

TEMPTED, LIKE AS WE ARE.

And Jesus being full of the Holy Spirit, returned from Jordan, and was led of the Spirit into the wilderness, being forty days tempted of the devil. (Luke 4:1.)

It would seem a reasonable assumption that Jesus, under the guidance, leading, or inspiration of the Spirit just received, retired to the wilderness for study and meditation relative to the great work to which he had just consecrated himself, represented in his baptism. Doubtless he there quietly searched the Scriptures, which after his anointing, would open before him deeper truths than ever before seen. He then probably saw more clearly than ever before the nature of the work before him, and this study opened the way for the presentation of temptations to do the work in some other way than that indicated in the Scriptures.

In the account of Jesus' temptation, we cannot presume that the four points of temptation mentioned cover every trial to which he was subjected during those forty days, but that of all the temptations of those days these that are mentioned are illustrations.

A careful examination and comparison will show that the Master's temptations are our besetments if followers in his footsteps.

When the devil had showed Jesus the kingdoms of the world he said: "All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me, and to whomsoever I will I give it. If thou wilt worship me, all shall be thine." This people generally regard as a sham temptation, and say that he offered what he did not possess and could not give; that Jesus knew this, and hence the temptation was a mere farce.

But such reasoners are in error, because they hold that all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them already belonged to Christ and were already ruled over by him. That such a view is erroneous is readily proven, not only by Scriptures, which speak of Satan as "the prince of this world," "the god of this world," "the ruler of this world," etc., and which speak of Christ's kingdom as future, a kingdom to "come" when he shall "take to himself his great power and reign," but the very facts of past and present history are sufficient to prove beyond a doubt that not a gracious God, but a fiend, a devil, has been working in and ruling over the nations. In no other way could we possibly appreciate the character and history of nations written as it is in blood and crime and injustice. Satan is now the prince and ruler of the nations, and gives the glory and honors of them to such persons as best suit his purposes. At the time in question Satan saw before him the perfect man Jesus, just anointed and imbued with the Spirit power from on high, and whose work as a Redeemer and Saviour he probably understood.

But even recognizing Satan's authority and power over the nations, the force of the temptation upon Jesus might be overlooked unless we remember other circumstances in connection with it. Some might ask, How would Jesus possibly be tempted to bow the knee and worship Satan? We reply that the thought is not of adoration and prayer, but of service – to follow Satan's directions – as though Satan had said to Jesus: I remember you before you became a man, when you were my superior in rank; I know why you became poor, taking a human nature, but Jesus you are laboring under a delusion. As your friend and well-wisher, let me tell you that you can never accomplish your object in the way proposed. You have come into the world to die for men, and thereby redeem them and restore them to perfection. But you never can do this; you may give your life for them, but it can never

benefit them, for it would be impossible to restore beings once destroyed in death. Remember, too, that you lose your own life by the operation; for though God has promised to raise you from death again, that, I assure you, is an impossibility. Remember that no one who ever came under the power of death ever escaped from it entirely.

Now, hear my advice: I, as well as yourself, have felt sorrow at the misery and trouble humanity is experiencing, and would be glad to assist you to such a place of influence and power among men as will enable you to establish REFORMS both moral and physical. And for such a work of reform among men you are eminently qualified, being a perfect man. You can thus accomplish for the world what no other man can do, alleviating much of the present distress and suffering. Thus by moral reform you could lead the race gradually back to the original perfection.

Now, Jesus, I have shown you the impracticability of your plan of dying to redeem men and the reasonableness of my plan, that you live and reform them and thus restore them, and I appeal to your judgment, is not my way the most reasonable, most sure and most hopeful way to the object you have in view – man's restoration?

Here was a strong temptation – all the appearances favored Satan's theory; yet Jesus walked by faith and held fast to God's promise of resurrection of himself and of mankind through him, and answered:

"Get thee behind me, Satan. It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." Thus Jesus escaped this temptation not by arguing with Satan that God's plan was as reasonable, but by simply relying on the fact that it was right to obey God and wrong to disobey under all circumstances.

As we look about us and seek to see which temptations common to the followers of Jesus most resemble this one endured by the Head of the Church, we are struck with the similarity of the adversary's methods now and the great success he meets with in assailing saints from this standpoint, viz., temptation to turn aside from God's appointed course – self-sacrifice – and endeavor to begin the work of blessing before the appointed time.

It was this same temptation which beset the infant Church during the first five centuries, and which finally was successful. The persecuted and weary Church was beset by the adversary saying, Come, not so; I will show you a far better way than suffering, and tribulation, and persecution to accomplish your desires. Follow my wise counsel and all these kingdoms of earth and the glory of them shall be thine. The offer was accepted, and Satan, faithful to his promise, exalted the nominal Church, [the few who resisted the temptation being considered heretics and outcasts,] which resulted in placing over the world the Church of Rome as the head of both civil and ecclesiastical government.

When this handmaid of Satan became very vile and low, and her methods and shams very apparent, and as a consequence a Reformation movement came about naturally, Satan, equal to the emergency, presented the same temptation to the "Reformers," and again with success. His argument, successful upon Luther, Calvin and others, was: Your reform is a great and grand work, but now you must beware of fanaticism. Get about your great work systematically, so that it will be a success and abide and have a powerful influence in the world. First, then, the IMPORTANT matter is to secure the support and sympathy of the world – of its empires and its great and wise. In deference to public opinion, you must have an organization and a very sharply-defined creed, and you had best distinguish your church by some name; and since you

are the organizers and originators of your church, you surely have a right to call it what you please.

Your Church must first of all recognize these governments of mine, and must call them Christian governments, no matter how un-Christlike may be their rulers and laws. Thus you must aid them in maintaining their hold upon the people, and they in turn will aid you, support you and protect you. Beware also that the long cherished traditions and theories of the Roman Church settled **[R681 : page 7]** by her ancient councils and firmly engraven by her upon the minds of the people be not in any wise tampered with, else your entire power and influence with the people would go and you would fail to make your Church the great one you so much desire.

Thus again power, dominion and the glory and pleasure and ease of them, allured the Reformers and nipped in the bud the Reformation which needed to be very thorough. Since then, various servants of God stirred by a zeal for truth, have broken over some of the barriers and again attempted a continuation of Reformation work, and invariably they have been met with the same temptation, by the same wily tempter; and in their day, or soon after, all reformation was swallowed up by the desire to please the world, sail smoothly, and to be great and influential.

But while this has been and is true of companies of men, it is true also of individual Christians. To us as individuals, this same temptation is one of the most difficult to withstand. It presents itself thus sometimes: It is useless for you to waste your time and influence advocating and helping to spread those unpopular doctrines, even though they be true. Associate yourself with some large and influential organization, and don't be eccentric and peculiar. Thus your influence among men will be greater, and more good will be accomplished than by advocating the truth and

associating yourself with it. Alas! how many yield to this who should say to the tempter as Jesus did in his similar temptation: It is written: Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and him only shalt thou serve. Nothing else under any consideration shall claim my attention or attract my service; his will, his plan and his truth must have my little ALL.

Sometimes the temptation is: Why spend time and effort in preaching that which is unpopular, yields small results and much persecution, rather let me engage in some other service, such, for instance, as the TEMPERANCE CAUSE, to do men good at once by moral and legislative reform. Why not seek by political agencies to relieve present troubles, rather than be thought a fool for preaching and preparing men for a coming reign of Christ when all these evils shall be remedied and all the race blessed. The temptation thus presented is often successful in removing from the ranks of the truth-bearers many of those who were anointed to preach the glad tidings. Others are tempted to think that they can serve God's cause and truth best by spending their best energies and talents in acquiring wealth, to be spent in spreading the Gospel. Deceitful snare! the getting of the wealth so enlists their best talents that they become dwarfed spiritually, and the wealth never reaches the object originally purposed. Thus Satan is successful with this class. He says, serve God and bless mankind and spread the Gospel, but do it my way, you will find it the most successful and most congenial way. But to heed is to reject God's way and to fall into the snare of the devil, and be led his captive and hindered from gaining the great prize.

COMMAND THAT THIS STONE BE MADE BREAD.

Another temptation presented to Jesus was, that he should use power just received at his baptism for his physical (personal, human,) gratification by making a stone into bread. To some it has

appeared that there could have been no sin in so doing, and hence no temptation. For a man to use any or all his powers to satisfy hunger, would certainly under ordinary circumstances be no sin. But the circumstances were peculiar: Jesus had just consecrated himself as a man, and as a result of that consecration had special power conferred upon him in the anointing of the Holy Spirit. It was this newly acquired power that Satan sought to have him use for fleshly gratification, whereas it was given for a totally different purpose. To have bartered or used it for purely selfish ends would have been misuse – sacrilege indeed.

How many of Jesus' followers have temptations placed before them of a similar character, viz.: Use your consecrated talents and powers, and your office as God's children and representatives, in such a manner as to further your "bread and butter" interests. Are you a public minister and under-shepherd? – seek the flocks with the golden fleece, and especially procure and maintain the goodwill of the bell-sheep of the flock; and with all your service of God, be sure you use your office so as to first of all secure a bountiful supply of earthly comforts. Many a public minister has yielded to this temptation, and obtained the bread that perisheth, while he starved spiritually.

Are you a private servant and soldier in the Lord's hosts, whose service is less public? You are not, therefore, exempt from this temptation. The Adversary will, in some manner, present the thought that, by using your religious profession in a certain channel – by associating with a popular church system in Babylon, your bread and butter interests will be advanced.

All pilgrims following in the Master's footsteps, should meet this temptation as he met it, viz., by saying: "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone." I am not afraid of starving, God has more ways and means for sustaining my life, than food; if I am faithful

to my covenant, I can afford to trust the matter fully to his wise care.

Another thought comes with these words – one especially applicable to the sisters: In your daily life remember, that "Man shall not live by bread alone," and, therefore, that all your energies should not be spent in merely gratifying the palate. Undoubtedly, very much valuable time is thus spent by the Martha's a part of which, at least, might be profitably spent after Mary's example, attending to the words of Jesus – either receiving or giving to others, spiritual food.

CAST THYSELF DOWN.

The third temptation was, to recklessly and boastfully risk his life in an attempt to answer a banter. Satan took Jesus to the highest part of the temple. (Probably, the central part of the royal portico, which was very high and overlooked a deep ravine; of it, Josephus says: "The pillars of that portico were a hundred cubits high, and the valley below four hundred deep.") Here Satan suggested that Jesus should prove himself the Son of God, by leaping from this eminence, Satan intimating that thus he could at once prove his claims before devils and men, if he escaped injury.

But Jesus answered, "It is said: 'Thou shalt not try the Lord thy God.'" Such an act would have been reckless presumption and daring, and not the faith in God proper to all who put their trust in Him; hence for Jesus to have yielded would have been sin.

With the followers of Jesus, not infrequently the desire comes to make some show before the world, and thus to convince the ungodly instead of by the Lord's plan – simply the preaching of [R681 : page 8] "the Gospel to the MEEK." It is this temptation which sometimes leads men to call upon God loudly, to come down in power and convert fifty sinners here this evening – convert

every sinner in this house, and such like petitions. Such prayers are an attempt to force God by prayer to interfere and do by miraculous power what he has arranged shall be done by other means – by preaching – teaching.

It is worthy of notice that finding Jesus able to quote Scripture, and to answer his previous temptations, Satan this time backs his temptation with a quotation from Scripture. Let this be a reminder to God's children that the adversary can use Scripture, and does use it often in the presentation of error. The quotation of a few words of Scripture should not be considered sufficient, but the context should be examined to see that it is properly applied. Truth misapplied is error.

The Scripture here quoted by Satan is part of the 91st Psalm, and at first glance the application seems correct. But in the light of the present unfoldings of God's word we see that it applies not to the feet of the man Jesus, but to the members of the feet class, or last members which complete "the body of Christ, which is the Church."

Throughout this Gospel age, the Church, the body of Christ, has been guarded by the angels of God: "Are they not all ministering Spirits sent forth to minister for those who shall be heirs of salvation"? But it is in the present "Evil Day," speaking of which, Jesus said, "Who shall be able to stand"? when thousands are falling at our side, that the body of Christ, now represented by the last members – "the feet of Him" needs to be specially helped. It is, then, with reference to the protection of the class of saints now living, that it is written, "He shall give his angels charge over thee to keep thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone."

If then, we are the feet, what is the stone over which there is danger of stumbling? It is the chief corner stone of the true

TEMPLE Jesus. Of him it was written, "He shall be for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence" to both the houses of Israel." We remember that the first or typical house – Israel after the flesh stumbled over that "stone of stumbling," in that they did not recognize his presence among them, and rejected his sacrifice as the basis of justification, holding instead to their own righteousness which in God's sight was as filthy rags. See Isa. 8:14; Rom. 9:32; 1 Pet. 2:6.

The very same stumbling-stone is NOW in the close of the Gospel age causing many to stumble, which caused so many to stumble at the close of the Jewish age, viz.: an unwillingness to be saved from the Adamic penalty by the redemption or purchase accomplished by Jesus. To-day everywhere, this question of salvation by faith in Christ's finished work is being contested. Numbers **[R682 : page 8]** of influential ministers and religious papers, under the guise of new light are endeavoring to show that Jesus did not give himself a ransom (Greek – antilutron, AN EQUIVALENT PRICE) for all, but was our example only. They talk about justification but know nothing of justification through his blood, and are not really justified. Wherefore? Because they seek it not by faith [in the ransom] but as it were by works of the law – their own works of righteousness. They stumble at the stumbling-stone. But whosoever believeth on him shall never be put to shame (stumble).

The context shows (Ps. 91:3-8) that there will be a great falling away from the truth, the pestilence of error, the arrow of sarcasm, and the destructive plague of infidelity, shall unsettle and overthrow the faith of thousands; yet in it all we are assured that all the truly consecrated, all the true, covenant-keeping members of the body of Christ – THE FEET, shall be kept by the power of God, through the ministration of his messengers, and delivered.

And, finally, of the whole body it is written: Because he has set his love upon me, therefore I will deliver him: I will set him on high [exalt to glory] because he hath known my name, I will deliver him and honor him, with long life [everlasting] I will satisfy him and show him my salvation. **[R677 : page 8]**

"In God I have found a retreat,
Where I can securely abide;
No refuge, nor rest so complete,
And here I intend to reside,

I dread not the terror by night,
No sorrow can harm me by day;
His shadow has covered me quite,
My fears He has driven away.

The pestilence walking about,
When darkness has settled abroad,
Can never compel me to doubt
The presence and pow'r of our Lord.

The wasting destruction at noon,
No fearful foreboding can bring;
With Jesus, my soul doth commune,
His perfect salvation I sing.

A thousand may fall at my side,
Ten thousand at my right hand;
Above me His wings are spread wide,
Beneath them in safety I stand.

His truth is my buckler and shield;
His love He hath set upon me;
His name in my heart He hath sealed;
E'en now His salvation I see."

"Blessed is the man that endureth temptation, for when he is
tried he shall receive a crown of life."
