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## "TEMPTED IN ALL POINTS LIKE AS WE ARE."

– JAN. 9. – MATT. 4:1-11. –

"For in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted." – Heb. 2:18.

IMMEDIATELY after his consecration to death, in harmony with the Father's plan, and after he had symbolized that consecration by baptism in Jordan, our Lord, instead of beginning at once his ministry, turned aside into the wilderness. The record is that he was led of the spirit to do this, and that it involved very trying temptations. We may readily surmise the reason why our Master took this course. He knew that he had come into the world to fulfil a great mission, to perform the Father's will, whatever that might be: he knew that it involved the rescue of mankind from sin and death: and, since it was the Father's will, he had left the glory which he had with the Father from before the world's creation, and had willingly come to a lower nature, human nature, in order to carry out to the full the divine plan. But the divine plan could not be carried out by him as the babe of Bethlehem, nor as the boy of Nazareth, nor until he had fully reached manhood's estate at thirty years of age. We saw in our last lesson that he waited not a [R2243 : page 10] moment, but started to come to John for baptism before he was quite thirty, in order that at the very earliest possible moment he might make his full consecration to the Father's will and begin the Father's business – the work he had given him to do. We have seen, also, that the holy spirit without measure was granted to our Lord as soon as he had finished his consecration and its symbol, as he came up out of the water. It was under the enlightening influence of this holy power that he had just received, and by means of which he was enabled to see and understand much more clearly than before the things of God – the divine plan and his connection therewith – that he sought the wilderness solitude for study, prayer and reflection. He took this course because he realized the importance of the work he was beginning, and desired to make no

mistake respecting the same, and its proper method. He turned aside and, freeing himself from all uninspired earthly counsel, sought to know by the holy spirit given unto him the true import of those Scriptures with which he was already familiar, and concerning which he had disputed with the Doctors of the Law in the temple as early as his twelfth year. (Had there been other spirit-begotten ones then, our Lord no doubt would have communed with them; just as his followers are instructed to do. – Heb. 10:25; Jude 19-21.)

We can imagine our Lord during those forty days praying to the Father for counsel and guidance, and searching the Scriptures which he already had stored in his memory, to find the answer to his prayers written aforetime in the types of the Law and the writings of the prophets. The various features were called up, and the harmony between them sought; – the prophecies which refer to Messiah as the Lamb led to the slaughter, and the other prophecies which describe the glorious majesty and power of Immanuel as King of kings. He saw also that the typical lambs and bullocks sacrificed must have an antitype, because their continued repetition showed that they never really cancelled sin: and furthermore that in some way there was an identity between the Priest who offered the sacrifice and the sacrifice itself; and that the same Priest was typified in Melchisedec as no longer a sacrificer, but enthroned in power. The putting together of these different features of the divine Word, and weaving out of them a knowledge of the divine plan, and of his own relation thereto, was probably a large and important part of our Lord's occupation during those forty days in the wilderness. The more he studied the picture, the more he saw that it represented ignominy, shame and death as preceding the glory of his Kingdom. Naturally the influence of these reflections would weigh heavily upon him, rather depressing him in spirit, – particularly since the continuous fast necessarily weakened him mentally as well as physically.

Whether or not the tempter was with the Lord, testing him throughout the forty days, we do not know; but we know that the

severity of his trial came at its close; – when he was at his weakest, physically, and when consequently the prophetic study, which indicated to him his path of suffering, exercised upon him its most depressing influence.

The first of the recorded temptations was a very subtle one. (1) It implied a sympathy on the part of the tempter, a desire for the Lord's welfare. (2) It implied a doubt on the part of Satan respecting our Lord's identity, and a desire for proof, with the indirect intimation that, if such a proof were given, Satan himself would believe and be ready to fall into line as a servant of righteousness. (3) Knowing that he was the Son of God and that he had been anointed with the holy spirit, this demand of the tempter would seem to be a challenge to prove himself to be the Son of God, and to prove that he had received the holy spirit in full power, and that, if he did not do so, his claim might be considered fraudulent. (4) It was an appeal to one of the strongest cravings known to human nature; one which we, who have never fasted much, can with difficulty conceive. The gnawings of hunger are said to be terrible, and it has become a proverb that hunger or "necessity knows no law." Shipwrecked sailors have been exonerated for turning cannibals under the stress of hunger when they have been without food much less than forty days. As foretold by the prophet, and recorded by the historian, mothers ate their own children during the siege of Jerusalem, under the stress of hunger. All these circumstances considered together prove that this was a most severe temptation upon our Lord, perhaps as severe as any.

But the question arises, Wherein was the sin? Why should not our Lord use his power for the preservation of his own life?

We must assuredly look for the answer to these questions, because if obedience to Satan's proposition had not been wrong, a serious wrong, there could have been no *temptation* in the matter. The fact that it was a *temptation* proves that for our Lord to have created bread out of the stones would have been a sin. It proves also that he

had the power thus to transform the stones into bread, otherwise there would have been no temptation. The wrong, as we understand it, would have consisted in the misuse of the holy spirit or holy power so recently conferred upon him. This spirit was poured upon him because of his consecration, his self-sacrifice to do the Father's will in the interest of others and to lay down his life in this service. Consequently, to have used that power in harmony with any other purpose than that for which it was given would have been a misuse of it. This avoidance of the use of his [R2243 : page 11] special powers for or upon himself may be noticed in connection with our Lord's entire ministry. All of his miracles were in the interests of others; none of them for selfish purposes. For instance, when at Cana the water was turned into wine, while our Lord may have partaken of the wine with the rest, it was made for their use and to manifest forth his glory, and was not for himself. The same was true when the five thousand were fed in the wilderness, and again when the four thousand were miraculously fed. But to have turned the stones into bread would not have fed others either physically or mentally. Indeed, so far from using his miraculous powers selfishly, we find that many of our Lord's miracles, especially those of healing, were done at his own personal expense – at the expense of the loss of vitality; as it is written, "Virtue [vitality] went out of him and healed them all."

There is a lesson in this for the Church, which is the body of Christ; for *we* are tempted like as he was. It is well to note that it is not all mankind that is tempted as he was tempted, but only his "brethren," the members of his body. These are tempted like as he was, and for the same reasons. A failure to realize this fact has led many to inquiry as to how our Lord was tempted in all points as every father and mother is tempted, and as every husband and wife is tempted and tried, as drunkards are tempted, etc. But all these fail to get the thought. Our Lord was not so tempted, but merely tempted on the same lines of testing and trial that apply to his consecrated Church.

Applying this lesson to the Church, the body of Christ, we find it applicable. We, having been justified by the grace of God through faith in the precious blood, are reckoned as perfect; in order that we may present our justified selves as living sacrifices to God, under the conditions of the New Covenant. With our Master this signified a consecration or baptism into death: so with us, it signifies a giving up of human rights, that we may obtain the more excellent inheritance, of which the holy spirit now given us is a foretaste. But the tempter comes to us to suggest such a use of our new nature, its talents, privileges and opportunities as would make *it* the servant of our earthly nature and its appetites. This temptation should be resisted as from the evil one. To our understanding this temptation may come in various ways; for instance, (1) our privilege of communion with the Lord might be perverted into merely an opportunity for begging for temporal blessings, wealth, or ease, or health. On the contrary we are to realize that our earthly interests have all been consecrated to the Lord, and we are to seek chiefly the interests of the heavenly Kingdom – to spend and be spent in its service, according to our covenant; and to commit all earthly interests unto him who careth for us, and who has promised that they [R2244 : page 11] shall work together for good to those who love him, and are called according to his purpose.

(2) Another form of this temptation might be to use heavenly gifts to earthly advantage; as for instance, a minister, finding the truth unpopular, might be tempted to sacrifice it in the interest of his daily bread, or comforts, or luxuries or fame. The same temptation is common to all; for all the members of the body of Christ are members of the "royal priesthood" whose commission is to minister to truth, "holding forth the Word of life." And suggestions will naturally come to all, to the effect that boldness and fearlessness in the use of their spiritual talents would soon or later lead to temporal losses and crosses; and thus to these also the Tempter suggests that the truth be used only in such a manner as will bring the largest proportion of the loaves and fishes. We all, therefore, should remember well our

Master's answer to the Tempter along this line: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." The word from the mouth of God is that if we are faithful in laying down our lives now we shall have eternal life and jointheirship in our Master's Kingdom. His word is that "whosoever seeketh to save his [earthly] life [at the expense of his covenant] shall lose it, and whosoever shall lose his [earthly] life [laying down his life in harmony with his covenant of consecration, faithfully, unto death] shall find it [eternal life]."

The second temptation was a challenge to our Lord to prove his relationship to God, and the divine providence over him, by leaping from the highest point of the temple into the valley below. We need not suppose that our Lord was taken physically to the top of the temple, but that he was taken mentally there by the suggestion which, if amplified, no doubt would be somewhat as follows: If you are the Son of God, it is proper that you should give some test or proof, and I suggest that it be a leap from the top of the temple into yonder valley: which would be proof not only to me but to the most zealous of the Jews, who would then know of a surety of your divine power and commission, by seeing you arise unhurt after the fall. Satan even sought to back up this temptation by a text of Scripture, quoting from Psa. 91:11,12. It was a misapplication of Scripture, however, for the prophecy relates to the symbolical feet of Christ – the last members of the body of Christ in the end of the Gospel age – pointing out how these will be preserved and helped in the time of trouble and stumbling with which this age will close.

Our Lord's answer shows that he possessed the "spirit of a sound mind." He answered the Tempter **[R2244 : page 12]** that it would be wrong, sin on his part, thus to tempt the Almighty, to tempt Providence, no matter how good the objective result.

There is a lesson here also for the members of the body of Christ, the royal priesthood. In seeking to serve the Lord we are not to tempt

Providence by expecting miracles where they are unnecessary. As it would have been sin for our Master to have leaped from the roof of the temple, so the temptation may come to us to fearlessly put ourselves into positions of difficulty and danger (moral or financial, physical or spiritual) and expect God to work a miracle in our deliverance. For instance, we have known Christian people who would go into debt without any assurance of being able to pay, and who explained the matter by saying that they had *faith* in the Lord that he would provide the money by and by, and not suffer them to be put to shame, as frauds, and thus to put him to shame. These people were jumping off the pinnacle of the temple financially and morally without any authority in the Word of God for so doing. Such are likely soon or later to meet with disaster. Their duty would be rather to remember that obedience is better than sacrifice, and that obedience demands that they "owe no man anything." Another temptation of this same character comes to some people in connection with the Lord's work: urging them to expect divine interposition and miracle to put the truth into their mouths and hearts while they fail to obey the divine instruction to "Search the Scriptures" that they may be "thoroughly furnished" unto every good word and work. Our Lord's reply to Satan is one that should be treasured by all of his followers for use under all such temptations; namely, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."

Our Lord's final temptation in the wilderness was the display to him of the kingdoms of the world, their power and magnificence, and the proposition that all of these should be turned over to him if he would but acknowledge Satan and become a cooperator with him. We do not suppose that the high mountain to which he was taken was a literal mountain, but suppose that our Lord was all the while still in the wilderness of Judea, and that mentally he was taken into Satan's mountain and given a view of the majesty of the earthly dominion and the subserviency of all the kingdoms of the world to Satan the "prince of this world, who now worketh in the hearts of the children of disobedience." Here, as elsewhere, "mountain" stands for *kingdom*, and the high mountain, from which earth's kingdoms were viewed,

was the Kingdom of Satan, his rule and authority over mankind. Satan in the first temptation had found our Lord fully obedient to his consecration and unwilling to use his heavenly powers selfishly. In the second, he had found him unwilling to exercise anything but a proper, rational trust in God, in harmony with the Lord's Word.

Now he tried a new plan, wholly different: He would no longer dispute with Jesus that he was the Son of God, he would no longer ask him to prove that proposition; but taking that for granted, and taking for granted his divine title to the dominion of the world, he now proposed a *compromise*. He said in effect, You are anointed of God to be the King of Earth; yet you yourself must see what difficulties must lie in your way. You see how the whole world is under my sway, and even according to your own expectations (as you have been reasoning the matter over from the Scriptures) the divine plan for blessing mankind, which you have undertaken to carry out, would be at very best a slow, tedious plan, full of difficulties if indeed at all practicable. And as for yourself, you perceive that the path marked out for you in Jehovah's arrangement, by which he proposes that you shall become the Lord and King of the earth, is a path of severe trials, difficulties and dangers, amidst which, if you make but one misstep, you will forfeit all. Now, therefore, my suggestion is this: I am not so bad, not so evilly disposed, as I am reputed to be. True, I did instigate sin, but not because I preferred to see mankind in sin, but because I wished to have an empire of my own, and to have mankind as my subjects. Really, I should be glad to have you undertake the work of rescuing mankind from its degradation and establishing just such a kingdom as you propose to establish – a reign of righteousness, justice, peace and love; and I would be willing to cooperate. Now, therefore, my suggestion is that, instead of combatting me and incurring my opposition and enmity, you recognize me in connection with this world of mankind, and undertake the work of bringing mankind to righteousness under my patronage, and I, on the other part, will promptly and speedily, and without contention or strife, deliver to you, to be blessed, all the



families of the earth, according to the desire of your heart. Consider well now, how much better is this plan which I suggest than the one which you have been entertaining as outlined in the Scriptures. Furthermore, this would involve my own conversion to righteousness, which surely would not be amiss either in your sight or in the sight of Jehovah. You need have no hesitation about adopting this my plan, because you do not find it in the Scriptures; for of course God never anticipated that I would make such an offer, a free delivery up of the world to you and to a reign of righteousness.

Here was the strongest temptation of all. Our Lord knew that the Father's will was to reconcile the world unto himself; he knew that it was for this purpose **[R2244 : page 13]** that he had come into the world; he foresaw that according to the divine arrangement (as outlined in the Scriptures, in type and in prophecy), a long, tedious battle with evil was involved; and now, here, suddenly, a door of escape from his anticipated troubles was opened almost seemingly providentially at the beginning of his ministry: this path led upward at once to the glory and power and dominion of earth, and speedily to the blessing of all mankind; whereas the divine plan led first down into the valley of the shadow of death, humiliation, ignominy, suffering, trials and, by and by, a long way off, promised glory to follow.

Which path should he choose? There were many strong reasons pointing to the proposition of Satan, and the depression of spirit which had come over him through the study of the Scriptures, and finding the narrowness and difficulty of the path of life which the Father had marked out, combined with the physical weakness resulting from his forty days fast, placed our dear Master at a great disadvantage, and served as a test of the severest kind to his love, faith, and loyalty toward God. But he came off victorious, and promptly so; answering, "Get thee hence, Satan [do not try to tempt me to become your follower and servant], for it is written, "Thou shalt worship the Lord

thy God, and him only shalt thou serve [I will follow the divine program at any cost]."

A temptation similar to this comes to the members of the body of Christ through the same Adversary and his various agencies. It is a temptation to adopt some **[R2245 : page 13] other plan** than the Divine plan for doing good, blessing mankind and establishing a Kingdom of righteousness in the earth. How many honest Christians, finding the Lord's way very narrow and yielding good results very slowly, have undertaken to improve upon the divine method by schemes and arrangements devised by themselves or by others. For instance, altho Christian people in general admit that sectarian divisions in the Church are entirely contrary to the divine instructions, they nevertheless lend their influence to these systems, declaring that they yield better results than the Scriptural plan, and supposing that, however good the Lord's plan might have been at first, they have found a better one for the present. They find in the Scriptures a very simple outline of faith, – "One Lord, one faith, one baptism and one God and Father of all:" but not satisfied with this, every denomination makes for itself certain doctrinal tests, and holds that it has a right so to do; because times have changed, and the divine plan in its simplicity would not be appropriate now.

It was not long after the apostles fell asleep in death that the Adversary succeeded in deluding the Church to try his easier way of reaching the desired results; – blessing the world and establishing it in righteousness. When Satan succeeded in getting some of the principal ones in the Church to hearken to his schemes and to go into partnership with him for the control of the world and its blessing through a combination of religion and politics, the organization called itself the "Church of Rome," "The Holy Catholic Church." After corrupting her through priestcraft and superstition, and introducing into her system and worship the greatest of blasphemies, he had measurably succeeded in making the world believe that it was living under the dominion of the Kingdom of God, for which Christ had

taught his people to pray, – "Thy Kingdom come." Yet *not all* were deluded thus; a remnant still remained loyal to the Lord and his Word, and preferred persecution for righteousness' sake rather than share the pleasures of sin and the glories of the false kingdom for a season.

When by and by under divine providence the torch of truth was caused to blaze forth in the hands of the Reformers, a new era was ushered in, and the Adversary immediately set about to oppose the truth and its servants who were denouncing him and his false Antichrist kingdom. He persecuted at first with sword and flame and rack and dungeon; but later he has taken new methods, and, persuading each band of reformers (each sect) that they have *won* a great victory, he has gotten them settled down self-satisfied in the belief that, while Papacy was corrupt, it was nevertheless the Kingdom of God; and that now both they and Papacy are unitedly God's Kingdom blessing the world by the establishment of civilization; – by political reforms, temperance reforms, social reforms; and converting the heathen by sending war vessels, seizing their territory, appropriating their customs duties, and forcing upon them Christendom's whiskey, tobacco and profanity in combination with monopolies and trusts.

Nor is this temptation confined to those who are identified with the grossest errors of sectarianism. Many who have a considerable knowledge of the present truth seem willing to bow the knee to wealth, to influence, to Satan's various systems, hoping thereby to have better opportunities of serving the Lord and his truth, than they could find by following in the path which the Lord himself took, and directs his followers to take; – the "narrow way." Let us each see to it most carefully that we worship and serve the Lord only, and that we follow only his directions. All other voices, except those which merely reecho the Shepherd's voice lead more or less astray. All other paths are violations of our engagements with the Lord. In victories over such temptations we are overcoming the world: and in order to have such victories and to overcome the world absolute faith in the

Lord is indispensable. We must realize that, however matters may appear on the surface, the Lord's way, the narrow way, is the best way, and the only way, that leads to the prize of our high calling in his Kingdom.

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