

Gathering Question:

The claim is made that everyone can be bought for a price. Do you think that is true or false? Why?

Facing Temptation

In Stephen Vincent Benet's short story, *The Devil and Daniel Webster*, a New Hampshire farmer named Jabez Stone was hit by a whole string of natural disasters and just plain bad luck. One day, after his two children came down with the measles, his horse began to cough, his wife got sick, and to top all of it off he broke his plow on a rock. Jabez decided that was the last straw. In a moment of despair and anger he vowed, "It's enough to make a man want to sell his soul to the devil! And I would too, for two cents!" Of course the devil takes him up on the offer and Jabez enjoys ten years of peace, success and prosperity.

At the end of the ten years the devil came to take possession of his property, but in the process is confronted by the great Daniel Webster. Thus began the greatest trial of all times, with the devil prosecuting and Daniel Webster defending Jabez.

Life is full of temptations and it seems the ones most difficult to refuse are those which come when we are facing incredible trials. Satan knows his business well. He will strike us when we are most vulnerable, when we are terribly weak. In the process he wants to hurt as many people as possible.

Jesus faced the same kinds of temptations we face. He was even given the opportunity to sell his soul for all the Kingdoms of the earth. He bore up under the temptations he faced and remained true to God. Paul, talking about the temptations we face assured us that all temptations we will face are common to all men and that God will not allow us to be tempted beyond our ability to bear up under it. He also assured us that with every temptation there will be a way to escape. We must simply look for it and take advantage of it.

Read:

Matthew 4:1-4; I Corinthians 10: 13-14

Reflect:

1. Why do you think the devil tempted Jesus early in his ministry? And why did the Holy Spirit lead Jesus into the desert so that he could be tempted?
2. If there is nothing wrong with being hungry and nothing wrong with bread, what is the turn the stones into bread temptation?
3. How is testing God different from trusting God?
4. Satan often offers shortcuts to believers. What are some of the shortcuts he could offer you and how do they relate to the shortcut that Satan offered Jesus in the third temptation?