

TEMPTATIONS PECULIAR TO THE NEW CREATION

"We have not an High Priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin. Let us, therefore, come boldly unto the Throne of Grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." – Hebrews 4:15,16.

ST. PAUL had been speaking respecting the antitypical Priesthood, and had been showing that Aaron had been only a typical priest, that the Levitical priesthood never really took away sin, that a better Priesthood was necessary, that this higher Priesthood was represented in Melchizedek, and that God had declared that Jesus would be "a Priest forever, after the Order of Melchizedek." Jesus is a Heavenly High Priest – not an earthly high priest. The thought, then, might be gathered that if our Lord is not an earthly priest He would not know how to sympathize with us. But the Apostle assures us that our great High Priest can fully sympathize with us, because "He was tempted in all points like as we are."

We are not to understand the Apostle to mean that our Lord was tempted in every manner that the *world* is tempted. He had none of the temptations peculiar to a drunkard, etc. His was not an unbalanced mind. He was tempted "like as *we* are" – The Church. Like our Master, we are not, as New Creatures, tempted as are the world. The world has its own kinds of temptation. We are not of the world. We are being tested as spirit-begotten children of God. We are tested as to our loyalty to Him, as to our faith and obedience. Of course, while still in the flesh, we are liable to temptations along the line of our natural tendencies as members of the fallen race, but these are not our temptations as New Creatures.

THE WORLD NOT ABLE TO UNDERSTAND US

The world knows nothing of our peculiar trials as New Creatures. They know merely about the common trials and weaknesses of humanity. But we, having been justified in God's sight, and set apart for His service, desire to carry out our new aims. We are no longer of the world. The world, the flesh and the Devil seek to turn us aside, to draw us back into the old ways; and these temptations are liable to make us forget our covenant of special relationship to the Lord, and what we have agreed to do and to be. It is in this respect that we are being especially tempted and tried, and we must ever be on our guard. We know that Jesus, our great Head, was tried in like manner with us.

When Jesus told His disciples that He was going up to Jerusalem, and that He would be betrayed into the hands of the chief priests and the scribes, and they would condemn Him to death and deliver Him over to the Gentiles, who would mock and scourge and crucify Him, St. Peter said: Master, do not talk that way – it is discouraging. And why speak of these strange things about eating your flesh and drinking your blood? Lord, do not say these things! God forbid; this shall not be your lot!

So even His chosen Twelve could not understand the Master. Jesus answered (but not in the crudity of the Common Version), "Get thee behind Me, adversary" – you are becoming My opponent. You would undo the very work I am doing. Instead of helping you are hindering Me, because your thoughts are not God's thoughts, but men's. – See Matthew 16:21-23.

And so it is with many who seek to show us kindness, who think they are serving our best interests. They say that we are foolish in thinking so much about religion. They mean well. They do not realize that we must be about our Father's business. This is the kind of temptation that comes to us as Christians, as followers of the Master. The special temptations of the Lord's children are

not temptations to commit gross immoralities; and the temptations of Jesus were not of this kind. But He did have the temptation to withhold the Truth and to give something that would be more palatable.

Some of our nominal church friends may say to us: Why do you not engage in slum work, or in social uplift work? You are continually talking about the Kingdom! the Kingdom! As God's ambassadors we are here for the very purpose of telling men about the Kingdom, about the glorious things God has in reservation for His saints, and also His purposes for the world. We know that human "slumming" methods will fail to save the world, [R5585 : page 359] but the Kingdom will save it. The temptation is to do something that others would applaud, instead of doing and saying things of God's Word that bring disapproval from the world and the nominal church people. The Editor has friends who say to him, If you would not talk as you do, and write as you write, more people would listen to you. You could be very popular if you would speak a little differently. You are putting too much religion into your sermons. We reply, Yes, but we are speaking and writing to instruct the people respecting God's Word, character, Plan; and respecting His present call to the Church.

THE CHARACTER OF THE MASTER'S TEMPTATIONS

The Master probably had presented to His mind the suggestion: Now take an easier way. This way that *seems* to be indicated is the crudest possible one. Go to God and tell Him that it does not seem right to you, who have been loyal through all these ages, that you should be subjected to such treatment; that this seems a very strange way to treat a faithful Son; that there can be no good reason for it, and nothing can be gained by it. Ask God if He cannot make some change. Ask Him if He is not overdoing the matter.

And so we, His followers, may sometimes have similar suggestions. But a murmuring, rebellious spirit would prove that we are not in the right attitude of heart; it would prove that we had either never really submitted our will to the Lord or else had withdrawn it, and that we lacked confidence in Him. Any such temptations must be promptly resisted by the child of God.

When St. Peter sought to defend our dear Master from the soldiers and officers who came to arrest Him, though knowing what the end would be, Jesus said: "The cup which My Father hath poured for Me, shall I not drink it?" He did not think for one moment of yielding to any temptation to use His superior power to prevent His enemies from taking Him. He showed them that He possessed such power; for they all went backward, and fell to the ground. Thus He made it manifest that had He chosen to exercise His supernatural power He was infinitely stronger than they, and submitted not because He *must*, but because He was in reality voluntarily submitting Himself to death. This was a demonstration of His previous declaration: "No man *taketh My life* from Me, but I *lay it down* of Myself." (John 10:17,18.) He steadfastly refused to yield to any appeals from His flesh to escape or to lessen His sufferings. "He was tempted in all points like as we are, *yet without sin.*"

We might weaken sometimes; we might come short – and we *do* come short. We cannot fully live up to the glorious standard. *Christ* was without sin. *We* have sin abounding in our flesh, and we have weaknesses which He did not have. But if we are to *follow in His steps*, we are to *overcome*, and to prove overcomers *to the end*. We are not to say to ourselves; I cannot live as Jesus lived, even if I try ever so hard; what is the use of setting up so perfect a standard? But there *is* use in it; and we should earnestly strive to come as near as possible to that standard. By keeping this glorious Pattern ever before us, we shall be able to come much nearer perfection than if our standard was lower. We

must have no less than this perfect standard as our aim, if we expect to win the prize for which we have entered this race.

If Jesus had sinned and had come short in any way, it would have meant failure complete. He would never have had a resurrection. This was typified in the Jewish high priest when he passed under the veil with the blood. The high priest who had not followed every instruction of the Law in the offering of his sacrifices would have died under the veil. This was what Jesus feared in Gethsemane, when "He offered up strong crying and tears unto Him who was able to save Him out of [Greek *ek*] death" – not to save Him from *dying*, but to save Him *out of* death by *resurrection*. And the record is that He was heard and was strengthened, comforted. (Luke 22:39-45; Hebrews 5:7.) As soon as He had the Father's assurance that He had not violated any conditions, and that He would not go into eternal death, He was content to suffer any other experience that might come to Him.

OUR SYMPATHETIC HIGH PRIEST

From the fact that our High Priest was tempted and suffered, we may know that He is not one who is cold and indifferent. On the contrary, He is One who is full of sympathy, who has had the largest kind of experience. (Hebrews 2:18; 5:8.) If then, we have temptations, what must we do? We are to come to our great High Priest; and as we come to the Throne of Heavenly Grace, we may come with boldness (or, more properly translated, with courage, not doubting), knowing that the One who meets us there is fully able to sympathize with our every sorrow and need, and with our every temptation.

If we have not sinned wilfully, if our sins have been those of imperfection of the flesh through besetment, so that at the time we were not able to overcome and to control the flesh properly, we may come with courage, knowing that the Lord understands all about the weaknesses of our fallen human nature – He remembers

that we are but dust: (Psalm 103:13,14.) St. Paul says we cannot properly judge even ourselves as respects our own weaknesses. [R5586 : page 359] He says (1 Corinthians 4:3,4), "With me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you or of man's judgment; yea, I judge not mine own self;...but He that judgeth me is the Lord." He knows how to make all due allowance. Then let us not hesitate to come to Him in prayer, pleading His promises. Let us seek for the mercy of the Lord, knowing that we shall receive it, when we are truly striving to be faithful to Him.

Our Father knows *all about* these experiences we are having, and He made the provision for our covering. *He* provided succor from our difficulties, that we might come in as members of the Body of Christ, even though imperfect. He knows that we cannot fully control our imperfect bodies. But as we become stronger, we should be better able to control the mortal body. The new will should subjugate the old mind, and have better success in conquering the flesh. We must scrutinize ourselves and our progress; we should not be satisfied nor feel that we are proving overcomers, unless we can from time to time see growth in ourselves in Christlikeness and in ability to subdue the old nature with its impulses and tendencies.

No other arrangement would have been so good for us as the one the Lord has chosen. We have our weaknesses and imperfections charged up to us; but God has provided a way by which we can have them all forgiven, if they are unavoidable or if there has been no wilfulness connected with them. Any measure of wilfulness in a child of God requires expiation by stripes. If we judge – closely inspect or scrutinize – ourselves, our thoughts, words and actions, we shall require less judging and disciplining by the Lord to correct our faults. If we realize that we have been remiss in any way in keeping our vows, if we think that we have been lax in some particular at any time, it is helpful to impose some penalty upon ourselves that we shall *feel*. We should go to the Lord

in earnest prayer, asking forgiveness, and promising Him by His grace to strive to be more watchful in the future. **[R5586 : page 360]** We should *daily* scrutinize ourselves along this line, and never lightly pass over any failure.

How precious and comforting the realization that our merciful High Priest is touched with the feeling of our infirmities! We should never, however, relax our vigilance because of this knowledge, or take any advantage of His mercy. But we rejoice that we have a Mercy Seat to which we can go as soon as we are conscious of our inability to be all that we would, and rejoice to know that we shall not be turned away.

