



The unfolding of your words gives light.

To Seek and to Save

An Exposition of the Gospel of Luke

^{4:1} Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led around by the Spirit in the wilderness^a ²for forty days, being tempted by the devil^b. And He ate nothing during those days, and when they had ended, He became hungry^c. ³And the devil said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread^d.” ⁴And Jesus answered him, “It is written, ‘MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE^e.’”

⁵And he led Him up and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time^f. ⁶And 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^g.” ⁷“Therefore if You worship before me, it shall all be Yours^h.”

^a **4:1 Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led around by the Spirit in the wilderness.** This leading by the Spirit was not simply a relocation. Luke’s use of the imperfect passive tells us that Jesus “was being led” the whole time—temptation time included.

^b **4:2 for forty days, being tempted by the devil.** This likely means the temptation was more than momentary. Matthew shows us that the Satanic attack (at least the three recorded for us) came at the end of Jesus’ fast (4:2), but that does not mean the temptations were brief.

^c **4:2 He ate nothing during those days, and when they had ended, He became hungry.** The Lord Jesus entered a fast similar to that of Moses. Fasting is a good way to prepare for a time of service (see also Acts 13:2-3). Luke points out that it made Jesus hungry. More than that, starvation can produce a clouded sense of reality, making Jesus’ weakness even greater.

^d **4:3 the devil said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread.”** The devil’s tactics include hitting us where we are weak. Here was a temptation related to Jesus’ physical desire. Eating would not have been sinful, but breaking a fast in submission to the devil’s wishes would have been. The contrast is stark. Imagine the One who fed the multitudes dining at the devil’s table. Then imagine yourself, having been seated at the Lord’s table, feasting on the devil’s dainties.

^e **4:4 Jesus answered him, “It is written, ‘MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE.’”** Jesus hit back with Scripture (Deuteronomy 8:3). One way to apply what Jesus told the devil here is to use the weakness of fasting as a time to meditate on and memorize Scripture. What do you think Jesus was doing during those forty days?

^f **4:5 he led Him up and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time.** Names like Nebuchadnezzar, Alexander the Great, Stalin and Hitler bring to mind the kind of terror that comes from men who desire absolute power. This is like God’s presentation of the land of Israel to Moses before Moses died, except that earthly things were all Satan had to offer. When our eyes see things that look good, desires well up. Covetousness and greed come from the desire for ease and power. But even if we gain the whole world we will still die. Then what?

^g **4:6 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.** It would be erroneous to believe that the devil was telling the truth here. He is called the “Prince of the Power of the Air” and the “god of this world,” but that does not grant him sovereignty. People who sell their souls to the devil are not truly given power. They are given an illusion of power that delivers the same destruction as the other lies the devil tells.

^h **4:7 “Therefore if You worship before me, it shall all be Yours.”** If a satanic catechism existed, the devil would have written the first question similar that of the Westminster divines:

What is the chief end of man? The chief end of man is to glorify Satan and to enjoy him forever.”

The Gospel of Luke
Steven Svendsen, Sr.

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⁸ Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD AND SERVE HIM ONLY^a.'"

⁹ And he led Him to Jerusalem and had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple^b, and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down from here^c; ¹⁰for it is written^d,

'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^e.'"

¹³ When the devil had finished every temptation, he left Him until an opportune time^f.^g

Satan has always sought, from his first interaction with man, to replace God. He wants to be our source of truth, to have our obedience and to make us think that real satisfaction is found in him.

^a 4:8 "It is written, 'YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD AND SERVE HIM ONLY.'"

Again Jesus hit back with Scripture (Deuteronomy 6:13). The devil tries to make black look white (or at least gray) and the only way to combat him is with the absolutes of God's word.

^b 4:9 he led Him to Jerusalem and had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple. This was not the top of a steeple. It was possibly the southeastern corner of the temple complex where the height of the temple wall was exaggerated by the depth of the Kidron Valley below.

^c 4:9 said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down from here. The sin would have been to show off and claim a verse of Scripture as protection. This would have been presumptuous as well as an attempt to avoid the agonies of the cross.

^d 4:10 it is written. The devil pulled out one of the tricks he used in the Garden of Eden. He did not misquote what God said. He misapplied it. We fall prey to that trick when we seek to use Scripture to our ends instead of obeying it to God's ends.

^e 4:12 "It is said, 'YOU SHALL NOT PUT THE LORD YOUR GOD TO THE TEST.'" For the third time Jesus hit the devil back with Scripture (Deuteronomy 6:6). Using Scripture to justify your desires taunts the holy God.

^f 4:13 When the devil had finished every temptation, he left Him until an opportune time. He would be back. Just before His arrest, Jesus told His disciples that the "ruler of this world" was coming (John 14:30). Satan had already entered Judas (John 13:27).

^g 4:1-13 Is sin really that big of a deal? For instance, all Adam and Eve did in the garden of Eden was to eat a piece of fruit. What really was the harm in that? That kind of rationalization is what demonstrates that we are experienced at believing the devil's lies about sin.

It is a big deal when you realize that sin is rebellion against the living God and His created order—when you remember that substitute pleasures are idols. It is a big deal when you understand that we are in a war and—even though our King is the victor—the enemy seeks to disable as many of our King's soldiers as he can.

The battle is fierce, but victory is in sight and it is sweet.

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Ephesians 6:10-12

Scripture does not teach that Jesus endured every specific temptation we have to endure. He was never tempted to steal a car. But we do know that He suffered the same kind of battles you face and won:

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. Hebrews 4:15

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We are energized by dramatic victories because they are the stories of ordinary people doing extraordinary things. Do you know the thrill of engagement and conquering? Here is the way to fight what Jesus died to defeat:

1. In the face of intense physical desires (flesh) you need to remember that there is something more satisfying that produces life instead of death. Whatever short-term gratification you are offered in exchange for sin, the price is too high.
2. If your fantasies include finding a way to bypass hardness on your way to ease (pride) you need to remember that you are not the main character in your life story. Certainly Jesus was the main character in this story, but the devil's game would lure Him to bypass the cross.
3. When you see an opportunity to get the things this world treasures (eyes) you need to remember that you will be controlled by what you value most.

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