

The Thin Line Between Faith and Presumption

by Kathryn Kuhlman

Kathryn Kuhlman's sermon explores the critical distinction between genuine faith and dangerous presumption in the life of a believer.

Duration: 17:57

Topics: "Presumption"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the second temptation of Jesus as described in the fourth chapter of Matthew. The devil takes Jesus to Jerusalem, knowing that Jesus is sentimental about the city and the temple. The devil tries to test Jesus' trust in God by suggesting that he perform an extraordinary act, such as casting himself down from a high place. However, Jesus responds by saying that trust in God does not require such heroic deeds, but rather a proper understanding and use of the word of God. Jesus demonstrates his mastery of the word by responding to the devil's temptations with the phrase 'again it is written,' showing that the word of God must be kept in its proper context.

Transcript

...along with you because we're discussing the fourth chapter of Matthew. And we're in the sixth verse of that fourth chapter. It's the second temptation of Jesus.

Then the devil takes him. That is, immediately following the first temptation, the devil took Jesus up into the holy city. That's Jerusalem.

And I still contend that the enemy took Jesus to Jerusalem because he knew how sentimental Jesus was over Jerusalem. Oh, beloved, do you remember the incident how he wept when Jerusalem refused to hear him and turned from him? Great tears of compassion and love flowed down the face of Jesus. He loved Jerusalem.

He was very sentimental over the city, over the temple. Think of the months, think of the time that Jesus spent in the temple of Jerusalem. And the enemy knew that if he could take Jesus to the place where he was most sentimental, taking him into Jerusalem, to the temple, and there attack him in the most subtle way possible, and he saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down, for it is written... And here's the old scoundrel quoting Scripture.

And he's still quoting Scripture today. The same old devil is still quoting Scripture. I believe that he knows Scripture better, he can quote it better than the greatest faith living in Israel.

He knows Scripture. He uses it. He quotes it.

And he had the nerve to quote Scripture to Jesus. And he was correct in quoting it. And this is what he quoted.

He shall give his angel charge concerning thee, and in their hand they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. Now wherein was the temptation? Pause a minute. Having endeavored to seduce Jesus from his position of unswerving loyalty to the will of God, he now flings all the force of his subtle art against that which was the strength of his abiding in the will of God, namely his perfect confidence in God.

He had the audacity to attack the Son's perfect trust, his perfect confidence in his heavenly Father. Now listen to the subject. Here is actual proposal.

Trust thyself down. Trust thyself down! It is a direct attempt to try to force Jesus to act upon that principle of trust which has been ministered to by the selection of this particular place in the city of the great king, in the house devoted to his worship, at its most awe-inspiring point. Exercise trust in him by causing thyself to be cast from this great height.

What was behind this suggestion? It was a suggestion that trust most perfectly expresses itself in bearing something unusual out of the common to be heroic. It was as if the enemy had said to Jesus, there is no necessity for you to cast thyself down. It does not come in the ordinary line of duty, but so much the greater opportunity for a venture of faith.

Trust in God most perfectly expresses itself in the doing of extraordinary things for God. The enemy suggested that the trust of Jesus should be put to the test and proven by being placed outside the realm of the commonplace. He is saying if you really want to show to the whole world how much you really trust God the Father, then do the extraordinary.

Do that which is not commonplace. Do that heroic. Stand before the whole world.

Cast thyself down to the ground. And by that heroic deed you prove to all of mankind your perfect trust in thy heavenly Father. You want to know something? No.

That is still the great danger in the life of the Christian today. There is a thin line between trust and presumption. There is a thin line between faith and presumption.

And great is the danger in our lives when we substitute presumption for trust and for faith. Lots of it. Lots.

Many a time, including the physical body, we have substituted presumption for faith. Many a time, in the building of some great edifice or the performing of some great heroic deed, we have substituted presumption for trust, for faith. There is a scripture that I'm going to give you as an example, and it's so very often misused, especially among the brethren who are fanatical and have gone out into fanaticism.

Sure, it's scriptural. It's in the 16th chapter of Mark. They shall take up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them.

And there have been those who have used that thinking they were exercising faith and trust. And they have deliberately picked up serpents, expecting those snakes not to harm them or bite them, because they have used the scripture that the Bible said they shall take up serpents and they shall drink any deadly thing and it shall not hurt them. And they were bitten.

And they've made a fool of themselves. And they have brought a reproach on the things of God. When, beloved, that was not faith, that was not trust, that was presumption.

But I have the trust, the faith to believe, that if I went to Macau as a missionary and was in the will of God and going there, and after doing everything in the world that I could to protect myself, if during the night I was bitten by a scorpion, I believed that God would undertake it on my behalf. I believed that I could call on the mercy of God. I believed that I could go to a foreign country and plead for God's protection.

If I did something ignorantly or innocently, because of my ignorance, because I was innocent in what I did, but because of my trust in Him, I believed that He would take care of me. But if I deliberately did it, to try to prove something to the whole world, I cannot ask His divine protection. In exactly the same way, we come to praying for the sick.

Somebody comes and said, Miss Kuhlman, we want this miraculous healing so that our godless members of our family can know the reality of the power of God. We want to prove to our family, our faith, our trust in the power of God through this healing. That is not the right attitude.

God does not have to prove Himself to any man, any woman. He does not have to prove Himself to your godless husband through some miracle. That godless husband of yours has the word of God.

That's proof enough. That godless husband of yours knows within himself there is a God. And upon the strength of that, he needs to have enough manhood and enough common sense to accept God and to accept the way of salvation through Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son.

For it is written, and God has given proof of Himself to the inner man of that husband of yours. He doesn't have to have somebody to do some great heroic deed or give proof of His person and power by performing some great miracle. I don't have to give some outward proof of my trust in the Lord by performing some heroic deed.

No, beloved. My daily, persistent life is proof enough. What was the sin in that second temptation? It was the sin of presumption.

And Jesus saw it. Trust thyself down. But Jesus said, I don't have to trust myself down to prove my trust, my faith in my heavenly Father.

Yes, thou art the Son of God. This is the challenge Satan makes the second time. It's the same argument used in the previous temptation, but almost certainly with a different emphasis.

In the first, in all probability, it lay upon the word, art. If thou art the Son of God. Here it seems as though it must have been upon the word, God.

If thou art the Son of God. The emphasis would be upon the nature of God. In the first temptation, He has proved the fact of His relationship, but now the appeal is to that relationship.

He's prepared to enlarge upon the goodness of God and the care that He bestows upon such as put their trust in Him. Oh, look how subtle. Foiled and wounded at the first, by the Master's use of the weapon of the word, He now makes use of a self-same weapon.

Behold the very sword of Christ in the hands of the devil. It flashes before us and He says it is written. Endeavoring to appeal to the principle of trust, the devil made use of Scripture.

Jesus had declared that man lived not by bread alone, but by words proceeding from the mouth of God, and in an attempt to urge him to a new exercise of trust, the devil copes the word of God. He now accepts Christ's definition of human life as something more than animal. He acknowledges that it is the spiritual life that needs to be strong for the exercise of trust, and moreover, that spiritual life is only strong as it feeds upon the word.

So he attempts to minister to Him in the realm of that very spiritual nature. And it's startling. It's appalling.

It begins to quote Scripture. He shall give His angels charge over thee, lest thou haply dash thy foot against a stone. What? He took that from the portion of the word of God.

The psalm that begins, He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. Is this the description of the perfect safety of the trusting soul? Oh, it's beautiful. You and I have clung to that portion of the word of God, our trust, a place of perfect safety in Him.

But there was a day when the devil himself used that which is very precious to our heart. Turn now to the answer of Jesus. And what weapon did He use on the devil? The same weapon, the word of God.

And Jesus begins with, Again. Watch it. Again it is written.

In the first temptation, Jesus said, it is written. In the second He said, again it is written. And in the use of the word again, we have a revelation of our Lord's perfect mastery of the weapon.

In comparison with Christ, the devil was a poor swordsman. Oh, believe me, when he attempted to use the sword of the Spirit, he was a mighty poor swordsman. It would seem as though with quiet and yet mighty movement of his strong arm, Jesus had wrested the sword right from the hand of Satan.

The force of the again lies in the fact that it is an answer to Satan's it is written. Jesus does not deny the correctness of a Satanic question. But He replies to it by saying, again it is written.

That is to say, there must be proper use made of the words of God. You cannot take a person of the word of God out of its setting and use it to prove a point. The word of God must be kept in its context before it can be properly used.

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