

I. Introduction

- A. I want to start on a really happy note today. I want you to think of two or three major problems in your life today. Which means I'm kidding about the happy part. Problems. Worries. Frustrations. Dangers. What?
- B. Two or three major problems in your life right now, that if you had a magic wand you would make them go away.
 - 1. Money problems. Health problems. Political problems maybe. Family. Relationship. Emotional problems.
- C. Okay, pick one or two, and hold it in mind. Put a name to it. Put a face on it. Picture it. Name it. Think about it. Don't say it out loud.
- D. I want to propose a certain way of looking at your problem... something you probably already knew, but have forgotten.
 - 1. When you dig beneath the layers of your problem, you will find multiple causes: maybe there's a bully. Maybe you made bad decisions. Maybe it seems random or you think it's karma or something.
- E. As we read this Scripture verse, hold your problem in mind. Ephesians 6:12:
 - 1. *For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. (Ephesians 6:12, NKJV).*
 - a) **BIG IDEA:** *The central reason you have problems in your life is because you live in a world at war.*
- F. This fallen world is a morally broken pain machine. What fuels the machine—and what even got it going in the first place—is a spiritual battle that rages all around.
- G. And the greatest source of pain is the spiritual battle that rages all around.
 - 1. Whatever face you put on your problem, if it's a human face, you're not thinking deeply enough. If it's a systems face, or "the Man's" face, or your boss, or a family member... or even if it's just some kind of force of nature.
 - 2. Whoever you blame, whoever you scapegoat, whoever is at fault, if you are thinking only of flesh and blood and natural causes to the troubles in your life, you are not thinking deeply enough.
 - a) We do NOT wrestle against flesh and blood (principally, mainly)... you're aiming at the wrong problem if you stop at the level of nature.
 - 3. There is a supernatural war going on. You're stuck in the crossfire.
 - 4. Welcome to church, by the way.
 - 5. And a supernatural, spiritual war requires supernatural, spiritual weapons, which Jesus Christ has provided, tested, and approved for you.
 - 6. We are going to see today that Jesus Christ stepped into the thickest part of that war. And he delivered a knockout blow to the enemy of your soul, so mighty, the whole cosmos is still quaking from the aftershock.

II. Christus Victor

- A. Welcome to Neighborhood, and to part three of our series, Christus Victor, which means Christ the Victor. He is the Champion you need in the battle for your life.
- B. We're trying to re-lay the foundations of our faith this year. We start with Christ. Who he is, his Person. What he did, his Work. Christology 101.
- C. We're starting 2017 with a focus on Christ. And we are studying our way through the major events in his life.
- D. So far, we've talked about his birth, his childhood, and last time, his baptism.
- E. Today, the next main event after his baptism: the Temptation of Christ. Here is that mind blowing event in the Bible. Let's take it verse by verse.

III. *The Temptation of Christ*

- A. *Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry. (Matthew 4:1, 2, NKJV).*
 - 1. This is the setting for the Temptation of Christ. He is in the wilderness. He has been fasting forty days and nights. He is hungry. And all of this was initiated by the Holy Spirit.
 - 2. Let's just lay it out there that this was a real temptation of a real human being by a real spiritual enemy.
 - 3. When Christ was tempted, he felt it. He felt the pull. He felt the pressure of giving in. The temptations were real. He wasn't numb to them.
 - 4. It's easy to say that Jesus resisted temptation. He's God. God can't be tempted. It's all play acting.
 - 5. Which would mean that, since you're not God, following his example here is impossibly out of reach.
 - 6. So, to remind you of what we've been saying, yes he is, was, and always will be God.
 - 7. But no, that's not how he resisted temptation. That's not how he felt it, experienced it, or resisted it.
 - 8. Jesus was hungry which means he was fully activated in his *human* nature. Yes, he had divine powers, but he chose not to use them in this moment. He boxed them in, so to speak, and he faced temptation as a man. A human.
 - 9. And not just any temptation—but direct temptation from the devil himself, the Ultimate Master of seduction, deceit, and subtlety.
 - 10. And not just as any human—but Jesus faced temptation as a weakened human. Hungry, tired, weary, weakened, broken. He's made himself the weakest he can possibly be.
 - 11. It's the devil at his best vs. Jesus at his worst.
 - 12. Why?

13. Because Jesus wanted to test the spiritual equipment God gives you, and he wanted to subject that equipment to the most grueling test possible. So he fasted away his energy to make himself extremely weak.
 14. Can the supernatural resources God gives you to rise above the troubles in your life work in the worst possible conditions? That's the test.
- B. *Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread." But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'" (Matthew 4:3, 4, NKJV).*
1. It's the cage match of the century. They climb in the ring. Strap on the gloves. The devil launches with his first punch.
 2. And look at where he aims.
 3. The devil attacks Jesus by attacking his name. His identity. If you are the Son of God... If... Maybe you're not. Maybe you're not who you think you are. You're not as strong. Not as beloved. Not as important. You're a nobody.
 4. So prove yourself, Jesus. "Command that these stones become bread." Prove yourself. Show me.
 - a) In the crowded arena, the demons roar and the angels gasp.
 5. Did you ever get in an argument with a sibling or a friend... Yes you are. No I'm not. Yes you are. No I'm not. Well you are. I'm not.
 6. Yeah. Jesus didn't do that. Instead, Jesus hit the devil with two jabs.
 7. First, he shifted the argument: he did not take the bait and debate his identity. Jesus knew he was Son of God and was good with that. Pow! Not taking your bait, Boy Devil.
 8. Second, he hit the devil with the ten-ton brick called the Word of God. When the devil tempted him, Jesus hit back with a Bible verse. "It is written..." That's how a Bible verse gets introduced. Jesus grew up studying his Bible. Memorizing Bible verses, like a kid in Awana.
 - a) The Bible is the Sword of the Spirit. It is the hammer of God. It is fire in God's belly issuing forth in holiness and truth.
 9. The Word of God is living and powerful.
 10. And Jesus hit the devil back with the power of the Word.
 11. And it's doubly powerful, because the Word Christ quoted was a Word about the Power of the Word.
 - a) Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. He's quoting Deuteronomy 8:3.
 12. You suggest I restore my strength and sustain my life by turning a stone into bread. But I restore my strength and sustain my life by turning to God's Word.
 13. The Bible is the devil's kryptonite, when it's trained into your heart, and launched into the adversary's face in the heat of the battle.
 14. Ding!
 15. Round One — Jesus. Here's round two.
- C. *Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written: 'He shall give His angels charge over you,' and, 'In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone.'" Jesus said to him, "It is written again, 'You shall not tempt the LORD your God.'" (Matthew 4:5-7, NKJV).*
1. So the devil says, "Okay pal, you want the Bible, I'll give you the Bible. Jab-jab!" He quotes two Bible verses... proof that the Bible isn't a magic incantation, by the way.
 2. It's not just magic to quote the Bible, and poof, your problems go away. It's the Word, when you learn it deeply, and build it into your heart, that builds a fortress of greatness in your soul, one brick, one truth, one promise, one verse, at a time.
 3. But the devil hits back with another Bible verse (Psalm 91:11,12). The demons are on their feet. That's awesome! He hit Jesus with his own Bible! Ha! Get him, Satan. Hit him again!
 4. But Jesus smashes the devil with a gut punch. And again, another Bible verse: It is written, again, You shall not tempt the Lord Your God" (Deuteronomy 6:16).
 5. Bam! Now, the angels are on their feet, and the demons are getting worried.
 6. What was Satan's temptation about here? He basically said: Hey Jesus...
 - a) Make God prove himself. Maybe he doesn't love you. Look at how hard your life is. Look at your pain. Does he care? Does he even take notice? Test him. He's promised to take care of you, but he's not. Look at yourself. Make him prove it.
 7. And the verse Jesus quotes basically says,
 - a) *My God has nothing to prove. I know he loves me. I know he cares. And I know he's with me and for me right here. Right now. So back off Satan. Because even when I cannot trace his ways, I can always trust his heart.*
 8. Jesus, the man, weakened, tired, and hungry — has just won round two.
 9. The demons are getting restless. The angels are getting excited. There's a murmur rippling through the crowd and as the gladiators step into the ring for the final round.
 10. The mighty ruler of the fallen angels vs. the frail humble man.
 11. Round three:

- D. Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to Him, "All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me." Then Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.'" Then the devil left Him, and behold, angels came and ministered to Him. (Matthew 4:8-11, NKJV).
1. The devil rushes in with a shoulder to the gut. He picks up Jesus to slam him to the mat.
 2. "All these things I will give you," he says.
 3. What things?
 4. The kingdoms of the world and their glory.
 5. Here's what people don't get about the devil: when Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden, they surrendered the scepter of earth to Satan. The kingdoms of the world and their glory— in a sense, they are the devil's to give.
 - a) Scripture calls the devil the God of this age (2 Corinthians 4:4).
 - b) Jesus calls him "the Ruler of this World" (John 12:31).
 - c) He is the Prince of the Power of the Air (Ephesians 2:2).
 - d) And John says, "The whole world lies under the sway of the Wicked One" (1 John 5:19).
 - (1) He has cast a spell over the minds of the world. The philosophies. Art, entertainment, government, media, education... it's all been infected. This is the matrix of the kingdoms of the world.
 - (2) And when Satan offered the kingdoms of the world to Jesus it was a real offer, but only because he stole them in the first place, and his power is a fraud.
 6. Who is the rightful ruler of all things?
 - a) The Lord Jesus Christ.
 7. And so the devil offers to Christ what is his own, BUT only if you will fall down and worship me, he said.
 8. The day you forget that the devil's goal is to BE LIKE GOD is the day that you let down your guard.
 - a) "How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, You who weakened the nations! For you have said in your heart: 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation On the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.' (Isaiah 14:12-14, NKJV).
 9. The devil's lies look like God's truth.
 10. The devil's plans look like God's decrees.
 11. The devil's currency looks like God's treasures.
 12. The devil's religion look like God's reality.
 - a) A counterfeiter does not make his money pink. He wants it as close to the real thing as possible.
 - (1) It's not the grossly evil stuff that trips us up, it's the good stuff. It's the shortcut. It's the counterfeit.
 13. Because the devil makes his plan as close to God's plan as possible. But with one fatal difference: at the top of God's plan sits the Lord Jesus Christ, the God-man in all his glory.
 14. But at the top of Satan's plan sits Satan himself—a liar from the beginning and the father of lies.
 15. *All these kingdoms*, which were his to give, I will give you, if you fall down and worship me.
 16. It was a temptation. Legit. Powerful. Real. It was a test, an enticement, a lure with a sharpened hook.
 17. This is the ultimate temptation, because it was what Christ came for. It was his true purpose — to rule the kingdoms of the world. To revel in their glory. It was a good goal.
 18. It was a good thing.
 19. But it was not a God thing. Think about this:
 - a) *All temptations are a suggested shortcut to the realization of a good goal.*
 20. The devil grapples Jesus. He slams him to the dust. He lifts him to the pinnacle of a mountain. He shows him in a flash all the world's glory — ten thousand throne rooms, and their treasures, and their powers, and privileges. *All these things I will give you. Worship me. Worship me. Worship me. You're tired. You're weary. You're hungry. Just give in. It can all be over. All these kingdoms. All this glory. Worship meeeeeee.....*
 21. The demons quivered and the angels held their breath. A hush fell over the arena.
 22. And the Lord Jesus Christ—bloodied from the battle, the sweat and grime of the arena dripping from his brow, tired, emptied, suffering, broken — the Son of God inhaled his deepest breath, and he got in the devil's face, and he looked him in his beady little eyes, and he shouted:
 - a) "AWAY WITH YOU SATAN! For it is written, 'You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him ONLY you shall serve.'"
 - b) And the demons screamed, and the angels cheered, and the devil turned tail and ran.
 23. And the man, flesh and blood, forty-days-fasted, battle fatigued, slumped, tired and worn—stood slumped in victory. And angels flew in, the Bible says, and took care of him.
 24. Behold the man. Bloodied but unbowed. Christus Victor. The Champion you need in the battle for your life.

IV. So what?

- A. He fought the fight. He used the weapons. He blazed the trail and walked the path. He felt your trials and troubles and temptations. He knows what the pain machine can do to a person. He knows how hope can dim. He can sympathize with you, because he's been where you are today.

- B. Nothing got him down.
- C. He triumphed. He rose above. He conquered. He emerged the hero.
- D. And now, from heaven, Jesus looks to you. Your turn, he says.
- E. But, I can't, you say. I'm not you.
- F. Well, you'd be wrong and right. Right, you are not Jesus. But wrong, because you can.
- G. How did Jesus win the temptation war?
- H. A carpenter has a tool belt. A chef has a knife set and spice rack. A surgeon has scalpels and suture kits, Bryant and Rizzo (Cubs players) have bats and gloves.
- I. Everybody's got their equipment.
- J. And when you received Jesus, you received your equipment too.
- K. Remember those problems we started with?
- L. God wants you to rise above them. God has equipped you to rise above them.
- M. So what's in the tool box?

1. *The power of the Spirit.*

- a) The Temptation of Christ begins with the Spirit. Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.
- b) The Spirit was his teacher. The Spirit was his strength.
- c) You see, Jesus shines forth forever as a demonstration of what God can do through a human nature fully upheld by the power of God the Holy Spirit. The capacities of a human nature, elevated and upheld by the Holy Spirit, are truly remarkable, and Jesus demonstrated those capacities to the maximum. When Jesus went into that wilderness, it was by an inner impulse of the Holy Spirit. And when he fasted forty days, he was upheld by the Holy Spirit. And when Satan came to him, and tempted him, Jesus resisted by the power of the Holy Spirit. [Look up these verses for yourself.]
 - (1) His conception was by the Holy Spirit (Matt 1:18).
 - (2) His service toward God was by the Holy Spirit (Matt 12:18).
 - (3) His casting out demons was by the Holy Spirit (Matt 12:28).
 - (4) His commissioning was by the Holy Spirit (Luke 4:1).
 - (5) His growing ministry was by the Holy Spirit (Luke 4:14).
 - (6) His death was by the Holy Spirit (Hebrews 9:14).
 - (7) His resurrection was by the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:11).
 - (8) His preaching was by the Holy Spirit (Isa 61:1; Luke 4:18).
 - (9) His ministry to heal and to deliver was by the Holy Spirit (Isa 61:1; Luke 4:18).
- d) Jesus set his human life on a foundation of the Holy Spirit's power, and he was never shaken. This is the power of the Third Person of the Godhead, not the second.
- e) You've been given the exact same Spirit. He lives in you, and he brings all the power you need.
 - (1) *Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. (Romans 15:13, NKJV).*
- f) Power to rise above your temptations. Power to live a rich, full life.
- g) Every single Christian has the Holy Spirit. And he will never leave you. He lives inside you to empower the life of your dreams. But you say, how do I receive the Spirit's power?
- h) And the simple answer is always faith. Ask him. Trust him. No matter how you feel, or if you feel nothing, the same power that sent Satan scrambling from the Savior will give you victory too.
- i) But there's a second weapon Jesus used, and he used it three times:

2. *The power of the Word of God.*

- a) The truth of Scripture is the Spirit's sword to overcome the devil's lies.
- b) Every key event in the life of Christ was strengthened and upheld by the power of God's Word, internalized and believed. And you have that same word. (Hebrews 4:12: the Word of God is alive and powerful.)
- c) Jesus shot Bible verses at the devil. The Bible, built into the soul, like a beautiful castle, brick by brick, verse by verse, line by line, is a weapon the devil can never overcome.
- d) It is the secret power of Jesus.
- e) That's why it's so important to build up an arsenal of Scripture in your soul.
 - (1) *BIG IDEA: The central reason you have problems in your life is because you live in a world at war.*
 - (2) *BIGGER IDEA: Do not give up, however, because the victory has already been won.*
- f) You have a supernatural arsenal. You can rise above your problems. That loss that tugs at your heart. That relationship that seems beyond repair. Those bills that seem impossibly high. That addiction you think will never go away...
- g) Christ has conquered. Christ has triumphed. Christ has cleared the path. He's tested the equipment.
- h) Now, by faith, pick up your Sword, and by faith in the Holy Spirit's power, follow him, trust him, and step into the victory that's already been won.