

Christ Crushes the Tempter

✠ By persevering in the Word (vv.1-4)

✠ By worshiping the Lord (vv.5-13)

In the Name of Jesus the Champion of our bodies and souls, dear fellow soldiers of the cross:

Maybe you'd rather forget it, but every one of us at some time or other has felt *crushed*. When you're *crushed* it feels as if your life is ending, that there's no point in going on, all is lost. When you're *crushed* in spirit, it's hard to imagine anything good. But we live in a broken world where *crushed* spirits like ours really need this season of Lent. *Lent* comes from an old English word for spring: *lengten*, when days grow longer. The forty days of Lent from Ash Wednesday to Easter, commemorate the temptation of Christ in today's Gospel as the church has been celebrating for 1400 years. *Crushed* under the weight of guilt, we press on through this Lenten season to total victory when Christ our Champion *crushed* our enemies of sin, death, and hell. Jesus' victory makes this solemn season of Lent a season of hope. We say with King David the psalmist, "***The LORD saves those who are crushed in spirit.***" And David again in repentance, "***A broken and a contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.***" (Psalm 34:18; 51:17 NIV84)

Why such hope for sinners? God wants you armed and dangerous to the devil, ready to fight the good fight of faith day-by-day. All because at the beginning **Christ Crushes the Tempter....**

✠ By persevering in the Word (vv.1-4)

In today's First Lesson we heard how that shepherd boy David beat Goliath in the Name of the LORD God of Israel. God's Name is His reputation as the Savior God. Since the whole Bible lays out God's Name-reputation, God's Word, the Bible has been called "the unfolded Name of God." That was David's amazing confidence and power. He stepped out to fight the Philistine. No one could imagine a shepherd boy with slingstone toppling a 9.5' tall giant, then cutting off his head with his own sword. But David went into that battle trusting in a greater weapon than a sword or a stone.

We're about to see our dear Savior and Champion Jesus Christ face off with hell's worst, the devil (liar) or Satan (enemy). The three temptations Luke lays out here match up with what Martin Luther noted as life's temptations according to age. Ever think of this? Youth struggles with hormones and therefore sex and identity. Changing your body type from what God made you only makes it worse, as a growing number of American youth are shouting how. Mid-life crisis? Wrapped up in fears about position and status. Elderly "golden years"? Like the 60's hippies, "Bread, man!" They meant money.

So see our Savior in His State of Humiliation, purposely giving up the full use of his power as God, in order to suffer in our place and win on our behalf. Luke reports Jesus just coming from his baptism, when the Holy Spirit descended on him like a dove and the Father's voice from heaven: "***You are my Son, whom I love. I am well pleased with you.***" At about thirty years old ***Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, where he was tempted by the devil for forty days. He did not eat anything during those days. When they came to an end he was hungry.*** (EHV) *Hungry* after forty days with no food? Wouldn't we all be "hangry"? Jesus calmly fights.

See how vicious our enemy from hell is? The devil said to Jesus, "***If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread.***" If Jesus ever did one miracle only for himself, he would be selfish, a selfish sinner like us. Many elderly Christians fall into sin living together unmarried for money, the fear of having enough – rather than listening and fighting temptation like Jesus. Fact is, in all Jesus miracles, not once did he ever do a miracle for himself. He humbled Himself all to the glory of God the Father.

Any guys remember a bully you couldn't reach because your arms were too short? He just laid his hand on your head to keep you away. Every swing was all air. Is Jesus just swinging here? Jesus answered Satan, ***"It is written: man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God."*** But notice Satan has no way to answer that. He tries to ignore it and move on to another temptation.

"It is written..." What kind of weapon is that? Looks and sounds totally inadequate. Yet ***the sword of the Spirit is the Word of God*** (Ephesians 6:17 EHV), ***sharper than a double-edged sword***, it cuts deep into ***soul and spirit, joints and marrow***, judging ***the thoughts and attitudes of the heart***. (Hebrews 4:12 NIV84) Psalm 149 puts this weapon in our hands: ***"May high praise of God be in their throats, and a two-edged sword in their hands, to inflict vengeance on the nations and punishments on the peoples, to bind their kings with chains and their nobles with iron shackles, to carry out the judgment written against them. This is the glory of all his favored people. Praise the LORD."*** (Psalm 149:6-9 EHV)

Satan here reminds me of ghost armies in World War II. Both Allies and Nazis used inflatable tanks to fool the enemy. You couldn't tell from the air, but get close on the ground and a bayonet will do. Satan for all his bluster is nothing more than hell's inflatable. Don't misunderstand. He's filled with deadly gas to destroy your soul if you listen. But ***the sword of the spirit, "It is written..."*** Crushes!

✠ By worshiping the Lord (vv.5-13)

It's as if Satan uses an inflatable airplane or just a balloon to take Jesus on the high mountain and tempt him with an easy way to gain control of the whole world. The devil told him ***"I will give you all this power and glory of these kingdoms, because it had been entrusted to me, and I can give it to anyone I want. So, if you will worship me, it will all be yours."*** But Jesus pops Satan's balloon again, ***"It is written: 'You shall worship the Lord your God and serve him only.'"*** Paul reminds us, ***"All things are yours"*** (1 Corinthians 3:21) because all things belong to God. Midlife crisis? ***"It is written...."***

Imagine another inflatable tempting Jesus about relationships. Satan takes Jesus to the pinnacle of the temple high above the street. ***"If you are the son of God, throw yourself down from here."*** Now Satan quotes the Bible poorly. ***"Because it is written: 'He will command his angels concerning you to protect you. And they will lift you up in their hands so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'"*** What should you do when the enemy tries to use God's Word on youth? ***God will take care of you, so go ahead and live with this person or marry them, even if they're not a believer. God will fix it.***

Christ Crushes the Tempter, first by persevering in the Word, and then by worshiping the Lord. He pops Satan's big blustering tank: ***"It says: 'You shall not test the Lord your God.'"*** There's only one place in the Bible where God ever says we should test him. Do you know it? ***"Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it."*** (Malachi 3:10 NIV84) That ***test*** that shows trust. Satan tempts Jesus to try to test the Lord as if God is uncaring, unkind, and totally clueless how you feel in your relationships.

Persevere in the Word. Worship the Lord only. See Jesus fully in control at God's right hand, no matter what kind of trouble keeps swirling around us, as anxiety tries to take over your heart. The devil still seethes in rage against us ***because he knows that his time is short***. (Revelation 12:12) Christ is coming soon on Judgment Day. Meanwhile, the same weapon that Jesus chose to use to demonstrate its power, he puts into your mouth and in your hand like a sword against Satan. ***"The sword of the Spirit is the Word of God."*** Jesus is more than just an example. As our Champion, he has already won the victory in our place. As surely as we enjoy freedom from brave soldiers' ultimate sacrifice, so much more can we glory in Christ. He not only sacrificed his life and death on the cross, but he took his life back again by rising from the dead. Christ conquered sin, death, and hell. And because **Christ Crushes the Tempter** in the desert, we can face Satan and his temptations unafraid. Be confident because our Champion has already won the victory. Be encouraged. Be victorious in Christ and His victories for you. Amen.