**It Is Written**

Based on [Genesis 3:1-21](http://biblia.com/books/esv/Ge3.1-21) and [Matthew 4:1-11](http://biblia.com/books/esv/Mt4.1-11)

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First Sunday of Lent

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Lent begins with the Gospel of Jesus fasting forty days and forty nights in the wilderness. At the end of this time, Jesus being hungry and weak, was confronted by Satan, the tempter, who always waits for an opportune time to tempt the faithful. It is when our bodies, our senses, our minds are weak and suffering that the devil especially pushes for a foothold.

Although he was hungry and weak, Jesus was prepared for battle. He was prepared, not because he is the Son of God, not because he has such great strength and willpower, not because he was without sin…though these all are true. Jesus was prepared because he was equipped with the written word of God. If anyone could get into an argument with Satan and win, it would be Jesus. If anyone could rely on his own authority to send Satan away, it would be the Son of God. But in response to each temptation, Jesus responds by quoting the Bible: “It is written, “It is written, “It is written.

Today we will consider the central place of the written Word of God holds in the life of the Christian. **First, *without* a written word of God, we are left in the hands of Satan and sin and we will fall.** Second, *with* a written word of God, we are equipped to overcome these enemies and send them away. And third, this written word of God, recorded in the Bible, is to be written on our hearts.

First, without a written Word of God, we will fall. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth, all things visible and invisible. He created Adam and Eve in his image, placed them in paradise and gave them things to do. He gave them dominion, authority over all creatures and creation itself. He had Adam name the animals. He commanded Adam and Eve to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. He gave them every tree in the garden for food, but forbid them this-that they were not to eat the fruit of the tree in the midst of the garden. The day they would do so, they would surely die. And then, Satan comes to tempt them.

Satan is not a courageous warrior who openly goes to battle. He is a tempter. He is a liar and a twister of God’s Word. He is a counterfeit, a confidence man, a false prophet and a snake. And so it’s really important to understand how he tempted Eve. He didn’t say, “Don’t listen to God, listen to me instead.” In that case she would have said, “No way.” He said, “I don’t think you heard God right. Let me tell you what God is *actually* saying to you.”

An illustration: If a stranger wanted to lure a child away from their parents he might say “come with me.” The willing and obedient child is of course taught to say “**My parents told me not to go with strangers**.” The stranger would be pretty naive to respond, “**Don’t listen to your parents; listen to me instead.**” That’s a red flag even the simplest child would recognize. Instead, a crafty stranger would say to the obedient child, “Oh, but you can come with me, because I have something your parents would want you to have.” “Oh what is it?” “It’s a surprise and they know what it is…just come with me, they will be so happy when you do.”

A scary example, but no less frightening than how Satan tempts Eve. The first four words Satan says to her, “Did God actually say…” Did God actually say, “You shall not eat any fruit in the garden.” Eve said, “**No, He said we couldn’t eat of just one tree, nor shall we touch it, or we would die…the rest are fine**.” Satan says, you will not die, but God knows you will be like him, knowing good and evil.”

Satan begins by misquoting the written word of God, “Did God actually say don’t eat of any tree.” Of course He didn’t, but Satan twists God’s Word, and that’s no surprise. But, that’s when the child of God is to set the record straight with God’s clear teaching. But here’s where things begin to go wrong. Eve didn’t have God’s word written down. I don’t just mean she didn’t have a bible, which is true, but she didn’t have God’s words *written on her heart*. Because she misquotes God, “You are not to eat of the fruit in the midst of the Garden, ***neither shall you touch it lest you die***.” God never said don’t touch it, but she adds to God’s Word.

It might seem like a little thing, harmless even. “So she’s convinced she’s not supposed to touch it either. So what? She would have done well to stay away from that forbidden tree it altogether.” But it’s never harmless to say “This is the Word of the Lord” to something that’s not. Deuteronomy 4:2 says, “**You shall not add to the word that I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God that I command.”** In her heart she had God’s Command wrong. She couldn’t even rebuke the devil with God’s word without also contributing to the twisting of it. But Jesus shows us how it’s done.

Second, the written word of God equips us to stop God’s enemies. “Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” Whenever someone confesses false doctrine, or suggests that you break God’s commands it is Satan at work (Matt. 16:23). He is a liar and the father of lies (John 8:44). So yes, if your loving grandfather or your rebellious teenager refuses to go to church--saying he doesn’t believe in all that church stuff--that is Satan at work in his words. I am not saying he knows it or is conscious of it, or that he is actively conspiring with the devil to undermine God’s truth; I’m just saying just saying if its false doctrine and he has been deceived by a lie, and if it’s a lie, it is begotten of the father of lies.

Have this mind among you. This is a spiritual battle, and there are evil forces at work. And they that aren’t trying to have an honest conversation about the word of God, they are trying to trick and deceive. Anyone who commits sin is a slave to sin and in bondage to the devil. Don’t think the devil is going to play fair. Don’t reason with Satan, he will deceive you; don’t bargain with Satan, he will take advantage of you. When you hear Satan’s lies coming from anyone’s lips; respond with the written word of God.

Jesus didn’t use his own power to overcome Satan in the wilderness. He deferred everything to the ***written*** word of God. Satan says “You’re hungry, turn these stones to bread and eat.” Jesus says yes I can, but **it is written**, “Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.” Satan says, “Jump off the Temple, it is written that God will protect you no matter what.” Jesus says, that’s true, but **it is also written**, “Do not put the Lord to the test”. Satan says, “Look at the world, you love these people don’t you. You would die for them, wouldn’t you. Well they are under my spell of temptation and in bondage to sin and they listen to me. There is my kingdom and they are a part of it, and I will give it to you, just bow down and worship me.” Jesus says I do love them and want to rule them as their loving Lord, but “**It is written**, Worship the Lord your God, and Him only shall you serve.”

Jesus *can* turn stones to bread; but not at Satan’s bidding. In fact on the night he was betrayed, he obey’s the will of his Father—not turning stones into bread, but turning bread into his body for the forgiveness of sins. Jesus *could* jump off the temple--or recklessly put himself in some other danger to prove he is the Son of God--but not at Satan’s provocation. Instead he obeys his Father’s will and waits in the wilderness where God sent Him. And his Father who is faithful to his Word to protect him, sends angels to minister to Him. Jesus *can* have all the kingdoms of the world and their power, but not at Satan’s bidding. Instead, he reclaims the world for his own according to God’s plan already written down. He wins the world by giving his life on the cross to purchase it from the curse of the Law and the tempter’s spell. And he will come again on the last day to reclaim this world that is rightfully his, according to his Father’s will. What a heroic savior we have!

Third, we are equipped to battle Satan in this world of sin, when we have the written word of God in our hearts. Proverbs 7:2-3 says, “**Obey my commands and live; keep my teaching as the apple of your eye; Bind them on your fingers; write them on the tablet of your heart.**” Joshua 1:8, “**This book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success**.” Deuteronomy 11:18a and 11:19, “**You shall therefore lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul...You shall teach them to your children, talking of them when you are sitting in your house, and when you are walking by the way, and when you lie down and when you rise.**”

How refreshing that God’s Word is black and white, even in text on a page. We are tempted to add a touch of grey so we can have freedom to do other things. It’s a false freedom, and a fool’s bargain. It’s like a fish jumping out of the water to be free from it; he can’t breathe and will soon choke.

God’s word is what Christians live in, and without it we are helpless. When God’s Word is put aside, you are left with only blind guides, your senses, your appetites, and your worldly wisdom to steer you (Genesis 3:6). And it will steer you off a cliff. Satan will say come with me; and lead down a dark alley, into his ghetto where the lamp of the word is put under a bushel of confusion, corruption, lies and deceit, where the prince of this present darkness will have his way with you.

But God’s Word has promises attached to it. It promises grace, salvation, life…the Holy Spirit. It promises the forgiveness of sins for Jesus’ sake. It promises an eternal inheritance in heaven. It promises, whatever consequences come from your following his commands, He will make sure they accomplish His purpose, which is to work out all things for the good of those who love him. It is written. It is written. It is written. Romans 15:14, “**For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the scriptures, we might have hope**.”