

JESUS WAS LED UP BY THE SPIRIT INTO THE WILDERNESS TO BE TEMPTED BY THE DEVIL.

### Introduction

Let me start here—Jesus was “led into temptation...”  
Do you hear what I hear? “lead us not into temptation....”

Hold that thought—and consider this--

One of the most difficult things in dealing with our Lord Jesus is that we are called as Paul says, to be “imitators” of Christ—and yet surely, as when he scourges the temple or says “How long must I remain with you?” – we are by no means meant to imitate Him—

Why? Because we are not the Son of God but only the Sons of Man...

Examples?

- Our anger does not work the righteousness of God
- Our impatience is sin

We are not perfectly good or, true—only Christ is

So we conclude that it is because He is the Son of God that He can exercise prerogatives that we dare not exercise ourselves.

So in a sense, we might even think we are being denied something...

Like Adam and Eve in the Garden, who were innocent but not “good”—we might want to flex our sinful muscles anyway.

God is a judge, and we like to judge

God is powerful, and we like power

God is wise, and we like to be wise in our own eyes....

Maybe we’re being denied something—and the answer is, yes, we are.

### So We Are—And Thank God for It

I would like to hazard a risky analogy—

Let’s set aside the corruption of politics and leadership, and think only of huge responsibility of being, say, President.

Sometimes, I think of the pressures and dedication necessary to the calling, and I thank God I’m not driven (or called) to such a position and career.

- Do you want to be President Bush and have yourself caricatured and hated and ridiculed as he often is? Do you want to decide who goes to war and why?
- Do you want to be Hillary Clinton and have your husband and yourself vilified by your opponents and the press?
- Do you want to be McCain (a little “crazy” from Hanoi Hilton?) Do you want to be Obama compared to JFK and MLK and knowing they were killed?

- Do you want the motels and chronic laryngitis and separation from family and the heckling and the glad-handing where people love you only so long as you please them?

We might do well to count our blessings that no such call, drive, ambition, or martyrdom calls us.

Though we take notice, maybe envy, and resent such sway and authority—do we really want that life?

So, even with imperfect politicians who are sinners like us, we can see that their higher status is something we would never want...or would have to question ourselves deeply if we do...

#### How Much More Our Lord

So, yes—like such leaders, our Lord has authority we dare not desire, and yes, His privileges, as well as His ways are higher than ours.

But it is here that our Lord becomes sublime and leaves us speechless:

Why? Because His greater power is to become like one of us and yet resist all Temptation.

He did not resist Temptation like some sort of Super Man

He took on the kryptonite of human frailty yet held out through forty days of Temptation to his pride, his need, his belly—

Do you want that? “We have not yet resisted unto blood” says Hebrews  
Nor have we resisted unto thirst and hunger and utter self-forgetfulness, as Jesus did.

No, I think His time in the wilderness was an exercise in divine power expressed through his fully human resistance to the sin that every one of the rest of us humans has fallen prey to.

That is his authority, his sway, his attraction, his power: it is the power of His love expressed to God and to us.

#### He Is Our Righteousness

##### **One man's act of righteousness leads to acquittal and life for all men.**

Here is a paradox:

Jesus brings God's forgiveness because He stands in our place—

Only Jesus has looked at Satan in the full splendor and comeliness of his beauty: Jesus saw Lucifer (“Light-bearer”) the highest of the angels, and He also saw the monstrosity of pure evil—evil with a face and a voice and a swirling hideous power.

He stood in our place, doing what we could not and cannot do for ourselves—

None of us could withstand the forty days of temptation and suffering and despair that Jesus the Man with divinity in his heart took on for us.

He, not we, is our righteousness.

But this, too—it was a human being like you and me who did it!  
We must not dream that God gave Him anything to go on but his human love for God—  
and for us!

We thank the Lord that He did not say to the Father—lead me *not* into temptation!  
We thank the Lord that because of Him we can pray it and believe it: “Lead us not into  
temptation.”

For better or worse, we have all eaten of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, and we  
know the difference.

We can make the choice for good—Why? Because He did it, and so can we.  
We can face our smaller temptations than His, and we can resist them—and we can  
know that our God may seem to lead us to temptation but because Jesus was there  
first, he is really leading us to Jesus.

Now, we can recognize when the Evil One whispers in our hearts—our envy, our  
resentments, our superiority-complex when we think we’re better than someone else.

So, as we begin Lent, we celebrate and shiver before the mighty power of our Jesus,  
our God and our Brother—who won, not because God gave Him a leg up, but because  
He faced the worst and conquered it not by power but by a perfection of human  
goodness and love.

This Lent,

As you may be moved to fast and pray, to read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest the  
Holy Scripture.

As you may be moved to give in to temptation, remember the Lord in the Wilderness.

If ever a Rose bloomed in the desert, it did those forty days when the only thing  
between us and the damnation of being left to our own devices was Jesus.

Jesus, who loved us so much that He did for us what we could never do for ourselves,  
Jesus, who loved us so much that He showed us that we could from time to time and  
then more and more indeed do this for ourselves as well.

Jesus, our God and our Brother, our savior and our guide. AMEN