

# OpenTheo

## No Compromise With The Devil - Part 2

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### **The Bible for Today with John Stott** - Premier

When we succumb to temptation as Christians, John Stott shows us that Christ left us an example of how to deal with temptation and the devil.

### **Transcript**

We don't have the clarity of moral judgment that is so evident in the life of Jesus. What we do is to see everything in infinite gradations of Compromas. Why we say the devil's got a point you know.

I mean there is something that's not a problem. I mean there is something in what he is saying isn't there. It's really rather clever what he's saying.

I mean it's partly true and partly false and immediately we begin to compromise. Welcome to The Bible for Today with John Stott. The 20th century gave us a number of great evangelical Bible teachers and for many John Stoats stood above them all.

Perhaps no one raised the standard of biblical teaching as did Stot. When a TV reporter once asked him, you've had a brilliant academic career at First at Cambridge, rector at 29, Chaplain to the Queen. What's your ambition now John replied to be more like Jesus.

It was Jesus Christ that he made preeminent in all his teaching. Whenever he preached at his home church of all souls, Lang and Place, it was packed and people even sat on the stairs. During John Stott's centenary we are bringing you some of his finest Bible teaching from almost 60 years of ministry.

In last week's message on Christ's temptation we saw that the affirmation of God from heaven when the sun was baptized had barely died down before the devil struck at the very character of Christ. The devil told Jesus that he could avoid suffering by bowing down to him. This week John Stott continues this message by showing us what the devil was attempting to achieve.

Do you see then how the temptation of Jesus struck at the very roots of his personhood?

Struck at the very roots of his self-awareness as had been given him at the baptism. The devil sought to rupture the union that God had made between his person and his mission, between his sufferings and his glory, and the devil tried to precipitate Jesus into an identity crisis about who he was and what he'd come into the world to do. And the devil offered to Jesus a shortcut by compromise.

He offered him glory without suffering. He offered him world conquest without pain. And behind that fearful temptation, Sir Radical that it struck at the very roots of who he was and what he'd come into the world to do, Jesus detected something even worse than that.

For what he's playing as you meditate on the temptations of Jesus is that the temptation to doubt himself, to doubt who he was and what he'd come to do, to doubt his person and to doubt his mission, behind the temptation to doubt himself was a temptation to doubt God and to disagree with God as well. Now this is clear from each of the temptations. When you look at them in the light of how Christ replied to them, because how Jesus replied to the temptation, of course indicates how he understood what the temptation was.

Now when he was tempted to turn down into bread, Jesus said that it threatened in Scripture that man doesn't live by bread only, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. And in the context in Deuteronomy from which that word is taken, it means by obedience to every word that comes out of the mouth of God. Man lives not just by bread, by food, he lives by obedience to the word of God.

So in that temptation Jesus detected a temptation to disobey God. Then the temptation to throw himself down from the pinnacle of the temple was a temptation to tempt God. Because Jesus replied that it's written, "You shall not tempt the Lord your God.

You shall not force his hand. You shall not put him to the test. I'm going to trust God.

I'm not going to force him to display his power on my behalf. I trust him already." And then third of the temptation to fall down and worship the devil is of course a temptation to discern God altogether. And Jesus replied, "But it's written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, not discern him.'" So you see Jesus saw these temptations as temptations relating to his attitude to God.

They were temptations to disobey God, to tempt God, to disown God, to doubt God. And what shines out for me from this whole narrative is the fundamental God-centeredness of Jesus. The clarity with which he saw the issues, that to love God he must resist the devil.

And in a sense one may say, however grueling the temptation was, it wasn't really difficult for him to say, "The God Satan." Because with this limped clarity he saw within

each temptation, an insinuation that he must doubt God, disobey God, disown God, that Jesus was so focused upon God that it was inconceivable that he should do so. Now, when you and I put ourselves in the position of Jesus, we who are victims of the relativity of modern culture. I think you'd agree with me.

We would have reacted in that wilderness of Judea quite differently. And indeed we do react quite differently today. We don't see things in black and white like that.

We don't see things in God and devil terms like that. In other words, we don't have the clarity of moral judgment that is so evident in the life of Jesus. What we do is to see everything in infinite gradations of compromise.

Why we say the devil's got a point you know, I mean there is something in what he is saying, isn't there? It's really rather clever what he's saying. I mean it's partly true and partly false and immediately we begin to compromise. We say that there is a prudence in his author.

There is a worldly wisdom in his author. There is a business like practical attractiveness about his proposition. Why he's offering the whole world.

Of course it's on condition that we fall down and worship him, but he would be rather nice to have the whole world. He's attractive. And so we begin to compromise.

No compromise with the devil. That's the first thing I see. This love for God.

This total devotion to God. To his will and to his purpose. That was at the root of Jesus refusal to compromise with the devil.

Now the second thing we turn from his love for God to his submission to Scripture. Because what we need to ask ourselves now is it's all very well to say Jesus loved God, but how did he know the implications of his love for God? In the concrete realities of his temptation. Love can be a deliciously vague feeling.

So how did his love for God lay upon him such precise ethical obligations that he saw the choice before him and made the right decisions? And the answer to that is because his mind was soaked in Scripture and because his will was submissive to the Scripture in which his mind was soaked. So he could say in verse 10, "Begone Satan, because it stands written. You shall worship the Lord your God." You see what stood written in Scripture was what showed him how his love for God should be expressed.

He believed that the living God, his heavenly Father from whom his being was derived had spoken, had revealed his will in speech. And Jesus believed that this divine speech had been preserved and recorded in Scripture. And Jesus believed that what Scripture said, God said.

Jesus drew no distinction whatever between the will of his Father in heaven and the written word of Scripture. He identified the two. What Scripture said? God said.

What God said? Scripture said. It was in Scripture that he discovered the will of God and found the word of God. And he drew no distinction between the two.

To obey this word was to obey the Father who had spoken the word. And it was inconceivable to Jesus that he should love God and disregard Scripture. Now that personal submission of Christ to Scripture, the personal submission of the living word of God to the written word of God is immensely impressive.

The incarnate Son of God voluntarily adopted a position of subordination to Scripture. Now this brethren is the first and fundamental reason why Christian people today should be submissive to Scripture as well. The Cavalier Attitude to the Bible adopted by many, even by leaders in the visible church today, I venture to say is incompatible with true Christian discipleship because it is to disagree with Jesus.

How dare we have a lower view of Scripture than that of the incarnate Son of God. A disciple is not above his teacher, a servant is not above his Lord, and it is from Jesus that we derive our view of Scripture and our attitude to Scripture. So it was in Scripture that Jesus saw the true position that a man should adopt before his God.

Jesus said, "Quiting Scripture, man shall not live by bread only, but by obedience to every word that precedes out of the mouth of God." In other words, in order to be a man, a woman, I must obey God. But again he said, "You shall not tempt the Lord your God, because the proper attitude of a man towards God is one of trust, not test, before God." Or again he said, "But you shall worship the Lord your God." That's what Scripture says. And therefore man must worship God, he must obey God, he must trust God, he must worship God.

Now you see, Jesus didn't just know these texts by heart, he did know them by heart, but he didn't just hold texts in a meaningless kind of way at the devil. Jesus had meditated upon these texts in Deuteronomy, he had absorbed their significance into his mind and heart, and Jesus had grasped that according to Scripture, man finds himself only when he is rightly related to God. That it is basic to our humanness, that we love God, trust God obey God, worship God and God-centered.

And any human being who is not God-centered is not a human being. Our very humanness is found in our godliness, and godliness and humanness are identical terms. So you see the temptations of the devil that undermined or attempted to undermine this basic relationship of the man Christ Jesus to the living god, he instantly recognized as devilish and resisted.

So we've seen his love for God and his submission to Scripture, and the third thing is his

resistance of the devil. Because it is out of his love for God and out of his submission to Scripture that his resistance to the devil was born. "Big gone Satan," he said.

"Get out, leave me alone, because it stands written. You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve." It's beautiful, listen, it is wonderful. So deeply had Jesus absorbed the god-centeredness of Scripture that he detected immediately the wickedness of the insinuations of the devil.

There was no discussion. There was no argument. There was no diplomatic negotiation.

There was only a themant rebuke, an indignant dismissal. There was no compromise with the devil. Now I believe that this is one of the most practical lessons that God means us to learn from this whole narrative.

Because the devil's tactic ever since the Garden of Eden has been to try to establish a bridgehead in our mind and to invite us to come to the negotiating table. The tactic of the devil has been to get us to open up debate with him, and to persuade us to deal it daily with temptation until we begin to appreciate the reasonableness and to savor the attractiveness. And then his toe-hold becomes a foothold, and his foot-hold becomes a stronghold, and his strangle-hold becomes a strangle-hold, and we fall ignominiously to his temptations.

Now I give you one or two practical examples. We begin to paddle in the warm shallows of self-pity, and soon we are wallowing in the depths. We begin by nursing just a little tiny resentment against somebody, and soon it has become a deep-seated animosity.

Or our undisciplined eyes lead to lustful looks, and lustful looks lead to an inflamed imagination until our inflamed imagination is overwhelmed by the tidal waves of passion. Or again we refuse to accept somebody's apology and forgive them. Why should we? Until in weeks and months time we've turned sour, and our whole heart is full of bitterness.

For one thing leads to another, and another, and another, by compromise. And it is in contrast with all that you see that we see the wonder of Jesus instant rebuke of the devil. He was prompt, and he was ruthless in the very first approaches of temptation, brethren I believe from Scripture and from my own experience.

Not only in victories, but also in failures. I know that this is a major secret of Christian victory. It is the little compromises which lead to the big falls.

Now let me conclude with just another word or two in just another minute or two. First a word of comfort. Is there somebody in church today grievously assaulted by the devil? You feel your weakness says, indeed I do.

We say in the words of the prayer book by reason of the frailty of our nature we cannot

always stand upright. And we know our great weakness. Listen my brother or sister, Jesus Christ understands.

His temptations were real. He is able as the author to the Hebrew says, he's able to sympathize with us in our weaknesses. For he was tempted just as we are, and yet without sinning.

No temptation has taken you, but such is his common to man. Indeed the Lord Jesus himself has trod this path before you. Brother, sister, lift up your heart.

Even in the midst of defeat, there is a way of escape, there is a way of victory. Jesus resisted the devil, and he tells us to resist the devil in his name. And he promises if we do, he will flee from us.

A word of comfort. But then second a word of challenge. How did Jesus resist? Because we say it's all very well telling me to resist.

The devil, my resistance is so weak that's just my problem. How can I resist? Let me draw a quick analogy between physical and moral resistance. If you had flew in the last few weeks, what is the secret of resistance? It isn't really to take patent medicines when the germ is about, it's to build up your resistance the rest of the time.

By a disciplined life, by a balanced diet, by being strong physically, and then you see when the germs attack, your resistance is there. The real secret of resisting the devil is not learning some technique in the moment of temptation, it's building up your resistance the rest of the time. The real secret of Jesus resisting the devil was not even the texts that he threw at the devil in the moment of temptation.

It was his whole life of diversion to God. Behind his encounter with the devil, there lay hidden depths of godliness. He watched and prayed that he might not fault a temptation.

He kept himself rightly orientated to God. He waited upon the Lord, he renewed his strength, said that when the temptation came, he was ready, he was resistant out of these depths of godliness. That's the secret for us.

No shortcut, you see, but just spending time every day in the conscious presence of God, getting ourselves properly orientated to him, learning from his word, listening to his voice, abiding in the warm glow of communion with him, waiting upon him that we may renew our strength until our love for him is kindled, and until our hatred of evil is strengthened. And then when the moment of temptation comes, we too shall imitate Christ. No compromise with the devil.

We shall say, be gone Satan. Because it stands, written, you shall worship the Lord, your God, and him only shall you serve. Let's thank Jesus for his uncompromising resistance of the devil, and let us pray that he will work the same in us.

Oh Lord Jesus, forgive us for the times. We compromise with the devil. Thank you for your uncompromising moral attitude, your hatred of evil.

Work it in us. We pray even in the midst of our relativistic culture. Strengthen us, Father, Holy Spirit, help us to orientate ourselves to right every day, that we increasingly may be pure as you are pure.

We ask it for the glory of your great name. Oh my. You've been listening to the conclusion of a message by John Stott on how we can be imitators of Christ by not compromising with the devil.

It's important to know what Christ thinks of the church, and that's the title of John Stott's book, which you can benefit from reading in the light of today's message. It's just one of many books he wrote that can be found by visiting the dedicated Centenary website, [premier.org.uk/JohnStott](http://premier.org.uk/JohnStott). The legacy of John Stott lives on and is growing, touching every level of society across the world. Today, Christian leaders throughout the majority world are being equipped to provide pastor training and resources in their own countries thanks to the vision of John Stott, who donated all his book royalties to support this ministry through Langham Partnership.

To find out about this and other ministries, John Stott founded, go to [premier.org.uk/JohnStott](http://premier.org.uk/JohnStott). Join us at the same time next week for more from The Bible for Today with John Stott.

[Music]

(dramatic music)