

✠ In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen. ✠

Did God really say? These words from the great tempter ring in our ears today with a strange sense of familiarity. They are the words used to deceive Adam and Eve in the garden, yes, but they are also the words Satan uses to tempt you each and every day of your lives. Did God really say? Is God's word really true? Is it really worth following? You might think that, after six thousand or so years, Satan would need new and more clever ways of attacking you, of undermining God's authority in our hearts and minds, and pulling you away from the Body of Christ. But all it takes is a simple question, "Did God really say?"

All temptation is fundamentally an attack on the word of God. It either claims that it is not the word of God at all or it seeks to undermine its authority, claiming there is a higher authority. It seeks to place our own human reason, our own desires and wants over and above God's commands. It seeks to usurp God as Lord and put ourselves in his place. There is nothing new under the sun and you fall prey to the same base desire that Adam and Eve did; you desire to be like God, knowing Good and Evil, deciding it for yourselves. Left alone, you are doomed and hopeless, perpetuating the cycle of sin and death started by our first parents.

In the Old Testament, you heard of Adam, our father, the one in whose image you are made, failing to withstand even the most basic temptation. In the garden given everything, in the midst of paradise, he fails to resist, the tempter wins the day, and the world is cursed. And Satan tempts you in the same way, he says to Adam and Eve, "Did God really say"?

"Did God really say a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh, reserving our sexuality for our husband or wife?" Certainly, my children are the exception, after all they do love each other...

Did God really say Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord? Surely not when I don't like the direction we are headed?

Did God really say, “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her? After all, if I am unhappy and my life is not what I planned or wanted, maybe we should just get a divorce?

Did God really say whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery? Surely my situation is the exception.

Did God really say, “Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, and the fruit of the womb a reward”? Surely that is only if I think I am ready for them, or want them. It's best if we limit the blessings the Lord desires to give us.

Did God really say, " Honor your Father and Mother? He must have meant that only when they are living up to the expectations I have for them, and when they are doing what I think is best.

Did God really say.... It goes on and on and on.

This is why Christ is tempted, because you, like our first parents, fall prey to the same trick time and time again: “Did God really say?” He is tempted because you have failed to stand firm. He withstands temptation on your behalf, he takes your place in front of Satan and counters each and every attack, and he shows you how to withstand when you are tempted by leaning on and knowing the word of God. What worked on Adam, what works on you, does not work on Christ, Did God really say?

Did God really say he will provide for you and care for you? Where is your food? Where is your water? Make some for yourself; you do not need God.

Did God really say, “He will command his angels concerning you? Cast yourself down and see if He meant it. See if His word is true.

Did God really say, “This is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased?” Surely He wouldn't want his only beloved Son to suffer and die upon a cross. Simply bow down, worship me, and you can avoid all of that.

To all of this Christ does not bend or falter, he withstands in the hour of temptation, countering each of Satan's assaults with the word of God, countering each of Satan's “Did God really say with a

resounding “Yes, he did”. He did not doubt the word of God, he did not falter at the will of God, and marched surely onwards to Jerusalem and faced the cross. Paying the price of our sin, our failure to resist temptation, and from the cross, God declared, “It is finished.” The devil and sin are overthrown, the tempted are set free and forgiven. Thereupon, the cross He proclaimed the truth that God really said, “He shall bruise your head and you shall bruise his heel.”

As part of your Lenten discipline, learn from Christ, memorize and study the scriptures so that you might withstand in the hour of temptation. Fast so that you are prepared to suffer. Steel your will as Christ did by his fasting.

Christ is not weakened by his fasting but strengthened. For 40 days and 40 nights, our Lord fasted. He had already considered His hunger, considered He could turn the stones to bread, and had been sustained by God’s word. He had already proclaimed “God truly has said...”

Dear Christian, fast and pray, so that when the tempter comes to you, you may not be found wanting as Adam and Eve were, but found faithful and resolute, firm in God’s word, firm in your Salvation.

God has really said, “It is finished”.

✠ In Jesus name. Amen. ✠