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Holiness Writers

**TRIUMPHANT IN
TEMPTATION**

By

O. J. Finch

*“Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without
which no man shall see the Lord” Heb 12:14*

Spreading Scriptural Holiness to the World

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By

O. J. Finch, D.D.

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INTRODUCTION

Temptation is an experience common to Christians everywhere. These are days when the media of temptation are many and varied and the pressures of temptation unusually severe.

We are delighted that it has been possible to include this book by Dr. O. J. Finch in the series of youth books relating to the present-day questions and problems of young people. While this is not a new book, having appeared in another format for several years, yet it meets the growing needs of young people.

Dr. Finch, a leader of young people for many years, is well qualified to give guidance and help in this area of study. He has successfully combined the scriptural and theological implications of temptation with the psychological and philosophical data which confront young people today. He has brought all of this to us in everyday words, so that none need lose his way. He has made his subject live so that it is fresh and new, relating itself to our individual problems in a way that is practical and helpful.

Lauriston J. Du Bois

General N.Y.P.S. Secretary

TRIUMPHANT IN TEMPTATION

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Chapter One The Temptation of Jesus

The temptation of Jesus Christ was inescapable. So unavoidable is temptation to the inhabitants of earth that even the King of Glory, when clothed in human flesh, could not avoid its unholy touch. God cannot be tempted, but Jesus — God incarnate — could not hope to escape temptation, for temptation is the common experience of humanity. Whether we be rich or poor, young or old, ill or well, king or peasant, saint or sinner, temptation is one experience which none escapes. The kinship of all humanity is manifest in the fact of temptation. And through the temptation of Jesus the intimate relationship between the "only begotten of the Father" and the weary sons of fallen Adam is graphically portrayed.

That Christ and Satan should meet was inevitable. Satan had assumed the leadership of men and Christ had come to challenge that authority of Satan over the inhabitants of the earth. Their meeting was by no means accidental and certainly it could not have been avoided. The leader of the cohorts of evil and the Captain of the hosts of righteousness must of necessity come face to face upon the battlefields of this earth. The age-old promise to the sons of men was that a Deliverer should come. And from the song announcing His birth until the moment of His death, Christ was taking certain and progressive steps which led to the final victorious cry, "It is finished."

A REAL TEMPTATION

The report of Christ's temptation in the wilderness is given us in three of the four Gospels, namely, Matthew, Mark, and Luke. This record is a definite and historical account of actual events. There is not the slightest indication of mere parabolic teaching. Christ and Satan are each described in like terms of reality. The temptation of Christ is portrayed in just as definite and straightforward language as is His baptism at Jordan.

The constant endeavor of Satan has ever been to avoid an open manifestation of himself and of his real objective. It is interesting to note in this instance that Christ was led by the Spirit into this desert and that Satan did not select the place for their engagement. Jesus was brought here for the express purpose of engaging in this conflict. Doubtless, this was the first time that Satan had come to Him face to face and, so far as we have any record, he never did again. It is true that he later approached Christ through others. He came through the Apostle Peter when that apostle unknowingly besought Jesus to depart from the will of God. He came through the hypocritical kiss of Judas. He inspired the injustice of the trial judge, Pilate. He was the real executioner on the day of the Crucifixion. But after the temptation in the wilderness was complete, Satan, both in his dealings with Christ and with His children, resorted once more to his undercover tactics. However, the record of this single instance of Satan's open approach to Jesus is sufficient to strengthen the heart of the weakest saint and to give guidance to every Christian in the hour of his own testing.

"Could Christ have sinned?" This is the age-old question to which one may properly answer both, "Yes," and, "No." Christ, through His incarnation, assumed the form and flesh of humanity and, as a result, also accepted the possibility of His own temptation. As God, He could not even be tempted, for God is above temptation as the beasts are below it. But as man, He had no exemption from the wiles of the tempter. He could have sinned in His hour of temptation. Otherwise, His temptation was not genuine. Unless He could have sinned, His victory over the tempter cannot possibly be a means of comfort or strength to us. Real temptation involves the ability to choose, and to do, either right or wrong. Both the first and the last Adam had natures which were capable of not sinning, but neither had a nature that was incapable of sinning. Because He was truly tempted and unquestionably triumphant, He becomes the glorious Leader of His people and gives to them a hope of final victory.

However, it was morally impossible that Christ should have sinned. He could not have sinned and at the same time have proved true to His own character. Because of His immovable loyalty to truth and righteousness we are assured that He will never choose evil. Because of the strength of holy character and the close relationship between himself and the Father we may ever be confident that He will always do right. In our world, darkness endeavors to blot out the light, evil would triumph over good, and Satan would defeat Christ. Can they accomplish these ends? Never! For light is stronger than darkness. Good is more powerful than evil. God is superior to Satan. The Son of God can command the tempter to depart from Him and, as a result of that simple directive, the bold and presumptuous Satan slinks away, leaving Him to receive the felicitations of the angels as He stands gloriously victorious upon the battlefield of earthly life.

The sufferings of Christ in this hour of temptation are further testimony to the reality of this engagement. For did not Christ suffer in the wilderness as others would have done? Yes, and infinitely more! The depth of one's suffering is determined by the sensitivity of his soul. Facing the same tests, some men naturally suffer more than others. There are circumstances in which the learned man may suffer more than the unlearned. Frequently the sensitive soul of the poet causes him to suffer more than does the practical and calculating mathematician. The commanding officer suffers more in the army's defeat than does the average soldier. The Creator of man and Lord of life must have suffered more intensely than any of His creatures.

Until Christ came, no one had ever proposed such relentless opposition to Satan's assumed leadership in this world. No other inhabitant of earth had such high ideals. In none other was the element of self-will and of personal desire so entirely abnegated. None other had sought so consistently ever to keep in the center of the Father's will. By the very compass of His manhood, by the dignity of His divine personage, by the full understanding of the significance of His temptation, and by the ignominy of having the archfiend of hell actually endeavoring to entice the Lord of heaven to do evil, Jesus' sufferings necessarily went far beyond the limits of that which others can possibly endure. But the boundlessness of His suffering in temptation only binds Him closer to our hearts, causes us to feel a real kinship with the Lord of life, makes us to better understand His infinite love, and enables us to find in Him unfailing solace and strength.

THE PURPOSE OF TEMPTATION

There is a dual purpose in all temptation — the intent of Satan and the plan of God. The intent of Satan is the destruction of the tempted. One purpose of God in permitting temptation is the demonstration of the strength of holy character and the certainty of His keeping power. Another purpose of God is the building of strong men and women in a world of weakness. The Christian who is successful in the hour of temptation is strengthened in his character as is the fiber of the oak by the mercilessness of the unfriendly storm. Inasmuch as Christ was tempted, we may well understand that for us there is no escape from temptation. And inasmuch as He is the incarnate Son of God, the record of His temptation, and especially that of His victory in the hour of temptation, is infinite in its significance, enlightening in its instruction, and glorious in its ultimate benefit to His disciples.

That the Master should be tempted of Satan was inevitable. But to us it seems unthinkable that the only Begotten of the Father should be "led up of the spirit" to the place of temptation. However, as we come to a realization of the true purpose of His temptation, our amazement is eclipsed by our gratitude.

The ultimate purpose of the Father, in permitting His beloved Son to be tempted, is the final defeat of Satan and the eternal salvation of the saint. It was on the cross that Christ paid the price of our redemption. But it was in His temptation that He made possible the bestowal of a calm assurance and a comforting strength to the minds and hearts of His tried disciples. For certain essential facts must be unquestionably established if the necessary assurance and strength are to be definitely implanted within the hearts of His followers. Therefore, God allowed His Son to face sore temptation that He might ever be able to succor the tempted and that the force of certain vitalizing truths might be lastingly demonstrated.

Three facts are central in divine revelation, namely, (1) God only is to be feared and served; (2) Satan and sin are not irresistible; and (3) Spirit-filled men are thereby equipped to live triumphantly in this world. These great principles are eternally underscored in the record of Christ's temptation. The demonstration of their truth is sufficient cause for the Spirit to lead Jesus to the place of temptation. Disregard of their vital import is sufficient cause for the everlasting punishment of the unrighteous. A true respect for their worth makes possible victorious living and triumphant dying. So important are these three facts that they should be indelibly written upon our minds, lastingly engraved within our hearts, and invariably followed in the practices of our daily lives.

CHRIST MEETING TEMPTATION

The humanity of Christ was the basis of His temptation. The Apostle John, who in his Gospel emphasized the deity of Christ, does not even record the incident. But holy character does not exempt one from temptation. Neither is an inward bias to evil essential to temptation. Many are confused at this point. They fail to distinguish the difference between temptation and sin. They fear that theirs must be an evil heart or they would feel no temptation. But it is readily apparent to anyone who has studied the temptation of Christ that an evil heart is not an essential element in temptation. Adam, perfect from the creative hand of God, and Jesus Christ, the sinless One, were both tempted. One was defeated and the Other was gloriously victorious, but in neither was there an evil heart prior

to that temptation. We must ever remember that the tempter may, and often does, appeal to that which is best within us. Frequently men are tempted, as was Jesus, to satisfy lawful appetites or to accomplish lawful ends in an unlawful and improper way.

Christ was tempted, not only in His humanity, but also in His representative capacity. Hence, in whatever He overcame, we through His grace may also triumph. If we walk in His footsteps, we can ascend to the Eternal City by the rock-hewn stairs which His victories have quarried.

Inasmuch as Christ was tempted as a human being and in His representative capacity, He dared use no strength that is not available unto all men. In His victories over Satan, He forecast the victorious life of His disciples and demonstrated effectively the untold possibilities that lie before every sincere Christian. If He had resorted to means of strength beyond our reach, His temptations would have been to us but a mockery. If He had availed himself of weapons which are not ours to use, then would mankind have despaired of ever living "soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." But because He used weapons that are also at our command, availed himself of the strength that we may have, and resorted to no means beyond the reach of the weakest saint, His temptation is to us at once a source of comfort, courage, and strength. His success in the hour of temptation becomes a challenge to every Christian to "go, and do thou likewise.

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Chapter Two The Tempter Unmasked

In the temptation of the wilderness, Christ, before an onlooking universe, unmasked the tempter. For this purpose He had been led of the Spirit to this place. In this desert, where there was none other through whom the devil might work, he personally faced our Lord and tempted Him. As a result we, through a careful reading of the record of these temptations, may get an accurate picture of the tempter of Jesus and all mankind. Thoughtful consideration of this record gives us an unveiled view of Satan as he desperately endeavors to accomplish his deadly purpose. And we realize, as never before, the danger of yielding to him in the day of our own testing. Through this temptation Christ effectively revealed to all of His followers the fact of Satan's personality, the deadly purpose of Satan's temptations, and the subtle manner in which Satan operates.

THE PERSONALITY OF SATAN

To Jesus Christ, the tempter had as distinct personality as himself. Some men are content to speak of Satan as an abstract idea, a mere quality, a blind force, and even a negation. But Christ met a being who was endowed with consciousness, will, and purpose. He met one who, of his own volition, lives only in and for sin.

Satan is recognized in the Scriptures as a personality. He is so presented in the record of the temptation of Job. In the account of Christ's temptations, Satan is described as one having personality in just as definite sense as the Master himself. And Saint Paul testifies that he was commissioned to deliver the people from the "power of Satan."

Human history also establishes the fact of such a being. The evils of humanity can be explained only by the recognition of such a foul spirit. Unthinkable as it may seem, there is every evidence of the presence of an evil being in our world who has set himself to the task of blinding the eyes and inflaming the passions of men. Evil cannot be a natural product of God's humanity.

Neither can the being of Satan be explained away by stating that there is no reality in the spirit realm, for we know that the spirit is more lastingly real than the physical. God cannot be felt by human hand, but He is eternally real. The spirit of man cannot be seen by the physical eye, but when our bodies will have decayed and this world will have gone into disintegrated ruin the spirit in man will still live.

Temptation is inescapable to man and in temptation we are faced by an evil being who is motivated by a passion to destroy, who is experienced in the art of deception, and who is accomplished in the methods of damnation. Satan and every human being shall surely meet. There is no exemption for either the saint or the sinner, and our only hope of eternal salvation is that we be successful in the day of our engagement.

SATAN IS AN ENEMY

First, he is an enemy which we as human beings must meet. He is our enemy because his goal is our destruction. He enticed Adam and Eve to eat of the forbidden fruit. He did not care whether or not they were being mistreated by God, whom he charged with being unfair to them. He was not endeavoring to be good to them. He was seeking their destruction. Likewise, Satan was not solicitous of the Master's well-being when he sympathized with Him in the hour of His hunger. He was, through an apparently sympathetic approach, seeking His confidence and later His destruction.

Satan is an enemy who, even in the remotest corner of the earth, is ever "seeking whom he may devour." He entices the beautiful young maid with glamorous pleasure. He sketches for the noble youth fair scenes of the benefits of great riches. He holds fame, rank, and power before the eyes of those in mid-life. He covers evil and uncleanness with pastel shades. He invites the multitudes to turn through apparently beautiful gates into his deadly avenues. He gives fair names to selfishness and jealousy and urges men to push forward with haste and without consideration along the courses which are indicated by these burning and evil passions. His single objective and his continuous endeavor is our destruction.

Second, he is an enemy who, through carnality, has a mighty grip on humanity. The carnal mind is the masterpiece of man's archenemy. God, our Creator and our Redeemer, is the one true Friend of man; but "the carnal mind is enmity against God." In the carnal mind, Satan has placed in the heart of man a ruler which is the very essence of rebellion against God. The carnal mind is Satan's Trojan horse in the citadel of the soul. The carnal mind is Satan's eternal ally within our breast. Satan has such a mighty grip on man, not because of his great strength, but because of the strength of carnality, which is his master product and his eternal ally.

Third, he is an enemy who will destroy us in an endless hell unless his clutches are broken. Satan has, through disobedience, charted his own course. In rebellion against God, he has fallen from heights of glory. As a result of his own choice, he is doomed to incarceration in the chains of eternal night. For him and for his angels hell was made necessary. If Satan will go so far in tempting Christ, in whom he has not the ally of carnality, what are the extreme lengths to which he will go in his endeavor to enlist man, who is both the habitat and the slave of the carnal mind?

In the temptation and in the crucifixion of Christ we see sin with its coat off and with its sleeves rolled up. Here, in an endeavor to destroy the Holy One of God, we see sin engaged in its deadly and destructive business. The end of carnality and the purpose of Satan are to make of every human being a hated and miserable co-inhabitant of hell.

THE LIMITATIONS OF SATAN

Satan is a spirit, but he is not omniscient. Satan is crafty, but he is not all-wise. Satan is powerful, but he is not omnipotent. Satan has definite limitations, and at least three of his limitations are revealed in his temptations of Christ.

The first limitation of Satan, which appears as we study these scriptures, is his misconception of human life. Many scriptures evidence to us that Satan believes that man's happiness consists in the satisfaction of the demands of his physical nature. In approaching Christ, he laid emphasis upon His hunger. To Satan an empty stomach was sufficient cause for Jesus Christ to forsake the Father. In tempting Adam and Eve, Satan displayed this same misconception. He spoke of God's restrictions and told them that their happiness could not be complete until, ignoring God's requirements, they partook of the forbidden fruit. In accusing Job before God, Satan gave him no credit for integrity of purpose nor soundness of character. On the contrary, he charged that Job was righteous and pious only because his every material desire was granted by God.

It seems strange that Satan should have known the patriarchs, the martyrs, and the saints of all the past generations and still not know that it takes more than material things to satisfy a human being. It seems strange that he later should have witnessed the soul bliss of a Brother Lawrence and not have discovered that God's presence is ample compensation for the absence of material things. It seems strange that he should have followed a David Livingstone to his final kneeling-place in the heart of Africa and not know that there is a challenge to man greater than the seeking of selfish ends. It seems strange that he should have listened to the songs of a Fanny Crosby and not have discovered that the heart of man is most enraptured by the visions of the eye of the soul. It seems strange that he should have known the godly of earth and not have come to realize that the great quest of man is for the "city... whose builder and maker is God." But as truly as no selfish person can understand the motives or manner of living of an unselfish person, so Satan, who fell for a price, cannot understand why all others will not depart from the paths of virtue and peace for a similar pittance.

Great is the confident strength that comes to the tempted soul who realizes that his tempter labors under such misconceptions. Satan's promises are but the idle prattle of one who claims to have diagnosed the need of every Christian, but who in reality has never understood a single one of us. His enticements, his promises, and his methods are based on premises that are false.

A second limitation of Satan is his poverty. The Scriptures tell us that the cattle on a thousand hills belong to God, but in no single place does His holy Word speak of the riches of Satan. Is it not significant that in the hour of Christ's hunger Satan brought no food? Is it not strange that he came not carrying trays filled with steaming and savory food? With what did he come to Christ in this hour of temptation? He came only with stones and promises. In fact, he came only with promises, for he called the Master's attention to the stones of the earth and promised bread as a reward for His willful disobedience. Let everyone, both young and old, remember that Satan gives no food, no riches, no satisfying portion of any kind. He merely calls attention to the cold material stones of earth and endeavors out of them to paint for us pictures of sublime satisfaction with his brush of lying promises.

Satan has nothing to give. In his own fall from the heights of glory into the abyss of iniquity he robbed himself of all that is worth while. He is like a dethroned and exiled monarch — his glory is gone. His followers trail him only to a certain and terrible doom. He is like one confined to the death row. He has been condemned and is now awaiting the day of his eternal execution. The humblest saint may sing that he is "the poorest of the poor," but he has infinite riches in comparison to the absolute poverty of his tempter.

A third limitation of Satan is his weakness — his inability to enforce his requirements. He cannot even tempt us without the permit of the Father. In the Book of Job it is definitely revealed that he came into the presence of God and accused Job of insincerity. God, knowing the fidelity of Job and being willing to demonstrate the rectitude of his heart, accepted the challenge and granted Satan permission, within certain specified limits, to afflict His servant. Without understanding the significance of it all, Job was being used to demonstrate to an entire universe the fact that man with God is stronger than any foe. God also, through His faithful servant Job, effectively declared that "rich is the reward of the saint who stands true in the hour of trouble."

Satan is powerless in the face of one who is set to do the will of God. After Christ had been taken to the very pinnacle of the Temple, Satan still could not force Him off that elevation. Why did he not push Him off? Simply because he has no such right nor power. The strength of Satan is the strength of argument. The power of our tempter is his power to persuade us. An authoritative voice necessitates sufficient strength to enforce his requirement. Satan has no such power. Rulers of earth may speak and their subjects must obey, but Satan can only entice, argue, or threaten. He cannot even touch us without the permission of the Father.

Frequently military leaders have been sadly awakened by the fact that they have sorely underestimated the strength of their enemy, but Christians have oftentimes overestimated the strength of Satan. In the face of an emphatic "No," even if it be from a mere child, Satan is impotent. So weak is he that he can ever be turned back by the human will. Surely it is acknowledged that he has been the master of masses of people in every generation. Certainly it is admitted that thousands of good people have fallen his prey. Of course it has often been demonstrated that he is accomplished in his wiles of deceit and destruction, and too frequently have Christians turned from the pathways of peace and virtue at his behest. But we do not admit that, in as much as one single instance, this acquiescence has been necessary.

Sin and Satan are not so strong as they have been portrayed. They are not irresistible. Before them, and without the strength of God's presence, the natural man is well-nigh helpless. But there is a type of manhood and womanhood, thanks be to our glorious Redeemer, sufficiently strong to triumph over sin and Satan on any battlefield.

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Chapter Three Satan's Methods in Dealing with Men

We never know just where, or when, Satan will next appear. We can never become familiar with all of his methods. However, the apostle tells us that Christ "was in all points tempted like as we are." A study of the temptations of Jesus should, therefore, acquaint us with the purpose, with the general plan of approach, and with the choicest weapons of the tempter of men. And surely such information is of real worth as we face our arch foe in the everyday conflicts of life.

SATAN'S ENDEAVOR

A true understanding of Satan's objective is essential if we are to have any adequate knowledge of his methods. The desire of Satan in tempting Jesus was to disrupt the entire redemptive program. His purpose then, as it is yet today, was to defeat God. His plan was to destroy humanity in the endless hell which had been prepared for himself. And the ultimate end of his program was to engulf the entire universe in hopeless chaos.

In an endeavor to accomplish these diabolical ends, the devil exerted himself to the utmost in his temptation of Jesus Christ. However, even though his desires were thus far reaching and though his greatest strength was exerted to its very extremity, his methods were simple. He made his every effort to hinge upon one pivotal point and that was to get Christ, independent of the Father's will, to act of His own will and volition.

If Jesus could have been induced to step aside from the will of the Father, then the redemption of man could never have been accomplished. Thus it becomes increasingly evident that Satan's purpose was destruction. He would disrupt God's plan for the spiritual rehabilitation of man. He would bring to this world an eternal blackout of all that is good. And that he might accomplish this, he endeavored to get the Saviour to ignore the plan of the Father and to chart a course for himself. Herein, also, is the revelation of the basis of security of every Christian and of Satan's purpose in his dealings with man. Our fondest Christian hopes can be realized only through a careful observance of His will. But the constant plan and continued endeavor of Satan is to get us to depart therefrom. A careful study of Satan's dealings with Adam, Job, Christ, and ourselves will effectively demonstrate this to be true.

Satan's goal is destruction. It was so with Adam and Eve. It was so with Job. It was so with Christ. It is likewise true in the approaches which he makes unto us today. To him the means is not of particular importance. He cares not how our downfall is accomplished. His persistent attempt is to secure our destruction and to bring about our lasting despair. He may induce us to become neglectful in our prayer life, to become careless in our service, to give less than "tithes and offerings," to loosen our grip upon the true standards of life, to take a wrong attitude toward a fellow being, or to seek

apparently proper ends through the use of positively wrong methods. But the design back of it all is the destruction of our life and of our influence and the final damnation of our eternal spirit.

APPEALING TO AN APPARENT WEAKNESS

First, Satan made his attack at the point of Christ's weakness. Jesus was hungry. After having fasted for forty days, He could not have been otherwise. The Scriptures emphasize this fact. There is no question but that His physical being craved food. Therefore, this naturally appears to be the most strategic point of attack. One of the choice strategies in all aggression is to locate the point of weakness of the one who is being attacked.

In this instance this point of weakness provided not only a very plausible, but also a very subtle, place of approach. For hunger is a legitimate appetite and craving. It provides a battleground that has proved to be confusing to the devil's prey throughout all the ages.

However, the concern of the diabolical heart of Satan was not that Christ should have food. He was not nearly so much interested in fair play as he would have the Master believe. His heart was not breaking over Christ's hunger. He had but one concern and that was to induce the Son of God to become disobedient. Herein is one invariable fact as regards temptation. This is one thing that all should remember relative to our tempter. He ever comes to us promising good, but he never comes to us planning that which is for our well-being. By making that which is contrary to His will appear to be definitely advantageous to us, Satan would cause us to become impatient with and disobedient to God and the truth and thus bring about our destruction.

DANGER IN STRENGTH

Having failed in his attack at the point of Christ's weakness, Satan then approached at the point of His evident strength. In repulsing Satan in the moment of his first attempt, Christ made use of the Word. His reply was, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." In giving this quotation from the Scriptures, Christ evidenced an unwavering faith in the Father, a definite assurance as regards His own sonship, and a persistent confidence that "God's way is the best way." This faith prevailed despite Satan's seed of doubt which was planted in the form of a question, "If thou be the Son of God." Satan's strong desire was that this seed of doubt might fall in fertile soil and that it might bring forth an abundant harvest of disobedience and destruction.

Satan was doomed to disappointment, for that seed of doubt never brought forth the desired fruitage. The tempter was defeated and that defeat was accomplished by the quotation of a brief passage of scripture. By the use of the simple statement from the Word, Christ effectively declared His continued faith in the Father, His lasting assurance as regards the reality of His own sonship, His positive delight in doing the bidding of the Spirit regardless of any personal sacrifice that might be attached thereto, and His implicit confidence in the truth and trustworthiness of the Scriptures. Satan's hopes could never be realized so long as He was thus consistent in His faith and obedience. In His victory over the tempter, the Word was the instrument of His choice and faith was the basis of His conquest.

Therefore, Christ's tempter came on the second occasion with a very different form of temptation. He had evidently decided that, if faith was to be the Master's basic weapon, it would be most effective to get Him to use this instrument in a wrong manner. Thus, the devil made his second attempt at the point of the Master's demonstrated strength — His faith. He endeavored to induce the Christ to prove His faith through the use of the sensational and of the heroic.

Consequently, we read of the subtle endeavor apparently to bolster but actually to destroy the faith of Christ. Satan took Him to Jerusalem — the Holy City. He took the Lord to the Temple — the house of God. He took Him to the pinnacle of the Temple — the point of elevation and of vision. And from that inspiring height, Satan made a most careful approach. This time he quoted the scripture. In his endeavor to get the Lord to depart from the true pathway, he reminded Christ of the Father's watchfulness and tender care by quoting these words from the Psalmist, "He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone." Thus, in this holy environment and with these assuring words, he endeavored to push the Christ outside the citadel of faith and into the quagmires of presumption.

However, Jesus well understood that experiment is the fruitage of doubt and not of faith. A wife does not have her husband shadowed because of her confidence. It is rather the evidence of her doubts and fears. Jesus had, in the first temptation, most effectively demonstrated His faith. To jump from the pinnacle of the Temple under such circumstances as these would be a demonstration of self-will rather than an act of faith. It was a good and dependable promise that Satan had used, and had the Father bidden Him jump, Jesus could and would have done so with the most implicit confidence and with the utmost safety. But He understood that there is deadly danger in the isolating of any passage of the Sacred Word and giving it a meaning other than that which was intended. Even so great a promise as Satan had quoted will not avail if one steps outside the will of God to test it. Therefore, He answered this wrong interpretation of one passage by properly using another statement from the Word — "It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." Jesus was definitely conscious of the fact that such an act as Satan had suggested would have been the greatest disobedience and the most foolhardy presumption.

It is true that Satan had taken Jesus to the Holy City, to the Temple, and to the pinnacle of that Temple, and from that point had cited a precious promise from the Word. However, he had not done this in a sincere endeavor to really strengthen the faith of Jesus. Rather, it was his desperate and subtle endeavor to get Jesus, through a demonstration of heroics, to become disobedient. This is but another instance which emphasizes the fact that Satan is never interested in our welfare, but is always anxious to bring about our disobedience and our downfall.

THE RUIN OF INFLUENCE ATTEMPTED

Having failed at the point of Christ's weakness and at the point of His strength, Satan then endeavored to ruin Jesus in the sphere of His mission and service. This seemed to be the one remaining logical point of approach. In fact, this was the vital spot. This third approach was made directly at the very point that he had endeavored to reach by the two previous attempts. His desire was to make ineffective Christ's mission and to nullify His service. Consequently, having so utterly

failed in His more indirect approaches, he now boldly endeavored to ruin Him in this vital sphere and to defeat God in His plan to fully redeem mankind.

He then took Jesus to the mountain peak of vision. He showed Him the world. He claimed it as his own. He pictured humanity as an easy prey and as a possible merchandise. But Jesus, from beside the throne of God, had already viewed this scene and had been impressed with the ruin and the helplessness of men. Before coming to this world, He had viewed man from a higher and a better vantage point. Because of His more complete vision, He had laid aside His celestial robes and had clothed himself with the form and flesh of the beings whom He would rescue.

Satan held before Him the idea of man's obeisance rather than of man's redemption, personal transformation, and eternal salvation. He would have the Master follow the mirage of apparent results. But Jesus chose rather to continue steadfast in His worship of the Father and in His fulfillment of the redemptive task which had been assigned Him. Satan emphasized to Christ that this nominal following could be had en masse and that it could be gained by a short cut, a way much easier than the obedience of the Cross.

However, Jesus belonged not to the group that seeks results regardless of the method. With Christ there is an everlasting relationship between worship and service. The primary purpose of His life was not to seek results and to make a sensational showing, but to do the will of the Father. The Father's will included His hunger, His temptation, His suffering, and His death. But through this sacrifice He was to make possible an acceptable relationship between God and man. The very purpose of His earthly life was that through His obedience, which included self-denial, suffering, and death, He should become the glorious Redeemer of a lost race. Therefore, He refused to yield to cheaper methods and to be content with the lesser results.

However, it must not be forgotten that there was a difference between Satan's real desire and his apparent endeavor. He was never interested in having the multitudes bow to the Christ. He was only using this deceptive means in his real endeavor to ruin the effectiveness of the Master's life and service. It is both interesting and profitable to note how Satan still clings to these same methods as he tempts the followers of Jesus. When he fails to get a Christian to return to gross sin, or when he finds it is impossible to push him on into the sphere of the fanaticism of heroics, how often has he caused good men and women to do some foolish thing that forever ruins the effectiveness of their influence and of their labors!

Any careful review of Satan's methods in dealing with Christ and with men emphasizes a bit more definitely the three great principles which God is ever endeavoring to teach us, namely, that God only is to be feared and served, that Satan and sin are not irresistible, and that Spirit-filled men are thereby equipped to live triumphantly.

TRIUMPHANT IN TEMPTATION

By

O. J. Finch, D.D.

Chapter Four Some Master Weapons of Satan

Occasionally an individual may be heard to state that he has lived a long time and that he has learned the tricks of the tempter. Whenever such a statement is made, the blood of any understanding disciple of Christ is invariably chilled. For no one has such knowledge. However, there are certain weapons which are used repeatedly. They were used against Christ and they have been used against His disciples. Some of these weapons will be specified in the following pages. However, everyone should remember that we never have any positive knowledge of the place nor of the manner of Satan's next attack.

DOUBT

The first weapon which he used against Christ was doubt. He endeavored to instill doubt into the heart and mind of Christ as regards His relationship with the Father. There is special significance in the fact that the temptation of Christ followed immediately after His baptism. At the time of His baptism by John, the Holy Spirit descended upon Christ in the form of a dove and there spake a voice saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (Incidentally, the coming of the Holy Spirit to any person is the choicest evidence of the Father's good pleasure.) With that confident, comforting, and strengthening assurance, Christ went to the wilderness of temptation. But when Christ had fasted forty days, Satan came with his oft-repeated "if." "If thou be the Son of God," is Satan's choicest question. It is the seed which he so often plants and which has repeatedly brought forth the bountiful harvest of distrust and disobedience. "If Thou be the Son of God, why are You hungry?" "If Thou be the Son of God, why are You not cared for?" "Will You not question this relationship with the Father?" "Do You not have reason to believe that the Father cares not for You?" These are the direct or implied questions which the devil presented to Jesus. They are the oft-repeated, and the too frequently effective, questions which he presents to the Christian. The single purpose of these questions was to cause Christ then, and us today, to doubt the definiteness of our relationship with God.

Satan would also cause Christ to doubt His Father's goodness. He had used this method before. The serpent approached Eve in the Garden of Eden and suggested that God was seeking His own welfare and their disadvantage through the restrictions which had been placed upon them. He caused her to feel that God's restraint upon them was a demonstration of His selfishness rather than of a love that sought only their well-being. Satan laid his hand upon Job, but he did so in such manner as to cause Job's afflictions to appear to be providential. And finally, using the lips of Job's wife as his own mouthpiece, Satan urged Job to curse God and die. Therefore, it is not surprising that he came to Jesus with this subtle suggestion that God is not good and that He cares not for His suffering Son.

We should ever remember that God has never made man, even the Christian man or woman, exempt from hardship any more than He exempts the tree from the furies of the storm. Our tempter,

in all probability, not only realizes this fact but also knows the worth of hardship to us. Nevertheless, it has furnished for him an effective and oft-used weapon — an entering wedge of doubt which has separated many a soul from God.

DECEIT

Second, Satan is especially artful in the use of the weapon of deceit. There are three deceptions that Satan has used most frequently in his temptations. All three of these are evidenced in his temptation of Christ and in his temptation of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.

It is interesting to notice that Satan almost invariably emphasizes the need of the physical. He called Christ's attention to His forty days of fasting and to His need of food. The implication was that soon He would die of hunger and that dead people could not accomplish worthy ends. To Eve he showed the fruit of the forbidden tree. He indicated to her that it was good to eat. Legion are they who have been induced to do wrong because they have been enticed to give primary attention to the needs, or desires, of their physical being. At the behest of Satan, multitudes have ignored the truest spiritual values and have gone to extreme lengths to satisfy their physical cravings.

Again, the enemy of souls always magnifies the benefits of evil. Not once did he intimate to Eve the tragic results, to be multiplied throughout all future ages, of her one act of disobedience. Never once did he even intimate to Jesus that a single bite of food, in the circumstances in which it would be taken, could demoralize a universe. On no single occasion has the devil ever warned us of the dangers of disobedience. Always does he cleverly conceal his purpose and, with his lying arguments, magnify the benefits of evil. Thus he endeavors to induce us to do that which is wrong.

Also, Satan ever minimizes the blessings of godliness. No true man can have a proper conception of the real privileges of the Christian, the benefits of obedience, or the rewards of righteousness, and still continue in sin. Therefore, Satan has blinded the eyes of men to the real advantages of godliness. The rich young ruler rejected Christ because he gave more consideration to the price than to the benefits of serving Him. He thus became the type of the multitudes of men and women who likewise go away sorrowfully. Satan would make all men feel that the price of serving God is far too great and the benefit is entirely too small.

The safety of man is dependent upon keeping a true sense of direction in this matter. Our safety is increased in proportion to our careful regard for and observation of the apostle's exhortation: "Be not deceived — [do not allow yourself to be deceived or do not deceive yourself]; . . . for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Our eternal well-being is dependent upon a careful estimation of the unvarying worth of spiritual values and of a vigilant guard against the deception of our enemy.

CONFUSION

A third weapon which is repeatedly used by Satan is that of confusion. In Christ's sonship, as in all such relationships, there were both privileges and responsibilities. Jesus was in the wilderness in the Father's will. He was led there by the Spirit. He was there to do the Father's bidding. As a result He enjoyed, so long as He continued true in the fulfillment of His responsibilities, the

protection of the Father. In the heart of the Master there was an all-consuming desire to do the Father's will. So definite was this desire that He was perfectly willing to forego any comfort in order that He might acceptably finish the task which had been assigned Him.

Satan's plan to defeat God could succeed only if he were able to keep Christ from the fulfillment of the Father's purpose. Therefore, when doubt and deceit had failed, he resorted to confusion. He endeavored to confuse Jesus as regards His responsibilities and His privileges. He suggested that it was impossible for Him to be the Son of God and at the same time be allowed to go hungry. In that moment Satan's success was assured and Christ's failure certain if Jesus could be induced to forget His obligation as the Son and think only of the Father's responsibility to Him.

This writer at one time pastored a young lady of the very finest type of Christian character, who had lived for seven years in the most dreadfully darkening and depressing fear as a result of such confusion. There were problems in her home life. There were problems in the relationships between certain members of the family. There were problems incidental to serious economic losses. Satan had her confused over these things. He had caused her to think largely upon her privileges as a child of God and to forget her responsibilities as a servant of God. She had not so learned of God's will and of His promised presence in every state of life as to be able to say with the apostle that she had learned to be content in whatsoever state she found herself. She had failed to realize that service rendered is the true measure of life. She had forgotten Joseph, Job, and Christ. She had not seen the glory of being tempted and of proving true in the day of temptation. She had not experienced the joy that is the fruitage of the true Christian life which is lived amid the trying circumstances of this world. She had dwell only upon what she felt should be her privileges and had forgotten her responsibilities.

Joseph, when he was tempted to do evil, said, "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" Joseph thought of God. Joseph thought of the trust of his master. Joseph was reminded of his own character. To yield in that moment of temptation would have been to fail God and his master. It also meant that he must do that which is contrary to the requirements of sound moral character. He looked upon his privileges and saw that with them there came a responsibility for him to live a certain type of life. His later advancement, service, and rewards were made possible by his having an eye single to the fulfillment of the responsibilities of a true man.

NECESSITY

A fourth instrument of Satan is that of necessity. How often has man done that which is wrong and then defended himself by saying, "I knew it was not right, but I was forced into it"! In the wilderness Satan held before Christ the apparent necessity of eating. On the pinnacle of the Temple the devil would have Him believe that He could do nothing else but jump. And on the mountain-top he wanted Him to think only of the urgency of getting the acclaim of man. But Jesus, ever conscious of His obligation to be obedient unto the will of the Father, said in effect, "I am not obliged to eat, but I am obligated to do His will." He, also, in effect said, "It is not imperative that I jump, for I can back away." Again, by His actions He said, "It is vitally important that men come to Me, but there is evil rather than necessity in your suggestion as to the manner through which I shall win them." Happy is the Christian who knows how to use his reverse gears. Many are the occasions when we

may find ourselves in that position when the only honorable and right thing to do is "back up." Many things that seem unavoidable are in reality positively unnecessary. And it is never necessary that we do wrong nor that we depart from His will for us.

PRESUMPTION

A fifth weapon of Satan is that of presumption. Christ would have presumed upon the love and providence of God had He jumped from the pinnacle of the Temple. We never need to resort to the spectacular and sensational in order to prove ourselves. The most effective way to demonstrate the presence and strength of holy character is to obey God, to live godly, and to refuse to do evil.

DISCOURAGEMENT

The sixth and final weapon to which we will call attention is that of discouragement. This was for Christ, as it ever is for man, a hidden approach. In no single attack of Satan was this especially apparent. Yet, in each temptation the element of discouragement was used with increased pressure. Discouragement and weariness are related. The slightest deviation from positive obedience is fruitful in its discouraging results. Christ did not become discouraged. His courage was the result of His high appreciation of the value of obedience, of His definite assurance of His sonship, of His confidence that the sunlight of the Father's love would break forth in all of its resplendent glory after the clouds of this conflict had passed, and of His sensitiveness to the fact that He was even then accomplishing the purposes of His life and being.

The conflicts of that hour were both real and testing, but His vision of the Father, as He sat upon the eternal throne, was also real and comforting. The "joy of the Lord," the consciousness of His concern for our well-being, the delight of living in the center of His will, the joyous fellowship of His presence, and the assurance of His love and protection have ever been abundant sources of strength to the Christian.

If one is to withstand the temptations of Satan and be strong in the face of his every weapon, the truth of the three vital facts which are so clearly portrayed in the record of Christ's temptation must ever impress itself upon him. Jesus succeeded in the hour of temptation because He recognized that God only is to be feared and served. He fully demonstrated that Satan and sin are not irresistible, and He unquestionably proved that the support of the Holy Spirit is sufficient for the tempted. Therefore He, upon His return to the right hand of the Father, sent the Holy Spirit, whose abiding presence in the heart of the sanctified is a sufficient source of guidance and strength to enable us to live victoriously in a world of sin, defeat, and sorrow.

TRIUMPHANT IN TEMPTATION

By

O. J. Finch, D.D.

Chapter Five

The Holy Spirit in the Life of the Tempted

Christ said to His disciples, "Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away. These were strange words to men whose every plan and hope had centered in Jesus Christ. However, as Jesus continued to speak, He indicated to them a higher privilege than they had thus far enjoyed and He said, "For if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you." For more than thirty years Christ had lived among men and had faced the tests and the problems which we face. Therefore, He well understood that without this Spirit man can only fail. For until the time of His own life and temptations no individual had proved sufficiently strong to invariably withstand the temptation of man's terrible foe. Christ, since His baptism and the anointing of the Holy Spirit, had peculiarly enjoyed the presence of the Spirit, had been conscious of the guidance of the Spirit, and had been successful in the tests of life through the assistance of the Spirit.

THE ANOINTING OF THE SPIRIT

The promise of Isaiah, as contained in the eleventh chapter and second verse of his prophecies, was: "And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord." This promise was fulfilled at the river Jordan, and the experience is described by St. Matthew as follows: "And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him." The sacred writer also indicates to us that with the coming of the Spirit there was a voice from heaven saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

The Holy Spirit did not come to Jesus to cleanse Him from sin. Christ had no need of such a cleansing experience. He was without sin either as a principle within His heart or as an act of His outward life. But the Holy Spirit did come upon Him as a divine subsidy for His human faculties. Herein lies the difference between His anointing and our baptism with the Holy Spirit. We need, as much as did He and more so, the assistance of the Holy Spirit in our daily life. But in addition to that, we must be cleansed from carnality, the seed of sin within our own hearts. Therefore, before the Spirit takes up His abode in the heart of man He must cleanse him from the principle of sin. After a man's heart is cleansed, there is then a very definite similarity between the work of the indwelling Spirit in Christ and in His disciples.

As Jesus departed into the wilderness He went with a definite realization of two great facts. First, He was certain of the presence of the Spirit. He went into the lonely and barren wilderness with the beasts. But He went with the consciousness of the fact that the Father was not far distant. He had received this strength-giving consciousness as only man can receive it, and that is through the presence of the Holy Spirit of God within His own heart.

The second fact which was so real to Him, and which would mean so much to Him in the days that were just ahead, was the assurance of His Father's good pleasure. He was heading for the wilderness of self-denial and temptation. But He was reveling in a peculiar joy because of the assurance of the Father's satisfaction with His Son. This consciousness gave Him a vital strength and heartening encouragement as He departed with the realization that He was on a mission with a definite purpose and with an eternal significance.

THE GUIDANCE OF THE SPIRIT

There can be no question as to the reason for Christ's going to the wilderness and to the place of temptation. It was not accidental. In the life of every person who is wholly devoted to the will of God and perfectly following His direction, there is nothing accidental. The presence of Christ in the wilderness and His temptation there were both within the will and the plan of the Father. The statements of the Scriptures are very definite at this point. Matthew does not say that Christ was led of the Spirit into the wilderness and, while there, accidentally met with Satan, but that He was "led . . . into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil." Mark says that He was "in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan." And Luke declares that He "was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, being forty days tempted of the devil."

Several facts become definitely apparent if one reads carefully these passages of scripture. Christ was led of the Spirit to the place of temptation. He was not tempted, as men so often are, because of some foolish and unwise move. He had neither foolishly nor willfully thrust himself into the place of temptation. The Spirit took Him there and was definitely real and of vital assistance to Him during the three temptations that are specifically recorded.

Some things of particular and significant interest are hereby indicated. It was in accordance with the will of the Father that Jesus Christ faced temptation. That would certainly indicate that a good man, even though he be living carefully, though he have a proper relationship with God, though he be indwelt by the Holy Spirit, cannot hope to escape temptation. If Christ's security in the day of His temptation was aided because of the fact that He was following the leadings of the Holy Spirit, it becomes readily apparent that our failure is too often due to the fact that we allow Satan to select the place of conflict. All mankind is called upon to live in situations which are far from ideal. All of us are in need of patience, courage, faith, persistence, and fortitude. Christ did not demand different circumstances and conditions amid which to live. He saw fine possibilities for righteous living and effective service in the unideal situations of everyday life. And like Him, both our peace and our security will be greatly aided in the day of temptation if we will but allow God to select the battleground.

THE ASSISTANCE OF THE SPIRIT

In each instance of temptation Jesus Christ made reply to His enemy. He depended largely upon the Scriptures. His interpretation of the passages which Satan used was perfect, and no finer choice of passages could have been made than those which He used in His reply to the devil. It seems evident that the Holy Spirit was of definite assistance to Him in this matter. His assistance is apparent in the interpretation of the scriptures quoted, in reminding Him of such apt passages, and

in suggesting to Him that which He should say and do. His promise to His disciples was that "the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." Christ, in this precious promise, was not only indicating to them that which He believed to be a fact, but was also testifying of that assistance which He had so definitely realized in His own life in this world. He left with us, in that statement, both a promise and a testimony.

The Comforter had also been to Him a vital source of assistance by means of the inner strength which is the continuous result of His abiding presence. The word comfort not only speaks of solace but of strength and fortitude. The name Comforter, applied to the Holy Spirit, is a strong name. The giving of comfort is the issuance of inner fortification against the crushing circumstances of life. Christ prayed that His people be sanctified — "Sanctify them." And He also prayed that they should be kept from evil — "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from evil." He well realized that the presence of the Holy Spirit, through the strength and assistance that He could give, would be to mankind the greatest source of protection against the onslaughts of the wicked one.

The presence of the Spirit was Christ's greatest source of assurance of ample strength and of needed assistance as He faced one temptation after another. In that wilderness He was tempted not only to depart from the Father's will but also to distrust His relationship with the Father. But the presence of the Holy Spirit was to Him the undeniable and ever-present evidence of His continued sonship. Happy is the arrangement whereby the Spirit's presence becomes to man the supreme evidence of his relationship with God. Emotions vary, moods are fleeting, circumstances change, the attitudes of others toward us are not dependable, but the presence of the abiding Spirit is both constant and comforting.

The presence of the Spirit also spoke of the Father's continued pleasure with Jesus. So long as He was conscious of the Spirit's presence He could distinctly hear those words which were spoken at the time of His anointing: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

The presence of the Spirit was truly Christ's source of sufficiency in the time of conflict. He was ever conscious of the might of God. He knew that the indwelling Spirit was to Him such a source of strength as to enable Him to do anything which, in the will of God, He would be asked to undertake. The Spirit's presence was to Jesus a constant reminder, not only that it was unnecessary for Him to fail, but also that He could succeed at any God-assigned task and could conquer any foe.

KEEPING IN THE FATHER'S WILL

Satan fully realized that so long as Jesus continued to do the will of the Father he was powerless. Therefore, in each of the three temptations, he endeavored to get Him to depart from the will of the Father. The secret of successful Christian living is the keeping of oneself in the will of God. And all failure finds its cause simply in a departure from the Father's will. Christ's success in the day of temptation did not necessitate a perfect knowledge of all that was involved in temptation. His remaining true to the trust of God did not necessitate a perfect knowledge of how to proceed in each circumstance that should arise. His fulfillment of the bidding of the Father did not necessitate infinite

strength on His part. There was just one thing needful, and that was that He ever remain in the will of the Father.

The secret of keeping in the Father's will is reliance upon the Holy Spirit for guidance and for strength. The Holy Spirit is the radio beam of the Christian Life Ways; for as certainly as the pilot, by the signals which he receives, understands whether he is to the left or the right of his true course, so definitely does the Holy Spirit make known to each disciple his position as regards the will of God. And any person who recognizes and obeys the voice of the Spirit has sufficient knowledge to enable him to be gloriously victorious in every engagement with the tempter.

This study of the secret of the Master's complete victory over the tempter would not be complete without a repetition of the three central facts which His temptation is intended to establish, namely, God only is to be feared and served; Satan and sin are not irresistible; and men and women who are filled with the Holy Spirit are thereby equipped to overcome on the battlefields of life.

TRIUMPHANT IN TEMPTATION

By

O. J. Finch, D.D.

Chapter Six

Some Personal Sources of Strength

Many are the fountains from which a strong character draws his strength. This was true of Jesus Christ and it is likewise true of all noble and strong men. Every man, in the building of his own character, lays the basis of his ultimate victory or defeat. And the strength of a man's character is determined by his reliance upon God and by his obedience to the divine law. Character is not only strong or weak as a result of vital relationship, or lack of such relationship, with God, but it also becomes a fountain from which the individual draws strength or weakness.

There is no phase of life in which the warning of the Psalmist, "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it," is more apt than as it applies to the building of character. Therefore, in order that we may be deeply impressed with the urgency of building sound moral character, and with not the least thought of detracting from the deity of our Lord nor from the value of His dependence upon the Father, we note some of the personal elements that were of untold assistance to Him in the day of His temptation.

A PROPER UNDERSTANDING OF HUMANITY

"Know thyself" is a maxim of greatest importance. Many an individual has failed in the tests of life merely because he did not understand himself. If a person believes himself to be the helpless prey of circumstance, he is thereby robbed of that stamina which is necessary if he is to face the tests of life with fortitude and courage.

Satan, our enemy, believes that man's happiness is dependent upon the satisfaction of the demands of his physical being. But Jesus Christ, our Lord, understands that a happy man is more than a fed animal. He knows that natural things do not form the true basis of genuine soul satisfaction. Because of his conception of human life, Satan besought Christ to forsake the Father who would permit Him to hunger for forty days. But Christ, because of His conviction that there are values greater than food, held steady, proved himself obedient, and received the continued approbation of the Father, which to Him was ample compensation for His sacrifice.

Man is essentially spirit. We live in a physical body, but we will continue a glorious life with God or a burning existence in hell long after these bodies will have been decayed. Happiness is something far greater than pleasure. Pleasure is contingent upon the favorable circumstances of life, but happiness is determined by a proper adjustment of the spirit life, a true knowledge of God, a proper relationship with Him, a genuine submission and an active obedience to His revealed will. Therefore, in the light of these facts, it is just as foolish for a human being to go to the "world" for soul satisfaction and happiness as for a man to go to a grove of cottonwood trees to gather black walnuts.

A true understanding of himself, a proper concept of His mission, and a genuine appreciation of those basic things which make for satisfactory living in this world were fountains from which Christ drew refreshing strength as He faced temptation in the burning desert. Such facts may seem to be so simple as to cause them to be inconsequential. But, if these fountains were so useful to our Lord, surely they are vitally necessary to us if we are to be victorious in the tests of life.

DEFINITE ASSURANCE OF RELATIONSHIP

We have previously made reference to the large place which the baptism at Jordan and the accompanying voice held in the Master's steadfastness under the pressure of temptation. But in any consideration of those personal elements which gave Him poise and strength, the assurance of His sonship must be listed. Such assurance is basic in all successful Christian living.

However comforting that initial experience at Jordan may have been, it was not sufficient to meet His needs throughout the wilderness temptation. Initial religious experiences are always precious in the memory of the Christian. But initial experiences are insufficient. There must ever be a present knowledge of our relationship with God and of His approbation upon our lives. The continuous presence of the Spirit was the Father's continuous and assuring voice to Jesus.

Christ, in commending Simon upon his confession of Him, placed a special premium upon that inner knowledge which is God-given. His statement was, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." In fact, Christ thereby said to Simon, "You do not believe in Me merely because you have seen, touched, or heard Me, but your assurance is the result of that inner relationship with the Father." In the very tone of His statement He indicates that such knowledge is of indisputable value to the Christian. The continuous, experiential relationship with God is the final demonstration of many comforting facts. It is that inner consciousness of such definite relationship which is so essential to steadfastness of faith or consistency in righteousness as one faces the conflicts of life.

A PROPER APPRECIATION OF THE SCRIPTURES

In the first temptation Satan besought Christ to break His fast and partake of food. Jesus made reply by quoting the following words from Deuteronomy: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." In the second temptation Jesus again used a statement from Deuteronomy. On this second occasion the tempter had taken a most assuring promise from the Psalms and isolated it in such manner as to make it appear perfectly safe to trust God and to disobey Him at one and the same time. Would that every professed follower of Christ, when tempted to do evil and at the same time presume upon God's mercy to keep him securely from the inevitable results of sin, might throw those words, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God," back into the face of his tempter.

Such wise and effective use of the Scriptures required a comprehensive knowledge of their content. Such breadth of knowledge of the Word indicates that Jesus had loved the sayings of the Father. Surely Jesus, as He was tempted in the wilderness, recognized that He was facing the chief foe of God and of man. Unquestionably He understood the eternal significance of their contest. With

such understanding of all that was involved, it would seem that He would most certainly select the deadliest of all weapons within His grasp. This weapon, when unveiled, was in each instance a simple statement from the unchanging verities of God.

Could the Psalmist have known how wise he actually was when he said, "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee"? If he understood so clearly in that ancient day the value of the Word as the strengthening agency of the soul, why are not all Christians of this day more careful and consistent in their reading of and meditation upon the Word of God?

THE SAFETY OF A FIXED HEART

Adam, who was made in the image of God and who was created free from the principle of sin, failed in the time of his temptation. His failure, his sin, and all of the resultant blight upon himself and his seed could have been avoided if his heart had been fully fixed on fulfilling the requirements of God. Jesus came as the humble Servant and apparently with but one purpose and that was to do the bidding of the Father.

Neither difficulty nor apparent personal profit had any effect upon the Master. His heart was set to do the will of the Father. Suffering, crucifixion, and death were insufficient causes for Him to avoid Jerusalem when His going there was plainly in accordance with the Father's good pleasure for Him. The obeisance of all mankind could never compensate Christ for the frown of the Father. His heart was fixed. He would consider nothing less than fulfilling the complete and perfect will of God.

No man can consistently be outwardly that which he is not within his own heart. Daniel has been the hero of both young and old all through the centuries. He faced the temptations of the idolatrous court of the heathen king, but he never wavered from a consistent, godly life. For Daniel recognized a great moral fact and acted in accord therewith. He realized that it is unsafe to face the crises of life in indecision. Therefore, before actually facing the critical tests of life in this ancient court, "Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself." When the tests came his course was already determined. He did not need to decide what to do. That had already been settled.

With full understanding that a "fixed heart" is basic in the Christian life, God has made provision for such a transformation of character. Every Christian is called by both the Word and the Spirit to die to self and to consecrate himself wholly to God. To such a fully consecrated heart the Spirit will come. He will cleanse the consecrated heart from the principle of uncleanness. He will take up His abode in that heart and will continue to abide therein as long as this consecration is entire. A "fixed heart" is one that is wholly consecrated to God, that has been cleansed of the seed of unrighteousness, and that is indwelt by the Holy Spirit. In this dispensation it is possible for everyone to have such a heart and, as we face the temptations of life in this present world, we can hope to succeed only if our hearts are thus "fixed in God."

HUMANITY WITH GOD

In the final temptation of the wilderness, Jesus simply said to the tempter, "Get thee hence, Satan." It almost takes one's breath as he reads this statement for the first time. But the record is that, as a

result of that command, "The devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him." Why had Satan departed? It was the majesty of the Master's voice. But it must ever be remembered that these words came, not from the throne, but from the lips of One clothed in human flesh. The secret of Christ's command and of its effectiveness was the realization of a fact which none of us should ever forget, namely, that man with God is stronger than any foe.

St. Paul caught that vision and wrote to the Roman church, the church which above all others was tried by fire and death, and to them he said, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

If Christ had used any strength or any weapon that is not available unto us, then His success in temptation would be but mockery to us. But Christ used no weapon which we may not use and gained no victory from which we are shut away, and upon His departure Christ transferred to us the power which enabled Him to defeat the enemy of our souls.

TRIUMPHANT IN TEMPTATION

By

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Chapter Seven The Glory of Being Tempted

Three men recently stood in a great union station and, while awaiting the departure of their train, noticed the servicemen who passed. As representatives of the different branches of our armed forces approached, these men studied the markings which indicated their fields of activity and expressed appreciation for the service that they evidently had rendered.

A member of the Eighth Air Force who had been overseas for three years made his way to a departing train. Then came another who had been cited for service as a member of the Fifth Air Force. A naval officer approached who had been given recognition for his service in battle in both the Atlantic and the Pacific. A marine who had been cited for his service on Guadalcanal received especial attention. A soldier approached who wore numerous medals for marksmanship.

One of the trio queried, "Where has he been to have received all of those medals?"

Another, who had served with MacArthur's forces in the Southwest Pacific, replied, "Oh, he has never been outside the United States."

The glory of the militarist is that of having successfully served in the great centers of conflict. Likewise the glory of the Christian is that of having been tested in the furnaces of temptation and of trial.

CAUSE FOR REJOICING

"Count it all joy," writes the Apostle James, "when ye fall into divers temptation; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience." Temptation is no calamity. Tragedy may mark the end of any temptation. However, it need not, for the results of temptation, instead of being tragic, may be glorious. In his immortal song poem, Palmer has indicated both the tragedy of temptation and the cause thereof as he sings, "Yield not to temptation, for yielding is sin." Temptation, when yielded to, results in sin, and sin is the tragedy of earth.

Successful resistance of temptation defeats Satan, magnifies God, demonstrates the strength of a Spirit-filled man, enriches the life of the tempted, builds strong fiber into his character, causes him to revel in the joys of conquest, and makes him the recipient of the rewards of the righteous. It was Christ's faithfulness to the Father and His resistance of the devil that caused Satan's departure and that brought the angels with their comforting message. He knew the glory of being tempted.

OUR ASSURANCE OF VICTORY

"There hath no temptation taken you," writes St. Paul to the church in Corinth, "but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." In a simple word St. Paul tells all Christians, as well as the Corinthian disciples, that there is no need of failure in the tests of life.

St. Paul bases his comforting word upon the faithfulness of God. He indicates that God's faithfulness manifests itself in two ways. First, He is faithful in His limiting of the tempter. St. Paul believed that God would never allow any person to be tempted beyond that which he is able to stand. There is no other record in all human history that gives us such a clear picture of the background of temptation as that of the testing of Job. And one of the most significant facts of that record is that Satan was obliged to obtain permission from God before he could touch Job. When God granted the request, He gave no blanket permission. He established certain limits beyond which Satan might not go.

The Apostle Paul indicates another evidence of God's faithfulness. He assures us that for every temptation God makes a way for our escape. Since the fall of Adam death had reigned over man. But Jesus, who was Life incarnate, pushed out the end of the tomb. Since that day the Christian dies in peace and his beloved go to the tomb with both tears of sorrow and songs of joy. For Jesus has provided us a "way to escape" the clutches of death. This same Jesus, who "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" and who finally watched His tempter withdraw in defeat because of His simple command, has also opened for each of us a way to escape in the hour of temptation.

Of all the sons of men, who is better able to give such assuring testimony of God's faithfulness than St. Paul, who in writing to the Corinthians says: "Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren"? Is not St. Paul entitled to a hearing when he writes of the faithfulness of God? Should not our faith mount when such an individual is so fully convinced of God's keeping power that he writes, "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

The assurance of victory also comes in the very process of salvation. Jesus Christ came that men might be transformed. Christ not only saves from the guilt and inbeing of sin, but in addition He so completely transforms the character of His child as to equip him to "live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." It is the intent of God that each of us shall escape the torments of hell and that we shall enjoy the bliss of His eternal city. Therefore, every willing heart is equipped by the Eternal One to be a conqueror in the conflicts of life.

"OUT OF GREAT TRIBULATION"

The glory of the victorious militarist is enhanced in accordance with the strength of the opposition which he overcomes. There is no glory in accomplishing that which requires no effort, no wisdom,

no preparation, no strategy, no skillful combat. The glory of life is that of complete victory in the face of opposition and difficulty.

The glory of Joseph was attained in his refusal to be untrue to God, to his master, or to his own manhood, and in his withstanding temptation, suffering unjustly, and still continuing to be a source of encouragement to his fellow men. David, the shepherd boy, won that true glory in his single-handed victory over Goliath, who by his huge size and vicious challenge had stopped the entire Israelitish army. It is to the glory of Job that "in all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly." The glory of Enoch appears as a result of his having "walked with God . . . three hundred years" in the midst of an unclean generation. The glory of being tempted and of proving true in the day of temptation is revealed to John on the Isle of Patmos as the curtain is partially drawn and he is permitted to view an indescribable scene and to hear the narrator say, "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

"TO HIM BE GLORY AND HONOUR"

The glory of withstanding temptation is pre-eminently that of co-operating with the Father and the saints of all ages in magnifying the name of our Redeemer. He is the great Conqueror. It is He who by a simple command forced the devil from the field of battle. He is our Redeemer. It is He who by His own ignominious crucifixion poured forth His life that we might be unloosed from the clutches of sin. He is the Lord of life. It is He who by going to the tomb pushed away the great stone and left an opening in the end of every burial spot through which the entombed Christian may face directly the City of God. He is our great Saviour. It is He who saves us from the guilt of the past, from the thing within our own breasts that makes us do wrong, and from the clutches of the arch-fiend and eternal enemy of man and God. He is the great Transformer. It is He who can take a man "dead in trespasses and sins" and make of him "a new creature in Christ Jesus." He is the great Comforter. It is He who gives such assuring solace to the bereaved mother that she stands beside the grave of her child and sheds tears of joy over the prospect of being eternally with that "safe" one and with her Lord of hope and comfort.

Every worthy beneficiary of His divine grace is willing to go to any length of trial, temptation, suffering, and endeavor that he might help to swell the eternal Hallelujah Chorus of praise to Him who conquered. Every sincere Christian will gladly be loyal and true to Him who so effectively demonstrated that God only is to be feared and served, who eternally established the fact that Satan and sin are not irresistible, and who has sent His Comforter to "stand by" us in every conflict of personal life and enable us to live victoriously every day.