

The Gospel According to Mark

Confrontations with the Enemy

subject/title

Mark 1:12-15

text

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The full message title this morning

Confrontations with the Enemy and What to Do About Them When They Happen To You

Last week, in verses 4-11, we looked at:

- 1. John's Baptism of Repentance**
- 2. Mark's Description of John**
- 3. Jesus' Baptist by John**

Now we come to verse 12. In case you are wondering, we will not take this pace through the whole book but nailing down these introductory verses will prepare us for future sections.

Let's read **Mark 1:12-15**

Pray

As we walk through these verses, there are five lessons we can learn here.

1. Some confrontations are intentional

The enemy “*drove*” Him into the wilderness

ILL: Imagine if the day after you were baptized someone said to you, “Come and get in this car with me. I am going to “drive” you into a wilderness area where you will be tempted by Satan for 40 days and 40 nights.” What would you think? How would you like that?

Even though they did not have automobiles in the days of Jesus, that is the word picture painted here. The Spirit of God *drove* Him into the wilderness with intentionality; with a purpose and a plan in mind.

The *wilderness* area where Jesus experienced this was most likely northwest of the Dead Sea, outside the city of Jericho.

- *Wilderness* speaks of a dry uninhabited land
- A widespread belief in the day was that’s where demons lived. We have previously nailed down it was a place where thieves and thugs lived
- It was fearful place; a dreaded place

What’s the point?

- Jesus is going to confront the enemy for 3 ½ years.
- Evidently, Jesus was led into this intense battle with the enemy at the get go of His ministry to get a full face-to-face sense of what it was going to be like.

He was led there to be *tempted by Satan*

- The word *tempted* means to try or to test, someone and context tells us who is doing the trying, the testing, the tempting.

When you read the other Gospel accounts and blend them together, we can see there is a twofold purpose for this experience for Jesus.

- To experience the enemy: The enemy's desire here is to tempt Jesus to do evil; to frustrate the plans of God
- Development: The Holy Spirit's goal here is development
 - To get Him ready for day to day combat
 - As we read this it should also remind us we need to do in similar situations
 - Trials and tests train us and prepares us

tempted

- The grammar of the word *tempted* tells us the enemy kept on tempting Jesus during all 40 days.
- Mark gives us no details of the kind of temptations Jesus faced
- In the Matthew & Luke accounts, they give three specific temptations but they appear to be three that came at or near the end of the 40 days

Mark tells us the temptations lasted *forty days*

The number 40 is the number of Testing and Trial.

- It rained 40 *days* and 40 *nights* during the flood (Genesis 7:4)

- The life of Moses is segmented in three sets of 40 *years*
 - He spent 40 *years* in Egypt, learning to be somebody
 - He spent 40 *years* in the wilderness, learning to be nobody, and
 - He spent 40 *years* learning how God could take somebody who thought he was a nobody and use him to do a mighty work for God

- Moses was on top of Mount Sinai for forty *days* (Ex.) 24:18

- Israel spied out the promised land for 40 *days* (Num. 13:25)

- Goliath taunted Israel forty *days* (1 Sam. 17:16)

- Israel wandered in the wilderness for 40 *years* (Num. 14:33)

- Jonah preached repentance to the city of Nineveh for 40 *days* (Jonah 3:4)

- Jesus was there in that wilderness situation for 40 *days* (Mark 1:12)

and was with the wild beasts

- This is Mark's way of using a few words to characterize the wilderness area

- The wild beasts that would lived in that area included [wild] boars, jackals, wolves, foxes, leopards, and hyenas
- We might ask, “*How did they get there?*”
 - Either this was their home or
 - They were led there by the enemy to add to the torment of the Lord
- This was a dangerous area. This was a wilderness in every sense of the word. This was no place for humans to dwell but that is exactly where Jesus is for now and He faced them directly
 - For a side note, Isaiah tells us the wilderness will not always be like this

Turn to Isaiah 35

- What we find here is what it will be like during the millennial reign of Christ on the earth; notice with the *wilderness* will be like then
- If a *wilderness* area can become that, imagine what the rest of the world will look like. This is going to be heaven on earth. I hope you are ready to experience that.

We find at the end of verse 13,
and the angels ministered to Him.

- Another way to read this would be to read it, “*the angels served Him.*”
- We found in the angels study that sometimes angels are called “*watchers*”

- While Jesus was down there in that wilderness situation, they were **watching** and what a royal battle that must have been
- When the time was right, the Father gave the order, in a moment angels were there in that wilderness ministering to Jesus
- One theologian I read this week said that the way he reads this - the angels were there throughout the entire 40 days
- Matthew seems to indicate they came at or near the end of the 40 days
- It could be that the picture painted here is the enemy tempted Him, the enemy left, the angels ministered, another temptation, the angels returned and they ministered to Him, etc.
- For sure at the end of the 40 days we can say that just like angels ministered to the prophet Elijah in 1 Kings 19 and provided him angel food cake in the wilderness, angels ministered to Jesus.

Lesson #2

2. Some confrontations are avoidable

Some situations we get into, we get into by our own making

- We go to the wrong places
- We hang with the wrong people
- We read or watch the wrong stuff and it is not healthy

This past Wednesday night, as we continued our study on Spiritual Warfare, I shared with the group, a whole list of ways, more than 60 ways people walk right into

the enemy's domain; areas they could and should avoid.

People get into these things either through curiosity, or thrill seeking, or peer pressure, or initiation ceremonies just to name a few.

We talked about

- Trusting in good luck charms rather than trusting in God
- Good luck and back luck notions and palm reading
- Placing figurines in certain areas thinking that figurine brings safety
- People who go to places looking for ghosts; there is whole group of people who do this kind of stuff down in Evansville and probably around here too
- The dangers of reading horoscopes and making decisions based on some sort of astrological sign or chart
- People who believe in crystal power and hang a crystal from the rear view mirror in their car thinking that crystal has magical powers
- The dangers of cults and false religions
- Messing around with Ouija boards and games like Dungeons and Dragons and even more evil stuff like that
- Secret religious ceremonies like those in fraternities, sororities, and other kinds of fraternal organizations and how they are rooted in Satanic worship

- There is even area of Judaism called Jewish mysticism that people get into thinking they are studying Judaism and they do not even realize they are walking themselves right into the enemy's camp

I gave them a biblical warning about all these things and more from Deuteronomy 18. If you have been involved in some of these things give me a call.

Needless to say, **some confrontations we have with Satan are avoidable** but we bring them on ourselves.

3. All confrontations can be educational

Hebrews 5:8 tells us of Jesus, *“though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered.”*

Jesus learned by what he suffered there in that wilderness situation

- Suffering is the way we learn
- I wish it were not so but that is just the way it is
- My best advice is, don't waste your sorrows
- Learn whatever it is while going through suffering so you don't have to go through this again

When we finish in a few minutes, I am going to give you a prayer that might want to pray in this area.

4. With God, all confrontations are winnable

In the Matthew account we find Jesus defeated and disarmed the enemy as Jesus applied the Word of God.

Notice again in v.13

*v.13 And He was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted by **Satan**, and was with the wild beasts;*

- The word **Satan** means adversary
 - Notice Mark does not use the name “Devil” here. The word Devil means slanderer
- In this scene, the enemy, **Satan**, is not **slandering** Jesus, he is **opposing** Jesus. He was seeking to get Jesus to turn away from the will and the plans of God
- The enemy does both to us. He slanders is **and** is our adversary. He tells us we are worthless, he tries to falsely accuse us, **and** he tries to get us to turn away from the will of God and the plans of God for our lives

We must on guard all the time for what he wants to do to us.

5. Each confrontation can be motivational

Here, we see Jesus actually begins His Galilean ministry.

v.14 Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God,

- In one verse, Mark captures what happened to **John** after his preaching ministry and what **Jesus** did next. He went away from that wilderness

situation and began *preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God.*

- You might be interested to know some manuscripts do not have the three words “*of the kingdom.*”
- Without those three words, the phrase reads, *Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of God.*” meaning the good news of God.

Read on in verse 15

v.15 and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel.”

- Jesus came preaching; He came heralding a message

Let’s notice the three items here

1. “The time is fulfilled”

- The literal meaning is – *the time is ripe*
- Here we have a specific time marked by an epoch event. There has been ...
 - 400 years of silence between Malachi and John the Baptist
 - John the Baptist was sent preaching a message of repentance
 - John baptized scores of people
 - Jesus was baptized
 - Jesus experiences His 40 days in the wilderness with Satan and the wild beasts
 - He leaves the wilderness and begins preaching

It’s a new day.

Look at His message

2. “... *the kingdom of God is at hand.*”

- Jesus will use this terminology again and again and Mark will direct our attention to this
 - In 3 ½ years, when Judas comes to betray Him, Jesus will say, “*Rise, let us be going, My betrayer is at hand.*”
- The kingdom of God speaks of the rule and reign of God
 - In a life,
 - In an organization,
 - In a community

And then He said,

3. “*Repent, and believe in the gospel.*”

- This phrase is what we call a double command
- It is not two steps; it is one
 - It should not be bisected except to explain each half and what each half means
 - It does not mean to repent and then on another day, believe the gospel. The words go together
 - In God’s plan, you cannot repent and then later on believe; you repent and believe; they flow together

So that we might have the whole phrase, let’s deal with each half of the double command

- The first ½ (***Repent***) means to change your mind, your direction, and your actions
 - It means to turn away from the old object of trust and do the second half immediately

- Trust God
 - The second ½ means to trust God; believe the Good News
 - Trust in Jesus as the Messiah; the Son of God; the Savior of people

Some listening to this message need to do this. You need to repent of your old ways of thinking about God and believe the gospel; believe in the good news of God.

To repent and believe has two other simultaneous aspects

- We believe Jesus now, the one who desires to rule and reign our lives now, **and**
- We believe in the future rule and reign of God when He will have absolute rule and reign over all and unbelievers will be removed to another place.

Here we see the incredible value of

- Walking with the Lord; growing in the Lord now, **and**
- Studying about the future like we did in the Revelation class and like we are doing in the Prophecy Class
- It is not an either/or situation, it is a both/and
- It is not be a question, “Should I grow today” or “Should I know about future events?”
- We should have the rule and reign of God in our hearts and lives today **and** look forward to the day when He will make everything right and have complete rule and reign over everything everywhere.

We will see Jesus speak of both aspects of this as we press through this Gospel account.

Conclusion

When God sends us into an **intentional** situations to train us and develop us, or we lead ourselves into confrontations with the enemy, our nature inclination is, “*Lord, get me out of this.*” It’s normal. It’s natural. Almost all of us do that.

- It is important that we do not let the enemy get the upper hand
- When we find ourselves in less than desirable situations
 - We can either blame God or
 - We can trust God
- We find ourselves in a bad situation, we have another option,
 - We can try and do something get ourselves out of this mess, or
 - We can call on God to teach us what He wants us to learn and deliver us as soon as we have learned the lessons He wants us to learn

I have written a prayer, we can pray in times like this. If it is helpful, use it. If you think of things to add to it, add them. Here it is

“Dear heavenly Father, I understand that some confrontations with the enemy are intentional and others are avoidable. I know all

confrontations with the enemy can be educational and winnable. I also know each confrontation with the enemy I face can be motivational.

I trust you with my whole life; in the good times and the bad. When I have lessons to learn, my desire is to learn the lesson so I can walk on in victory with you. I am trusting you to care for me before each battle, through each battle, and after each battle.

In Jesus name I pray, Amen”