

From temptation to victory. Luke 4: 1 - 13

We are tempted to avoid victorious suffering

Introduction: In Luke 3:21-22 we have the record of Jesus' baptism when he was thirty years old. "Now when all the people were baptised and when Jesus also had been baptised and was praying, the heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form, as a dove, and a voice came from heaven, 'Thou art my beloved Son; with thee I am well pleased.'"

When Jesus was baptised along with all the repenting people of the day, his Father in heaven, who had sent him to ensure victory for the elected, signified with the appearance of a dove that the Holy Spirit would be with him in the battles to come.

Jesus fought our battle, representing the new people of God.

In 3:23-38 Luke inserts the genealogy of Jesus. Matthew records Jesus' genealogy at the very beginning of his gospel and takes it back only to Abraham. Luke, however, records the genealogy here just after the baptism of Jesus (where he is announced as *Son of God*) and just before the temptations of Jesus (where he is attacked as the *Son of God*); and Luke takes the genealogy all the way back to Adam (whom he calls a *son of God*).

This arrangement is very important in communicating Luke's message about Jesus. The message goes like this: *Adam had a unique relation of sonship to God in that he was directly created. But Jesus has an even greater unique relationship to God as the virgin-born divine Son of the Most High (1:35). Adam had a unique relation to humanity as the head from which all of us came. But Jesus has an even more unique relation to a new humanity which he creates and redeems. Adam was tempted and failed, bringing all of his descendants into misery. Jesus is about to be tempted, but will not fail; he will bring all his people to victory.*

By taking the genealogy of Jesus all the way back to Adam and calling Adam a son of God, and by inserting this genealogy between the announcement of Jesus' Sonship and the testing of Jesus' Sonship, Luke shows that Jesus is like a new Adam, entering a new battle to redeem a new people.

So when we read the account of Jesus' temptations, we must realize how much is at stake here. If he fails, he will be the same as the old Adam and there will be no new people of God.

Four ways Jesus prepared for the conflict ahead.

What did Jesus do to prepare for Spiritual warfare? Luke 4:1-2, "And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit for forty days in the wilderness, tempted by the devil. And he ate nothing in those days."

Jesus is thirty years old. He has just been acclaimed by God to be his Son. Three years of increasing conflict lie before him, which he knows will end in his suffering and execution. How shall he begin? Verses 1 and 2 tell us four things.

1. Filled with the Holy Spirit

He begins his battle full of the Holy Spirit. The divine nature of Jesus did not cancel out his human nature; and therefore as a human in battle with evil, he claimed for himself of the same power offered to us in the Holy Spirit. He was filled with the love of his Father and his own awesome mission and calling.

2. Forty days of Isolation

Being filled with this love for his Father and sensing his destiny, the Holy Spirit led him into solitude for forty days. He went away from family and friends and lived in the desert. This was not the only time. Luke 5:16 shows that there were other times when Jesus went away alone.

Preparation for ministry demands significant times of isolation. We simply can not uphold our God-centeredness amongst constant human interruption. The depth and value of what you bring in your heart to other people will depend on what you do with your solitude, being only in fellowship with God. God-centred quiet time is crucial when we seek our God-defined destiny and calling.

3. Forty days without food

During these forty days of solitude Jesus did not eat anything. He fasted. Why should the perfect Son of God go without food? **To demonstrate that he was not enslaved by anything and that his only allegiance was with God.**

Physical appetites are not evil (Jesus was hungry!). But when your human appetite seize the rule in your body, your spiritual power deteriorates. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 9:27, "I pommel my body and subdue it, lest after preaching to

others I myself should be disqualified." For forty days Jesus pummelled his body to confirm and demonstrate that his appetite for food gave no foothold to Satan in his life; for he was driven by a superior desire for God. "My food is to do the will of him who sent me" (John 4:34).

This is what it means to be filled with the Spirit. To be so full of God and his purpose for my life, that food, even after forty days of fasting, does not control me. Drive the demon of greediness out and seven more will come back, unless you fill your house with the Holy Spirit. Jesus was filled with the Spirit and no demon ever had a hold on him and could destroy his spiritual discipline and sense of calling.

4. Forty days of conflict

Verse 2 says that Jesus was tempted by the devil for forty days. For forty days Christ was in combat with the enemy, defending himself in the power of the Holy Spirit against the deadly arrows of self-pity, fear and the temptation of mumbling against God, like Israel so often did in the wilderness.

When you have opened yourself to the fullness of God's Spirit and have disciplined yourself to self-denial and have resolved to give yourself to the invigorating work of the gospel of grace, you without any doubt will be attacked by the evil one, every day. You will live in conflict with evil.

Satan wanted to prevent Jesus from suffering.

Luke gives us three examples of the temptations Satan threw at Jesus. First, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread." Then Satan shows him all the kingdoms of the world and says, "To you I will give all this authority and their glory; for it has been delivered to me and I give it to whom I will. If you, then, will worship me, it shall all be yours." Finally Satan took Jesus to the pinnacle of the temple and said, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here; for it is written, 'He will give his angels charge of you,' and 'On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.'"

These temptations are amazingly relevant for established Christianity. Satan skips over adultery, fornication, stealing, lying and murder, because those temptations are simply too obvious. Those are the games that sub-demons play with the weak. Jesus is no candidate to fall for these obvious tactics to eliminate the effect of his ministry.

When Satan attacks a strong and experienced believer, he often uses religion and he makes the Bible his manual. Even today he brings to a fall people known to be committed to Christ. "If you are a child of God, why are you living like a beggar? If you are a child of the king, why don't you live like a prince? The children of the king do not eat sandwiches, they eat steak. If you are a child of the king, claim your blessings. God has promised to send his angels to make you healthy, wealthy, and prosperous. Throw yourself into these blessings." Does this not sound familiar? Do you see the similarity with the temptations Jesus conquered?

Satan had one aim in the wilderness: to do whatever he could to keep Jesus from suffering. He was willing to let Jesus have all the glory and authority of a world ruler, if he just would not gain it through suffering, for it was through suffering that we would be redeemed.

Satan wants to prevent you from suffering for the sake of the gospel.

Do you remember when Jesus said to the disciples that he had to go up to Jerusalem and suffer and be killed, Peter said, "God forbid, Lord"? Jesus responded, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me" (Matthew 16:23).

Satan's aim in the wilderness was to hinder Jesus from suffering. ***The suffering and death of Jesus meant the final destruction of Satan and the salvation of you and me.*** And Satan's aim in the church today is to hinder you from following Jesus when he says, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me (in the path of suffering)" (Luke 9:23).

Conclusion: What Satan fears most is the power of the Holy Spirit that causes us to say with Paul, "I count everything as refuse that I might gain Christ that I might know the power of his resurrection *and the fellowship of his sufferings*, becoming like him in his death."

If Jesus was prevented from suffering, we would still be lost. Jesus was tempted to take "the easy way out". But he never even considered Satan's ploys. And neither should we.

Jesus is victorious, because no sacrifice was too much for him to bring about salvation for us. His choosing of suffering, in stead of giving in to temptation became our pathway to redemption and one day, even glory!

May we tread in his foot steps. May we understand that in our fellowship with his sufferings, we gained eternal joy. Amen.