

Title: Exposing the Lie: Addressing Temptation with Lethal Faith and White-Hot Worship
Text: Matthew 4.1-11
Theme: Dealing with Temptation
Series: Matthew #10
Prop Stmtnt: Our weapon for temptation is Christ and his Word.

Read Text:

“Call me Ishmael.” These infamous words begin Herman Melville’s classic story called Moby Dick. It is the story of a man, Captain Ahab, whose boat was destroyed and leg bit off by a large sperm whale that Ahab, having obtained another boat, is now bent on pursuing and killing, no matter what. And I mean, no matter what. Ahab does not care what price he has to pay, what lives he forfeits, what property is lost or what reason is thrown to the wind. He is singularly focused on destroying that whale as reflected in these words:

*Towards thee I roll, thou all-destroying but
unconquering whale; to the last I grapple with thee;
from hell’s heart I stab at thee; for hate’s sake
I spit my last breath at thee.*

There is no truce to be arranged; no peace to be found. The Captain and the Whale are engaged in a war between sworn enemies. You cannot make peace with war. You cannot broker a truce with hostility. And so it is between you and sin. There is no peace, no calm, no truce, no cessation of hostilities, and no agreement for rest and no treaty. Sin is your sworn enemy and Satan is the master of using it in an attempt to destroy you. You are in a war. You are in a war until the day you die. And what’s more sin has an ally in its war against you. The Bible calls it your flesh. But the Bible is not speaking primarily of your skin, bones, muscle and organ tissue, but is speaking of your thoughts, your desires, your goals that have been so wrongly habituated because of the presence and power of your sin nature that you are born with. Like a board that is warped, our thoughts, desires and goals (hearts) naturally tend to reflect their warped condition. Sin, in spite of its destructive properties, history of devastation, agonizing effects upon our lives, yet retains a remarkably powerful influence upon us. That influence is called temptation. Two weeks ago, I preached on the temptation of Christ from this text. The majority of the message focused on how Christ faced temptation and did what no one before him or after him has been able to do. He never, ever succumbed to it. At the end of the message I listed 11 things that we need to remember and take with us. This message is an expansion and application of those things. In other words, it is because of the victory of Christ in the desert, and the ultimate victory of Christ at the cross, that we do not have to live in bondage. That which Satan throws at us to destroy, can be the means that God uses to draw us to him. (1 Cor. 10.13; Hebrews 12.1–2) How do I deal with temptation?

This message has two parts. In the first part, I am going to summarize some of the things that the Bible says about temptation. And then in second part, I want us to see how Christ

responded to temptation as a paradigm for us, but also how our ability to address temptation is ultimately found in the finished work of Christ. **3 Summary Truths:**

1. **Sin is toxic.**

This is so difficult for us to grasp because sin does not come labeled as poison. Sin has a great public relations department and media consultant. It comes with soft lighting, laughter, mood music and a measure of prestige. It appears to have secrets to success, steps to fulfillment, experiences that will thrill, and an image that will impress. But, all of the things that sin seems to be are actually the part of the lure that hides the hook, the point of which is tipped with soul poison.

a. Sin is rebellion against God.

I know that when I say that, it is natural for many of you to think that sin is your friend, your good times, your helper and that God is the monomaniac and tyrant who is threatened by his own creation having a good time, when in reality God is the true lover of your soul and provider of your soul's delight. We rebel against the true lover of our soul and the true champion of our joy when we sin.

b. Sin is the perversion of that which is good.

God made everything good. Sin perverts everything, even as it appears to be pleasing. The scary thing is that perversion is appealing to us. It looks like something that we want because our hearts are warped by it.

c. Sin is empty

Sin leaves you isolated, lonely, empty, broken, used by it and by others, even while you are using others. It is dirty, guilty, angry, depressing, bitter, deceitful and hopeless.

d. Sin is irrational.

The field of psychology is driven in large measure by trying to find causality and rationality for certain destructive and anti-social behaviors. It sounds impressive with labels, definition and even descriptions of the patterns of these destructive habits, but the bottom line is that sin does not make rational sense. Sin is extremely stupid, and that, by the way is a very legitimate use of the word stupid. It is why I say, "sin causes brain damage." If you are going to engage successfully in your fight with temptation, you need to use correct language. Psychological terms are not helpful, because they attempt to label things as a disease, giving you the impression that there is a pill for that, or therapy for that. That is why there is no end to the pills that you can take or the therapy sessions for you to attend, because psychology cannot cure the heart of sin. Sin is not a disease, though it has symptoms that look like it at times. Sin is the condition of our hearts that is in rebellion against God, because we think that we know more than God does, which is

about the stupidest thing that you could ever imagine. This means that temptation, which is the solicitation for you to sin, is nothing more than a double-decker bus to Stupidville.

e. **You never sin alone.**

What you do always affects others.

2. **The goal of the Tempter is to destroy you.** (James 1.14-15)

a. **Satan wants to capture your heart and never let go.**

Do you see what James is saying in v.14? Temptation is not primarily what happens outside of me, it is what happens inside of me. Whatever is being offered is making a promise that appeals to something in my heart. Satan is relentless and patient, calculating and conniving in his pursuit of taking over your whole being.

b. **Satan wants you to sin and to keep on sinning.**

This desire gives birth to sin (15), not as a one time event, but as a practice, a habit, a crutch, a helper, a friend, an escape, a way of life, an identity, a master, a thief, and finally a tyrant.

c. **Satan wants to destroy your life.** (15b)

Only then, you may realize that sin is a tyrant. It is an evil, murderous tyrant. It despises you, and uses you, mocks you, even as it continues to lie to you about God. Satan lies to you that you deserve to sin, and then after trapping you lies to you that you cannot get out. Why is Satan so intent on destroying you? Please understand. He does not care about you. He seeks your destruction because his hatred of God and everything good, knows no bounds. He is so consumed with hatred for God that he will seek to destroy everything and everyone that God loves in order to inflict as much pain upon God as he can. You're nothing to him because you are so much to God.

3. **You are no match for sin.**

a. **Sin captured the heart of Satan.**

He is both tyrant and tyrannized. He is both deceiver and deceived. He is blinder and blind. Sin captured Adam and Eve. Samson and David could not stand on their own. Neither can we. We dare not pretend that we are made of spiritual Teflon, and that we have risen to a level where temptation is no longer an issue.

b. **Sin destroyed everything good and beautiful in this world.**

If sin is so destructive that it can invade every aspect of life in this world, I must respect its power and fear its consequences.

- c. **Sin has destroyed the lives of many people around you.**

Are you different?

- d. **Fighting sin is a group effort.**

You need brothers and sisters because you are prone to believe yourself instead of believing God. You are prone to put too much security in your discipline and not enough hope in Christ. You have blind-spots that you are not even aware of and weaknesses that you cannot see.

Therefore, temptation is a serious issue because it is a lie, in the form of a promise that is hiding from you its true intent of destroying you and everyone and everything good that is in in your life. It is seeking to bring upon you and through you, devastation and destruction of unspeakable anguish.

That was the introduction. Ok? Realizing the nature of sin (toxic), the goal of the Tempter (utter destruction of your life) and the fact that you are no match for sin, we are now ready to look at our text and see how Christ responded to temptation and what we must apply from this. **3 strategies from Christ for fighting temptation:**

- 1. **Be aware of your weakness.**

- a. **Physical exhaustion**

When you are tired, hungry, thirsty, weak, sick and diseased you are very prone to temptation. Your enemy does not care that you are in a weakened condition. He has no mercy. Your weakened condition makes you a prime target.

- b. **Idleness/Boredom/Loneliness**

“Well, since no one is home tonight, and I don’t have anything to do, I’m just going to sit down for a while and channel surf, or just see what’s out there on the internet, or better yet, I’m going to browse through the local video store and see if there is anything that I would like to rent.” Are you kidding me? Seriously, it would be better for you to go into the bathroom and drink all of the water in the toilet.

- c. **Stress**

When you are under stress, it is easy to feel sorry for yourself and convince yourself that it is not fair that you are under pressure. Therefore, you deserve better than this, or, you deserve some time to chill or you deserve a break, you deserve some understanding and you deserve some space and cooperation and sympathy right? But, does that happen? Is it not a law of nature that the more pressure you are under with a project at home is in direct proportion to the amount of chaos and destruction that your kids will produce? All

you want to do is simply finish this job when they decide that its time to re-enact Mario Kart in your family room – right? And right in front of them you have an out of body experience and morph into a creature from the Andromeda Galaxy.

d. Ease/Prosperity/Success

These are times when we are so tempted to have confidence in ourselves.

e. Flattery

We are so vulnerable to believing flattering things about us, especially by someone who tells us what we want to hear. If you are in an on-line relationship with someone from your past, or with someone from work, and they are “sympathetic” to you, and “sensitive” to you and “supportive” of you, then, let me guess, you have found your soul-mate – right? And in comparison your spouse looks disgusting. You are being played!

f. Disappointment/injustice

But, perhaps our greatest times of vulnerability is when we have been let down by others, or we perceive that we have been let down. As soon as we think that we deserve better, that we are entitled to more, that we have been cheated, then we are so vulnerable to taking short-cuts, which is the power of temptation. Look back at these and see how many of them were experienced by Christ. He was physically exhausted, lonely, under great stress, just experienced a great moment at his baptism, is exposed to flattery from Satan, and a sense of injustice in the opening temptation. Therefore...

2. **Be aware of your enemy.**

a. **Always look for the sales pitch.**

I think that most of you recognize that advertising is designed to make you dissatisfied. Temptation is the same thing. It is designed to make you want something and it will appeal to your senses in an attempt to overrule and overwhelm your brain. When a salesperson is talking with you, you need to look for the pitch.

i. What is being offered?

What is the promise? What is this temptation offering to me? Pleasure? Comfort? Pride? Position? Wealth? Power? Envy? Prestige? In the temptation of Christ, Satan was offering him instant gratification and glory. Is that appealing? Sure! What

ii. What is the price?

For Christ, the price was his trust, and our salvation. What will this temptation cost you? What will giving in to this temptation cost your family? How will giving into this

temptation reflect upon the gospel, Christ, and our church? Look at the price and total it all up.

b. Identify the hook.

The hook is the promise that God will not really give you what you need or want. The hook is the lie that there is satisfaction and contentment outside of God. The hook is the idea that God cannot be trusted and that he has not worth your perseverance. The hook is that God cannot fill you and that somehow he is really not enough.

- iii. You can have it now, why wait on God?
- iv. You deserve it, God is not being fair
- v. No one will ever know, others get away with it
- vi. Everybody does it, why should you be deprived.
- viii. You can quit anytime. You are in charge.

1. Fight lies with lethal faith and white-hot worship!

i. Compare the promise-maker

Christ compared the promises of Satan to the promises of God. In other words, who are you going to listen to? The Tempter has come to steal, kill and destroy. He wants you to die so that he might exact some revenge upon God. Look at what he is. Do not be deceived as to his intentions. Compare him to God. You have a Savior who died, that you might live. You have a King who is sharing his kingdom with you. Seriously, who can you trust?

This is why you and I need to look daily at the cross. When I consider the cross, I realize that my sin and this temptation to sin is a big deal to God. I also realize that I have a King who is so committed to me and so faithful to me and so loving of me and so accepting of me and so caring for me, and so delighting in me and so treasuring of me, even though I am weak, inconsistent, inconsiderate, forgetful and ungrateful. Yet, he loves me. I need to consider that and when I do, I am overwhelmed by it and I desire to love God in return because he is worthy of my love, not simply because I do not want to get into trouble. So, how do I consider that? That is why we must gather together to worship. White-hot corporate worship is high-octane fuel for our joy and delight in God. A soul that has gorged on God has no appetite for the Tempter. White-hot worship gorges my soul on God. We gather with brothers and sisters in order to make much of God by reviewing his worth, his glory, his attributes, his acts, his promises, and his plans. As we do this in singing the word and praying the word and preaching the word and responding to the word, it makes the promises of Satan look pathetic in comparison. Satan cannot match God.

j. Compare the promise

How does what are you being offered by temptation compare to what you are being offered by God? (Psalm 84.11) This is where you fight fire with fire. Satan pretends to offer you the world, but his promises cannot stack up against the promises of God. However, if you are not listening to the promises of God, then the promises of Satan sound pretty good. In fact, if you are not listening to the promises of God, then you have no defense against the promises of Satan. You are toast! Again, that is why we must be under the influence of the Word of God in the context of the people of God. God raised up the church for your battle against temptation. We observe communion together, not simply as an act of obedience, but as an expression of our community to live for one another, to care for one another, to watch out for one another, to reflect Christ to one another. I am blessed and sustained with sanctifying and strengthening grace from my participation within the life of the body. The Word that we hear fills us with promises that feed our soul with delight. The Word that we read is used by the Spirit to encourage us, to warn us, to correct us, to sustain us and to strengthen us. I must have God's word filling my mind. The memorization of God's word is the greatest weapon for a believer against temptation.

This is exactly what Jesus did. He fought the promises of Satan with the promises of God's Word. In fact, it does not appear that Christ thought long and hard about Satan's promises, but did not give room for them.

k. Compare the price

There are plenty of people in this room who have made financial decisions that were driven by a dream that became a nightmare. The actual cost became such a burden that the initial thrill of the purchase of that house, or car or timeshare or 2nd mortgage became an albatross. The actual price of giving into temptation goes far beyond money. This is what the book of Proverbs helps us do. It takes us down the road and tells us of the consequences that we are tempted to ignore. Role play the conversation that you will have with your daughter when you explain to her that you do not have enough money to pay for her wedding because you spent it all on drugs, or booze, or you gambled it away. Imagine how the conversation will go with your co-workers who you tried to tell about Jesus, when they ask you why you are leaving your husband for that old flame from high school. Think of Christmas Eve, and being alone because your family cannot trust you to stay sober. Compare the price that you will pay and will keep paying and keep paying for the temptation to the price that Christ paid.

l. Compare the outcome

Look at the finish line. Look at who is there. At the end, what will you have wished that you did? Read 1 Corinthians 10.13. Like Captain Ahab and Moby Dick, you are locked into a war with temptation until the day you die. Unlike Captain Ahab, because of Christ's obedience, perseverance, (sinless life) and substitutionary death, if you have trusted in Christ, ultimate victory is yours. He set the mark, we keep the pace.