

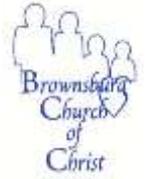
The God Filled Do Not Live By Bread Alone

Brownsburg Church of Christ

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April 27, 2014

PM Assembly



Introduction:

The die is cast. The battle lines are drawn. You have entered Christ and Satan doesn't like it. Like Jesus, you have been baptized and declared the child of God (cf. **Matthew 3:16-17**), and the enemy has been aroused. Do not think the battle is over. In fact, it is just beginning and our enemy is merciless. He does not care who you are, where you are, or what you are doing, he will tempt you, pushing you to stumble and fall so he can devour you as a lion devours its prey (cf. **I Peter 5:8**). And yet, our Master, our Hero, Our Savior has gone through these exact same battles. He has fought on these battlefields and won. In **Matthew 4:1-11**, Satan attacked Jesus on three battle fronts. But our Captain and King stormed the field, took it, and vanquished the foe. Let's examine the first skirmish in this battle.

Discussion:

I. The Battlefield: A Battle for Reliance

- A. In **Matthew 4:1-4**, Jesus has been devoting Himself to God. He has been engaged in utter spiritual devotion, ignoring the flesh, fasting for 40 days. The text offers what is likely one of the greatest understatements of all time. After 40 days of not eating, Jesus, it says, was hungry. Ya think?
- B. Satan comes with a simple request. "Prove you are the Son of God by turning these stones into bread." The battle front is subtle, but Jesus' response helps us grasp what Satan's real end game is. Jesus said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God" (ESV). The issue is not, as many suggest, simply using miraculous power to fulfill a physical need. The issue is where does life come from? Does it come from bread or does it come from God? The issue is reliance; the issue is dependence. Jesus has been relying on God for 40 days. Right out of the starting gate, Satan attacks the very foundation. Will you rely on God or will you rely on bread for life.
- C. Satan attacks us on this battlefield daily. As with all the battlefronts, the real battleground is around God. Who is our God? Who or what do we allow to be God in our lives? The fact is our God is the one we depend on, the one we rely on for life. Consider the example of Ahaziah in **II Kings 1:1-4**. When he fell through the lattice in his upper chamber and lay sick, who did he turn to and rely on for healing? He sent to inquire of Baal-zebub. God sent Elijah to ask, "Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are sending to inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron?" (ESV). While bread may not seem to be on the same plain as Baal-zebub, this is the exact same battleground. Jesus hasn't eaten in 40 days and He's hungry. Going without food for that long can even put life in danger. Satan wants Jesus to seek life somewhere other than God. Is it because there is no God in heaven that He would turn to the stones around Him and make bread?
- D. For us, the issue might also be bread, or too much of it as we are tempted to pursue gluttony. The issue might be lust, pornography, and sexual immorality. The issue might be alcohol or drugs. It might be spending or gambling. It might be enmeshed relationships, overworking, or over exercising. The battleground is where do we turn to have life? To what do we inquire when stress, fear, depression hits? Who is our God? On who or what do we rely?

II. The Attack.

A. Desire

1. Satan began with desire. As we learned in our overview lesson, Satan uses our desires against us. Why? Because desire by itself is not wrong. Was it wrong for Jesus to desire food? No, and especially not after fasting for 40 days.
2. We have plenty of healthy desires: hunger, thirst, meaning, emotional fulfillment, sexual fulfillment, relationship, respect, appreciation, accomplishment, belonging, wisdom, comfort, peace, safety, and on the list could go. These desires are not wrong. But Satan uses them to attack us. He gets a foothold through our desires, promising to be able to fulfill our desires in more fulfilling and pleasurable ways. As he did with Eve, to whom Satan showed the one forbidden tree as good for food, a delight to the eyes, and desirable to make one wise (**Genesis 3:6**), Satan blurs our vision with desires and deceives us with them.

B. Doubt

1. Notice Satan's first words: "If you are the Son of God..." (**Matthew 4:3**, ESV). God had just declared Jesus to be His beloved Son (**Matthew 3:17**), but Satan puts a seed of doubt in it. "If..." "Are you really the Son

of God? I mean, Jesus, if you were really the Son of God, would He let You suffer like this? Surely the Son of God would never go hungry?"

2. Satan uses this same attack on us. Are you a child of God? Is God really there for you? Surely God just wants you to be happy. Surely He would never expect you to suffer by foregoing one of your desires. Surely, if God were really looking out for you as one of His children you wouldn't be hungry, lonely, poor, uncomfortable, unhappy, etc.
3. Satan wants to sow a seed of doubt. Maybe God isn't looking out for us after all. Maybe He doesn't have our best interests at heart. Maybe He is actually holding out on us and withholding something great from us. Isn't that exactly what Satan did with Eve in the beginning? In **Genesis 3:4-5**, he told her, "You won't die if you eat from the tree, you'll be like God. He's holding out on you. He's trying to keep you from enjoying everything you could enjoy if you followed my way. He is trying to hold you down and keep you back." And that is what Satan does to us. He sows doubt.

C. Death

1. When Jesus brings up *living* by God's Word and not bread, we recognize that death is on the line. Satan wants Jesus to believe He is going to die if He doesn't turn a stone into bread. Of course, what is really amazing is that after fasting for 40 days, Satan really is dealing with a need that could cost Jesus His life. At some point, all things being equal, Jesus needs to eat or He will die. But Jesus has been putting His faith in God and He isn't going to change now.
2. This is exactly what Satan does to us. He convinces us that we are going to die, or suffer a fate worse than death, if we don't follow His plan. It would be worse than death for someone else to get away with something, so we are tempted to seek revenge. It would be worse than death, if we missed out on some enjoyment, so we turn to gluttony, pornography, immorality. People who have become compulsive, obsessive, and addicted to their sins know this feeling well. If I don't get a drink, I'm going to die. If I don't have a smoke, I'm going to die. If I don't have sex, I'm going to die. If I don't get to buy _____, I'm going to die.
3. **Galatians 5:17** pictures this as a battle between the flesh and the spirit. **Ephesians 2:3** talks about the time we spent living in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the mind and body. This is very literally happening. When we endure stress, fear, depression, anger, loneliness, our body's chemical makeup is thrown out of balance. When we do something that excites the pleasure and peace centers, our body secretes chemicals and hormones that help bring us back to a balance of peace and contentment—endorphins, dopamine, serotonin. In those instances, our mind and our body remembers. And so many of us might say the following: "When I'm sad, eating a gallon of ice cream brings balance." "When I'm angry, yelling and clamoring brings balance." "When I'm lonely, looking at pornography brings balance." After you engage, you feel intense guilt and commit to never doing that again. But even in that, the guilt and shame cause negative feelings to increase, and the body remembers what brought balance last time. The desire increases as it tells you you are going to die or worse if you don't get that balance back. This is the attack and Satan uses it with everyone.

III. The Defense

A. Truth

1. Satan attacked Jesus with doubt, Jesus defended with truth. He went right back to God's Word, quoted **Deuteronomy 8:3** and said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God" (ESV). **John 8:32** says truth sets us free. Jesus was set free from this temptation because He knew the truth and let it guide Him.
2. The truth is life comes from God. Even in His particular case where at some point He would need to eat bread to stay alive, Jesus understood it is not "bread alone." In other words, if He put His faith in bread to keep Him alive, He would die. Since the bread comes from the hand of God, He would depend on God to feed Him. This is like David in the cave of Engedi (**1 Samuel 24:1-7**). Saul was in his grasp and his men were telling him it was a sign from God. But David knew God's truth—do not raise your hand against God's anointed. No matter David's desire for peace and safety, he knew the truth. Peace and safety come from God, not from killing our enemies. So, he needed to follow God's will and let God bring about the peace and safety in His way and in His time.
3. There is only one way to know the truth. Get into God's Word. Be in it all the time. If you wait until the battle lines are drawn, it may be too late for you. Anchor in God's truth daily.

B. Remember

1. Jesus quoted **Deuteronomy 8:3**. The context of this quote helps us see another aspect of our defense. As Jesus had been in the wilderness for 40 days, Israel had been in the wilderness for 40 years, tested by

God to see if they would keep His commandments. God let them hunger, and then gave them manna. As the text goes on, God talks to them about when they are in the land and are no longer hungry. He says, "Take care lest you forget the LORD your God by not keeping his commandments and his rules and his statutes, which I command you today, lest when you have eaten and are full...then your heart be lifted up, and you forget the LORD your God...Beware lest you say in your heart, 'My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth'" (**Deuteronomy 8:11-12, 14, 17**, ESV).

2. Who got Israel through the 40 years of the wilderness wanderings, delivering them from Egypt with powerful hand, feeding them, keeping them clothed, preserving them from scorpions and serpents? God did that. Who preserved Jesus during His 40 days of fasting in the wilderness? God did that. Who sent His Son to die for us and deliver us from our sins? God did that. Who has been feeding us and providing for us and caring for us? God did that. By whom do we live and move and have our very being? By God.
3. Meditate on God's power and blessing. Remembering what God has done for us helps us hang on to the truth that God is not picking on us and not holding out on us.

C. Depend

1. The fact is, when we spent our time pursuing the passions of our flesh, our flesh was trained to pursue sin. That is hard to overcome. We have to stop the cycle. We have to train our flesh to find comfort in new ways. In those moments, we must depend on God. That is exactly what Jesus did. Quoting **Deuteronomy 8:3** was not simply a magic mantra that fixed everything. It was the truth that Jesus depended on.
2. If we want to overcome, at some point we have to make the decision to depend on, to rely on God. We can't feed the habits that lead us to sin. If Jesus had a leg up on us in this battle, it is simply that He had never gone down the path of sin before. His mind and body had not been trained to pursue it. He had no muscle memory, body memory, or mind memory of coming back into a balanced state by pursuing sinful pleasures. But all of us have. Therefore, for us, depending on God is likely going to take a bit more effort and direct help. For us, it will look more like when Jesus was in Gethsemane the night of His betrayal. In **Matthew 26:37ff**, Jesus took Peter, James, and John with Him to pray about the temptation that was coming against Him. While depending on God will start with the kind of prayer, fasting, meditation, and study we've already discussed in our previous lesson, we need to remember that depending on God will, for us, mean depending on God's people. We need our inner circle to take with us. We need the inner circle we can call on when the battle is raging. Sadly, Jesus' inner circle let Him down, but it still shows the importance of having the people to turn to for help. As **Ecclesiastes 4:9-12** says, a threefold cord is not easily broken. As we are learning self-control, we may have to depend on God by depending on other control. Who do you have to help you depend on God?
3. **I Corinthians 10:12** is also helpful here. Since we have become slaves to sin and trained our bodies and minds to pursue sin (cf. **Romans 6:16**), we need to understand we are fighting a stacked battle. We may have overcome on rare occasions, but if we keep simply trying to face temptation and sin, we'll fall. Paul's point in **I Corinthians 10** is for all those Christians who thought they had so much knowledge and strength that they could eat in an idol's temple without succumbing to idolatry to learn no one is that strong. Too many of us depend on ourselves. We want to prove to God we can handle something so we set it in front of us to prove how well we can stand. Depending on God does not mean hanging out with temptation to prove how strong you are, it means asking, "How would I act if I knew I can't possibly when this battle?" As many in the addiction recovery world say, people who hang out in barber shops eventually get their hair cut. What does that mean? It means if you don't want to get a haircut, put a boundary around the barbershop and stay away. If you don't want to worship idols, stay out of the idols' temples. If you don't want to drink, quit spending happy hour with your friends in the bar. If you don't want to look at pornography, put restrictive software on your computer or you may just have to stay off the computer. If you don't want to lust, you may just have to turn off your tv. If you don't want to pursue gluttony, you may have to stay away from all-you-can-eat buffets. I understand we will never completely remove temptation from this life. But that doesn't mean we have to waltz into its very midst. Depending on God often means putting up boundaries that keep us away from what we know is going to be a temptation.

D. Delight

1. Jesus' response includes a very subtle, yet profound point. It is the point of delight. As seen in **John 4:34**, Jesus' food was to do God's will. Jesus' delight is not bread. His delight is God. So, when Satan tempted Him with bread, it was easier to turn down. In **Deuteronomy 8:10**, Moses encourages the Israelites to

bless God for the good gifts He has given them. This is a form of delight. Then by contrast, in **Deuteronomy 8:19**, he warns them against forgetting the LORD and worshiping other gods. In other words, delight in Yahweh, not other supposed gods.

2. Sadly, if you're like me, you have too often delighted in sin. Oh sure, we are committed to avoid sin, but wouldn't it be fun if we could just _____, and the fantasizing and delight begins. How many times have you imagined what it would be like to completely tell off that someone who bugs you, whether spouse, parent, employer, employee, or brother and sister in Christ? Have you ever daydreamed about the way to get back at the person who did something to you? Have you ever fantasized what it would be like to have a meeting with that actor or actress that you think is so dreamy, even though you've already got a spouse? "Oh, I would never do what I fantasize about. I'm a Christian. Christians don't do that." The problem is, the more you delight in it, the more you'll see your walls of defense crumbling down. The next thing you know you are committing the sin and wondering how you got there.
3. A very dangerous form of this negative delight is what I've heard called euphoric recall. Let's face it, most sins are pleasurable. If they weren't, they wouldn't be tempting. One of Satan's attacks through desire is skewing our recall of the sin. We can easily filter out the negative consequences and problems that went along with it and then fantasize and delight in the pleasurable parts. That is euphoric recall. The defense against this is to "think through the drink." Remember the truly negative parts about the sin or the negative consequences of going back to the sin. But further, delight in your God experiences. Turn your mind to remember the joyful times with God's things that you have had. Find delight there.
4. We must learn to delight in God. When we can say along with Asaph in **Psalm 73:25**, "Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you" (ESV), we will have built the largest defense we possibly can against temptation and sin.

IV. The Victory

- A. Jesus's response actually tells us something about this victory. Notice He essentially says, "Man shall live by every word that comes from the mouth of God." We know that sin leads to death (cf. **James 1:14-15**). When I sin, I have pursued my desire and caused my own death. However, when I achieve life, where did that come from? It came from the mouth of God.
- B. When I've had victory, what must I do? Give thanks to God whose empowering hand provided the way of escape that allowed me to endure in the face of temptation (cf. **I Corinthians 10:13**). As the children of Israel glorified God when they crossed the Red Sea (cf. **Exodus 15**), as the Israelites under Deborah and Barak sang praise to God when they defeated the Canaanites (cf. **Judges 5**), as David gave God the glory when he defeated Goliath (cf. **I Samuel 17:46**), we must glorify God when we have won the victory.
- C. Let us never take our victories to God asking if He saw what we did for Him. Rather, let us bring our victories to God's throne and express our thanks for His strength and power.

Conclusion:

The God Filled do not live by bread alone. We live by God's strength, power, might, love, and Word. He is our sustainer. He is our life-giver. It is by Him that we live, move, and have our very being. May we always delight in Him and gain the victory over temptation and sin that He offers if we will simply learn to depend and rely on Him. Who do you depend on?