

Session 2

April 23, 2023

THE TEMPTATION TO RELY ON MYSELF INSTEAD OF GOD

Deuteronomy 8:2-10; Matthew 4:1-4

I often say, there is only one sin. It's the sin of pride. It's what got Lucifer kicked out of heaven. It's what got Adam and Eve kicked out of the garden. And it's what we wrestle with every day. Simply put, we all want to be God! And we demonstrate that every time we insist on doing it "our way." In this week's lesson, we see how Jesus (who really *is* God!) handled the devil's temptation to do it "His way."

God's provision (Deut. 8:2-10). God has always taken care of His children. But God has always required devotion. He is a jealous God who will not share worship with another (see Ex. 34:14 et al). As the Lord recounts the promises made to Israel prior to their entrance into the Promised Land, He reminds them that while His love may be unconditional, His provision is not (see also 2 Chr. 7:12-14). The devotion He requires in this passage has four main elements. First, there is *humility*. Verses 2 and 3 indicate that God's provision of food and clothing during their wilderness wandering was meant to humble them, not reward them. By finding themselves helpless, they had nowhere to turn but back to the God who had delivered them. Second, there was *discipline*. When God's people got out of line, He *chastened* them (v. 5). The word connotes *correction*. There may have been some pain involved (isn't there always?) but the purpose was not harsh punishment, but instruction. Hence, He compares it to the firm but loving correction a father gives to his son. The third element of devotion is *obedience*. The children of God were told to "keep His commands," "walk in His ways," and "fear Him" (v. 6). That being accomplished, verses 7-9 highlight many of the blessings that awaited them in the Promised Land. Fresh, flowing, and abundant water (v. 7) must have sounded pretty good to the thirsty masses who had spent the years wandering from desert places to oases seeking water. Verse 8 lists the kinds of crops the land would produce. The idea of cultivating crops signaled settlement and stability. Their aimless wandering would finally stop! And the division of land meant permanence, inheritance, and a family legacy to leave behind. "Food without shortage" (v. 9) meant no hunger, and "lacking nothing" indicated that no need would go unmet. The unexpected promise of iron ore and copper is interesting. Little is mentioned of such mining operations, but they certainly existed (e.g.: 1 Chr. 22:3). Here the illusion is to natural resources needed for everything from creating artwork to building new cities; something that had not been done since their fathers had slaved away (literally) for their enemies in Egypt. The final element of their required devotion was *worship* (v. 10). Hence, the covenant relationship would be complete. God would provide all of their needs and do so in abundance. In exchange, the people would devote themselves fully to their God, expressing that devotion through *humility, discipline, obedience, and worship*. For reflection: *Some people have said that God is not really loving if He "requires" our devotion. How would you answer that?*

God's promise (Matt. 4:1-4). Remember, there is really only one sin: pride. The devil knows all about pride since he was the original tempter and used pride as the original temptation. In this text, Jesus was confronted once again with that original sin. Notice the devil did not offer Him something to eat; rather, he offered Him the option of doing it "His way:" "If you really are God's Son, then prove it! And satisfy your own earthly cravings at the same time." The issue

wasn't Christ's ability to do it. Nor was it wrong for Him to have made bread out of stones, should He have chosen to. The temptation was to prove His deity through a selfish, self-centered act. By quoting Deuteronomy 8, Jesus moved the focus away from His own wants and back to God His provider. "There are things more important than bread," Jesus meant. "And God the Father can sustain Me with or without it." For reflection: *If Jesus is God (and He is!), He doesn't owe the devil any explanations. Why do you think Jesus didn't He simply rebuke the devil? Or ignore him altogether? In each of the three temptations, Jesus answered by quoting Scripture Why?*