

Luke 4 8-12-18
The Greatest Battle, Part Two
The Greatest Warrior

Luke 4:**1-13** *Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led around by the Spirit in the wilderness² for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And He ate nothing during those days, and when they had ended, He became hungry.³ And the devil said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread.”⁴ And Jesus answered him, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live on bread alone.’”⁵ And he led Him up and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time.⁶ And the devil said to Him, “I will give You all this domain and its glory; for it has been handed over to me, and I give it to whomever I wish.⁷ Therefore if You worship before me, it shall all be Yours.”⁸ Jesus answered him, “It is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God and serve Him only.’”⁹ And he led Him to Jerusalem and had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down from here;¹⁰ for it is written, ‘He will command His angels concerning You to guard You,’¹¹ and, ‘On their hands they will bear You up, so that You will not strike Your foot against a stone.’”¹² And Jesus answered and said to him, “It is said, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’”¹³ When the devil had finished every temptation, he left Him until an opportune time.*

What we have read recounts the battle of all battles, the conflict of the ages, the big showdown. For those of you not tuned in here last Sunday we began our study of the temptations of Jesus. For real, in this engagement between Jesus and Satan the destiny of mankind is on the line and your entire hope hangs in the balance. In this corner is Satanis Lucifer, the prince of darkness, the devil. And in this corner is Jesus the Christ, Son of God, Prince of Peace, hope of the world. Jesus must win. But, as we learned, he faces a notable foe. He faces the devil who is devious, deceitful, defensive and determined.

Today though we focus our minds away from him to the corner of the ring where we behold with relief and delight the greatest warrior.

Of all the names by which Jesus is called in Scripture: Messiah, Savior, Lord, Shepherd, Light of the World, Prince of Peace, one of the least used and least understood is the name, *The Second Adam* or *The Last Adam*. So Jesus is called in I Corinthians 15:**45** *So also it is written, “The first man, Adam, became a living soul.” The last Adam became a life-giving spirit.* There are several parallels between Jesus and Adam. Both had an unusual beginning. Both were free of the

blight of original sin. Both are representative heads of a group of humans. And both had a crucial encounter with Satan. There are significant similarities, but there are also some dramatic contrasts between the first and the second Adam. Those contrasts are quite evident in their battles with the temptations of Satan.

The temptations were remarkably similar for both in that Satan appealed to bodily appetites. *Eat the fruit; turn the stone to bread.* He also appealed to pride. *The fruit will make you like God. I will give you all the kingdoms and their glory.* In both the garden and the wilderness Satan questioned God's word, distorted God's word and contradicted God's word. Adam (or Eve) and Jesus faced the same powerful foe. Adam was in a rich garden. Jesus was in a desert. Adam was full of all the food he wanted. Jesus was starving. But it was Jesus who stood and conquered.

In Romans 5 the apostle Paul contrasts Jesus and Adam. He tells us of the consequences of Adam's life and Christ's life. Romans 5:**12** *Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned.* Adam introduced the world to sin and he led all men into the way of death. **14** (ESV) *Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come.* Adam is called a type of Christ. This points to the many parallels between them. **15** *But the free gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many.* This says that through Adam's transgression, his sin, his deadly choice, many died, but by the righteousness and grace of Jesus many receive the gift of life. **18-19** *So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men. 19 For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous.* We are accursed and condemned because of disobedience. Or we are justified and saved because of obedience. That doesn't sound evangelical but it's true. The only way you or any person can be saved is through obedience to God and His law. But that will not be your own obedience. Instead, you may be saved by the perfect life, the righteousness of Jesus Christ. **18b** *through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men. 19b through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous.* So, it is not only by the death but also His perfect life that Christ saves us. Do you understand why that is? Paul speaks of Christ's righteousness being imputed or accounted to us. Romans 5:**10** *For if while we were enemies we*

were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. Christ not only died a saving death, he lived a saving life. That is why I have said that in the encounter of Jesus and Satan your destiny hangs in the balance. Had Jesus succumbed to Satan, Romans 5:18 would read *through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men.* Period! End of story. And Romans would not be a best-seller. There would be no gospel to celebrate. There would be no spiritual life, no justification, and no hope. But Jesus stood fast in the desert showdown and therefore it is possible for fallen sons of Adam to become risen sons of God. The Last Adam has done what the first failed to do. That is why Milton, who wrote *Paradise Lost*, around the story of the fall in Genesis 3, wrote *Paradise Regained* about the temptation story in Luke 4. Here we find Jesus, the Last Adam, winning the victory. And now all who trust in Him have that victory as their own.

Each of us has a choice to make. You can be in either of two positions. You may be in Adam the sinner, the loser, or, by repentance and faith you may be in Christ, the Righteous and the Victor. We are all born in Adam, but you may be reborn into Christ. Which will it be for you? Will you be an Adamian or a Christian?

In the Great Battle that we study we discover Jesus to be the challenger. There is a sense by which Satan, having defeated Adam, is the reigning heavyweight champion of Earth. The challenge comes from the Son of God who appears in human robes for the purpose of destroying the works of the devil. Satan, the greatest enemy, retaliates and, to defend his turf, comes after the greatest warrior in the wilderness. The collision of these titans will shake the universe.

So, having introduced you to the combatants, we may proceed to look at the battle itself. Today we have seen the greatest warrior and the beaten warrior who is Adam. Now, let's study the greatest warrior and the temptations. To do this we will walk straight through Luke 4 for a blow-by-blow description of the battle.

Luke 4 starts with a brief statement on the condition of the challenger. **1a** *Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit.* When He faced the devil he was empty of food, but He was full of the Spirit. What does it mean to be full of the Spirit? When we hear this phrase we may envision a tank within a person, and we think of that person's tank as being empty, full or somewhere in between. But, to be full of the Holy Spirit means to be controlled by Him. The Greek Scholar Thayer said, *That which takes possession of the mind is said to "fill it."* Luke 5:**26** (NIV) *Everyone was amazed and gave praise to God. They were filled with awe and said, "We have seen remarkable things today."* Does

that language mean that someone poured awe into these folks? No. It means they were controlled by their awe. It dominated their emotions, and thoughts and words. We refer to being filled with fear or sorrow or love and we mean the same thing. To be filled by something is to be controlled by it. So, Jesus is controlled by the Holy Spirit and was led therefore, by the controlling Spirit, into the wilderness.

Jesus was alone. He took a personal retreat. He made Himself unavailable. Now, if He needed this kind of time alone, with His Father, do you think maybe you would profit from such a time as well? Time to get away and be still. To know your God. To love Him. To commune with Him and listen to Him. Consider taking a couple of days for a personal spiritual retreat. Even just one day? Jesus took forty. And in those forty days He fasted. **2b** *He ate nothing during those days, and when they had ended, He became hungry.* No kidding. At the end of forty days He grew hungry. For most of us it would be at the end of four hours. I read somewhere that the longest a human can go without food is 21-40 days. Forty days. Jesus is at the end of his limits. And a ravenous, desperate hunger finally sets in.

Some ask the question whether the temptations of Christ were real. I mean, it is hard to understand that the perfect Son of God can be tempted to sin. So, how can these be considered real temptations? Well, the term *tempted* also means *to test* or *try*. Its purpose may not be to change something but simply to reveal what it's made of, what the nature of it is. We talk about an *acid test*, such as given to determine what is or is not true gold. The result of Satan's temptation then is to demonstrate or prove the purity of Jesus. It was a struggle for Jesus. Satan's offers could appeal to any human, fallen or not. So, the temptation is genuine and whether or not Jesus could sin or might sin is unimportant.

One principle we can learn from this is – you cannot run away altogether from temptation. You can separate yourself from people and media but that does not mean you can escape temptation. You might shift the nature of the temptation with those choices but that is all. In medieval Catholicism it was the spiritual thing to run away to a monastery or sit in the desert in order to avoid temptation. Jesus is alone in the wilderness when he encounters temptation. He went there to get away from people, but Satan can go wherever you can go. Furthermore, you cannot get too holy to be tempted. No experience, no process will ever put you beyond the reach of Satan. A seminary diploma won't make the devil afraid. And no degree of sanctification will ever free you

from doing battle with the enemy. Perfect Jesus was tempted. You can expect to be too. Life is a constant war in the spirit, sometimes hot, sometimes not, but readiness is key.

Now we are ready to study the temptations one by one. **3** *the devil said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread."* The enemy begins by questioning God's word. God had said, *This is my Son*. Satan says *if*. He taunts Jesus and challenges His ego while, at the same time, appealing to His hunger. *If You are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread.* **4** *And Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'Man shall not live on bread alone.'"* Jesus argues that what sustains a man is not primarily bread, but God. In John 4 Jesus referred to eating a special kind of food. Do you remember what that was? John 4:**32** *He said to them, "I have food to eat that you do not know about."* **34** *Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work."* He lived by and on obedience to the Father. He said that he always did what pleased the Father (John 8:29). That's an amazing claim but it had to be if Christ were to be our victor. Some might ask, *What's wrong with turning stones into bread?* In itself, nothing. But anything outside of God's will is problematic. Jesus was not to use His power for Himself and so He refused the temptation and won round one.

Temptation # 2 comes in verses **5** *And he led Him up and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time*. Where did they go? Mt Everest? I don't know. Maybe they went to the moon or maybe this was a mental vision. But **6-7** *The devil said to Him, "I will give You all this domain and its glory; for it has been handed over to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. ⁷ Therefore if You worship before me, it shall all be Yours."* The old joke asks, "When do you know when a politician is lying? When he moves his lips." It's mostly like that with Satan. I believe Satan is lying. God said He appoints rulers and authorities as He wishes. Satan may, however, have some delegated authority over these issues. And if we suppose Satan could do what he claimed, it would be a very powerful temptation for Jesus. He has come to be a king, the ruler of the whole earth. And Satan promises Him all that He was destined for. Dominion and glory. Why? Why would Satan want Christ to rule? The answer to that is the cross. Satan would do anything to keep Jesus from the cross. Did you hear that? I said Satan would do anything to keep Jesus from the cross. Hebrews 2:14 says that it was by His death that Jesus rendered powerless the devil. By His death. You see, the name *Satan* means *accuser*, and after Christ has paid for a man's sins his accusations ring hollow. They become groundless. So, he must not let Christ die this atoning death. That's why he offered Jesus immediate glory. The Father offered Jesus glory too, but what would

make Satan's offer appear sweeter? God offered glory only after the cross. And the temptation to avoid the cross had to be real for the man, Jesus.

Do you remember the time Jesus detected the presence of Satan working through Peter? What did Peter say? Matthew 16:**21-22** *From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day. 22 Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You."* "Jesus, you must not die! Jesus, don't go to the cross!" **23** (NIV) *Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns."* Whew! Why this reaction? Because Peter and Satan using him were out to keep Christ from the cross. Again, later, Jesus underwent a great inner struggle that produced a bloody perspiration and what was the struggle over? To go or not to go to the cross. It was in that decision to die, according to the Father's plan, that Jesus defeated the devil.

Do you see now why Satan offered Jesus a cross-less glory? Be warned by this yourself. You will be offered the same thing. Jesus says the only way to true life, to joy, to blessedness now or in glory is that you die. Take up your cross and die to self. Satan comes along and says, *I will show you the fun, easy way to wealth, weight-loss and wisdom. I will give you glory another way.* And the reason you want to walk Satan's path to some pseudo-glory and phony joy is that God's way is difficult and humbling. But, friends, it is the only way to the heavenly city! The paths of Satan lead nowhere at best and to hell at the worst. His offers are half-truths or full lies. There is a way that seems right to a man, but the end thereof is the way of death. The way to glory is the way of faith and following the Savior who walked the way of a daily and sometimes painful obedience. So Christ our Master told the devil said **8** *It is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God and serve Him only.'* Round Two goes to the Son of God. I think some applause would be in order.

Temptation #3 **9-11** *He led Him to Jerusalem and had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down from here; ¹⁰ for it is written, 'He will command His angels concerning You to guard You,' ¹¹ and, 'On their hands they will bear You up, so that You will not strike Your foot against a stone.'"* The Scriptures do say this. But Satan distorts the word of God and applies it in a way God never intended. The temptation here is for Jesus to do something presumptuous. To leap off this temple may have resulted in Jesus being hailed as the Messiah immediately. Maybe that is part of the temptation. But, Jesus sees it as a

presumptuous act and so rejects it. **12** *Jesus answered and said to him, "It is said, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'"*

Note in this instance how Satan will distort a promise of God in order to lead you into sin or folly. A very popular Satanic strategy is to suggest to us, *Go ahead and sin. God promises to forgive you.* And so we take the amazing grace and love of our Savior, that love that should constrain us to obedience and we make it a license to sin. God forbid that Satan should so deceive you.

To the non-Christian Satan also might speak about how merciful God is. Satan tells that person, *God is love. God is love.* And he applies that blessed truth to mean, *you can wait to make a commitment to Christ. There's no hurry. God will be there with open arms whenever you are ready.* That is trouble. It is a terrible lie, falsely based on the word of God.

Thankfully, Jesus does not fall for Satan's trick. He will not use God's promise as a personal license to step out of God's will. He only does what pleases the Lord. Round 3 belongs to the Son of God, and Satan quits for a time.

There is something I hope you see in all this that may be very encouraging to your heart. Two things in fact. First is that Christ has gone thru the battle with Satan before us. He has not sent us out to where He never went or to do what He never did. His call is, *Come and follow.* The brave General leads the troops into battle and so does our Greatest Warrior. Christ never calls you to where He has not gone. In fact, Spurgeon says, *Jesus goes so far into the fight that he advances beyond the front rank, and can say, "I have trodden the wine-press alone, and of the people there was none with me."* *Oh comrades, let us be of good cheer, Christ has trodden the way before us, and the blood bedabbled footsteps of the King of glory may be seen along the road which we traverse at this hour.*

Secondly too, we see that our Christ understands what we face. He does not stand aloof as one who has never known temptation. Don't ever think that Christ does not realize how hard obedience can be for you. Hebrews 4:**15** *For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.* When our Lord calls you to be an overcomer, He understands the price and He can point the way.

Praise God! Jesus fought the greatest battle with the greatest enemy and He won it! He is the Victor. Not you. Not directly anyway. We may be victorious in our conflict with Satan but it is always only through Christ, the last Adam, the champion of those who believe. Jesus won on our

behalf and He did so by wielding the greatest weapon. Next Sunday we get to see what that is and how to use it ourselves as we cover the Greatest Battle, Part Three.