

Thoughts of Jesus

The Conquering Jesus

LIFE is a conflict for all who would live godly in this present evil world. When the Son of God voluntarily took man's place and thrust Himself directly into this struggle, He found no easy road. The way to victory was as hard and painful for Him as for any man, and no doubt it was even more so.

Jesus came out to meet Goliath with no armor or weapons not available to other earthly Davids. With trembling and fear He went forth to face the towering enemy, trusting only in His sling of faith and the smooth stones of promise picked up from the brook of God's Holy Word, And like David of old, who was challenged to come out and prove the might of the God whom he served, Jesus staunchly stood His ground, when Satan came forth to dismay Him at the very outset of His ministry in man's behalf, and He hurled one scripture after another at His enemy until he departed from Him.

It took only one stone from David's sling to slay Goliath, but it took three stones before Satan was defeated in that first encounter with the Son of man. So Jesus knew very early in His contest with the devil that the prince of this world would not yield up his throne without a terrible struggle.

Christ warned His disciples of this spiritual warfare. He had been instructing them in regard to their work and telling them of the treatment they would receive from those who would oppose them. They were to go forth "as sheep in the midst of wolves." They were to be hated and persecuted, He declared. But they must not deny their Lord no matter what the circumstances, for they were entering a great conflict in which they would have to meet enemies both at home and abroad.

"Think not," said Jesus, "that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. He that loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that takes not his cross, and follows after me, is not worthy of me. He that finds his life shall lose it: and he that loses his life for my sake shall find it." Matthew 10:34-39.

Jesus was well acquainted with this awful struggle. He did not ask of men what He Himself would not endure. He was at the very forefront of the battle, and even before He felt the cruel nails pierce His hand He often was wounded in soul and spirit.

While He was telling His disciples about conflicts they must meet, He said of Himself: "I am come to send fire on the earth; and what will I, if it be already kindled? But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished! Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division." Luke 12:49-51.

How often the sensitive soul of Jesus must have been pained as He saw men and women reject His offers of salvation and yield to the blandishments of the enemy. How one among His closest friends must have troubled Him-Judas, who trod the narrow and precarious line between right and wrong. When Judas first joined the disciples, he was attracted to the lovely character of Jesus and felt His good influence, but he hardened his heart toward the Master and bargained with those who would slay Him.

Even on the night of the betrayal Jesus stooped low to wash Judas' feet, desiring to do all He could to win this wayward man. We are told that "Jesus hungered for his soul. He felt for him a burden such as He felt for Jerusalem when He wept over the doomed city. His heart was crying, 'How can I give thee up?' - The Desire of Ages, page 645.

Again we see Jesus as He painfully struggles to hold on to Peter. With what anxiety He says to him, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." Luke 22:31, 32.

Jesus felt it keenly when any of those nearest to Him fell into the enemy's trap. He suffered greatly as He struggled to extricate them. He knew the sorrow and pain that would be the lot of those who followed Satan. It was His purpose to do all that He could to rescue men and women from such a fate. He plucked them as brands from the burning, searing His own hands as He did so.

It was not alone for other men that He struggled. He must Himself meet His antagonist and overcome him, and we can be sure that this enemy of His did not leave Him alone. He came continually to Jesus with insinuating doubts, with terrible temptations, to see if possible he might not overthrow Him. It was because of this that Jesus often had to go into the mountains alone with God, where He might receive strength and help to meet His adversary. There was no other way but this. The help He received one day was not sufficient for the next. Thus we read of Him again and again seeking out His heavenly Father in prayer.

What an example this is to us in our struggles against sin and temptation. We can no more conquer alone than could Christ. Thus He says to us as He did to His disciples, "Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation."

As Jesus neared the close of His ministry His struggles grew more intense. He realized what awaited Him, and He was pained as He considered it. He could only move along toward His destination, trusting in God as He went, seeking for strength that He might not fail. On one occasion as He was thinking of this He said to His disciples, "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name." John 12:27, 28.

As God heard this cry for help He audibly answered Jesus and said, "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again." Then last we come to the struggle in the Garden. "As Christ felt His unity with the Father broken up, He feared that in His human nature He would be unable to endure the coming conflict with the powers of darkness in the wilderness of temptation the destiny of the human race had been at stake. Christ was then conqueror. Now the tempter had come for the last fearful struggle. For this he had been preparing during the three years of Christ's ministry. Everything was at stake with him. If he failed here, his hope of mastery was lost; the kingdoms of this world would finally become Christ's; he himself would be overthrown and cast out. But if Christ could be overcome, the earth would become Satan's kingdom, and the human race would be forever in his power. With the issues of the conflict before Him, Christ's soul was filled with dread of separation from God. Satan told Him that if He became the surety for a sinful world, the separation would be eternal. He would be identified with Satan's kingdom, and would never more be one with God." Ibid., page 687.

"Turning away, Jesus sought again His retreat, and fell prostrate, overcome by the horror of a great darkness. The humanity of the Son of God trembled in that trying hour. He prayed not now for His disciples that their faith might not fail, but for His own tempted, agonized soul. The awful moment had come,-that moment which was to decide the destiny of the world. The fate of humanity trembled in the balance. Christ might even now refuse to drink the cup apportioned to guilty man. It was not yet too late. He might wipe the bloody sweat from His brow, and leave man to perish in his iniquity.... The words fall tremblingly from the pale lips of Jesus, 'O My Father, if this cup may not pass away from Me, except I drink it, thy will be done.' Three times has He uttered that prayer. Three times has humanity shrunk from the last, crowning sacrifice." - Ibid., page 690. (Italics supplied.)

Victory for Jesus was not an easy one. But His efforts brought their reward of triumph over His enemy, and opened the way of salvation for the human race. Let us ever remember the terrible struggles through which He passed for us. Let us be grateful that He has provided the means by which we may become "more than conquerors."