

- I. Ends and Means; Sunday, September 7, 2014  
(Sunnyslope)

Psalm 19:14

May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be  
pleasing in your sight, O LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer.

- A. "Good morning, church!"
- B. Yesterday, I had the honor and privilege of flying  
my father-in-law from Bremerton down to Olympia
1. We taxied off the runway on the north side
    - a) And parked just across from the WW2  
airplane museum
    - b) For you see, he had scheduled a flight in  
a T6, a WW2 trainer aircraft
  2. After his flight, Sharalyn, Evie, and I  
prepared for a return flight to Bremerton
    - a) I initiated radio communications with the  
ground controller...
    - b) ...who gave me a taxi clearance to the  
southern end of the main runway
  3. The taxi path took us on a route that included  
crossing the ends of 2 runways
    - a) Now the day way much like today:  
completely clear skies
    - b) There were very few airplanes in the  
skies
    - c) There was very little activity on the  
field
  4. Now what you need to know, though, is that  
according to FAA regulations, pilots are  
technically required to get explicit clearance  
to cross all runways when taxiing

- a) So as I came up to the first runway, I slowed and made a call to ground controller
  - b) He cleared me across the threshold of the first, and I continued
  - c) When I was approaching the second runway, he proactively cleared me to cross
5. And I couldn't help but think that when traffic is light, ground controllers at smaller airports may not explicitly follow the details of some regulations for expediency
- a) When taxiing across runways, it's of course faster and more efficient to ignore the clearance regulations
  - b) When visibility is good (and it was just about perfect yesterday), a pilot should be able to just look up around to see any problems with crossing runways
  - c) So then why the regulation?
  - d) Because the FAA says that a little bit of inefficiency for the sake of safety is a good thing
  - e) The ends do not justify the means
  - f) Efficiency of progress does not justify side-stepping the regulations
- C. Now this example is a minor one, the question of violating a regulation for the ends of convenience and efficiency, but it does raise the question: Are there situations where the ends do justify the means?
- 1. Humans throughout history and all the way up to today, in countless ways in today's world, often believe yes; the ends do indeed justify the means

2. Typically, the idea goes: When the ends benefit the whole society or the community or the children or something, then yes, if you have to violate some principles or regulations to achieve those means, that's OK
- D. One common idea that takes this point of view is the notion of "eminent domain"
1. Eminent domain is the power of the government to take private property for public use
  2. Classically, it's the justification for when one group of people deem it appropriate and completely acceptable to force another group of people to do something they don't wish to do so that the ends desired by the first group can be more easily achieved
  3. Normally as a society, we understand, respect, and value the notion of private property and property rights
  4. However, eminent domain is the practice and justification of ignoring those rights to further the goals of one group over another
- E. The ethical term that covers the "ends justify the means" is consequentialism
1. Consequentialism is the class of normative ethical theories holding that the consequences of one's conduct are the ultimate basis for any judgment about the rightness or wrongness of that conduct
  2. Thus, from a consequentialist standpoint, a morally right act (or omission from acting) is one that will produce a good outcome, or consequence
  3. The independent morality of the act or acts themselves is irrelevant
- F. The problem with mature consequentialism is that it justifies all sorts of morally wrong and even evil choices in the name of theoretically achieving good ends

1. Taking this to its logical conclusion, we find ourselves with situations like Stalin's purges, the Khmer Rouge, and in our current times, ISIS
  2. These groups all felt that the sanctity of life could be ignored for their desired ends
  3. That the normal social principle that murder is morally wrong does not hold true if those murders result in a good consequence
- G. It's easy to say we would never do this, that we would never justify something based on the ends over the means
1. But I believe we are tempted to do this quite commonly...
  2. Only just in very small ways with very small things
- H. I believe Satan uses consequentialism to help tempt us to get to the ends, instead of focusing on the means
1. As I was looking through notes on temptation, I found this little proverb  
**Satan, like a good fisherman, baits his hook according to the appetite of the fish.**
  2. Satan tempts us often by showing us the good ends to decisions, thus trying to justify the decisions
  3. In the most famous temptation story of all time, Satan used an "ends justify the means" approach to tempting Christ
- II. Let's walk through the story of Jesus being tested by temptation in the wilderness
- A. We'll begin with the first verse of chapter 4
- Luke 4:1
- Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness**

1. There was never a time in Christ's life when He was not full of the Holy Spirit...
  - a) ...but it is specifically mentioned here in connection with His temptation
  - b) To be filled with the Holy Spirit means to be completely yielded to Him and to be completely obedient to every word of God
  - c) A person who is filled with the Spirit is emptied of known sin and of self and is richly indwelt by the Word of God
  
2. As Jesus was returning from the Jordan, where He had been baptized, He was led by the Spirit into the wilderness
  - a) This was probably the Wilderness of Judea, along the west coast of the Dead Sea
  - b) But one particular thing I find interesting here is that Christ was "led by the Spirit" into the wilderness
  - c) I think we sometimes assume that if we allow the Holy Spirit to govern our lives and if we allow the Holy Spirit to lead us, we will always be led into places of peace, places of prosperity, and places of benefit to ourselves and others
    - (1) But here we have a clear example where the Holy Spirit led Christ into the wilderness
    - (2) The Holy Spirit led Christ out into a wasteland and into the hands of the devil and into a situation where Christ would be tempted
  - d) I think this is ought to be a reminder to us that when we allow the Holy Spirit to lead our lives, the result will be that *God's purposes will be fulfilled...*

- (1) ...not necessarily our purposes, our goals, and our desires
- (2) Typically, this means peace, prosperity, and benefit
- (3) But sometimes it can mean struggle, strife, and trials
- (4) We just need to remember that:
  - (a) The struggle has a purpose
  - (b) The strife is temporary
  - (c) And the trials have benefits

B. Let's continue into the next verse

Luke 4:2

<sup>2</sup>...where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry.

1. Once in the wilderness, He was tempted for forty days by the devil, days in which Christ ate nothing
2. At the end of the forty days came the threefold temptation with which we are more familiar
3. And in actuality, the 3 temptations took place in 3 different places:
  - a) The wilderness
  - b) A mountain
  - c) And the temple in Jerusalem
4. The true humanity of Jesus is reflected by the words He was hungry
  - a) This was the target of the first temptation

C. Then we have the first of the 3 explicit temptations

Luke 4:3

<sup>3</sup>The devil said to him, “If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread.”

1. Satan suggested that the Lord should use His divine power to satisfy bodily hunger
  - a) The subtlety of the temptation was that the act in itself was perfectly legitimate
  - b) But it would have been wrong for Jesus to do it in obedience to Satan
  - c) He must act in accordance with the will of His Father
2. And this raises the question: what is sin?
  - a) Is it sinful to eat?
  - b) Certainly not
  - c) Is it sinful to prepare food?
  - d) Again, certainly not
  - e) We know from Scripture that there is nothing inherently sinful in miraculously preparing food because Jesus miraculously created wine (the best wine) during a marriage banquet
  - f) So it seems reasonable to me that we can conclude there would have been nothing *inherently* wrong with Christ turning stones into bread so He could eat
  - g) However, there was something *specifically* wrong in this specific context and situation
  - h) For if Christ had made bread, He would have been following Satan and not God, which would have been sin

3. I think sometimes as fallen human beings we like to sometimes like to take simple lessons like "always obey God" and turn them into lists of specific rules to follow
  - a) The Pharisees and Sadducees of this period were expert in this
  - b) Crafting derived rule upon derived rule
  - c) The problem is that derived rules are situational
  - d) What is completely fine of an action in a specific context is sinful and wrong in another
4. The key lesson here is to listen always to the Holy Spirit and obey God in whatever context or situation we find ourselves in

D. Let's see how Christ rebuffed the temptation

Luke 4:4

Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone.'"

1. Jesus resisted the temptation by quoting Scripture, specifically Deuteronomy 8:3
2. More important than the satisfaction of physical appetite is obedience to God's word
3. Note that Christ did not argue with Satan
4. He simply quoted Scripture
5. Christ, the very Son of God, divine, able to perform miracles, eloquent, of great stature, did not engage in debate
6. Instead, He quoted a short bit of Scripture
7. This is an indication to us how important Scripture is, and how important it is that we spend time in private Scriptural study regularly

8. In times of temptation, struggle, and strife, we can recall a short bit of relevant wisdom from Scripture that can keep us from falling to the devil
- E. With the physical hunger temptation rebuffed, Satan tried to appeal to desire for power and riches

Luke 4:5-7

<sup>5</sup>The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. <sup>6</sup>And he said to him, "I will give you all their authority and splendor; it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. <sup>7</sup>If you worship me, it will all be yours."

1. In this second temptation, the devil showed Jesus all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time
2. What's interesting here is that Satan was offering to Christ what was Christ's already
3. Satan was offering all the authority and splendor of the kingdoms of the world
4. But God gave Christ certainly all the authority in heaven and Earth
5. So perhaps similar to the stone to bread temptation, Satan was offering Christ what Christ would eventually have
  - a) Certainly, Christ would eat again, just not as a temptation from Satan
  - b) And we know that God would give Christ all authority
6. But there could be no short cut to the throne
  - a) The cross had to come first
  - b) In the counsels of God, the Lord Jesus had to suffer before He could enter into His glory
  - c) He could not achieve a legitimate end by a wrong means

7. So Christ rebuffs the temptation by again quoting Scripture

Luke 4:8

Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.'"

- F. In the third temptation from verses 9 through 11, Satan took Jesus to Jerusalem, to the pinnacle of the temple, and suggested that He throw Himself down
  1. Had not God promised in Psalm 91 that He would preserve the Messiah?
  2. Perhaps Satan was tempting Jesus to present Himself as Messiah by performing a sensational stunt
  3. Here was Jesus' opportunity to obtain fame and notoriety as the promised Deliverer without going to Calvary
  4. However, for the third time, Jesus resisted temptation by quoting from the Bible
  5. Deuteronomy 6:16 forbids putting God to the test
- G. And so thus repulsed by the sword of the Spirit, the devil left Jesus until an "opportune time"
  1. And there's a lesson here about temptations from Satan
  2. After we have successfully resisted temptation through the power of Scripture and the Holy Spirit, Satan doesn't give up; he simply retreats until a better time comes around
  3. Thus, we should use the time when Satan is away for preparation for the next series of attacks

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- III. So looking at the whole of the story, all 3 temptations and their context, there are a few lessons or bits of wisdom that stand out to me
- A. In all 3 cases, the end held out was right enough, but the means of obtaining it was wrong
1. It is always wrong to obey Satan, to worship him or any other created being
  2. It is wrong to tempt God
  3. And we should guard ourselves against making lists of sinful and un-sinful actions
  4. Instead, we should focus on following God only
- B. Another bit of wisdom comes from the realization that the first temptation concerned the body, the second the soul, the third the spirit
1. They appealed respectively to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life
  2. We can be tempted in many ways
    - a) Some ways are easy to resist

- b) And other ways are not easy to resist
- 3. We should not think ourselves prepared to meet Satan's temptations because we have successfully resisted one set of temptations
- 4. We should always think ourselves able and needing to improve our resistance to the devil
- C. The 3 temptations revolve around three of the strongest drives of human existence – physical appetite, desire for power and possessions, and desire for public recognition
  - 1. How often I wonder are modern-day Christians tempted to choose a pathway of comfort and ease, to seek a prominent place in the world, or to gain a high position in the church
- IV. Remember that proverb from the beginning of the sermon?

**Satan, like a good fisherman, baits his hook according to the appetite of the fish.**

- A. That is a very interesting concept, that the devil will tempt us in ways in which we are most likely to be tempted
- B. And that raises the question: What are we most likely to be tempted with?
- C. Are we tempted to place perhaps our desires for how things ought to be ahead of the way God wants them to be?
- D. Are we tempted to concern ourselves with the outcome or result of things instead of concerning ourselves with the choices of actions we should do and leave the results up to God?
- E. What are we most likely to be tempted with?
- F. What are you most likely to be tempted with?
- G. If we invest ample amounts of private time reading and reflecting on Scripture, we will be better prepared to resist Satan's temptations

- H. Let us pray that we will be better able to allow the Holy Spirit to lead us to choosing to do always and only the right
- I. And that whether to trials or triumphs, we will be led where God wants us to be
- J. Amen