

A Declaration of Those Things Which Are Most Surely Believed Among Us

An Expositional Study of **The Gospel According to Luke** **Chapter 4- Luke 4:1&2** 37- Jesus Led by the Spirit to be Tempted

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Luke 4:1&2

The most important thing that happened last week was not the resignation of Sarah Palin from being Governor of Alaska, it was not the funeral of Michael Jackson, it was not the stock market drop, and it was not the collective blessings of all that God did for us.

The most important thing that went on last week was that you and I might have missed a wonderful opportunity to suffer in this flesh and we missed it. We *could* have suffered in our bodies and yet we didn't; we *might have* tasted of the pain of sin and temptation and we avoided it; we might have confronted satan head on- but it didn't happen.

And the net result of us *not* suffering last week and all the weeks before last week is that we now are more bold than ever to *stay* delivered, we are more determined than ever to *avoid* the pain and the agony, and to *escape* the time of trial and temptation that God has chosen for us to walk in. And that should makes us very sad- because based on this passage here in **Luke**- I think that we can safely say that it is *not* always God's Will to deliver us out of what we determine is bad, and it is *not* always God's Plan to set us free from a time of confronting the devil, and it is *not* always God's Will for us to avoid the pain and the agony of temptation, and it is *not* always God's Will that we eat and not fast. In fact, based upon this passage in Luke- I think we can safely say that there are seasons in our lives when it is the perfect Will of God that we suffer, that we confront the devil head on, that we go through the wilderness of temptation and fasting.

Most of the time that we think about suffering- we think about it only in terms of God delivering us *from* it- but here the Spirit of God leads Jesus *into* it. When we think about a time of confronting the

devil- we think in terms of God moving us *past* it- but here the Spirit of God led Jesus *into* it. When we think about a season of combat or of spiritual warfare- we think in terms of victory and of being brought *out* of it- but here the Spirit of the Lord led Jesus *into* it. When we think about the wilderness- we think in terms of God *changing* the wilderness and making it prosperous and lovely- but here the Spirit of God led Jesus *into* it, and when we think about fasting- especially long protracted fasts- we usually think about something else real quick- but here- the Spirit of the Lord led Jesus into it.

And so our thoughts of wilderness and confrontation and combat and temptation and agony and suffering and fasting are much different than what Scripture teaches that they should be, and so I am trying very hard this morning to present these things to you in such a way that you change the way you think about these things so that we all may think Biblically about them.

If God's Will for our lives was that we live down here on earth in relative peace and safety- if that was God's Will- then I would agree that we would not need the wilderness or the suffering or the struggle or the temptation or the fasting or the confrontation. If it was God's Will that we all become wealthy and happy and content and satisfied down here on earth in this present life- if that was God's Will- then I would agree that these things would not only *not* be good- but they would be something that we should reject and bind and cast out and refuse.

But if it is God's Will that you and me be conformed to the Image of His Son- if that is God's Will- then I suggest to you that not only is the wilderness and the fasting and the temptation and the suffering *useful*- but that it is mandatory. If God is infinitely more interested that I be holy than I be temporarily happy, if it is God's Will that I be content with what God has already given to me and not covet after more, if it is God's Will that I delight myself in the Lord more than I be safe or secure or physically healthy or that I be materially blessed- if it is God's Will that I live my life to bring honor and Glory to Jesus Christ- rather than live my life as a king or as a prima donna- then I suggest to you that while our own lusts will lead us into many things- God's Spirit will lead us into this.

Approximately thirty-eight years after this moment of Jesus being led to go into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil and to fast for forty days- the Apostle Peter wrote this verse in **1Peter 4:1**:

Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin,

Here Peter says that you and I should "**arm yourselves also with the same purpose**". What same purpose? The same purpose that Jesus had when He was led by God's Spirit to go into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil and to suffer and to agonize and to fast and to confront satan head on.

And then the Apostle gave us a Promise here that if we would suffer in our flesh- we would "**cease from sin**". So if our biggest problem in life is not a lack of money, if it is not a lack of physical health, if it is not a lack of material possessions, if it is not a lack of opportunity to be great and to do great things- if it is true that our biggest problem down here on earth is our sin- and if it is true that if we suffer in the flesh- we would cease from sin- then all of a sudden- suffering and going into the wilderness doesn't look so bad after all- does it? In fact- a person who is honest could very well see that there are times when this kind of suffering is mandatory to our walk with God.

And that phrase, "**has ceased from sin**", means that sin no longer *dominates* or *controls* our decisions and choices. So if that is God's Will for us- for you and me to get to a place in Jesus Christ where sin no longer dominates our lives- then Peter says that the best way to get there is to suffer in the flesh.

So Jesus- the perfect, sinless, spotless Lamb of God was led by the Spirit of God to go into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil and to fast for forty days. So what are we led to do?

I believe that is why Jesus told us to pray in **Luke 11:4**:

And lead us not into temptation

And the King James Version adds:

but deliver us from evil.

Why did Jesus tell us to pray that we would *not* be led into temptation if we are never led to be tempted? And why would Jesus teach us to pray that we will be *delivered* from evil if it is not God's Will at times that evil come to us?

So how does all this work? And what exactly is Luke trying to teach Theophilus and us this morning about why Jesus was led into the wilderness to fast for forty days and to be tempted of the devil?

In this passage- the Bible says that Jesus was led by God's Spirit to go into the wilderness for the purpose of fasting for forty days and to be tempted of the devil. **Luke 4:1** says that Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, and verse 2 says:

for forty days, being tempted by the devil.

And at the end of verse 2- Luke writes:

... And He ate nothing during those days, and when they had ended, He became hungry.

So when you put these three statements together- we see that not only did God the Holy Ghost lead Jesus into the wilderness, but that Jesus was led by the Spirit of God to also be tempted by the devil himself and to fast for a forty day period.

Now in **Matthew's Gospel Account**- we see that the verses that speak about this moment in Jesus' life break differently than does **Luke**. Please turn with me and read **Matthew 4:1**:

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

So what we have here is not a contradiction between **Luke** and **Matthew** but simply an illustration that the verse and chapter divisions of the Holy Bible- as useful as they are for reading and studying the Bible- were put there many years after these Books were written and sometimes they do not fit the thoughts of the Biblical writers as well as they could.

Now when you examine the original Greek- Matthew's account is worded more accurately than is Luke's. So we must attach the temptation of Jesus by the devil and His fasting for forty days- along

with Jesus being led by God's Spirit. And what you get out of that is that God's Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness to both fast and to be tempted by the devil for a period of forty days.

And I beg you to look closely and notice that God's Spirit did not lead Jesus to *escape* this torment as you would normally think. Notice also that God's Spirit did not *prevent* this time of suffering from occurring, and neither did God's Spirit *deliver* Jesus out of the pain and agony of this moment. No, the Bible says that God the Holy Spirit *led* Jesus straight *into it*.

And that would mean that this was God's Will for Jesus because the Holy Spirit *never* does or says or leads *anyone* to do *anything* that is not the perfect Will of God the Father.

Now I realize that we live in a day when people ascribe God's great Name to whatever it is that they want to do, and these people then justify pursuing after their own lusts by saying that the Spirit of God led them, or that God showed them this or that, or that God spoke directly to them to give them this revelation or that insight- and all of this abuse by wayward people and all of this excess by zealous people has given the Holy Spirit a bad reputation in our day- so much so- that many people run away from any mention of the Holy Ghost for fear that some off the wall demonstration may occur.

But here is a very simple test that you can use to determine if the Holy Spirit is leading or speaking or guiding or directing an individual or not.

- ✓ If what they say does not come to pass- it is not the Spirit of God
- ✓ If what they are doing or speaking brings Glory to Man or to themselves- it is not the Spirit of God

If what is said or done does not meet up to both of these tests- then what they say about hearing directly from God or being led by God's Spirit or God speaking directly to them is now suspect at best, and they themselves and what they say is unreliable and untrustworthy, and neither they nor what they say should be believed or obeyed. Please turn with me to read **John 16:13-15**:

13 But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come.

14 He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose *it* to you.

15 All things that the Father has are Mine; therefore I said that He takes of Mine and will disclose *it* to you.

Now in this passage- God the Holy Spirit- Whom Jesus called the Spirit of Truth- is sent to the earth by God the Father and God the Son- after Jesus ascends into Heaven to do seven very specific things among those who are saved:

- 1. He will guide you into all truth (John 16:13b)**
- 2. for He will not speak on His own initiative (John 16:13c)**
- 3. whatever He hears, He will speak (John 16:13d)**
- 4. He will disclose to you what is to come (John 16:13e)**
- 5. He will glorify Me (John 16:14a)**
- 6. for He will take of Mine (John 16:14b)**
- 7. will disclose *it* to you (John 16:14c)**

Now I want to concentrate on the first one this morning- because I think that this is the key to understanding just why the Holy Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil and to fast for 40 days. So look closely again at **John 16:13b**. Jesus Himself says here that God the Holy Spirit will:

... guide you into all truth...

Now that phrase "all truth" in the Greek means: *finished truth; final truth; completed truth*. So just how did this work? How did the Holy Spirit guide these men into the final, full, and completed Truth about God and Salvation? And why did Jesus have to leave in order for that to happen. Why couldn't Jesus have remained with them, or why couldn't Jesus Himself have told them or revealed to them this final and completed Truth? Why did Jesus have to leave in order for the Holy Spirit to come and give these men the completed Truth about God and Salvation? Again, I think we will find the answer to that question in the passage of **Luke 4** that we are studying today.

Now we must agree that this passage here in **Luke 4** is a very odd and strange statement by Luke, and one that we need to examine very closely because I believe that this statement should impact us more than it usually does when people read this. And I also suggest to you that the fact that God's Spirit never leads *us* into the wilderness to fast and to be tempted by the devil is not because we are *better* than Jesus. No, Jesus Himself said in **John 15:16-21**:

16 You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and *that* your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you.

17 This I command you, that you love one another.

18 If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before *it hated* you.

19 If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you.

20 Remember the word that I said to you, 'A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also

21 But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know the One who sent Me.

Now, there are two reasons why Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil and we are not:

1. Jesus was God and we are not- and as God- Jesus came to this earth for the purpose of being tempted with every sin that all humans experience- so that He alone could remain perfectly sinless, and, thus, earn His Own spotless Righteousness so that this perfect Righteousness might be imputed to us- so that we could enter into Heaven. So it was God's perfect Will for Jesus to be tempted.

2. Jesus only did what He saw His Father do, and we are driven by our own lusts.

Now there is much being written and taught today about the ministry of the Holy Spirit, and most of that teaching centers around how many "rights" we have in Christ, and how many things are under

subjection to us, and how powerful we are, and what God owes us, and how we can get more stuff in this life and live better in this sin cursed earth.

So by default the glorious ministry of the Holy Spirit has been marginalized and reduced to petty and temporal things like physical health and material possessions and money and political influence and cars and airplanes and finer homes. It has become all about how much God wants to give us and how much He wants to bless us and heal us and give us the best so that we can live like King's children and not like paupers. And that message is very attractive to the masses of people who believe that God exists to make much of us.

But you will be hard pressed to find that kind of teaching here in these two verses of **Luke 4**. Here you find a very different message of the ministry of the Holy Ghost that involves forgotten things like suffering and pain and agony and fasting and temptation and of combat and confrontation- and that message is only received by those who believe that we exist to make much of God.

So since that is true- I think it would behoove us if we tried our hearts this morning to see if we are earnestly contending for the same Faith that was once and for all delivered to the saints, or if we are following some pipe dream and some pie in the sky fantasy, and the only way to do that is to honestly examine what we have become so enamored with and to honestly examine what we seek to avoid.

We call "bad things" "bad", and we call "good things" "good", and because the "bad things" are "bad", we then seek to avoid the "bad things", and we seek to embrace the "good things". And that is fine to a point- but we have a tendency to say that anything is "bad" if it involves our own suffering and our own pain and temptation and agony- and I don't believe the Bible supports that notion. Because when we read Scripture- we see that God's definition of what is "bad" or "good" is many times far different from what we say.

For example- I suggest to you that it was "good" for Jesus to be led into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. It was "good" for Him, and it was good for us, too. I also suggest to you that it was "good" that Jesus fasted 40 days, and it was "good" that Jesus afflicted His soul, and it was "good" that He was tormented, and it was "good" that He engaged satan head on.

And less we are tempted to follow the false mantra of the modern Church and say, *"But that was Jesus. He had to be tempted and suffer- but because He suffered- I am not supposed to suffer!"* we need to remember that the Bible declares that Noah and Abraham and Joseph and Moses and Joshua and David and Isaiah and Jeremiah and Daniel and James and Andrew and Peter and John and Peter and Paul were all led by God's Spirit into a way of fasting and suffering and pain and agony and temptation and confrontation and combat.

And this way of being led by God's Spirit into pain and agony and temptation and fasting and confrontation and combat was also God's Will for Justin Martyr and Clement and Irenaeus and John Chrysostom and Augustine and Athanasius and John Wycliffe and John Huss and Martin Luther and John Calvin and John Knox and The Puritans and The Pilgrims and Jonathan Edwards and Charles Spurgeon.

And this testimony of being led into the wilderness by God's Spirit is the collective testimony of all the Missionaries who have traveled to hostile lands and suffered persecution and hunger and want and imprisonment and beatings and even death for the 2,000 years of Church History.

So I have no idea what book the people are reading who teach that being led by God's Spirit only involves blessings and prosperity and ease and comfort and wonderful, wonderful and delightful things- but they are certainly not reading the Bible, and they are certainly discounting two millennia of History, and they are certainly not in accord with the Truth.

So I tell you this- whatever God Sovereignly allows to come into our lives to cause sin to cease from dominating us is Mercy, and it is good and it is lovely and it is profitable to your soul, and it is a glory to God- and whatever causes us to be fat, dumb, and happy, and to live our lives without any care or burden about our sin is evil and ugly and dark and sinister and of the devil, and it dishonors Christ and is of no value to your soul.

So let us examine what we feel led to go into and what we seek to avoid in our lives and see if what we are led into is in accord with what God's Word says that we should love and let us see if what we seek to avoid are those things that God's Word says that we should seek to avoid.

Let us bring our desires and our affections and our loves and wants and our ability to be led by God's Spirit and place them next to the Inspired, Infallible, Inerrant Word of the living God and see if they pass the test:

Do those things that I love and those things that I seek after and those things that I feel led to go into something that will cause sin to cease in my life and something that will bring glory and honor to Jesus Christ, or are they purely selfish?

Do those things that I am led to go into and those things that I seek to avoid speak of eternal and weighty matters, or do they speak of temporary and earthly matters?

Does what I am led to go into what I seek to avoid expose sin in my life?

Do they force me to my knees or do they simply make this sin cursed earth more attractive and appealing to me?

Is what I love and what I avoid a tool in the Hand of God to mold and shape me into the Image and Likeness of Jesus Christ, or is it simply an effort to make my own life better down here?

These are the kind of questions that we need to ask ourselves this morning, dear friends, as we read this passage in **Luke** and we see Jesus- the sinless, spotless pure Lamb of God- being led by God's Spirit to go into the wilderness for forty days to fast and confront satan and temptation head on.

Now I really and truly believe, dear friends, that Technology is a great blessing to us. We have access to more information and more goods and services for a cheaper price in our culture in the first decade of the 21st Century than any other society in the history of the world. God has truly blessed us.

But as we enjoy and use our technology, and as our technology becomes a greater and more important part of our daily lives- we need to ask several questions in light of what the Spirit of God led Jesus to do here in **Luke**.

Because you see, I really believe that technology- like Medicine and Government and Money and Possessions and anything that is the product of fallen Man can become gods to most people who are not rooted and grounded in Scripture. They encourage us to look *away* from God and we begin to trust and take comfort in our Medicine and in our Government and in our Money and in our Possessions and in our Technology rather than taking comfort in Jesus and in trusting Jesus and in Jesus alone for all our needs.

And so because God loves us- and because God is infinitely more interested in us being holy than He is in us being temporarily happy, because God's Priority for our lives is that we trust in Him and not in Money, that God desires that we embrace the Offense of the Cross rather than pad our nests and live in this world safe and secure and fat, and dumb, and happy, and because God desires that we see our sin more than we are prosperous- periodically- God's Spirit leads us into the wilderness to confront sin and to do combat and to fast and to afflict our souls and to struggle with sin and to wrestle with temptation.

And what I am trying to get you to see this morning is that we should *embrace* those moments and those seasons and we should thank God for them and we should *not* waste these moments and we should *not* seek to be delivered from them so quickly and we should *not* seek to avoid them- but rather we should seek to be faithful *in* them.

There is something that lies inside of us that technology grips and holds. Technology is like a romance or an epic or an adventure which has come true before our very eyes. It combines mystery and power and precision and beauty- all in one little gizmo.

Technology is exciting and it is fresh and new and it has opened possibilities for us. And most people would say, "Yes!" to that- but I will be faithful to tell you that our culture is in for unimaginable and irreversibly horrible effects from the technological revolution. And I do not doubt that virtually every one of us will have our lives dominated by technology in 15 years as the uses expand, and the prices fall, and the temptation to live this life safe and secure and free from agony and pain and suffering and fasting and affliction and confrontation and combat will be greater than even this generation has ever had to face.

And one of the negative effects that technology and money and Government and possessions can have on a Christian is to make us feel

like spiritual things are very unreal and very unexciting. I believe that we already live in a day when to most people- reading and studying the Bible is just simply boring. I mean who in their right mind wants to spend time with passages like this when they can go see Star Trek and X-Men and Vampires and Football.

You can see a computer, you can *handle* a cell phone, you can *use* the Internet, money can make your life so much easier and nicer, and possessions tempt us to believe that this life is all that there is. All of these things touch our flesh and can give us *immediate feedback and solutions*. And that is why they hold a powerful fascination to the human mind. And that is also why the Bible warns us about them.

Because you see, the Bible speaks largely of *unseen* things, things that *don't* force themselves onto our senses, things that are sometimes far away or in the distant past. You all have had these experiences with some new gadget or toy or appliance. We have all been touched by the wonder that money can do for us, and we stand amazed that when Government decides to do something- it *really* gets done.

So with all of that surging around us all day long- how easy is it then to steal away and lay them all down and truly enjoy the Voice of God in Scripture? How long do we go before the Spirit of God speaks to us to fast and pray? How many months go by before we feel the need for spiritual confrontation and self-examination and to test our hearts and to judge our motives and to see if we are faithfully following Jesus or if we are following our own lusts and just simply rationalizing it?

Here is one way to judge your hearts. If you were laid low by kidney failure or a congested heart and were told by the doctors that you have only a few days left to live- would you want to spend your last days idling in front of television? With the world on fire would you just sit in a chair and or lay in a bed and waste the last few precious moments here on earth, or would you be on the phone- telling somebody about the Heaven that you will soon walk in, or would you be praying- crying out to God for the lost and dying?

Would you even care whether you sold or bought that stock at a quarter of a point move in the market, or would you want your family to sit by your bedside and read to you from the latest systems developments of IBM?

Or would you want to tell that wayward son or daughter one more time about Jesus? Would you want to pray for that lost soul or that

troubled teenager? Would you want to lay hands on your wife or husband or children or parents and charge them to be faithful after you're gone? Would you want to know God's Word better and make sure that your heart was right with God?

What happens to the attraction of Money and Government and Technology and Possessions in those minutes after the doctor walks out of the room and leaves you with the impact that you will soon be dead? What happens to the gripping fascination of Politics and Mutual Funds and 401k Accounts and Social Security and RAM and Sports and how many mega-pixels the camera on your cell phone has got?

What happens is that here at the end of your journey through the valley of life- the low-lying haze of all of this earth's attractions are blown away behind you and you stand perhaps for the first time before the lucid reality of the mountains of eternity that stand just ahead. And you look back on the fog falling away in the valley and you wonder how you could have ever been so entranced, and so captivated, and so swallowed up by the functions of *anything* that is passing away.

When you look at the spectacular peaks and awful ravines and unapproachable crags in the mountains before you, and it comes to your mind that you will soon stand before the Owner and Creator of the Universe- Whose Eyes burn like flames of fire- you will wonder how the mystery and the power and the beauty of *this* earthly reality could have ever been so important in your life.

But not only the mountains. In the short distance that remains between you and the foothills of eternity you look around on what the receding haze has exposed and see this world for what it really is. On the one side, thick green grass, and trees with luscious fruit, and crystal streams with darting fish, and over it all there is a great white Dove, hovering in mid-air. But on the other side- there is a wasteland of smoldering ashes, and cracked riverbeds, and half-eaten corpses, and in the midst of that destruction- there is a huge, gaunt, starving lion, crouched with his shoulder blades protruding under the mangy fur and looking you right in the face.

And in that one immeasurable moment you awaken to the awesome fact that what was really happening during your entire life here on earth was not about comfort or ease or prosperity or good health or a nice car or a fine home- but what was *really* going on was a combat between the life-giving Dove of God's Spirit and the lion of satan's

destruction, and your life and what you loved and what you were led to go into and what you sought to avoid in your life was (and *is*) the issue.

So this morning I have come to proclaim to you that whatever on this earth has entranced you or captivated you or swallowed up your attention- it is nothing but the haze of an illusion if it desensitizes you to the combat between the Holy Spirit and Satan for your life, and if it diverts your solemn attention from the mountains of eternity that lies just ahead- it is a trap.

And to help us see things like they really are, let's look at Christ in combat— first on the defense and then on the offense.

Back in **Luke 3:21&22** we have the record of Jesus' baptism when He was about thirty years old.

21 Now when all the people were baptized, Jesus was also baptized, and while He was praying, heaven was opened,

22 and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in bodily form like a dove, and a voice came out of heaven, “You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased.”

And when Jesus was baptized along with all the repenting people who wanted to be on God's Side- it was as though the Commander-in-Chief had come to the front lines, fastened His bayonet, strapped on His helmet, and jumped into the trench along with the rest of us. And when He did that- His Father in Heaven- Who had sent him for this very combat, signified with the appearance of a Dove that the Holy Spirit would be with Jesus in the battles that were to come.

Then in **Luke 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 also calls a *son of God*).

And this arrangement is all very important in communicating Luke's message about Jesus. I think 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 (**Luke 1:35**). Adam had a unique relation to humanity as the head from which all of us came. But Jesus has an even greater unique relation to a *new* humanity which He re-creates and redeems. Adam was tempted and failed, bringing all of his people into misery. Jesus is about to be tempted, but He will not fail; so He will bring all of His people, all of those whom the Father has given to Him, Jesus will receive every one of them and Jesus will keep every one of them and Jesus will glorify every one of them in Heaven. And by taking the genealogy of Jesus all the way back to Adam and making Adam a son of God, and by inserting this genealogy between the *announcement* of Jesus' sonship and the *testing* of Jesus' sonship- Luke shows Theophilus and us 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 Jesus fails in any way here at the first few minutes of His Ministry, if He sins, if He bites this fruit of temptation- He will be in the same class as the old Adam and there will be no new people and the lion will devour the world, and all the green grass and all the fruit trees and all the crystal streams and all the darting fish will be burned up in the fire of God's Judgment.

But if Jesus succeeds in combat with the lion- He will be able to liberate a new people who learn from Him what is truly real on planet earth and what is an illusion, and Jesus will recreate a people who learn from Him how to do battle with Satan and escape the fog of his falsehoods, and a people who will live with Jesus forever some day in a world just as securely renewed as the base of Mt. St. Helens, where the trees are sprouting and the animals are returning and the lakes are pure again.

So here in **Luke 4:1&2** in the wilderness beyond the Jordan- our Commander-in-Chief- fighting in a trench just like ours- turns back the enemy and teaches us how to do the same.

So let's watch the Captain of our Salvation in action:

1 Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led around by the Spirit in the wilderness

2 for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And He ate nothing during those days, and when they had ended, He became hungry.

Do you see the great contrast between how Jesus engages the enemy here and how many of us were taught by the modern Church? May God grant us the wisdom and power to engage the enemy like Jesus did- rather than like the false prophets of our day.

Now here Jesus is thirty years old. He has just been publicly proclaimed by God to be His One and Only Son, and the only human being on earth that has fully pleased God. Three years of grueling conflict lie before Him- which He already knows will finally end in His torment and execution. So with all of this- how should Jesus begin His Ministry? Verses 1 and 2 give us four ways:

1. Jesus Begins His Ministry Filled with the Holy Spirit

He begins full of the Holy Spirit. There is a great mystery here of how all three of the Persons of the Trinity inter-relate. But the least we can say is that the Divine Nature of Jesus did not cancel out His human nature, and, therefore, as a human in the trenches with us- He availed Himself of the very same Power that has been offered to us in the Person of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus was filled with the Love of His Father, with the wonder of His Own mission, and with the Hope of His Own Destiny.

2. Jesus Begins His Ministry With Forty Days of Solitude

What we know about most of the famous preachers and teachers of our day is their public side- the side that is in front of the cameras, the part of them that is the showroom of their life, the part that everybody sees. And part of that is because they seek to be seen and heard- but the other part of that is that we humans are very attracted to open shows of glory- even if that glory is not of God, and even if it is pure flesh and emotion- open shows or open demonstrations of glory- human or otherwise- appeals to us.

But here one of the first things we see about Jesus is the hidden part, the part of solitude, the side of Him stealing away from the crowds and of going alone to pray and fast and to confront Satan head on.

And I say to you- that we need this time. We all need time alone with God, reading and studying His Word, wrestling with our own pride and lusts, grasping and struggling to climb higher up the mountain of

God, and we need time to pray and fast and seek God's Face and to confront the devil head on.

All of the great men of the Bible got up early in the morning- way before sunrise, and they prayed and sought God and studied His Word. In fact, this pattern goes way beyond the examples that we find in Scripture.

All of our founding fathers with the exception of Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin rose up early to seek God's Face and read His Word. Most of the great industrialists of this nation- who formed vast and important corporations that bless us today like Kraft and JC Penny and LaTourneau and Proctor and Gamble all employed this method of Jesus right here, and they rose early in the morning to fast and pray and read God's Word and to confront the devil and temptation.

I do not believe that it is accidental that 100 years ago- the majority of the people of this country rose up early to pray and meditate on God's Word, and today very few do. I believe that this is part of the Great Falling Away that the Bible speaks about in the last days, and I beg you this morning to examine your life and see if you are following the pattern of the world or you are following the pattern that Jesus set up right here.

With that fullness- the Holy Spirit led Jesus into solitude for forty days to begin His Ministry. He went away from His family and friends and the crowds and lived in the desert for forty days. Now that's almost six weeks. No radio. No television. No computers. No video games, no books, no entertainment, no billboards- the noise of the world was completely drowned out.

And this wasn't the only time. Jesus did this periodically all throughout His Ministry. For example- **Luke 5:16** shows us that Jesus went away alone. It must be that true preparation for godly ministry demands significant times of sacred solitude. And I truly believe that we humans simply cannot maintain a radical God-centeredness under an unbroken barrage of human interaction. The depth and the worth of what you bring in your heart to other people will depend on what you do with your solitude.

I regard Sunday mornings from 7:00 am to 10:00 am as the most important three hours of my life. The main purpose of God's Call on my life as I proclaim the unsearchable riches of Jesus Christ from behind this pulpit can either be defeated or fulfilled by whether or not I steal

away from everyone and everything in three hours of quiet solitude each Sunday Morning in the Power of the Holy Spirit and with the anointing of God way before I get up here to preach.

In other words- the exercise of the Power of the Holy Spirit is working in me and through me in my solitude- when nobody is here to see or hear me- as I confront the devil head on in my times of agony and soul searching and reflection and meditation and struggle BEFORE I get up to preach- not as I am preaching. My ability to preach rightly and fully the mysteries of God is completely dependent on how successful I have been alone with God.

And so woe to me if there is no wilderness of solitude in my life *before* I begin my public ministry. Woe unto me if I try to get up here and try to wing it, woe unto me if I stand here unprepared and unqualified to deliver my soul to you. Except for unusual crises, most all of Friday and all day Saturday are given to solitude to prepare for Sunday's ministry of the Word. And Saturday night and Sunday Morning are especially sacred to me. So I urge all of you to find a pattern of personal solitude.

3. Jesus Began His Ministry With Forty Days of Fasting

Again, not a very glamorous way to begin a ministry is it? Beginning your ministry with a forty day fast is not the way to get noticed by Man, but it will sure get God's attention. And please notice that Jesus didn't hobnob with the elite and the High Priests and the Roman politicians, and also notice that Jesus didn't travel to the White House with a petition and a photo op with the President.

During these forty days of solitude Jesus did not eat anything- He fasted. Why? The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof. 1Timothy 4:17 says that God richly furnishes us with everything to enjoy- so why should the perfect Son of God go without? And why begin His Ministry so serious and so somber?

This was to demonstrate that He was not enslaved by anything or influenced by anything but God and of doing God's Will. And from this action by Jesus- we can determine that our spiritual power will be weakened to the degree that we can't say no to our bodily appetites and lusts unless we are on a steady diet of fasting.

Now physical appetites are not evil- Luke tells us here that Jesus Himself was hungry. But when these appetites and cravings and lusts usurp the rule in your body- your spiritual power will always decline. This is a concept that the Puritans called "keeping under the body". To find this concept in scripture- please turn with me to what the Apostle Paul said in **1Corinthians 9:27**:

But I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.

Now the phrase "**keep under my body**" in the King James Version ("**discipline my body**" in the NASB, above) actually means in the original Greek that Paul *pummeled* his body in order to bring his flesh under subjection to the authority of Scripture. Another way of saying this is found in **Romans 8:12&13**, where Paul said:

12 So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh—

13 for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

And yet another way to illustrate this concept of bringing under the body is what Paul said in **Galatians 5:24**:

Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

So to "bring under the body" is to pummel the body or to mortify the deeds of the body or to crucify the flesh with the sinful affections and lusts that inhabit the body. And one of the best ways for all of us to do that is through the wonderful gift of fasting.

For the first forty days of His Ministry- Jesus pummeled His Body to certify and demonstrate that His appetite for food and for sex and for all the things that this flesh desires provided no foothold to Satan in His life. All of those hungers and all of those desires and all of those affections were mastered by a superior appetite and desire and affection for God and for doing God's Will. In **John 4:34**- Jesus Himself said:

My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work.

This is what the Bible means when it talks about being "filled with the Spirit". This is not about speaking in tongues or falling on the floor or some other open demonstration of emotion- to be filled with God's Spirit is to be so controlled and so dominated and so empowered by God's Spirit that the flesh no longer dominates us nor does the lusts and desires of our flesh.

If speaking in tongues was the manifestation of being filled with God's Spirit then why do all those who speak in tongues still lust after the cares of this life? But if we bring under the body, or if we systematically starve our flesh to the point where our flesh no longer rules over us, if we crucify our flesh and destroy the ability of our fallen flesh to dominate our thinking and decisions- then doing that will absolutely correct our walk with God.

Paul said in **Ephesians 5:18**, "**And do not get drunk with wine . . . but be filled with the Spirit**" (see **Luke 1:15**). And the way that we conquer our *physical* cravings is not by ignoring them- it is by *replacing* them with *godly* and *holy* cravings. No other way will produce long-term fruit that is godly.

You can drive the demon of gluttony out the front door and all that will happen is that seven more will come through the back door, unless and until you fill your house with the Holy Spirit. Jesus was full of God's Spirit from the start and no demon ever had a toehold in His marvelous life of discipline.

4. Jesus Began His Ministry With Forty Days of Combat

Notice that verse 2 says Jesus was tempted by the devil—not just at the end of the forty days but all during them, too. " . . . for forty days in the wilderness, tempted by the devil." For forty days Christ was in combat with the enemy, defending Himself in the Power of the Holy Spirit against the fiery darts of self-pity and loneliness and fear and the pain of His fasting and the awful temptation to murmur against God like Israel did in the wilderness.

And this is something that you can count on. Whenever you have opened yourself to the fullness of God's Spirit, and you have disciplined yourself to a life of simplicity and self-denial, and you have resolved to give yourself to the liberating work of the Gospel— understand

Christian brothers and sisters- you will be attacked by the gaunt lion of destruction day in and day out.

Now I close with a very important statement so if you're asleep- please wake up to hear this:

Satan would have done *anything* to prevent Jesus from suffering!

And I hope to get into this more next week, Lord willing- but unlike most of what we are being taught these days- satan didn't want Jesus to suffer- satan would have done *anything* to prevent Jesus from going into the wilderness to fast and be tempted. Remember, it was not satan that brought Jesus to the wilderness, dear friends. No, the Bible says that the Spirit of God led Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil and to fast.

And just like Jesus- what the devil fears most of all- is that you and I will also be led by God's Spirit into that solitary place to seek God and to confront our own sin and to do combat with the devil and to fast. Because satan knows full well that as you emerge from this time of struggle and pain and temptation- you will love God with all your heart and you will be fit for the Master's use. Your flesh will be under subjection to the authority of Scripture and you will be empowered by the Holy Spirit.

So please do not waste your trials, brothers and sisters, do not seek to be delivered from your pain and agony. Seek rather to learn all that you can from what God has Sovereignly allowed you to go through so that when you emerge- your flesh will be under subjection and Jesus will be Lord of all!

Let's come and pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.