

It was a nightmare teaching my daughters to drive. For them. Not for me. Dealing with my struggle to remember right from left. Asking them to turn right. Expecting them to turn left. As a navigator, I'm a liability. Needing help to reach my destination. Struggling to win the victory over my abysmal sense of direction. Daily I face a bigger battle. Temptation. In Paul's words, *'I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do.'* **Romans 7:15** Brothers and sisters, are you winning the battle over temptation? Your answer may well decide what you choose to do for the next eighteen minutes. Doze. Or pay attention to Dr Luke's account of Jesus' temptations. Before you doze off remember the words of the Apostle John. *'If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.'* **1 John 1:8** For a temptation battler like me, today's passage a blessing and encouragement. I trust it is for a temptation battler like you. Jesus faces genuine temptation and resists. By trusting the word of God. On display for us the means by which we are to deal with temptation. Two words of God. Jesus, the Word made flesh. The Bible, the written word of God. Today's reading unique in Dr Luke's thorough investigation of eye witness accounts. No eye witnesses to tell Dr Luke what happened. Jesus and the devil on their own. Jesus the only possible source. Probably revealed to the twelve apostles. Passed on to Luke. Clearly a highly significant event. Last week we discovered Jesus, the Messiah, 100% God 100% man. Divine Son of God revealed at his baptism. A member of the human family revealed in his family tree. Now beginning public ministry full of the Holy Spirit. Led by that Spirit as part of God's greater purposes. *'Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil.'* **v1-2** Facing real temptation as a real human being. Exercising his divine knowledge and power under the discretion of God. The wilderness setting reminds us of two profound failures in biblical history. The desert wasteland the opposite to the Garden of Eden. Adam fails to resist temptation even in the abundance and perfection of the Garden. The wilderness the setting for forty years of Israel's sustained failure to resist temptation. Where Adam and Israel fail, Jesus the second Adam succeeds. Winning victory over temptation on our behalf. Also, on the Cross, he destroys the power of sin to separate us from God. *'But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation'* **Colossians 1:22** Sisters and brothers, our victory over temptation

and sin comes through the Word made flesh. Rejoice. Live in the light of it. By embracing the example of Jesus, the representative human being. His example of victory over temptation by relying on the written word of God. His weapon in response to each temptation. *'It is written. It is written. It is said.'* Followed by quotes from the Old Testament book of Deuteronomy. **v4,8,12** Adam and Israel also had the word of God. Unlike Jesus, they fail to trust it in the face of temptation. Sisters and brothers, we have the full and final written word of God. The word *'useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness'* We enjoy the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit. Is the word of God your sword in the temptation battle? How are you filling your heart and mind with the word of God? What steps are you taking to read and meditate on its life shaping truths? How committed are you to memorizing God's promises for the battle? In any battle there are advantages in knowing your enemy. Understanding the method of attack. In exposing his method of attack to Jesus, the devil gives Jesus' disciples a strategic advantage. Insight into his methods. Better defensive preparation. Six things from the passage to help us fight temptation. **One**, genuine temptation offers something attractive to the tempted. The devil places attractive propositions before Jesus. Food after forty days of hunger. Instant power, authority, glory without suffering. I have never been tempted to smoke. Cigarettes hold no attraction to me. But the temptation to eat chocolate when I'm tired and adrenaline depleted. An attractive proposition. A genuine temptation. Brothers and sisters how self-aware are you? What are your attractive temptations? When are you most vulnerable? What satisfaction substitutes are you most vulnerable to? Gossip, slander, illicit substances, alcohol, pornography, manipulating others, self-interested power plays? Prepare your defenses. Turn to the word of God. Listen to its encouragement, teaching, rebuke, correcting. **Two**, watch for the temptation to do the right thing in the wrong way. Jesus faces that temptation. Satisfy hunger using the powers he has. A worthy thing to do. Here the temptation is to do so apart from the purposes of the Father. Jesus resists. Later he does exercise his divine power to satisfy hunger. In the feeding of the five thousand. Sisters and brothers, are you tempted to go beyond the boundaries of God's word in order to achieve good things? Mishandle money, break appropriate rules to meet the needs of others. **Three**, watch for the temptation to presume on God. Taking for granted his care and protection. Especially as you engage in reckless behavior, making unwise choices. Demanding the God who loves you catch you before you hit rock bottom as you topple over

the cliff's edge. The word of God is clear, *'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'* **v12 Four**, short cuts to satisfaction a prime temptation of the devil. Jesus tempted to find food apart from the provision of God. Glory and kingly rule apart from the way of the cross. Attractive options. Instantaneous and suffering free. But a fundamental breach of Jesus' unique relationship with the Father. A profound failure to do the Father's will. Brothers and sisters, watch out for the short cuts on offer. Material needs and personal satisfaction apart from the provision of the Father. Self-promotion using your own schemes because you are impatient for signs of God honouring you. **Five**, the temptation to twist God's word for personal gain. On display in the devil's cunning quote from scripture in **v10**. Tempting Jesus to presume on the Father. Demanding the Father's protection on Jesus' terms. Asserting the Father must fulfil his promise in Jesus' timeframe. Like the toddler who jumps into the swimming pool without warning expecting his dad to protect him as he disappears from sight. Sisters and brothers, are you tempted to misuse Scripture to justify your behavior or pursue your own agenda. **Six**, temptation never ends in this life. *'When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time.'* **v13** Brothers and sisters, always be on your guard. The writer to the Hebrews powerfully sums up the outcome of the devil's encounter with Jesus, *'Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to feel sympathy for our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet he did not sin. Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.'* **4:14-16** What an encouragement to us. Resist the devil by standing firm in your faith. Rely on the one who was tempted in every way but did not sin. Speak honestly with Jesus about our struggles with temptation. He understands temptation. He experienced it. Seek from him the grace we need to obey God rather than succumb to the temptation to live without him and find satisfaction apart from him. As we do this together as brothers and sisters at Northern Beaches Anglicans we will keep moving to the right personally. We will be better equipped to help others move to the right. Living lives of self-sacrifice instead of self-seeking. Depending on the Word made flesh for victory over sin. Modelling ourselves on him. As we do God will continue to be glorified through us. We will continue to be blessed in him.