

Thoughts of Jesus

The Tried and Tempted Jesus

IN THE person of Jesus were combined all the inherent powers of the Godhead and all the inherent weaknesses of the human race. How He overcame the latter in every instance and refused at all times to use the former in His own behalf, other than those accessible to all human beings, is told in the remarkable epic of His life.

It was the marvelous self-control over His dual personality always manifested in the life of Jesus that set Him apart from all other men and made Him the Savior of the world. It was thus that He demonstrated His fitness for this role. Most truly Peter declared, "There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

First, what is said in the Scriptures concerning the divine power of Jesus? It is very clear that He was conscious of this power. At the close of His ministry He declared, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." Matthew 28:18. He also said that God had "given him power over all flesh." John 17:2.

When Jesus was about to inaugurate the communion service the Sacred Record says of Him: "Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God; he rises from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself." John 13:3, 4.

Paul later wrote of the great power of Jesus in these words: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds." Hebrews 1:1, 2.

On the other hand, Jesus was continually reminded of His human lot and the frailty of the flesh. We read that at the close of His fast in the wilderness "he was afterward an hungered." Matthew 4:1 In another place He said of Himself, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." Luke 9:58.

Referring to the bad reputation of His home town, an inquirer asked, "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth!" John 1:46.

It was because of this frailty that Jesus spent so much time in prayer. He was as dependent as any one of us for daily aid from the throne above. Thus we often read about His departing to a quiet place, where He spent the night or the early hours of the morning in prayer. Jesus plainly said of Himself, "I can of mine own self do nothing." John 5:30. Of Jesus the Scriptures say, "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same." Hebrews 2:14.

Again we read: "Verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it became him to be made like unto his brethren.... For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted." Verses 16-18. He "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." Hebrews 4:15.

Jesus "took the risk of failure and eternal loss." As He faced the great issue of life in the Garden of Gethsemane, the cup trembled in His hands as His humanity sought release from the dark venture before Him. It was because of this that He struggled until great drops of blood, as it were, appeared on His forehead. Three times He prayed for resignation to the will of God.

Let us turn to another aspect of His life, and note how remarkably Jesus steered His course between the consciousness of His human weakness and His divine power. Think, for instance, of many miracles He performed in behalf of others. He healed all kinds of sickness, He cast out devils, He fed the multitudes, yes, and He even raised the dead. But never once did He use these powers in behalf of Himself.

One time when the Jews came to Him and said, "Show us a sign, work us a miracle," Christ made no move to satisfy their curiosity or to prove that He was a wonder worker. He wrought no miracle to advance His power among men or to hinder the evil that men were planning toward Him. "Christ never worked a miracle except to supply a genuine necessity, and every miracle was of a character to lead the people to the tree of life, whose leaves are for the healing of the nations." - *The Desire of Ages*, page 366.

Of Jesus' life in Nazareth one has beautifully written: "Jesus lived in a peasant's home, and faithfully and cheerfully acted His part in bearing the burdens of the household. He had been the Commander of heaven, and angels had delighted to fulfill His word; now He was a willing servant, a loving, obedient son. He learned a trade, and with His own hands worked in the carpenter's shop with Joseph. In the simple garb of a common laborer He walked the streets of the little town, going to and returning from His humble work. He did not employ His divine power to lessen His burdens or to lighten His toil." - *Ibid.*, page 72.

Some might well question, "Why should Jesus live in poverty when He could create from five loaves and two fishes sufficient food to feed more than five thousand people?"

But was it not on this point of fleshly desire that the devil tempted Jesus at the outset of His ministry? When He was very hungry after a fast of forty days, Satan came to Him and said, "If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." Matthew 4:1

Here was a subtle stroke on Satan's part. If he could break down Jesus' control over both the fleshly and divine natures, and have Him use His holy power to satisfy a human craving, Satan's battle would be won. But even while Jesus' body cried out for food and His divine nature said, "I can create," Jesus refused to fall into such a trap.

Concerning another occasion of temptation, we are told, "Had Jesus yielded for a moment, had He changed His course in the least particular to save Himself, Satan's agencies would have triumphed, and the world would have been lost."

Again some may ask, "Could not Jesus have escaped from the mob who came to take Him in Gethsemane?" Yes, He could have. When Peter drew a sword and cut off the ear of the high priest's servant, thinking to deliver Him, Jesus said, "Put up again thy sword into his place. . . . Think thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?" Matthew 26:52, 53.

The disciples had already heard Him say, "I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man takes it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." John 10:17, 18.

The disciples were keenly disappointed when Jesus did not use in His own behalf the power they knew He had. They felt He had been untrue to them, but this was because they misunderstood His mission. How true were the words spoken at the cross by those who taunted Him: "He saved others; himself he cannot save." Matthew 27:42. Little did these enemies of the Savior know why this was so. No, He could not save Himself and still be our Savior. When He stepped down from heaven to identify Himself with man, He was committed to go all the way. He must both overcome in His human nature and hold in

cheek those divine powers that could have delivered Him from that nature. We know not how many times Jesus must have had to make the decision not to save Himself.

In contrast to this self-denying spirit of Christ, let us think of modern man. How does he use the powers that have come to him? Never before this day have such godlike powers been accessible to man. All nature seems to be opening its secrets to him. Now the climax in the search for power has been reached in the splitting of the atom, and man today has at his finger tips apparently unlimited power. But what is he doing with it? Is he using it to bless humanity and spread the gospel of good will? No, he is using it for the exaltation of self and to gratify his lust for power.

Because man is unable to use properly the great powers that are his, he has proved himself unworthy of life. Only those, who deny themselves and take up the cross and live as Jesus did will become fit subjects for the eternal kingdom of our Lord. We are told that we may be "more than conquerors through him that loved us." May we daily avail ourselves of this help.