



"In keeping silent about evil, in burying it so deep within us that no sign of it appears on the surface, we are implanting it, and it will rise up a thousand-fold in the future."

—Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn

08-Oct-10

Evil Is Real (Part Five)

Luke 4 contains Satan's temptation of Christ, and it is instructive to see what Jesus did in the face of evil:

Then Jesus, being filled with the [Holy Spirit](#), returned from the Jordan [where He had just been baptized] and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, being tempted for forty days by the devil. And in those days He ate nothing, and afterward, when they had ended, He was hungry. And the devil said to Him, "If You are the Son of [God](#), command this stone to become bread." ([Luke 4:1-3](#))

Just prior to this, Jesus had been highly complimented by the Father: "You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased" ([Luke 3:22](#)). Jesus, then, must have been feeling confident, for the voice booming such praise out of heaven was a massive pat on the back. Then, [Luke 4:1](#) relates that He was filled with the Holy Spirit; the power, the strength, of God was pumping through Him. It was at just this point—before He commenced His ministry—that [Satan](#) pounced.

We should not think that Satan tempted our Savior with merely three or four temptations, as recorded in this chapter, as well as in Matthew 4. The text says that He was "tempted for forty days"—meaning that He was under constant attack for the full forty days, every day! This was an intense, prolonged test and more personal and

powerful than we have ever experienced. The terrible evil that He faced in the wilderness would likely have crushed us.

The passage implies that Satan left the worst temptation to the very end, when Jesus was seemingly at His weakest point. He had not eaten food or drunk water for forty days. But was He passive all that time? Did our Savior just sit or lie on the sand for those nearly six weeks, allowing the Devil's temptations to batter Him like one sandstorm after the next? Luke does not present Him like that. Jesus did not fast because He had nothing to eat in a barren land. Remember, He is the One who inspired the instructions about [fasting](#) in Isaiah 58, so He clearly knew the spiritual strength that fasting provides. At the end of the forty days, He may have been weak as a kitten physically, but spiritually, He was the powerful Son of God.

Perhaps the temptations were not just storm after storm, but were like an ever-strengthening tempest that culminated in a hurricane. What did Jesus do? Each successive onslaught was harder to resist. How did He face it? Jesus bent all His will and strength on overcoming each temptation as it broke on Him. He pulled out every spiritual weapon to defeat each one.

Luke does not say that He pulled out His scroll of Deuteronomy and began instructing Satan on the finer points of God's way of life. Jesus already had them deeply embedded in His mind. He was prepared—by long years of study and deep meditation on what He learned—to face Satan's attacks. We also know that, not only was He fasting when out in the wilderness, but as His everyday practice, He prayed regularly, almost constantly.

Here are *four tools* that we also must use to rid evil from our lives: 1) Bible study, 2) meditation, 3) fasting, and 4) [prayer](#). When Satan hit Him with temptation, Jesus did not need to do some emergency Bible study. Not only was He the Word of God in the flesh, but He also knew Scripture by heart. When Satan sent a temptation, Jesus quoted an opposing scripture verbatim. The right words—words that He had inspired as God of the Old Testament—came immediately to mind, and He hurled them at Satan like a razor-sharp weapon ([Ephesians 6:17](#)).

Christ never treated evil as if it did not exist. In addition, He knew the weakness of His own flesh. He is the only person who has ever totally resisted the pulls of the flesh, though He suffered them just as we do ([Hebrews 2:14](#), 18; 4:15). However, He was strong in the Spirit of God and able to resist them. We see in this vignette from His life that, even so, it was no easy task for Him. We know that it is certainly not easy for us, but if we want to be like Him, we have to approach it just as He did.

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The apostle Peter, who witnessed the life of Christ firsthand, had a certain approach to life in which events like this made a great impression on him. Thus his epistles, both I and II Peter, are full of advice on how to be diligent to overcome and grow. In the three middle chapters of I Peter, he tells us how we are to resist evil, how we are to do good, how we are not to be as the rest of [the world](#) is. Perhaps these things were tough for him to do too, which is why they made such an impression on him and thus is why he passed these instructions along. It is a good thing that he did! God inspired it to be included in His Word because we need the admonition.

Notice [I Peter 2:19-24](#), where Peter is speaking about submitting to masters:

For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully. For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it [patiently](#)? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God. For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: "Who committed no [sin](#), nor was deceit found in His mouth," who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed.

What does he say that we are called to? Suffering! One could say we are called to be hit over the head for doing good. In reality, God's way is so antithetical to the way of Satan and of this world, that it is only natural that doers of good will suffer rather than be rewarded for their good works. Of this, [Jesus Christ](#) was the most extreme example—an not just on the last day of His life! He suffered every day He drew breath. Satan never stopped tempting Him for long, and His flesh never stopped trying to pull Him towards evil.

Peter says that Jesus overcame these things by committing Himself to the One who really knows what is in our characters, what our hearts are really like. In that commitment was great [faith](#) that the Father, knowing Him intimately, would guard Him and help Him to the very end—that considering Him as the apple of His eye, God would be with Him even through the grave.

Note, too, Christ's reaction to the evil that was done to Him: He did nothing like it in return. He did not return evil for evil; out of Him came no defiling sin. What did He do?

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He did self-sacrificial acts of [goodness](#) toward His revilers and persecutors—and not only for them, but as Peter goes on to say, He also did it for us, His brethren. Throughout His life, He consciously performed self-sacrificial acts of goodness for others. As Peter says in [Acts 10:38](#), Jesus "went about doing good and [healing](#) all who were oppressed by the devil."

There is our pattern to follow! He did not allow evil to get Him down or to change His course—He just kept on doing good. That is how He fought it: He faced it down with the Word of God, committed Himself to His Father's will, and repaid evil with good. His method will work for us too.

- Richard T. Ritenbaugh

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[Be There Next Year!](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

John Ritenbaugh suggests that whether we do or do not make it to the Feast of Tabernacles next year depends on our faithfulness at stirring up the gift of God's spirit within us through consistent prayer, Bible study, and hearing God's word. Distractions brought about by love of the world, neglect of Bible study, neglect of prayer, or neglect of God's word could seriously erode our faith, making us vulnerable to false doctrines and cares of the world.

From the Archives: Featured Article

[Faith to Face Our Trials](#)

by Pat Higgins

Life sometimes seems to be one trial after another. However, Pat Higgins asserts that God has revealed an astounding facets of our relationship with Him that should give us the faith to soldier on despite our many trials.

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