

Do Not Tempt The Lord Your God
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 Texts: Deut. 6:4-18

I was completing my study of Psalm 78 when I came across the Explanatory Note on verse 18: **They tempted the Lord their God** (The Treasury of David, C H Spurgeon, p. 353). I immediately thought of Jesus' citation in Matt. 4 of Scripture, Deut. 6:16: **It is written/or God has said, you shall not tempt the Lord thy God, as you tempted him in the temptation** (meaning at Massah in the wilderness, Exod. 17:7). Specifically the people asked at Massah an unbelieving question: **Is the Lord With Us or Not?** This in the midst of present and active divine protection, guidance and provision! It was obvious, demonstrable—even undeniable. So, we conclude that unbelief is a tempting of God. Now Henry Melville, the author of this explanatory note, explains that “unbelief of every kind and degree is a tempting of God.”

Not to believe, given the evidence God has offered in the testimony of Scripture, “which He has seen fit to offer,” the substance of which Jesus alludes to when he declares, **they have Moses and the prophets, let them believe them**, is to tempt God. (This is from the parable of the rich and the beggar—or Dives and Lazarus.) To tempt then is more than simple allurements, or enticement to sin, or to do evil, it is to ask more of him than he has chosen to offer, or provide. For example, when the Jews demanded that Jesus perform an “attesting” miracle saying, **that we might know you are the Messiah, Jesus refused**. [Matthew 16:4 reads: **4 An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a [b]sign; and a [c]sign will not be given it, except the sign of Jonah.** And He left them and went away.]

- Offering our assent, if further proof that he is the Son of God were given, is boilerplate satanic temptation. Satan said, “If you are the Son of God command these stones to be made bread.”
- We cannot disbelieve, or distrust God and not, in actuality, accuse him of being deficient—that is, wanting in either goodness, or power, or both!

This being true, our *complaining, murmuring, questioning and repining*, all reflect unbelief. By doing so we say that either his plan is not the best plan—that we have a better plan. Or we are saying his dispensations are not the best and wisest for us! That would be a tad presumptuous of us to say the least and, at worst; it is an affront to his benevolent disposition towards us—and toward all creation. We imagine that we know ourselves better than he knows us, that we know our needs, wants and best interests—when we do not. What if we were to see our disappointment with God as disappointing to God? Then we would be on the way to grasping this prohibition of tempting God.

Consider our spiritual perversity *when we deliberately and consciously sin*. We say, I made a mistake when the truth of the matter is more damning. We made a choice. That is what the responsible and truthful persons says. And there is a related thing we

do, we relativize sin by evaluation. Remember, God is the judge, but our self-inflated view put us in that place and we call this sin little, and that sin great. Or, we call your sin grave and our sin “just being human.” Probably some humble repentance is in order here. May I suggest that we remember who God is; who Christ is as part of the triune God and integrate as our sober assessment of sin, sinning and the sinner.

Consider that our fear, our anxieties, our despondency, perplexity and despair run deeper and actually constitute a call upon God to change his plans, his fixed course in our lives, or in the current of daily life. A demand, rather than a simple request. Do we really want to express doubt, or suspicion and by that assert that God might proceed in a manner that would be more worthy of him, or more honorable? Should we be speaking arrogantly from the height of our understanding, and or preferences? Should God seek counsel from us?? There is a difference between dialoguing with God and giving out directives, and memos.

How different is it to say, “Satan made me do it” (when justifying our sin, when rationalizing) or to say, “This is just who I am . . . God made me this way?” Can we even slide a piece of paper between them?! To the first, it is a fact that Satan is neither omniscient, nor omnipotent! He offers options and we make choices—at least that is one way of explaining “free will” so-called. And as it turns out that God the omnipotent and the omniscient—has designed us to be responsible moral creatures. We are not determined by our background, education or social influences; we are, created above our circumstances. We cannot legitimately blame society, Satan, or anyone else!

**Psalm 8:4 What is man that You [a]take thought of him,
And the son of man that You care for him?**

**5 Yet You have made him a little lower than [b]God,
And You crown him with glory and majesty!**

**6 You make him to rule over the works of Your hands;
You have put all things under his feet,**

**7 All sheep and oxen,
And also the [c]beasts of the field,**

**8 The birds of the heavens and the fish of the sea,
Whatever passes through the paths of the seas.**

**9 O Lord, our Lord,
How majestic is Your name in all the earth!¹**

Is the proposition that we are responsible and accountable creatures sustainable? Is man so in divine regard as Psalm 8 suggests? What does **You care for him** mean? I prefer the translation of verse 5 that reads: **you have made him (man) a little lower than angels (plural)—not God. Crowned him with glory and majesty, making him**

¹ Footnotes

- a. Psalm 8:4 Or *remember him*
- b. Psalm 8:5 Or *the angels*; Heb *Elohim*
- c. Psalm 8:7 Or *animals*

rule over all the works of your hands (God-given dominion) and **put all things under his feet**. If God put us in charge would he not also make us capable of being in charge?

And if God makes us to be in charge of **all the works** (of creation) and has put **all things under his feet—all living things!** Would he not have made us capable of self-rule, or self-government as part of the package? ***All to exalt the majesty of God's Name?***

May I suggest that we remember who God is; who Christ is as part of the triune God, that godhead, as we explore this proposition: that we are responsible and accountable creatures. Jesus as the Son of God is all in as regard divine activity—Father, Son and Holy Spirit are in agreement, in union and united as God. It will not do to separate the three persons and then to suggest that one of them would contradict the others! In the work of Creation, the operative word is **we** —**let us make man in our image** undergirds our special creation. Our special creation is the foundation of Psalm 8, the underpinning for **What is man?**

In the work of the world-wide flood, when God eradicated the human race for its evil: **God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.** (Gen. 6:5) This judgment was from God, all three persons, and each of them was all in for the destruction of evil. Friends, it behooves us to acknowledge that God was all in for Creation, and ask in for the Flood/destruction of evil. Yes, the end of evil is destruction and that has never altered. God's indignation, anger and wrath against sin is a constant and it harmonizes with mercy, truth, justice and righteousness perfectly—despite our inability to conceive of such a thing!

There is in Genesis 18-19 a powerful narrative regarding divine/human interaction. 1 **Now the Lord appeared to him by the [a]oaks of Mamre, while he was sitting at the tent door in the heat of the day. 2 When he lifted up his eyes and looked, behold, three men were standing opposite him; and when he saw *them*, he ran from the tent door to meet them and bowed himself to the earth.** The three persons (the Godhead?) appear to Abram **by the oaks of Mamre**. This detail is significant because of what befalls two of them while the third dialogues with Abram over the fate of Sodom. Now Sodom was a very wicked city and we are told what the besetting sin is. That is not hidden from us. Here chapter headings can be misleading. God has appeared to Abram and there are several things going on: first, in a setting of Oriental hospitality, God informs the couple that they are to have a son. Secondly, God wants Abram to know about family life and the doom of Sodom and Gomorrah.

17 The Lord said, “Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do, 18 since Abraham will surely become a great and [a]mighty nation, and in him all the nations of the earth will be blessed? 19 For I have [b]chosen him, so that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice, so that the Lord may bring upon Abraham what He has spoken about him.”

Regarding family life, the patriarchal transmission of **the way of the Lord** and the testimony of God are essential—God wants to be known in the family setting where the father commands, or exercise authority in matters spiritual. *Anything that disrupts, or interferes with that for which capability Abram was chosen(!) is atheistical, or anti-God—or, demonic.* Divorce unhappily falls into that category which is why we acknowledge that God hates it. Abram was chosen to become a great and mighty nation **and all nations shall be blessed in him** as a godly father and authority in the home.

But it is misleading to suggest that the visit is primarily about the promise of a son; or even about solidifying the couple's faith in God's promises for both of them were questioning God and the delay of promise. Now the doom of Sodom and Gomorrah is the judgment of God on unbelief! Yes, unbelief and the wickedness of these depraved cities are directly related. It is as if the doom of Sodom was a cautionary tale for unbelief.

11 Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age; Sarah was past [a]childbearing. 12 Therefore Sarah laughed [b]to herself, saying, "After I have become old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?" 13 And the Lord said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh, saying, 'Shall I indeed [c]bear a child, when I am so old?' 14 Is anything too [d]difficult for the Lord? At the appointed time I will return to you, [e]at this time next year, and Sarah will have a son." 15 Sarah denied it however, saying, "I did not laugh"; for she was afraid. And He said, "No, but you did laugh."

20 Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is grievous; I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not, I will know.

Please note how this foreshadows the Exodus narrative. There is a parallel. Between the oppression in the cities and the oppression of Pharaoh (stemming from unbelief!) there is an enormous connection. God responds to human suffering with redemption and with judgment against the perpetrators. But none of it is arbitrary: very bad choices have awful consequences.

We have two main things revealed here: first, the character of Abraham:
Who had just before felt himself called upon to become the protector, avenger, and deliverer of the land from its foes, so he now thought himself

² Footnotes

- a. Genesis 18:11 Lit *the manner of women*
- b. Genesis 18:12 Lit *within*
- c. Genesis 18:13 Lit *surely bear*
- d. Genesis 18:14 Or *wonderful*
- e. Genesis 18:14 Lit *when the time revives*

called upon to act as mediator, and to appeal from Jehovah's judicial wrath to Jehovah's covenant grace (Kurtz), for he had not delivered the land from the foe, but merely rescued his nephew Lot and all the booty that remained after the enemy had withdrawn; nor did he appeal to the covenant grace of Jehovah, but to His justice alone; and on the principle that the Judge of all the earth could not possibly destroy the righteous with the wicked, he founded his entreaty that God would forgive the city if there were but fifty righteous in it, or even if there were only ten.

and, secondly, the identity of the divine being with whom Abraham was presently discoursing—namely **Jehovah God**, the third person of the trinity, or Father God (**Judge of all the earth**) who executed justice prior to the transfer of that authority to the Son (upon his return, or second advent). We are reminded of the character of those involved.

What can this revelation mean except that God is altogether just in his judgments, not excessive, or rash? “Consider, as a very bright part of Abraham's character and example, that he not only prayed with his family, but he was very careful to teach and rule them well. Those who expect family blessings must make conscience (*be aware*) of family duty. Abraham did not fill their heads with matters of doubtful dispute; but he taught them to be serious and devout in the worship of God, and to be honest in their dealings with all men.” (Henry Melville on Gen. 18:16-22)

The investigative team proceeds to the gates of Sodom where they came across Lot and how they are treated clarifies what the wickedness of Sodom is: sexual predation and sexual violence in the form of homosexual rape. **The men of the city . . . old and young, representing all quarters of the city** (making this a cultural crime!) targeted the two men, as they supposed, whom Lot had extended hospitality in his home. Given Abraham's prior extension of hospitality, of sanctuary under his roof, for all three, this treatment of just two is quite consistent.

And they called unto Lot, and said, where are the men which came into thee this night? Bring them out that we may know them. This is an instance of obsessive criminality. Violent, sexually exploitative rape is fully damnable.

Lot steps outside and exhorts them: **I pray you, brethren, do not so wickedly.** (This was not a meet and greet situation. The townsmen meant carnal intimate and sexual knowledge, from Genesis 4:1, they wanted to sexually rape the visitors. Lot's horror at the request and the offer of his two virgin daughters for their sexual satisfaction makes this request very clearly homosexual. There is nothing in the text that prohibits the possibility that this offer was with the daughters' knowledge and consent—as their subsequent actions (sleeping with their father to beget children) might support. But the choice here is between heterosexual and homosexual intercourse and the men of Sodom wanted the latter. *Now consider these details as items filed in the report; this incident is representative of the sexual exploitation/oppression that made up the wickedness of Sodom and may have replicated the pre-Flood world's depravity.*

The men pressed in on Lot even to the point of breaking the door. (v. 9) The “angels” intervened, **And they smote the men with blindness . . . so that they exhausted themselves trying to find the door.** (v. 11) Investigation over. Lot is advised to evacuate his family immediately. **For we will destroy this place, because the cry of them is waxen great before the face of the Lord and the Lord hath sent us to destroy it.** Very specific choices were made leading up to this present moment, from both the divine and the human side. The Lord Jesus was, as the Son of God and Christ, completely in on the investigation, the summary judgment and the destruction—the sin was so pervasive that not even ten righteous could be identified! Lot, his wife and two daughters are led by the angels outside the city limits (v. 16). And they flee to Zoar. Then fire and brimstone are rained down on Sodom and Gomorrah in retribution for their wickedness. This is what God has to say, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, about sexual sin (rape, exploitation and homosexuality)—it is drastically, undeniable and terrible. And Jesus is in it, affirming the judgment in destruction. What occurs in this life has its counterpart in eternity. We say repent, before it is too late.

Amen