

## THE BATTLE OF TEMPTATION.

– MATTHEW 4:1-11. – FEBRUARY 4. –

**Golden Text:** – "In all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." – Heb. 4:15.

WITH sin came selfishness – indeed "original sin" sprang from selfishness, which has marked its development at every step for now six thousand years. Selfishness is the mainspring of a battle not only against benevolence and righteousness but against everything that stands in its ambitious way. It has led to all the conflicts of the world, both personal and national. While it is evil and only evil in itself, it may, under God's providences, serve a useful purpose in the development of character. As God stands for every principle of goodness, righteousness, mercy and truth, Satan stands for or represents all the adverse principles of sin, covetousness, injustice, untruthfulness, unprinciple, selfishness in its every form. Sooner or later each individual esteemed worthy of divine favor and life must be tested along this line of principle – faithfulness to God and the principles of righteousness against lack of principle, selfishness.

The apostles record the temptation of Jesus along the line of selfishness, after his anointing with the holy Spirit. Doubtless as a child and as a young man he had temptations along this line such as are common to others, and doubtless his perfection of being made this as nothing, so inwrought must love have been in the very constitution of a perfect being such as he was. It may surprise some that his temptation could be as great, yea, much greater, after the anointing of the Spirit. This, however, was the case. Moreover, it is well to remember that our Golden Text, "Tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin," does not refer to the ordinary temptations experienced by our Lord in common with others before his anointing. It was our Lord's trials,

temptations and victories as a New Creature that constituted him the Captain of our Salvation and our pattern – "Tempted in all points like as we [new creatures] are."

### **LED BY THE SPIRIT INTO TEMPTATION**

We should never voluntarily go into temptation. Reverence, humility and caution should deter us. We should have such a realization of our own imperfection that we would seek to avoid temptation and pass by on the other side. Nevertheless, when temptations do come to us we should be of good courage, remembering that greater is he who is for us than all they that be against us, that he has promised never to leave or forsake us, and that his strength shall be perfected in our weakness if we will by faith accept of his aid.

We must not expect to escape temptations, trials, difficulties, [R3716 : page 39] perplexities, because only through these can we be developed, perfected in character. Only the tried ones could ever be declared overcomers. Sin, error, is all about us, and presented to us not only by the world and Satan but also by the attitudes of our own flesh. If we be without trials, without temptations, without difficulties, we may be sure that we will never be overcomers and never receive the crown of glory and joint-heirship with our Lord, the Head, the Captain, the Leader of the overcomers. We are not forgetting the request of the model prayer, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one." But for the foregoing reasons we incline to prefer the rendering of this verse as given in the Emphatic Diaglott, "Abandon us not in temptation, but deliver us from the Evil one." As our Lord declared, "It must needs be that offences [trials] come."

Our Lord was led by his own spirit, his own mind, to go into the wilderness and thus indirectly into trials and difficulties there experienced. So it is with the Lord's followers. It is through their

holy minds or dispositions, the result of their full consecration to the Lord and their reception of the begetting of his Spirit, that they, too, are led into temptations, trials, difficulties similar to those which our Lord experienced.

### **TEMPTED FORTY DAYS**

The account in our lesson speaks of our Lord's temptation as occurring at the close of his forty days in the wilderness, but Mark and Luke in referring to the same forty days imply that our Lord was tempted for the entire period. Both thoughts are evidently correct: he was tempted during the forty days, tested, tried as respects his own mind, his own disposition to do the Father's will, while the temptation narrated in our lesson, which occurred at the close of the forty days, was a special conflict with Satan – Diabolus. And we here remark that this name Diabolus is always in the Greek used in the singular number, evidently referring to Satan, the prince of demons. The matter is confused before the mind of the English reader by the fact that our common version Bible uses the word devils, in the plural, whereas the Greek in such places is a totally different word, signifying demons.

Errors entertained by many hinder them from properly appreciating the matter of our Lord's temptation. Some, with the theory that he was a spirit being who merely assumed a human body and pretended for a time to be a man, can have no proper appreciation of this account until they drop their misconception and accept the Scriptural declaration that "he who was rich, for our sakes became poor" – that "he was made flesh" – that he was actually the "man Christ Jesus" and no longer the spirit being; but humbly, voluntarily, stripped of his glory, honor and privileges as a spirit being, became subject to all the limitations of a perfect man, corresponding to father Adam and his perfection before he sinned and came under the divine sentence of death.

## **"ABOUT MY FATHER'S BUSINESS"**

Some things our Lord knew most distinctly, other things had not yet been revealed to him by the Father. Even as the boy of twelve we find that he knew that he had proceeded forth and came from God, that he had come into the world on a special mission, and that he must be about his Father's business. Learning that he could not enter upon the Father's business, "the work thou gavest me to do," until he was thirty years of age, he patiently awaited the time and hid his identity and contented himself with being a faithful son in the humble sphere in which divine providence had placed him. But just as soon as he had reached the appointed age he hastened to make his covenant with God, symbolized by his baptism – namely, a full consecration of his every talent and power to do the Father's will even unto death. At the time noted by our lesson he had done this and had received the anointing and filling of the holy Spirit. He now stood at the threshold of his great work, and realizing its importance and that now it was due time for him to understand the divine plan which he was to execute, that he might do it thoroughly and in full accord with the divine will he sought the wilderness, that in solitude he might know thoroughly the proper course for him to take in announcing himself as Messiah to Israel and the world.

## **WORTHY THE LAMB SLAIN**

Symbolically our Lord shows that it was not possible for him to know the completeness of the divine plan until after he had demonstrated his worthiness to be the heir of all things, and until that worthiness was proven by his obedience unto death, even the death of the cross. In the symbols of Revelation he points this out to us, showing how the divine plan had long been in the Father's hand a sealed scroll, and how that no one in heaven or earth had been found worthy to open that book or scroll or to understand the particulars of the divine program until he, as the antitypical

Lamb of God, had been slain, and by his sacrifice had demonstrated his worthiness to receive wisdom, honor, dominion and might. Then to him was the scroll or book of the divine plan entrusted in its every detail, that in due time all the wonderful provisions of the divine plan might be fully executed in the glorification of the Church and the blessing of all the families of the earth. – See Revelation 5.

Those forty days, we may safely assume, were spent in meditation and prayer, our Lord being led to this course by his spirit of devotion to the Father, his anxiety to do the Father's will in the Father's way. He had neither Bible nor concordances nor other assistance in the study of the divine predictions, but he had instead the perfect memory and the eighteen years of hearing the reading of the Law in the Synagogue. We may safely say that he knew the entire Word of God by heart. He had known it for some time, and not only had exercised his own thought upon it but had also inquired of the most learned their views. He evidently realized that it was not due time for him to have a clear and full understanding of the prophecies until he had received the holy Spirit – that the divine revelations were only intended to be understood by those enlightened by the holy Spirit. He therefore now expected and doubtless realized newer and clearer views of the subjects he had been studying from childhood respecting his personal mission and the manner in which it was to be executed, as foretold in [R3716 : page 40] the shadows of the Law and in the veiled testimonies of the prophets.

### **"TEACH ME THY WILL, O GOD"**

In fancy we may see our Lord meditating upon how he was to be the Mediator of a new Covenant, the antitype of Moses, who mediated the Law Covenant. In our minds we may with him watch the procedure of the going up into the mountain, the receiving of the commission and the preaching of it to the people

under a vail, and how this transaction not only represented a first advent but a second advent in glory. We may presume that he studied carefully the type of the sin offerings, the Day of Atonement sacrifices, by which propitiation for the sins of the world was to be accomplished.

We may in our mind's eye see him unravelling the symbol of the typical Jubilee year and noting the blessings of the Millennial age which shall ultimately come to all who should become the Lord's people through him.

We see him studying the type of the Israelites bitten by the serpents in the wilderness of Sin, and how their looking with faith upon the brazen serpent was the cure.

We may see him endeavoring to apply this to himself as the antitype who should be made sin, treated as the sinner in the interest of the sin-smitten ones.

We may see him wrestling with the prophetic statements of Isaiah respecting the one who would be led as a lamb to the slaughter; how he should be a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, and that the people of Israel would be ashamed of him and hide as it were their faces from him, giving him no support, no assistance or cooperation in the work he had come to do; how the Lord would lay on him the iniquity of us all, that by his stripes we might be healed.

We see him wrestling with the statements made by the prophet Daniel, some of which were in process of fulfilment and therefore to be understood; others sealed by God and impossible to be understood by any – waiting times and seasons which the Father had put in his own power, of which neither the Son nor the angels of heaven, any more than others, were informed.

We see him studying the symbolical representations of the establishment of the Kingdom of heaven at the close of a certain period of the world's history, and how it would be with power and great glory; how previously Messiah would be cut off, not for his own sins but for the sins of the people, and how he would seal up the testimony, anoint the most holy, etc., etc.

### **OUR LORD'S EARNESTNESS**

These studies – interspersed, we may be sure, with prayer – seemingly occupied our Lord's attention so completely, so fully, so thoroughly for those forty days that he had no thought for anything else. We may infer that he neither ate nor slept, for the record is that at the close of the forty days he *afterward* hungered. So intent was his perfect mind upon the great subject with which he wrestled that it absorbed all of his vitality, energy, in this effort to know the Father's will in order that he might do it. We can very readily suppose, too, that he experienced various temptations during these forty days of study; that although he was separate from sinners and all sinful thoughts or ambitions, nevertheless it would be quite a test to his loyalty of purpose to so interpret the Scriptures as to see in them the great sufferings, trials and disappointments which he afterward experienced. Continually there would be the opportunity of taking a different view of the matter – the opportunity of construing the course outlined for him another way than that which would mean so much of degradation and dishonor to the One despised and rejected of men even unto death, even the death of the cross. **[R3717 : page 40]**

### **"STUDY TO SHOW THYSELF APPROVED"**

There is a great lesson in all of this for all of the Lord's followers. If it was the wise and proper course for the Master to go aside for the study of the divine plan before beginning his public ministry, how much more should his followers feel it incumbent upon them as fallen beings with imperfect judgments

to seek counsel of the Lord's Word and Spirit to ascertain what work the Lord would have them do in his vineyard before beginning any work. If this course were more generally followed there would be far less ranting done in the name of the Lord, fewer would feel that it was their privilege to rush in and work for the Lord without first studying carefully the divine will or program respecting that work – lest they should be hinderers of the Lord's plan which they desire to serve.

Let us more and more apply each to himself the Apostle's words to Timothy, "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth." Until we do study we will have every reason to doubt our preparation or usefulness in the Lord's service. First comes consecration, wholly, unreservedly; and secondly, as the first step in the fulfilling of that vow, comes the study of the divine will, the divine Word, the divine plan; and following that comes labor in the Lord's vineyard.

### **THE TEMPTER CAME TO HIM**

At the close of the forty days of personal, earnest study, and when our Lord had reached a conclusion respecting the divine program as outlined through the Law and the prophets, and when in doing so he was exhausted in mind and in body, then the tempter came, the representative of all subtlety, a liar from the beginning. As the Lord's followers we can from experience say that this is the Adversary's general course – to intrude himself and his temptations at the opportune moment of our greatest weakness. While busily engaged in searching for the Father's will our Lord was not molested by the tempter, but as soon as he had digested the subject and reached a conclusion, and while his perfect but overtaxed human powers needed and sought refreshment, recuperation, that was the moment of the tempter's assault. Let us remember that it is the same with us who are his



footstep followers, how he was tempted in all points like as we are.

We have found some of the Lord's faithful people surprised at first because they had so few trials, and we have always admonished such to use such a period of rest for study, for putting on the whole armor of God, that they may [R3717 : page 41] be able to stand when the assault shall surely come later on. Apparently the Lord's providences safeguard us at the very beginning of our experiences until we have sufficient opportunity for reaching a firm and definite conclusion in our own minds respecting his will, as presented to us in his Word. Whoever fails to use this period faithfully, earnestly, will find himself so much the weaker, so much the more liable to defeat, when the testings from the Adversary come a little later. It is also to be noted that these peculiar trials and temptations which come to us as the Lord's followers do not reach us until after we have attained the point of full consecration to the Lord. Neither do we have the privilege of coming to a clearer appreciation of the teaching of the Word until after such a consecration.

### **"AS AN ANGEL OF LIGHT"**

The account does not say and we therefore cannot know whether Satan appeared to our Lord personally or not. The fact that he was tempted in all points like as we [his brethren] are seems to imply that Satan did not appear to him personally, because he does not so appear to us in connection with our temptations. We may be sure, however, if there were any personal appearance it would be that of an angel of light, and not at all as Satan is vulgarly pictured, with hoofs, horns, etc. If Satan were to present himself in any vulgar form to any in harmony with the Lord, the effect would be to at once disarm the temptation. We may be sure, therefore, that Satan would adopt no such course at any time.

The Apostle puts us on our guard, that rather we are to expect the Adversary's temptations along the line of an angel of light – a minister of the Truth. He always affects to be a helper and not a hinderer of the Lord's people. He would show them how to get along in the world much more smoothly and more happily; he would bless them; he would turn their narrow, rugged path into a path of roses; he would be their friend, their counsellor, their guide. Only after they had followed him awhile would they find, when well under his power, that he is a murderer from the beginning and abode not in the Truth. As illustrations of some of his misrepresentations in our day note the claims of Theosophists, Spiritualists, and Christian Scientists. These all affect to lift mankind to higher planes, to free them from pains and trials, and to give them a higher wisdom, guidance and instruction than that which they might receive from the divine Word and the light which shines therein from the cross of Christ.

### **"LIKE AS WE ARE"**

Not like as the world was our Lord tempted, not like as we are tempted as natural men and women, but like as we are tempted who have become new creatures in Christ through a full consecration of our hearts, based upon our justification through his blood. Our Lord's temptations correspond to the temptations of this class only.

Our temptations are from three different quarters, well represented in the three tests put to our Lord by Diabolus. First the flesh, second the world, third the adversary himself. All of our Lord's trials as a New Creature were from these three quarters, and all of the trials of his followers as New Creatures are from the same. Let us, while following our Lord's experiences, apply the same to ourselves.

## **TEMPTATION FIRST – THE FLESH**

Self-gratification is to some extent proper, but there are limitations. Those who are consecrated to the Lord may not seek to gratify themselves, their appetites, in any manner contrary to the divine arrangement – to do so would be sin. This rule applied to our Lord as well as to all his followers. After his forty days' fast he was very hungry, and the tempter's suggestion to him was that of a friend. Jesus was reminded that he was the Son of God, that he had every right to all the favors of God, that his hunger was a legitimate craving of nature, that there was nothing sinful in being hungry, and that he had therefore the right, the privilege, to reasonably gratify his appetite. All this was true. The next suggestion was, You have the power – you have just received the anointing of the holy Spirit – you may therefore at your pleasure command these stones and they would turn to bread; power to do this is vested in you by God. Use that power now for the supply of your needs. Why should you hunger? Take counsel of a friend, appreciate my interest in you; if I were an enemy I would prefer to see you starve to death or at least prefer to see you suffer.

How insidious was this temptation! It had in it many elements of truth, and apparently was kindly and well meant. There was just the one flaw which our Lord's keen mind at once discerned, and his loyal heart at once repudiated the advice. He reasoned, This holy Spirit, this power I have received in my anointing, was not intended to be used for self gratification; it was my begetting of the Spirit as a New Creature, to the intent that as a great High Priest I might lay down my life, might sacrifice myself as a human being. If now I should use this holy power, which was given me for the purpose of sacrificing, in an opposite direction, to heal, restore, to strengthen the mortal body which I have just delivered to death, it would be wrong – it would be using the power of God in an opposite direction from the divine intention. However hungry I feel I cannot do this. My life is in

my Father's hands. I have been here these forty days under the guidance of the holy Spirit, seeking to know and to do the Father's will, I have not forfeited my life by disobedience, I may therefore conclude that while I am thus about my Father's business naught shall harm my Father's child. Hence I conclude that my hunger will not prove really injurious to me. My answer to this temptation of the Adversary will not impugn his motives in mentioning it, for that would be unkind and needless. My reply is: Bread is not the only thing by which man shall live; every word of God is a word of life. I have been feeding upon this heavenly food, I am strong in my spirit, in my determination to do my Father's will. I will not use improper means for my refreshment of body. The Father will be able to make up to me whatever disadvantage may accrue through my faithfulness to him. His will be done in me.

### **SPIRITUAL PRIVILEGES NOT FOR SELFISH USES**

How are the Lord's followers tempted as he was in this respect? We have no power to turn stones into bread. No! But having received the holy Spirit, [R3717 : page 42] it is within the range of our opportunities to use the same contrary to our consecration, to use it for our physical benefit – for instance, to make merchandise of the Gospel, to preach that which would be pleasing to the natural man and bring us worldly applause and approval and wealth and social caste, etc. This would be selling our birthright for the mess of pottage. Those who see the matter in its true light, those who are in the right attitude of heart to appreciate the matter, will not do this but will say, Natural food alone will not sustain us. We cannot live except as we have the smile, the favor, the approval of the Lord our God. To live without that would not be living for us.

Another temptation coming to some of the Lord's consecrated ones along this line would seem to be in the teaching that to some extent prevails, that they should go to God with every ailment and pain and thus [R3718 : page 42] use their privileges as anointed members of the body of Christ for the healing of their mortal bodies, which they have already in consecration surrendered to death. Would this be right? Would it not be along the same lines as our Lord's temptation to use the privileges and opportunities and powers that were his as the anointed one to comfort, strengthen and upbuild his mortal body? We believe that the cases are analogous, and that it is highly improper for any of the Lord's people who have received of his Spirit, who have made a consecration of their lives, to ask for any special intervention of the Lord's power on their behalf, to attempt in any manner to use their privileges as members of the Royal Priesthood to minister to their flesh.

On the contrary, so far as their fallen flesh is concerned, they have all the rights and privileges of the whole world to food and raiment and anything that in the Lord's providence may come to their attention as being healthful, strengthening, call this food or call it medicine as we please. It is our holy Spirit privileges as Royal Priests that cannot be invoked for earthly advantage, because this relationship to our Lord was not granted us for such a purpose, but rather that under this holy Spirit relationship we might the more efficiently lay down our lives for the brethren. It is in vain that some reason that they merely desire physical health that they may better perform their sacrifices to the Lord. The Scriptures declare that obedience is better than sacrifice.

Let us accept such temporal, physical blessings and mercies as divine providence grants us with gratitude, with thankfulness, and let our holy spirits, our holy minds, intentions, so use our mortal bodies as to make the best use possible of our talents, opportunities, and conditions for the service of the Lord, not

asking for resuscitation or special strength as our Lord did not, but accepting such favors as the Father might grant to us unsolicited – "Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask him." "After all these things [food, raiment, health, etc.] do the Gentiles seek." – Matt. 6:8,32.

## **TEMPTATION THE SECOND – THE WORLD**

Satan did not stop to argue the question; he saw that it would be useless as soon as he perceived that the Lord's stand had been firmly taken. And so we also have the promise, "Resist the tempter and he will flee from you." – Jas. 4:7.

But although Satan fled, desisted from the first temptation, he speedily brought another, still in a friendly manner. Paraphrased, his proposition was this: "I carry you in mind to the roof of the southern wing of the Temple, which overlooks the valley of Hinnom [Gehenna]. A leap from that altitude would attract the attention of all the people, especially the most religious class, if done at the hour of the day when large crowds gather in the Temple. It would be a wonderful way of announcing your mission and showing at the same time the divine power which is in you. And there is a Scripture which implies that this was to be the way you would make an announcement of your Messiahship. It reads, 'He shall give his angels charge concerning thee, and in their hands they shall bear thee up lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.' (Psa. 91:11,12.) This Scripture would undoubtedly be fulfilled by the leap I am suggesting, and the people, realizing its fulfilment, would apply the Scripture directly to you and would all give attention to you as Messiah. They would all as a whole become your followers, and your mission would be thoroughly launched in one day." Longfellow practically pictures the scene:

"Unto the holy Temple on Moriah,  
With its resplendent domes and manifold  
Bright pinnacles of gold.

Where they wait thy coming, O Messiah!  
Lo, I have brought thee! Let thy glory here  
Be manifest and clear.

"Reveal thyself by royal act and gesture  
Descending with the bright triumphant host  
Of all the highest  
Archangels, and about thee as a vesture  
The shining clouds and all thy splendors show  
Unto the world below."

Again the suggestion had the appearance of being a friendly one. Could it be that Satan was really interested in the Lord's mission? Could it be that whereas he had been the tempter at first he was now sincerely desirous of undoing his work and becoming a co-laborer with and a helper of the Lord Jesus in his mission? Would it not be a great item in itself to gain first of all the great tempter who had misled so many, and, by converting him, to begin the work with his co-operation? And were not his words wise? Would it not provoke a general comment all through Palestine, and awaken the people to a realization of the power of God in their midst in the person of Jesus?

### **THOU SHALT NOT TEMPT GOD**

All of these thoughts and many more doubtless came to our Lord in connection with the tempter's suggestion. But his study of the divine plan during those forty days, and the conclusions he there reached, quickly settled our Lord's decision that he could not take such a course, that it would not be consistent with the divine plan which he saw outlined in the Law and the prophets, and that anyway such a procedure would not be according to proper lines, reasonable conduct; that in thus leaping from the Temple parapet he would in a measure be tempting God by going contrary to the established law of gravitation. He could readily

see that if in the performance of some obligation, some duty, he should miss his footing and fall from the Temple, that the Lord would be able to protect him, that he would receive no [R3718 : page 43] injury; but it would be quite another matter for him to adopt a plan for serving God that was contrary to what he recognized to be a law of nature. Not by merely curious wonder-working was he to be known to the people, but by the working of the works of him who sent him; by giving illustrations, in the healing of the sick and the blind and the lame, of the great work of God in restitution which would be accomplished through him later, during the Millennial age. The Adversary had no more to say, it would have been useless; he left him so far as that temptation was concerned.

Have the followers of Jesus temptations along this line?

Yes, we answer. The world continually looks to those who confess their relationship to the Lord as sons and who profess to have received the spirit of adoption, and urges them to show or attempt to show some marvel in his favor, if they would prove that they are specially the Lord's children.

### **"THIS GENERATION SEEKETH A SIGN,"**

said our Lord, and thus it is with every generation, every people – the whole world. The world wants miracles or outward show of sanctity and great professions. Some responding to this spirit of the world have adopted peculiar dress. Monks, nuns, quakers, and others make profession of wonderful powers received through laying on of hands, and would thus impress the world along worldly lines. Others claim the power by magic words to change the bread and wine into the actual body of Christ, and authority then to sacrifice him. We cannot suppose that sane people really believe that they do anything of the kind; we must suppose that they do it for a spectacular effect upon the world.



Similarly the red and purple and gold and white and black robes, miters, not now enjoined.

The world seeks after signs of healing, wonder-working magic, etc., and the nearer the Lord's people approach to these things the more they may expect to influence the world. Romanists are leaders along these lines, and have relics of saints, garments, bones, etc., to which reverence is attached in the minds of all classes except in the most civilized lands. Many of these things are attempted also by the Mormons, Spiritualists, Christian Scientists, and magnetic healers, and there is a general tendency amongst all denominations to attempt something of the spectacular whereby to arrest and fix the attention of the public.

As our Lord avoided anything and everything spectacular so should also his followers. True, our Lord performed some miracles of healing, but we should remember that the numbers healed as compared with the whole number of the people was comparatively small. We should remember also that these were the foretold witnesses by which he should be recognized, that they were foreshadowings of his coming glorious work of restitution to all the families of the earth, which shall be accomplished in due time during the Millennial age. True, also, there were miraculous gifts and tongues in the early Church, which we see through the Apostle's statement were designed for the establishment of the Church until the work of grace should more thoroughly be developed in the hearts of the Lord's people, when the fruits of the Spirit should and did supplant the miraculous gifts of the Spirit.

The Lord's people should be on guard against any unreasonable procedures in the proclamation of the Gospel. The service of ambassadors for God is a reasonable service, and those who are in proper line in the footsteps of Jesus will be found to

possess more and more of the "spirit of a sound mind." – 2 Tim. 1:7.

## **MISAPPLICATION OF SCRIPTURES**

Note in connection with this temptation of our Lord that the Adversary quoted Scripture in support of his position, and that our Lord met the temptation not only upon reasonable, logical grounds, but with the Scriptures also. The lesson in this is that we not only need **[R3719 : page 43]** to have the Bible in our possession and be able to read it, but we also need the guidance of the holy Spirit, the spirit of a sound mind, in our application of the Word to the affairs of life. Our Lord did not dispute that the Father could give the angels a charge over him to bear up his feet, to preserve him from injury, but he did reason correctly and in harmony with the Word that it would be wrong for him to tempt the Lord, to try the Lord, to test the Lord's ability. Instead of proving the Lord and having him co-operate with a wonder-working spirit, we should the more carefully investigate the teachings of the divine plan, to ascertain and follow the course marked out for us in the Lord's providences, our reasonable service, even to the extent of the using up of our mortal bodies in reasonable methods, in the promulgation of the Truth.

In the light of the unfolding of God's plan we see that the living members of the Church constitute the feet of the body of Christ – the last members. We see further that in the prophecy which Satan quoted reference is had to the serious difficulties and trials of our day which would precede the feet members, "The hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." – Rev. 3:10.

We see that in our day there is a stumbling-stone permitted for the testing of our faith and patience and loyalty; that whoever is of the proper character will be aided of the Lord to victory, so that the stumbling-stone to such will be a stepping-stone to higher

riches of grace and blessing. We hear the Apostle speaking of our day and saying, "Who shall be able to stand?" (Rev. 6:17.) And the answer is that all the faithful in Christ, all the true members of the elect body, will stand in this day of testing, because the Lord will give his messengers a charge, a message in their interest, that they may bear them up in their hands by their power, lest they should be stumbled in this time. Nothing shall be able to stumble, to deceive, the very elect. – Matt. 24:24.

### **TEMPTATION THIRD – THE DEVIL**

All of these temptations were of the devil, but from different standpoints. The third one was Satan's own temptation in a special sense or degree, in that it was along the subtle lines which he himself has seemed to follow in all his work as an adversary of God and of righteousness.

In this temptation the Lord is taken, not physically but in the spirit of his mind, up into a high mountain – a very exalted kingdom. Physically he was all this time in the desert near Jerusalem, and as a matter of fact there is neither in that desert nor anywhere in the world a mountain from which all the kingdoms of the **[R3719 : page 44]** world could be viewed except with the mind's eye. The very high mountain or high kingdom superior to all earthly kingdoms was Satan's own dominion of the world. For a long time by usurpation he has been the prince of this world, who now worketh in the hearts of the children of disobedience, and who blinds the minds of those who believe not the Gospel. (2 Cor. 4:4.) Not that Satan is known to be the ruler and is recognized as such, nor that God has given him this dominion, but by deceiving mankind he has usurped the control of their minds. He is the great deceiver of whom we read that in the Millennial age our Lord Jesus shall bind him that he shall deceive the peoples no more. – Rev. 20:3.

In this temptation Satan seems to have entered sympathetically with our Lord in his work, as though he had said to him, "I see that you are bent upon doing a thorough work, and that to some extent you realize the difficulties which are before you – the impossibility of bringing order out of present confusion. You see the world of mankind steeped in sin and ignorance and superstition, taking pleasure in war, licentiousness and falsehood. You long to recover them, to establish a dominion of righteousness in which all the people shall be blessed and brought to see the advantage of obedience to God, of lives of peace, sobriety and happiness. I am with you in this matter. I also deplore the wretched condition of the world; I have been a witness to its degradation for four thousand years, and am now ready to join with you or rather to have you join with me in the work of lifting the world out of its deplorable condition.

"It was not my original design to bring such a blight upon mankind. I wanted to have a dominion, I wanted to be a ruler; there was no chance in heaven, because everything there was strictly under the rule and guidance of Jehovah God; therefore I endeavored to establish a kingdom amongst men. I will admit that humanity as it is at present is no credit to me or to my reign of centuries. I am willing to turn over the entire matter to you, to exert all the influence and power which I possess amongst men and to thus give you the control of the whole world to lift them up, to bless them, to do them every good, if you will but recognize me in connection with this dominion of earth. This is the short road to all that you desire to accomplish for man, and it is the only road, for you may well judge that if you do not take up with my proposition I will oppose you at every step and you see what my influence is amongst men. Not only will you yourself have most rugged experiences, but all who will attempt to co-operate with you I would oppose, so that there would practically be no opportunity for doing the good you have come into the world to accomplish except as you have my assistance and co-operation."

## **"HIM ONLY SHALT THOU SERVE"**

Our Lord's answer came promptly; we might paraphrase it thus: "O, Lucifer, it is true that you have great power, that you could co-operate, that you could also on the contrary oppose the work in which I have engaged and to which I have just consecrated my life. You rightly judge that my flesh shrinks from such a terrible conflict as I realize is before me, and that if the work could be accomplished in an easy, peaceable manner it would be my joy to have it so. But I remind you that my life is not consecrated to the work but to the Father, my God, and from this standpoint you are not only God's opponent, adversary, but also my adversary, in that you are endeavoring to alienate my affections and loyalty from him. Get thee behind me, I will not recognize you, I must follow the right course, well expressed in the Scriptures which say, 'Thou shalt reverence the Lord thy God and him only shalt thou serve.' There can be no compromise. You are on one side of the matter and God is on the other side. You may oppose me in my work in every way within your power to the extent that the Almighty will permit you. No more can you do, and if this in the Lord's providence shall bring me trials, disappointments, pain, suffering, death, I have already pledged myself to God to the full extent of all this."

The temptation was ended, our Lord's firmness and uncompromising loyalty to the Father and to his plan were fully vindicated; he was prepared now for the ministry of three and a half years, and knew to expect that from start to finish he would have the opposition of the adversary in every sense of the word – even unto death, even the death of the cross.

## **SIMILAR TEMPTATIONS BEFORE HIS BRETHREN**

In what respect are we tempted as was our Lord in this final temptation? We reply that similarly the adversary comes to us

with suggestions respecting a compromise of the Truth. As the eyes of our understanding open to see to what extent evil has a dominating influence in the world, and that fidelity to the Truth will cost us all that we have, in that same proportion usually comes the suggestion to compromise, to try to accomplish the good by more or less fellowship and partisanship with the evils that are in the world. It is along this line that many in the nominal churches justify themselves in respect to the worldly forms and customs introduced. Fairs, private theatricals, games, etc., are all compromises intended to attract the worldly by having the Church approach as nearly as possible to the world's conceptions and ideals and standards, etc., and yet with a view not to degradation but to uplift the world. This was exactly the course which Satan proposed to our Lord and which he rejected. All who would follow in the footsteps of Jesus must also reject every compromise with the world – "Ye are not of the world even as I am not of the world, therefore the world hateth you." – John 17:16.

Let us remember the words of our Lord, that those who would be his disciples should sit down first and count the cost before they enter upon discipleship, before they make the consecration of their lives, before they take upon them the holy name, "members of the body of Christ," the Church. And having taken their stand with the full knowledge that the way in which they are going is a narrow one, full of trials and difficulties, and that its further end is death, they will, with this view before their minds and such a consecration, be less likely to be sidetracked by the deceiving oppositions of the Adversary. Rightly instructed by the Word of the Lord they know that no real blessing could have come to the world except through his death, and to whatever extent he might have yielded to the Adversary's proposition for an easy way would have been a hindrance to that consummation. **[R3720 : page 45]**

Likewise they know that all the Church, the elect of God, called to walk in his footsteps now, are to take up his cross and follow him and be faithful even unto death if they would have the crown of life. They see that in the divine order the blessing of the world can come only through the sacrifice of the Christ, Head and body. The more they come to understand the lengths and breadths and heights and depths of God's great plan, the more they see the wisdom of the divine arrangement and the impossibility of the success of any other. The sacrificing priesthood of the present time is to constitute the glorious Royal Priesthood of the future, through which all the families of the earth are to be blessed. All who would constitute themselves members of this Royal Priesthood must learn at the very beginning of their experience to say, Not my will nor my way, but thy will and thy way, O Lord, be done.

Let each of us as followers of the Master be prompt in giving our response to the Adversary's proposition of compromise. He who dallies with temptation increases its power every moment; hence the propriety, yea, the necessity, of an absolute consecration of the heart, the will, at the beginning: on that foundation the daily conflicts with the world, the flesh and the Adversary become much more simple and lose much of their power. Meantime let us pray as our Lord directed, "Abandon us not in temptation, but deliver us from the evil one," realizing that of ourselves we are no match for the Adversary, that our help is in the Lord, and that greater is he who is on our part than all they that be against us.

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