

DAY BY DAY

Bible Texts and Topics, With Comments,
For Personal Study and Use at Family Worship.

3: CHRIST'S MISSION AND TEMPTATIONS

1. THE MISSION OF CHRIST

"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me; because the Lord hath anointed Me to preach good tidings unto the meek. He hath sent Me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God. To comfort all that mourn. To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He might be glorified." Isaiah 61:1-3.

"We are to labor both for the health of the body and for the saving of the soul. Our mission is the same as that of our Master, of whom it is written that He went about doing good, and healing all who were oppressed by Satan. Acts 10:38. Of His own work He says: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me. Because the Lord hath anointed Me to preach good tidings unto the meek." "He hath sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised." Isaiah 61:1; Luke 4:18. As we follow Christ's example of labor for the good of others, we shall awaken their interest in the God whom we love and serve." Testimonies, Vol. 6, page 225.

"The works of Christ not only declared Him to be the Messiah, but showed in what manner His kingdom was to be established. To John was opened the same truth that had come to Elijah in the desert, when "a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake. But the Lord was not in the earthquake: and after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire (1 Kings 19:11, 12): and after the fire, God spoke to the prophet by a still small voice. So Jesus was to do His work, not by the overturning of thrones and kingdoms, not with pomp and outward display, but through speaking to the hearts of men by a life of mercy and self-sacrifice.

"The kingdom of God comes not with outward show. It comes through the gentleness of the inspiration of His word, through the inward working of His Spirit, the fellowship of the soul with Him who is its life. The greatest manifestation of its power is seen in human nature brought to the perfection of the character of Christ.

"The followers of Christ are to be the light of the world; but God does not bid them make an effort to shine. He does not approve of any self-satisfied endeavor to display superior goodness. He desires that their souls shall be imbued with the principles of heaven; then, as they come in contact with the world, they will reveal the light that is in them. Their steadfast fidelity in every act of life will be a means of illumination." Ministry of Healing, page 36.

2. "LIKE AS A FATHER"

"The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. 9 He will not always chide: neither will he keep his anger for ever. 10 He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. 11 For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward

them that fear him. 12 As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us. 13 Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him. 14 For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust." Psalm 103:8-14.

"But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. 2 When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. 3 For I am the LORD thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour: I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee." Isaiah 43:1-3.

"God is love. He has a care for the creatures He has formed. "Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him." "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." What a precious privilege is this, that we may be sons and daughters of the Most High, heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ. Then let us not mourn and grieve, because in this life we are not free from disappointments and afflictions. If in the providence of God we are called upon to endure trials, let us accept the cross, and drink the bitter cup, remembering that it is a Father's hand that holds it to our lips. Let us trust Him in the darkness as well as in the day. Can we not believe that He will give us everything that is for our good? "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He riot with Him also freely give us all things?" Even in the night of affliction, how can we refuse to lift heart and voice in grateful praise, when we remember the love to us expressed by the cross of Calvary?" Testimonies, Vol. 5, pages 315, 316.

When the loom of earth lies silent
And its shuttles cease to fly,
When my God unrolls life's fabric,
He'll explain the reason why
Threads dark-hued were interwove, as
Clouds that shine in yonder blue,
And I'll know and understand what
Seemed so hard was love most true.

Then I'll know and understand life's
Cruel loss that counted gain,
Why God's rainbow would appear when
Clouds had loosed their summer rain.
Then I'll know, and knowing learn
why In His plan that's all divine,
He allowed the rain-like shadows
Fall upon this heart of mine.

When the loom at last lies silent
And its shuttles cease to fly,
When my God unrolls life's fabric,
He'll explain the reason why
No dark threads are visible as
God the Weaver's skillful hand
Made them cloth of purest gold, and
Then I'll know and understand. -HELEN MCCOLLUM JOHNSON.

3. TEMPTED TO SAVE HIMSELF

“Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He was afterward an hungered. And when the tempter came to Him, he said, If Thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. But He answered and said, it is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.” Matthew 4:14.

“Christ could have worked a miracle on His own account; but this would not have been in accordance with the plan of salvation. The many miracles in the life of Christ show His power to work miracles for the benefit of suffering humanity. By a miracle of mercy He fed five thousand at once with five loaves and two small fishes. Therefore He had power to work a miracle, and satisfy His own hunger. Satan flattered himself that he could lead Christ to doubt the words spoken from heaven at His baptism. And if he could tempt Him to question His Son-ship, and doubt the truth of the word spoken by His Father, he would gain a great victory.

“He found Christ in the desolate wilderness without companions, without food, and in actual suffering. His surroundings were most melancholy and repulsive. Satan suggested to Christ that God would not leave His Son in this condition of want and real suffering. He hoped to shake the confidence of Christ in His Father, who had permitted Him to be brought into this condition of extreme suffering in the desert, where the feet of man had never trod. Satan hoped to insinuate doubts as to His Father's love that would find a lodgment in the mind of Christ, and that under the force of despondency and extreme hunger He would exert His miraculous power in His own behalf, and take Himself out of the hands of His heavenly Father.

“This was indeed a temptation to Christ. But He cherished it not for a moment. He did not for a single moment doubt His heavenly Father's love, although He seemed to be bowed down with inexpressible anguish. Satan's temptations, though skillfully devised, did not move the integrity of God's dear Son. His abiding confidence in His Father could not be shaken.” MRS. E. WHITE, in Review and Herald, Aug. 4, 1874.

Faith in Her Father: “A father was holding his little blind daughter on his knee. Just then a friend came in, and picking her up, walked off with her down the garden. The little one expressed neither surprise nor fear, so her father said, 'Aren't you afraid, darling?' 'No,' she said. 'But you don't know who has got you?' 'No,' was the prompt reply, 'but you do, father.' That was enough. She was in 'the sight of' her father, and faith in her father's loving care banished fear.”

4. TEMPTED TO PRESUMPTION

“Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, 6 And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, 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. 7 Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.” Matthew 4:5-7.

“Christ came off victor in the second temptation. He manifested perfect confidence and trust in His Father during His severe conflict with the powerful foe. Our Redeemer, in the victory here gained, has left man a perfect pattern, showing him that his only safety is in firm trust and unwavering confidence in God in all trials and perils. He refused to presume upon the mercy of His Father by placing Himself in peril that would make it necessary for His heavenly Father to display His power to save Him from danger. This would be forcing providence on His own account; and He would not then leave for His people a perfect example of faith and firm trust in God.

Satan's object in tempting Christ was to lead Him to daring presumption, and to show human weakness that would not make Him a perfect pattern for His people. Satan thought that should Christ fail to bear the test of his temptations, there could be no redemption for the race, and his power over them would be complete." MRS. E. G. WHITE, in Review and Herald, Aug. 18, 1874.

"The tempter can never compel us to do evil. He cannot control minds unless they are yielded to his control. The will must consent, faith must let go its hold upon Christ, before Satan can exercise his power upon us. But every sinful desire we cherish affords him a foothold. Every point in which we fail of meeting the divine standard, is an open door by which he can enter to tempt and destroy us. And every failure or defeat on our part gives occasion for him to reproach Christ.

"When Satan quoted the promise, "He shall give His angels charge over Thee," he omitted the words, "to keep Thee in all Thy ways;" that is, in all the ways of God's choosing. Jesus refused to go outside the path of obedience. While manifesting perfect trust in His Father, He would not place Himself, unbidden, in a position that would necessitate the interposition of His Father to save Him from death. He would not force Providence to come to His rescue, and thus fail of giving man an example of trust and submission....

"Often when Satan has failed of exciting distrust, he succeeds in leading us to presumption. If he can cause us to place ourselves unnecessarily in the way of temptation, he knows that the victory is his. God will preserve all who walk in the path of obedience; but to depart from it is to venture on Satan's ground. There we are sure to fall. The Savior has bidden us, "Watch you and pray, lest you enter into temptation." Mark 14:38. Meditation and prayer would keep us from rushing unbidden into the way of danger, and thus we should be saved from a defeat." The Desire of Ages, pages 125, 126.

5. TEMPTED TO IDOLATRY

"Again, the devil takes Him up into an exceeding high mountain, and shows Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them. And says unto Him, All these things will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me. Then says Jesus unto him, get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shall thou serve. Then the devil leaves Him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto Him." Matthew 4:8-11.

"This last temptation was the most alluring of the three. Satan knew that Christ's life must be one of sorrow, hardship, and conflict. And he thought he could take advantage of this fact to bribe Christ to yield His integrity. Satan brought all his strength to bear upon this last temptation, for this last effort was to decide his destiny as to who should be victor. He claimed the world as his dominion, and he was the prince of the power of the air.

"He bore Jesus to the top of an exceeding high mountain, and then in a panoramic view presented before Him all the kingdoms of the world that had been so long under his dominion, and offered them to Him in one great gift. He told Christ He could come into possession of the kingdoms of the world without suffering or peril on His part. Satan promises to yield his scepter and dominion, and Christ shall be rightful ruler for one favor from Him. All he requires in return for making over to Him the kingdoms of the world that day presented before Him, is, that Christ shall do him homage as to a superior.

"The eye of Jesus for a moment rested upon the glory presented before Him; but He turned away and refused to look upon the entrancing spectacle. He would not endanger His steadfast integrity by dallying with the tempter. When Satan solicited homage, Christ's divine indignation was aroused, and He could no longer tolerate the blasphemous assumption of Satan, or even permit him to remain in His presence. Here Christ exercised His divine authority, and commanded Satan to desist. .

“Jesus said to this wily foe, “Get thee hence, Satan; for it is written, Thou shall worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shall thou serve.” Satan had asked Christ to give him evidence that He was the Son of God, and he had in this instance the proof he had asked. At the divine command of Christ he was compelled to obey. He was repulsed and silenced. He had no power to enable him to withstand the peremptory dismissal. He was compelled without another word to instantly desist and to leave the world's Redeemer.” MRS. E. G. WHITE, in Review and Herald, Sept. 1, 1874.

“Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, inasmuch as you are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when His glory shall be revealed, you may be glad also with exceeding joy.” I Peter 4:12.

6. NATURE OF CHRIST

“For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.” Hebrews 4:15

Christ took our nature. He took the very nature we have, with all its limitations and weaknesses. He became, in verity, a human being just like us. From His Incarnation onward, Christ was fully God and fully man. But, while on earth, Christ never used His divinity to aid His humanity. His only assistance was guidance and strength from His Father. His only source of help was that which we can have.

Every temptation common to mankind was pressed upon Christ by Satan. The ferocity of those temptations can hardly be imagined. Satan did everything in his power to overcome the Son of God. Yet he was totally unsuccessful.

(1) Christ was tempted in all points like as we are, (2) yet without sin. These are the two great balancing points. In addition, we have the fact that, in all things, He is our perfect Example; one which we can safely follow. We will follow the Lamb through all eternity; we can safely follow Him now.

Satan tempted Christ to take every possible bad attitude, think every possible bad thought, say every possible bad thing, and do every possible bad action. But Christ did not do so. There was nothing in Him which responded to Satan's temptations.

Were the temptations fierce? Yes, more than anything you and I have or will ever experience. But was Christ sullied by these temptations? Did they bring evil into His thoughts, His feelings, His life? No. How can we know? Because we are told hundreds of times in the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy that Christ was without sin.

“Oh,” but someone will reply, “It is not sin to be tempted.” It is not sin to be tempted, but it is sin to invitingly respond to temptation. This Christ never did, so there was no evil within Him. He had all our frailties, weaknesses, and leanings toward sin,—but He did not respond to those leanings, and this made all the difference.

We are safe only as we remain within the perimeters: Christ took our nature; was tempted; never sinned. If any of these three aspects are missing or flawed, then Christ is not our Example, our perfect Sacrifice, our Atonement, our Mediating Priest, and our Saviour.

Christ had to fully take our nature, be fully tempted, and never sin. And that is exactly what He did.

7. TEMPTATIONS

When a temptation comes to the soul, it may come suddenly and it may come with great power. But one thing is certain: When it arrives, the individual experiencing it will respond. That response will be his

choice in the matter. It may be a light, passing temptation, and he may reject it by just ignoring it and turning his thoughts to something else. It may be very strong and he may fight it fiercely, and overcome.

But, instead of resisting it, the soul may consider it with interest and delight. The contamination of the temptation fills his mind, and he yields to the desire which has been aroused. The response to the temptation is crucial. Christ's response was always a negative one. Temptations and sinful thoughts never lingered in His mind. He instantly repulsed them. He did that through the same power available to every child of God. That which Christ did, we can do.

Here is an example of how it works: A person is tempted to have thoughts of rebellion against God. Christ was tempted with that thought also. But the temptation came to Him even more powerfully than it does to us.

But, when the temptation came to Christ—He instantly cast it out. He repulsed it, just as we may do. But when the temptation comes to a person who has had rebellious thoughts before, that person is also free to reject the temptation or accept it. If he is trusting in Jesus, God will give him grace to repulse it as Christ did—even though he may earlier have indulged in rebellious thoughts. It is in that sense that Christ has no advantage over us in meeting temptation. The strength He received to meet them, we too can have.

But, if the man chooses to linger on the temptation for a moment, then it strikes an answering chord in his own mind. He lingers over the temptation as Eve lingered about the forbidden tree when she should have fled away from it. But Christ never lingered.

Someone will say, "Well, then, Christ had no answering chords, but we do." Yes, but the answering chords—the sympathies with sin—are only there when we linger. Christ did not linger, and neither need we. If you do not linger over it, when the temptation comes, there will be no answering chord to worry about. In the strength of Christ, repulse it immediately. Refuse it instantly. In addition, as you continue doing that, the answering chords tend to fade away.

I speak from experience. I am sure you have experienced it also. It is an experience we can all have, from day to day. In the strength of Christ we can overcome all the power of the evil one. Thank God!

Yet, as we draw closer to our Creator, we will continually feel more and more our deficiencies and our weakness apart from Him. There will be no vaunted pride, "Hey, look at me! I have overcome, and am living without sin!" Flee from anyone who claims to be without sin. Earnest Christians do not consider themselves sinless and worthy of eternal life.

From time to time, those strong temptations will come again. Yet, just as Jesus did, we can as quickly resist them—and cast them out. We can choose to love Jesus with all our hearts, more than we love the evils of earth. Our loyalty is to the God of heaven, not to the devilish trinkets Satan presents to us.

Jesus did not cherish any evil feelings, evil thoughts, evil words, or evil actions. He was sinless. He harbored nothing evil. Did He have evil tendencies or propensities? He inherited weaknesses just as we all do. But He yielded to none of them. He entertained none of them in His thoughts. Christ did have inherited tendencies, but He had no evil propensities such as we do. He inherited weaknesses and tendencies as we do, but, because he did not respond favorably to any of them when tempted, sin never took root in His mind. He did not respond favorably to inherited or environmental negative factors. Because He did not accept them, He did not make them His own. Thanks be to God that through the power of Jesus' victory, we can reject them too!