THE

LORD JESUS TEMPTED.

BY DR. NEATBY.

Author of "Our Lord's Coming again"; "I shall be satisfied," etc.

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In thus considering Him it becomes us to tread softly with reverence and godly fear. It is holy ground. His name is "Wonderful." It was before *His* glory that Seraphim hid their faces and cried, Holy, Holy, Holy.

We recall with worship that "No one knoweth the Son but the Father" (Matt. xi. 27, and Luke x. 22). This is

absolute and final. When it is said, "Neither knoweth anyone the Father save the Son," it is immediately added, "and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him." The Son can and does reveal the Father to whom He will. But the mysterious Person of the Son, the Father alone knows. May these solemn words sink into our hearts! May they rebuke—nay, prevent any tendency to repeat the sin of the men of Bethshemesh! May it be ours reverently to bow before the Ark of God, the Person of Christ! How many have erred here, and have taken occasion of the gracious humiliation of the Lord, to say of Him things which the only One who knows His holy and mysterious Being never said! May both writer and reader humbly cover their faces, bow at His feet, and worship Him as the thrice holy Jehovah! For such He was, and is,

and is to come. Not less so in the days of His flesh, than "of old, from the days of eternity" (Mic. v. 2, marg.). He is here spoken of as "the judge of Israel," smitten "with a rod upon the cheek"; for indeed He gave (else no one could have taken) His back to the smiters. hid not His face from shame and spitting (Isa. l. 6). But when we turn to the Gospels (John xviii. 5, 6), we find that the "Wonderful," the "I am," is there in all His glory, however much He has veiled that glory. Impossible that He could ever be less than God over all, blessed for evermore! His very humiliation attests His Being. Who but God could humble himself? God could humble a man to the condition of one that "did eat grass as oxen" (Dan. iv. 33); but the creature is powerless to change the place in nature which God has given him.

In considering our blessed Lord undergoing temptation, let us ever have the dignity of His holy Person before our eye-nay, indelibly written of God in the depths of our heart! May He be, even as born of a woman, "that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God!" When we contemplate Him as a tempted or weary man in all that holy life, may we always remember "that He was manifested to take away our sins; and in Him is no sin." O Thou Whose name is "Wonderful," may we hear Thee saying, when face to face with Nicodemus: "The Son of Man which is in heaven!" And when Thy days are "shortened," when Thou art the Messiah "cut off" in the midst of Thy days, may we, with bowed heads and worshipping hearts, hear our God saying, "Thou Lord in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the

earth, and the heavens are the works of Thine hands: they shall perish; but Thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed; but THOU ART THE SAME!" (Ps. cii., Heb. i.).

Let us reverently turn to Heb. iv. 15: The Holy Ghost here brings before us, "Jesus, the Son of God," as our great High Priest. He is only such as passed into the heavens, for on earth He was not a Priest. Having "by His own blood entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us," He appears there as our Priest. Past suffering Himself, He is able to succour those whose cause He maintains when they are passing through suffering. He has been tempted; He is able to sympathise with tempted ones. This is so precious

a truth that our hearts may well seek to learn its blessed scope as it is here given us in a few pregnant words. Although the title of our High Priest here is "Jesus, the Son of God"; yet we are led to the immediate consideration of Him, as "touched with the feeling of our infirmities."

He has passed through sufferings and temptation, such as His people are now called to pass through. He has felt them in all their reality; but He has felt them according to God. He has known what hunger is, for He has been forty days without food—a man. He has been in a storm raised by Satan for His destruction, and knows what many a tempest-tossed believer experiences. He has been weary with His journey taken because of the rejection of His own people, and can feel with and for those who are tired, lonely and outcasts. That all

these trials found nothing within of sin, only magnifies the sense of His perfection. It would not have helped the saint of to-day, if these trials had found a murmuring, a lustful, or a rebellious heart. It could not be. But if it could, it would not have rendered Him more able to sympathise with, and to succour, the tempted saint. For what we need—nay, what as saints we desire—is not one to sympathise with our sin, but to sympathise with us in the trials and temptations that come upon us in a sinful world. In Heb. ii. 18, it is said, "in that He Himself has suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted." A holy one "suffers" when tempted. If the tempted one be not holy, the temptation may cause no suffering, because the heart goes with the temptation: lust within answers but too well to the temptation without.

But "Iesus, the Son of God," has been truly tempted, and has truly "suffered," for every disposition and thought of His heart, was not only pure, but a sweet savour to God. In the passage which is occupying us we read, "but was in all points tempted like as we are yet without sin." Dr. Anderson in his work "The Gospel and its Ministry," has a note upon this which so well expresses what I have long felt to be the truth that I will quote it. "Our English version is ambiguous here, and the words have been generally perverted to mean that the Lord's temptations were exactly similar to ours, the result alone being different. Were this so, He must have known the power of sin within-the source of so many trials. But the words are $\chi\omega\rho$ is $\dot{a}\mu\alpha\rho\tau\iota\alpha$ s apart from sin. 'So that throughout these temptations in their origin, in their process, in their result,—

sin had nothing in Him: He was free and separate from it!'—Alford."

How well for us that God Himself says that "such an High Priest became us, who was holy, harmless, undefiled. separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens!" That He has stooped low enough to be the subject of temptation—of real temptation, Satan suggesting a line of conduct which His holy eye detected to be sinful, and which His holy heart turned from with "suffering" at the very suggestion, is indeed grace unspeakable. That He has thus, if we may say so, qualified Himself to be a merciful and faithful High Priest, to sympathise with and succour our poor feeble hearts when they are tempted; this is indeed grace to help in time of need.

But let us reverently look at our blessed Lord in some

of the actual temptations which He endured. This will shew better than anything at once how perfect He was under the trial, and how able He is to sympathise with us in such temptations. See Him in St. Matthew's Gospel (iv. 1-11). We are in the very atmosphere of reality. Jesus has just been owned by a voice from heaven, as "My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased," and the Holy Ghost descending like a dove rests upon Him. The godly remnant in Israel had been confessing their sins in John's baptism. Christ had no sins to confess, yet would He associate Himself with the first movement of the Spirit of God in those who are confessing their sins. "Thus," He says, "it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." How heaven is transferred to earth as the lowly Jesus comes up out of the water! Ineffable scene of holy communion!

It is the Father's joy to own His beloved Son. It is the Holy Ghost's delight to rest upon His head. The Godhead has unspeakable communion in the redemption of fallen man. The "Wonderful," who is the blessed agent in that redemption, free from all sin, and from all tendency thereto in the body which has been prepared for Him, is the centre of that blessed communion. From—nay, in—that atmosphere He is led into temptation. But let it be carefully remarked, He is led by the Holy Spirit. A garden had been the scene of the first man's temptation; but here it is the wilderness. In Adam's case there was everything outwardly to witness that God loved and cared for him. The Second Man is surrounded by no such testimony, but by the wild beasts of the desert. After fasting forty days He feels the pangs of hunger. Then and thus the tempter

comes to Him. All is reality here. A hungry man in a wilderness surrounded by wild beasts, the Lord is face to face with God's enemy and man's. The strong man in his armour must now be met by Him, who "when He had fasted forty days and forty nights was afterwards an hungered." The stake is the glory of God in the redemption of fallen man. Who shall say how angels beheld that wondrous conflict! Who shall tell what it was to God in His Sanctuary! "If Thou be the Son of God!" Forty days previously, a voice from heaven had owned Him such; but they had been forty days of fasting, forty days in which no raven or angel had been commissioned to minister food to the dependent man. Did it look like a Father's care? This was the terrible suggestion of the tempter. In Eden, in the garden of delights where everything spake of God's

tenderness in providing care, the first man had fallen a too ready prey to such a suggestion. And now in the hard, cold wilderness, how will the Second Man bear Himself? "If Thou be the Son of God command that these stones be made bread." The temptation is awfully real. But it neither meets nor raises a suspicion, as it had done in the first Adam, that God's love was not perfect. God forbid the thought that there was no temptation, because that temptation found no response! Let not our unbelieving hearts doubt the great High Priest's aptitude for sympathy and succour, because when the suggestion was made that the Father did not perfectly love Him, His heart abode in the undisturbed consciousness of the love which it had been the Father's joy to express, and His to feel in the sacred communion of forty days before. The heart worships as it

hears from His lips, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

Yes, He is a Man, and so am I. Because He has been a man in temptation He can fully enter into the hour of my temptation. Did the tempter find only perfection in Him? That perfection renders Him the more suited for me in my frailty, and with my sinful nature. If He has perfectly trusted God, when everything seemed against Him, He as a merciful and faithful High Priest can fortify my heart with a holy confidence in God, when circumstances seem all against me. "Man shall not live by bread alone." God has other ways of shewing His care, other ways of Divine wisdom. It is a man's place to hang upon God. If it had not been a world of sin, the

Saviour would not have been here; if it is a world of sin, God's footsteps are in the great deep. Blessed be His name, they are in the Sanctuary too, and Christ was there. "By every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Till the word shall proceed from that mouth which bids Him who has taken the "form of a servant" to eat, the obedient One will not eat, but trust Him Who is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working. What a model for us! Thank God, the tempted Man in His perfection has become a merciful and faithful High Priest for us, sympathising as perfectly as in temptation He suffered.

The second temptation is still more subtle. The first, I think, was addressed to Christ as man, the second to Him as Messiah. The tempter seeing the reverence which the Man, Christ Jesus, had for the Word of God, now proceeds

to quote Scripture as authority. He takes advantage of a promise to Messiah, in Ps. xci., and suggests that He should put God to the test, and see if He would be as good as His Word. This, by the way, has been greatly misunderstood. It has been represented as a temptation to trust God too much. But it is not thus that man can tempt God. To see whether God will do what He has promised, is not a sign of too much faith. It is unbelief tempting God. But in vain the devil says, "It is written" to Him, of whom it is testified—" Thy law is within My heart." His eye at once detects the Satanic mis-quotation of Holy Scripture. Had the enemy quoted the Word as God had given it, it would have been an authoritative direction for the Messiah to act upon. But an essential part is left out, "to keep Thee in all Thy ways." This would not have served Satan's

purpose. He wished to lead the blessed Man of God's counsels, His Messiah, away from the place of entire dependence which in grace He had taken. "Cast Thyself down," was not "His way," and in "His way," the obedient Man was fully purposed to walk. It was one of Satan's deadliest wiles, supported by a misquotation of the Word of God. The heart listens humbly, reverently, confidingly, for the answer of Christ. In lowly grace He takes it again from Deuteronomy,—a just quotation from the Word of the living God, binding upon man, and the very food of God's Messiah: "It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." How perfectly the blessed Lord is in the true attitude of a man, of every child of faith in a world of sin! How truly He has suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should tread in His steps! And how He

has fitted Himself to succour those that are tempted! In the third temptation the devil throws off his mask, and the blessed Lord treats him as an "adversary," just as He did later in the days of His flesh, when Peter lent himself to be Satan's mouthpiece to the same intent. See Matt. xvi. 21-23. How terrible the temptation we can scarcely understand. On the path of Messiah to God's holy hill of Zion lay the cross in all its terrible reality. It was a glory of dazzling brightness that lay beyond that cross, but it was beyond the cross that it lay. The "sure mercies of David" could only be His in resurrection. Between Him and that "path of life," He knew the awful wail must arise, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me." The tempter shews Him a smiling bypath to the throne, as later by Peter's lips he said, "Spare Thyself." If He would

only do homage for His possessions to Satan, the kingdoms of the world should be His. All in vain for One who asked only what was the will of God! All in vain for Him in whose heart was God's law! But because it was God's law that was there, and not the lust of glory or ease, was it therefore no temptation? We must wait for the light of another day fully to know how He "suffered being tempted." It is our privilege to bow low at His feet, and worship before His Majesty in the heavens, where He is to-day maintaining our cause—a merciful and faithful High Priest "touched with the feeling of our infirmities." "Get thee hence, Satan," is now the victor's word. He has overcome by "It is written." It is His to exalt the Word of God; His to hold on in the form of a servant with the words: "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him

only shalt thou serve." The temptation ended, and not before, "angels minister to Him."

St. Luke tells us that the devil "departed from Him for a season," and St. John records his single return, ch. xiv. 30. Can Satan get a victory in view of the path of darkness and woe that now lay before the Lord [esus? Immediately after the Lord was sealed for His service down here, Satan had sought to turn Him from the path of obedience by the most subtle wiles, and by every allurement; he had completely failed, and he knew it. He had met One in weakness, stronger than he; he returned from the contest consciously vanquished. He had found one man who sought nothing but the will of God. But now was there not an opportunity that offered some promise of success? The obedience of Christ so far had been the

most blessed communion with His Father's joy and love. As He had lain upon the Mount of Olives, the homeless outcast, what a feast of the Father's love and intimacy was spread for Him in the still silence of a scene, "from earthly joys apart!" How the Father was with Him as He sat weary and lonely, the rejected of men at the well of Sychar! Ah yes, blessed Lord, Thou didst say, "The lines are fallen to me in pleasant places," because Jehovah was the portion of Thine inheritance and of Thy cup!

Obedience always leads man in a path marked by the light and joy of communion with God. There is one terrible exception. The Lord Jesus was now in full view of it, and Satan might think that at last he had a chance. Obedience was leading the Lord surely and soon

into darkness and abandonment. To continue upon that path; to accomplish to the full the will of God which He had come to do, must lead His soul into the darkness of one forsaken of God. Because of man's sin, "the prince of this world" had the power of death, but he could not use that power upon the Lord Jesus Christ. He "hath nothing in me." How divinely true of Him! Alone of all the sons of men He could say it. If there had been sin there the power of death might have been used upon Him. But His death, if He dies, will be as His life had completely been, an act of obedience. Every other death has been the fruit of disobedience. His death, if He continues as He will surely do, the path upon which He has entered. will be simple obedience, pure love to the Father, a whole burnt offering for the heart of God! "Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life, that I might take it again. No man taketh 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. This commandment have I received of My Father" (Jno. x. 17, 18).

But if Satan can do nothing against the Lord Jesus with the power of death, he can use the fear of death to alarm the Saviour's soul, and to present his final temptation to leave the path of obedience. That sinless soul could not but shrink from being made sin. To fear death as the judgment of God, was His piety (Heb. v. 7). Satan was never more satanic. Heartlessly he detects, maliciously he seizes the dread occasion. The anguish of the temptation was outwardly expressed by the agony of Gethsemane. "His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." What it inwardly was we shall in measure learn when our bodies shall have been changed to the likeness of His body of glory, and we hear from His own lips in the heavenly glory something of "the decease which He accomplished at Jerusalem."

Need I dwell upon the reality of the temptation? There never was anything more real in this world. Could He who delighted supremely and only in the light of His Father's countenance, continue to tread a path which must end in the forsaking of God? The counsels of God's grace required it, the very glory of God necessitated it. "Father, glorify Thy name."

There are times when worship must be silent. Even Jehovah's joy is silent (Zeph. iii. 17, marg.). And here

words utterly fail. Silent, prostrate, adoring, we listen: "But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment even so I do."

Perfect love! Perfect obedience! And both made known in that death from which Satan, by his wiles and allurements, seeks to turn the Lord Jesus. He will make it known in the whole universe that, fearing the darkness, the distance and desertion of the Cross, He nevertheless loves the Father with unswerving and measureless love. All His counsels shall have effect. Those He gave to Christ shall be redeemed. His will shall be done in earth as it is in heaven. The "glory of God the Father" shall be supreme through Christ Iesus, "obedient unto death, vea, the death of the Cross."

The Lord has overcome. The awful cross still is before

Him; but there He will in effect "destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." There He will finish the victory

"That needs no second fight, That leaves no second foe."

And now in closing, does not the heart feel strengthened for any temptation? Has not the good shepherd gone before His sheep, met the foe and vanquished him? Has He not become a High Priest, "touched with the feeling of our infirmities?" Has He not been in all points tempted like as we are apart from sin? Is He not the "seed of Abraham," truly a man in the presence of God for us? In that sacred body has He not suffered being tempted? Is He not capable of fully feeling with us, who pass through the same scene of sorrow with like temptations, with the same malicious, wily foe? And is it not a *rock* beneath our feet in temptation, to know that our High Priest, Jesus the Son of God, is He who has overcome Satan by an absolute trust in God, and *shown* that "IN HIM IS NO SIN?" God help us to value Him more! May He give us to make better use of One so divinely fitted to meet all our need!



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