

Sermon 120: The Certainty and Power of the Gospel: Luke 1:1-4

Text: Luke 1:1-4 "Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, Even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word; It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, That thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed..."

Purpose: Luke meticulously recorded the details of Christ's life and ministry to convince Theophilus that the witness he had heard was fully reliable and should be trusted.

Proposition: God wants our faith to be strengthened as we rest in the reliability and power of the gospel.

Interrogative: How should this book strength our faith?

Part 1: A carefully documented history: 1:1-3 "Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, Even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word; It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee..."

Key Statements:

- **Many people documented these events: 1:1** "Many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things..."
- **The basis of their faith was solid: 1:1** "Most surely believed among us..."
- **This record was based on eyewitnesses with a formal commission: 1:2** "Even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word..."
- **Luke's record was more reliable than natural recall: 1:3** "It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first..."
 - **2 Timothy 3:16** "All scripture is given by inspiration of God..."
 - **2 Peter 1:15-21** "Moreover I will endeavor that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance. For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but

holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost..."

- **It was written to preserve its purity:** "To write..."

Part 2: A skillfully presented series of arguments: 1:3-4 "It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus..."

- **Three Distinctions:**

- **It was complete and accurate:** "Perfect understanding..."
 - He did his research.
 - He had multiple firsthand accounts.
 - He was being guided by the Holy Spirit as he wrote.
- **It considered the whole picture:** "Of all things from the very first..."
 - This account considered the flow of events and many fascinating conversations.
 - It considered the prophecies that anticipated and predicted these events and conversations.
 - It gave a Divine commentary on the significance of these events.
- **It was personal and practical:** "That thou mightest know the certainty of those things..."
 - Not everything was included, but what was included was deliberately included.
 - There was a point to what was given and the order in which it was given.
 - Our faith must be built on a sure foundation of reliable facts.
 - The case when laid out should strengthen our confidence in the reliability and objectivity of our faith.
 - Faith is not simply a feeling, but rather a committed reliance based on reasonable evidence.

- **The basic flow of Luke's record:**

- **Jesus of Nazareth was a real person: 1:1-4:13**
 - Promised in the OT.
 - Descended from David in the flesh through the virgin Mary.
 - Grew up in obscurity like every other Jewish boy of His time.
 - Was truly tempted and overcame Satan's onslaughts.
- **He had a compelling ministry that validated His claim to be Christ: 4:14-9:50**
 - **Demonstrated His power over Satan:** Casting out demons on numerous occasions

- **Demonstrated His power over sickness:** Healing numerous several individuals
- **Demonstrated His power over death:** raising multiple individuals from the dead
- **Demonstrated His power to create:** Feeding thousands from a small lunch
- **Taught extensively on the Kingdom of God:**
- **Despite overwhelming evidence, He was rejected: 9:51-19:27**
 - Approximately 40% of the material recorded in Luke is dedicated to this topic.
 - This portion of Luke could have covered as short as a week or two of Christ three-and-a-half-year ministry.
 - Luke seems to be emphasizing the shocking rejection of Christ despite overwhelming evidence validating His person and work.
- **He was crucified under Pontius Pilate and His resurrection from the dead was witnessed and proclaimed: 19:28-24:53**
 - The remainder of Luke's testimony is dedicated to the final week of His ministry.
 - He carefully documented Christ's arrest and trials.
 - He carefully documented the crucifixion with a longer narration than the other gospel writers.
 - He documented eyewitness testimonies to the resurrection.
 - He recorded three compelling witnesses to close his case.

Part 3: A compelling case we cannot ignore: 1:4 "That thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed..."

- **Witness 1: Disillusioned skeptics on the Road to Emmaus believed: 24:20-27** "The chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him. But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, to day is the third day since these things were done. Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre; ³ And when they found not his body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive. And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulchre, and found it even so as the women had said: but him they saw not. Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the

prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself..."

- **Witness 2: Terrified disciples believed: Luke 24:39-48** "Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have. And when he had thus spoken, he shewed them his hands and his feet...And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things..."
- **Witness 3: The church's fiercest opponent in Jerusalem believed:**
 - **Acts 8:1-4** "Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles...As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison. Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word..."
 - **Acts 9:1-2** "Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem..."
 - **Acts 28:22-31** "We desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest: for as concerning this sect, we know that every where it is spoken against. And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into his lodging; to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening. And some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not. And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word, Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers, Saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive: For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they

closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted...And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him..."

Final Thoughts:

- **Faith and Unbelief:**

- God does not call us to step out by faith without compelling reasons to believe.
- Despite overwhelming evidence, many will willfully reject this witness.
- Even people who saw these events firsthand hardened their hearts to the message.
- This hardness does not invalidate the reliability of the witness.

- **Luke's Key Witness:**

- **Luke highlighted the hardest skeptic as his most compelling witness:**
- **Paul's conversion is perhaps the most compelling witness to the power of the gospel history has ever produced:**
Galatians 1:11-23 "The gospel which was preached of me is not after man...I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ...in time past...beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it: And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers. But...it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace...he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed..."

- **Embrace the truth:**

- The testimony is clear.
- The witnesses are numerous and compelling.
- We must choose to rest in this testimony.