see is that the entire forty days were constant, constant testing, constant temptations.

So, what about these temptations? Because we really need to kind of get at—Jesus is God—could He really be tempted? Could Jesus have sinned? There's a question for you, could Jesus have sinned? He's God.

And the only answer to that is absolutely. The human Jesus absolutely could have sinned. If not, then it was not a real temptation. It was a farce. And this is not a farce, this is the real deal.

So, this temptation—let's try to get our arms around...Hebrews 4, verse 15, tells us that our High Priest has been tempted in every way that we have, yet without sin. Now, when the writer to the Hebrews says that, he doesn't mean to say that Jesus has been tempted exactly as you have, identically to you. What he intends to say is that Jesus' is temptation fully encompasses all of our temptations, and far, far more.

Because the temptation that Jesus encountered for forty days here—in fact, for His entire life—the temptation that He encountered here, is not exactly like our temptation, there's some differences. And there's some key differences to understand. But it's also a temptation that, if I could use the word infinitely, stronger than what we face.

So, when we're tempted, we know what happens as we're tempted, right? I would trust that everybody here is thought well enough about your temptation to sin, that you've kind of thought about how that works in you, how it is that you're tempted, and why temptation is a difficulty for you.

And so, here's what happens in our temptation. When we are tempted to sin, there is something outside of us, either the enemy, or the world around us or both, and they make some sort-of appeal to a fallen desire in our heart. Isn't that how temptation works with you? That something in the world or something from the demonic maybe, is appealing to something in your heart, some sort-of desire, some sort-of fallen desire, and it's saying, "Take me, indulge in me, have me."

And that's how temptation works. In fact, that's what the Bible teaches us. Look at James chapter one, verse 14, and 15. "But each person is tempted (when are we tempted?) when he is lured and enticed by (what?) his own desire."

So, there's a desire in our heart. And our enemy is aware of these desires, and the world in which we live, lives and breathes these desires. And so, those enticements they come to us, and they speak to us, and they say,

“Wouldn't I be fun? Wouldn't this be enjoyable? Can't you just indulge in this? Oh, this would be so good, this would be so, nice. This would be so, gratifying. This would be so, helpful.”

And that appeal comes into a heart that deep down in there—wants, it has a desire for it.

And then James says in the next verse, when that desire is acted upon when the temptation is given into, then it sort-of culminates, it sort-of brings to fruition the sin that causes death. And that's how James explains it.

So, that's how temptation works with us. We have a fallen heart, a fallen nature, fallen desires. And there is an enticement outside of us that appeals to that. And it says—act on this, indulgent in this, give in to this.

Now, when we come to Jesus, the problem that we face is—well, Jesus had no fallen desires. Jesus was sinless in every way.

That doesn't mean that Jesus was just sinless in His behavior. It also means that He was sinless in His desires, He had no fallen nature. He was like us in every way—except sin.

So, Jesus did not live His life fighting against the desire to get drunk, because He didn't have that desire.

He was the only righteous Man, He was the only one without sin, and sin Scripture teaches us is also our desires.

So, was it really a temptation for Jesus to be tempted by this demonic force here, this Satan in his in his cronies, wasn't really a temptation if Jesus didn't have those fallen desires, and this is where Jesus temptation is not exactly like ours. But if we think about this, His temptation was far, far greater than ours.

Let me try to explain. Take a look at the back of your notes here. And here's just some things that show us how Jesus, what Jesus endured in the wilderness is far greater than any of us ever endure in our temptation. For the first thing, Jesus was under constant and direct attack from the Prince of Darkness himself, not any of his cronies or lackeys. You know, we often say, don't we, that Satan is trying to get us to do this, or we're under attack by Satan. And we say that because the Bible uses that language. First Peter five says, First Peter five calls Satan, our adversary. But you know, Satan is not omnipresent. Satan is a creature, he's a created being. He is not the Spirit of God. Satan cannot tempt all people at once—like the Spirit in dwells all of His people at once—Satan can't do that. And so, it actually be kind of thinking quite highly of ourselves to think of ourselves as the object of Satan himself attacking us. I doubt any of us have ever been under the direct attack of Satan himself.

That's not to say that when we are under demonic attack, that it's not right to say it's under Satan's attack, because it's all under his direction and under his goals.

But that is to say, when Jesus was attacked in the wilderness when He was tempted in the wilderness, He was attacked by the Prince of Darkness himself. For forty days, day and night.

We're never told this, but I believe it's entirely reasonable to believe that it's not just the Prince of Darkness himself, only. But every demonic being that he could recruit to help him.

This is the prize. Jesus is the prize. If the prince of darkness can bring Him down—we all understand what that means.

And so, for forty days and forty nights, Jesus is under the most direct attack of the Prince of Darkness himself, and every available help that the prince of darkness can recruit to his side. All of them attacking the Son of Man with vicious vengeance, no mercy, day and night. I doubt Jesus slept much at all for those forty days.

Can you just imagine—the hunger the weakness, the beating down sun, the tiredness and the demons?

“Curse God, curse Him, just curse Him, curse Him, curse Him, curse God!”

Never-ending. “Blaspheme His name, blaspheme Him!”

He is under the most direct attack, day and night. Forty days.

Also, number two, Jesus’ temptation was never weakened by a single moment of surrender. Do you know that when you resist temptation, does your temptation just sort-of give up? Isn't it true, that the more you resist, the longer you resist, the greater that temptation becomes?

Now there may be seasons in which it sort-of slacks off and then comes back later, but doesn't it come back stronger?

Jesus never acquiesced one bit. So, Jesus experienced the full force of the strongest temptation the enemy is capable of. None of us have ever experienced the full force of any temptation. Why? Because none of us have resisted indefinitely like that.

All of us are sinners, all of us have acquiesced. And that acquiescence brings sort-of, at least a temporary relieving of the temptation. Jesus never again. So, Jesus is the only one who's experienced the full, 100% force of everything that evil had to bring against Him.

Number three, Jesus’ temptation knew no limits. Do you know that your temptation is limited by your limited human capabilities? In other words, it's not a real temptation to any of us to be tempted to do something that we know we're not capable of doing.

You can't tempt me, in a real way, you can't really tempt me to go and wastefully spend my family's money on a new sports car. That's just not a real temptation, because I know I can't do it. I mean, they would, if I went to the sports car store they'd laugh at me. So, that's not a real temptation.

You can't—here's an example I've used before maybe you've heard it—I can't be tempted to impress everybody in the room by levitating two feet off the floor. Not a temptation, because it's not in the realm of possibility. And so, we're not really tempted by that which is not possible for us. Jesus' temptation knew no limit, because His power knew no limit. There was nothing outside of the realm of what could be temptation for Jesus because there was nothing outside the realm of possibility.

Furthermore, the Scriptures teach us that sin is not just action, sin is thought. Take a look with me at Colossians chapter three and verse five. Paul says, “Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, *evil desire*.”

And even before that—passion, what's passion, but inflamed desire?

Okay, so, Jesus teaches us that lesson in Sermon on the Mount about lust, He says, "You have committed adultery when you have desire in your heart." So, we sin, we are capable of sinning, just by having an evil desire that we don't act upon.

Now, when we act upon an evil desire, then we compound the sin. But we can have an evil desire—Paul says put those evil desires to death because their sin, Jesus says, "You've sinned in your heart when you've desired someone wrongly."

Jesus—one moment of a fallen desire would have cast Him into a pit of sinfulness. One instant of wanting this to stop. One instance of wanting to be outside the Father's will. One moment of thinking a low thought of His Father, one instant.

All Jesus would need to have done would be to desire it. Remember what the Centurion said to Him in Luke's Gospel? Luke chapter seven. Can you do something about my servant? My servants dying? Okay, take Me to him. You don't need to go. All you need to do is say the word. And Jesus says—he gets it.

What does that mean? That means all Jesus needed to do was want it. Was desire the servant to be healed, and he would be healed. All Jesus would have had to do in the wilderness would be to want something sinful. Instantly, momentarily.

Can you imagine the barrage, forty days, day and night? And never once sinning in thought, or desire?

Oh, the barrage against Him was so merciless, so inhumanly difficult,

Which is why the Scriptures tell us of His suffering. Look at Hebrews chapter two and verse 18. The writer to the Hebrews describes Jesus's time of temptation as suffering—for because He himself has suffered when tempted.

Jesus suffered so immensely for those forty days. You know, we know Jesus suffered on the cross. And we know He suffered in those hours leading up to the cross. But have you ever thought about Jesus's suffering in the wilderness?

Oh, how He suffered. Just imagine if you can.

Do you know what it's like to sort-of have that thought, that passing thought—blaspheme God?

You know, when something goes really wrong, something just really, you don't understand something just really get you. And that thought hits you—to blaspheme God.

And you know how distasteful and unwanted that thought is.

That is a thought popping into our mind, into the mind of someone who—I don't know how to make the comparison—but compared to Jesus maybe has a miniscule tiny amount of righteousness in us.

Think of just how difficult, how painful it is, for us to have that thought when something happens, and it just hits into our mind, to curse God. Jesus is the perfect Son of God, the only righteous One.

Day and night—curse God, curse God, blaspheme God, curse Him! Curse Him!

Can you imagine the torment of His soul, to hear that, to be subjected forty days and forty nights to the hideous demonic—curse Him! Curse Him! He doesn't love You, You're not His Son, He cares nothing about You! He's left You out here, curse Him! The spirit of Job's wife, right? Curse God and die.

Can you imagine the torment of His soul?

Mark describes Him here as with the animals, with the wild animals. And I think that Mark puts that in there, we said earlier as a point of connection to help the Roman believers to bolster their confidence in what they're going through. But I think they would have made a connection to Jesus here. Because the Roman historian Tacitus tells us that that's what the Romans were doing to the Roman Christians, that they were wrapping them in animal skins and throwing them to the animals. What do you think they would have thought when they heard—our Master, He was with wild animals too, He was with the wild animals to just like us.

But do you see how perhaps they would have been just so, encouraged to hear, He's been here.

He's been here. Oh, the suffering!

The animals are here, not to, not to be as they were for Adam—to first add them to the support, the ones who are under his dominion, who are there to perfectly help him. They're here as His enemies. They're here just as an illustration of just how lonely this was. Imagine once again, the Son of Man, who perfectly loves the image of God in other people, being subjected to just such solitude and such loneliness, in the hardest, the most difficult of times that He has yet to endure.

Mark also says that He was ministered to by the angels. Now that might give us sort-of a nice little, warm-hearted feeling that these angels are coming into ministering to Jesus. I don't think that's what Mark meant.

I think that this is just one more humiliation for Jesus, to now be beholden to the angels He created.

That's what the writer to the Hebrews says, "We see Jesus, who was for a time made a little lower than the angels." These perfect sinless angels that He created, now they have to serve Him. Now they have to minister to Him. The word there's 'deacon,' they have to 'deacon' to Him, in order for Him to make it through this. Can you imagine the humility of the Maker of the heavens and the earth having to be served by angels, having to be ministered to by angels?

Oh, the suffering, the suffering of the Son of Man to willingly subject Himself—remember, the Spirit didn't have to change His mind, or convince Him. This is the Father's will. And the Son said, if this is the Father's will, nothing can stop Me from doing this.

Now one last thought for us, and then we're done. And that thought is this: Just to remind ourselves—if one failure had occurred in these forty days, think for just a moment, where we would be.

The entire human race would be utterly hopeless. All of humanity would be without hope for eternity.

There would be nothing for us save damnation, and the full deserved wrath of God, had the Son of Man tripped or faltered in the smallest way over these forty days of testing.

Our eternity, in one sense, hung in the balance. In another sense, it was never in question, though, was it?

Because He is the Champion, and He comes to defeat that which we had no chance of defeating. He came to destroy that which sought to do nothing but to destroy us, to destroy the people of God, the seed of the woman.

But here's our champions stepping on to the arena, onto the stage, and this will lead us directly into next week: Proclaim the Good News.