

Spirit Stamina

‘A Catholic priest walks into a bar, clearly quite depressed. The bartender asks him what’s wrong. However the priest is insistent that they cut the chatter and asks for the strongest drink in the place. He goes at it for hours. He keeps it up longer than anyone the bartender has ever seen. Finally the bartender asks “Y’know, I’ve always wondered, why do you Catholics drink so much?” Shocked and only somewhat phased by the immense amount of alcohol he had just consumed, the priest answered, “Our theology dictates that we must be filled with the holy spirit”.’

Roman Catholics do have a lot wrong with their theology. Seems I’ve never heard of this heresy before!! The problem being conflating Holy Spirit the Third Person of the Trinity, with liquor!! Now, there is a state of blessedness called being drunk with Holy Spirit. It’s called that because in some outward, physical manifestations, it can look similar to being drunk. But these people are so blessed with Holy Spirit’s presence that they often stagger, unsteady on their feet, because the weight of God’s glory is so heavy upon them. Indeed, one description of God’s glory is weightiness. When God’s presence is powerfully present, it’s unmistakable. The whole place is charged and so heavy, as it were, it can be physically felt. When Holy Spirit truly “overshad-

ows” people, the very atmosphere of Heaven comes down to earth and envelopes you. It practically feels like one is swimming in liquid honey, sweet, comforting, pure love, peace and joy. Remember how the apostles looked on the first day of Pentecost after Christ Jesus had ascended into Heaven and sent Holy Spirit to them? In Acts 2:13, some of the bystanders described them as being drunk. Remember, too, the priests and Levites who were ministering in the Temple King Solomon had built for the Lord. During the dedication and consecration of that Temple, the priests and the attending Levites, the singing Levites, the worship leading Levites, none of them could stay standing, as the powerful presence of God, His cloud of glory, swept in and through the holy Temple and took up residence in that holy place, made holy simply because God’s presence was there, as recorded for us in I Kings 8:11 and II Chronicles 7:2.

Today, we read of the temptation of our Lord. While we call this “the” temptation, it wasn’t the only time. It may not have even been the first time. The devil had probably tried to divert Lord Jesus from His God-given destiny many times in less overt and more subtle ways before this, while He was still growing up. Anyone who could read the prophecies would have already known that Lord Jesus was the destined King of Israel. The wise men knew. King Herod’s scribes figured that out when our Lord was physically born! And the devil is no dummy. But this time, Luke 4 records, also in Matthew 4 and Mark 1, is satan’s most direct and

candid attempt to derail the Lord's mission, even though the devil still didn't have the full picture of what that mission fully entailed.

Recall that our Lord had just been baptized by John the Baptist, immersed in the Jordan River. And how Holy Spirit had descended upon Him in a most striking way, in the physical shape of a gentle dove. Holy Spirit is the Third Person of the Trinity, but that does not mean that He does not have a mind of His Own. He is God, just as much as the Father and the Son are. And He presents Himself, manifests, in a wide variety of ways. He works so marvelously, in so many and varied ways that it is truly beyond our imagining. Because Lord Jesus the Messiah was the veritable Son of God, Holy Spirit was always with our Savior to be. But at this juncture, Lord Jesus had turned 30 years old, the age at which priests became eligible to serve in the Temple. Our Lord was now to begin His primary mission of reconciling God and man. And doing so would necessarily require the full empowerment of the Triune God's empowering Holy Spirit. At His baptism, His physical humanness was fully filled with Holy Spirit's presence. But our humanness lacks the innate knowledge of how to truly live and move and have our being in God. So, to show us how to learn this, it says, Holy Spirit immediately moved on Lord Jesus to go, by Himself, out into the wilderness, a deserted desert. Lord Jesus was here totally alone.

At the leading of Holy Spirit, the Lord began a 40-day fast. This is a long fast, but possible for most healthy people as long as

they have access to water for the duration. It seems certain that our Lord had access to water since He was a real human man, and would otherwise have died from thirst. The Gospel records state clearly that at the end of His fast, He was extremely hungry. Not thirsty. At this moment, at His weakest point, the devil strikes with what would seem like an irresistible, and also, understandable, and reasonable proposition. The Lord Jesus is starving, literally. Since He is supposedly the Son of God, then just use His divine power to transform some nearby rocks into loaves of bread. After all, He is hungry and His physical body very much needs food. But, almost inexplicably, our Lord refuses the suggestion. He shows us that God's Word is what really keeps us alive, not even gourmet food, no matter how delicious!

The devil came back with another offer, one which revealed the devil's ultimate life goal. Using his spiritual power, he showed to Lord Jesus all the kingdoms, all the glories of this planet, with all their power and authority. Because satan had legal right to all of them, at that time, it was within his prerogative to hand them all over to Lord Jesus. It was indeed a shortcut to one of the Lord's purposes, as the King of Israel, He was destined to become the King of All the Earth, the King of All the Universe. Here He could gain possession of all the kingdoms of planet Earth in one fell swoop. What could be simpler? All He had to do was to bow down and worship the devil, just this one time. That was/is what the devil craves most: people to worship him. For satan is a nar-

cissist egomaniac par excellence. Having his ego stroked is what he longs for. When he doesn't get it, he's enraged and unleashes all manner of attacks on God's people. But God's people are not left unprotected. Reread Psalm 91 if you have doubts. Reread it again and again, until God's promises therein are indelibly written in your mind, so you can claim them, cling to them in faith, whenever trouble comes. Lord Jesus, of course, was well aware of Psalm 91. So He refutes the devil's lust for illegal worship.

Still, satan doesn't give up. It seems he doesn't give up easily. Remember that. We just have to outlast him. With Holy Spirit's help. So the devil creates a ploy in which Lord Jesus could definitely prove His identity as the Son of God, again at one fell swoop, rather "fall", from the pinnacle of the Temple, which would send angels rushing to His aid, to prevent Him from even a scratch from such a fall. In so doing, the people in Jerusalem would witness this miraculous event and proclaim Lord Jesus as the Son of God. After all, this was one of God's ironclad promises. Kill two birds with one stone. Prove the trustworthiness of God's word, and prove Lord Jesus' divine identity. What could be neater? But Our Lord Jesus was too smart for the devil. No way would He "fall" for this trap.

Finally, the devil gave up. The devil withdrew to plot his next moves to throw Lord Jesus off His destiny. This also shows us that the devil has his limits. Again, we just have to outlast him. And how do we do that? Well, this whole episode in our Lord

Jesus' life is a lesson for us. Each time the devil spoke seductive words into Lord Jesus' thoughts with what appeared to be an enticing proposition, not only did our Lord recognize the deception and duplicity behind it, but He also knew exactly how to turn it back onto the devil, using not His Own words, but these words right here—God's Word written. Which should make it obvious to us that to live a successful, victorious Christian life, we need to read the Holy Bible daily. We need to know it well. For the better we know it, the easier it will be for us to both discern truth from error, particularly when the devil is trying to sell us a bill of goods, and also know how to hamstring satan and defeat his schemes.

We just need to outlast the evil one. We not only need the Bible's words as weapons against his subterfuge, we also need the stamina, the spiritual stamina, namely the Holy Spirit stamina to endure for as long as it takes until the evil one realizes that he's just wasting time and effort on us. For this is exactly what our Lord Jesus had acquired in spades from the very fact that He had fasted, not one day, not two days, but a whole forty days. He had consciously deprived His physical body of normal sustenance for an extended period of time. This enabled the Lord, not just then, but prepared Him to take full control over the earthly, physical hungers and desires of our flesh when it counted most of all—in the Garden of Gethsemane and onto the Cross of Calvary. This Lent, meditate on our Lord's temptations, that we, too, may find ourselves increasingly enveloped with Holy Spirit's empowerment!

