

THE TEMPTATION OF JESUS

By Milton Smith

One of the most amazing incidents recorded in the Bible is the story of the temptation of the Son of God by the prince of “spiritual wickedness in the high places.” Each of the synoptic gospels record this incident. We must consider that what took place on this occasion was Satan engaging himself in an assault on the incarnate Son of God. Among the adversaries of Jesus, none could equal the power of Satan. If our Lord was able to triumph over the spiritual assaults of the prince of this world, he truly was the Son of God, the promised Messiah, and the Holy One who has the authority to rescue all sinners from the kingdom of darkness.

Scripture tells us that Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil for 40 days. (Luke 4:2.) This would be the ultimate assault on Christ by the wicked powers of darkness. This area the Bible identifies as the “wilderness,” was

often called the “devastation.” It is a very frightening area east of Jerusalem that was entered by traveling down the back slopes of the plateau on which Jerusalem rose over the Dead Sea. It was an area consisting pretty much of nothing but rocks, jagged cliffs, and devastation. It was a most frightening trip. Jesus found Himself all alone in this dreaded wilderness when Satan came to Him. Here, in this intimidating wasteland, Jesus would be confronted by a subtle, crafty, and clever deceiver. Satan’s temptation would be masterfully designed to attack Jesus with the greatest amount of impact. Everything about this situation would be dangerous.

But Jesus overcame every obstacle and every temptation that this evil deceiver would throw at him. But what does this mean to us? Basically, three important facts: First, Jesus satisfied the Father’s demand for the

perfect sacrifice by his victory over the tempter. Second, Jesus became the perfect mediator between God and man by being “tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin.” (Hebrews 4:15.) And third, in turning back Satan by quoting Scripture, Jesus was showing us how to overcome Satan’s temptations by using the Bible. Satan hates the word of God, and when we use it, he is more likely to flee from us and center his attacks on someone else. The temptation of Jesus was truly an amazing incident, and one that teaches the student of the Bible some magnificent lessons. — Tulsa, OK

“MY LORD AND MY GOD”

By Caleb Boggs

What kind of God do you believe in?

Jim McGuiggan wrote in his book *The God of the Towel*, “A God who tears mountain ranges to shreds, who rolls out light years of space like a man laying carpet, a God who flings galaxies into the empty space and lays oceans in their places with an eyedropper - that kind of God, we think earns the name ‘God.’”

Undoubtedly, a God of such power deserves our worship. However, we have deeper reason for reverence to Him.

In John 20:27, Jesus said to Thomas, “Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe.” In verse 28 Thomas proclaimed, “My Lord and my God!” At this moment, it wasn’t the omnipotence of God that compelled Thomas to confess. Thomas was floored by a kind of God unlike any

other.

“A God who will be bundled into a crowded room, with spittle falling from his beard and red welts marking his face? A God like that? A God who stands silent before an insolent and pathetic little Roman governor, a God who listens patiently to the rantings of an ecclesiastical hypocrite? A God like that? A God who blushes as he is stripped naked for crucifixion, who winces as pikes gouge their way into his feet and hands? A God who delivers himself into the hands of stupid, self-serving, brutal men - this is the God who stood before Thomas.” (Jim McGuiggan)

Our invulnerable God assumed vulnerability to prove His love for us. He is living, and His love is perfect. We could have no greater reason for reverence than that which He has given us. May we hold steadfast in love and belief of the one, true God.

“Blessed are those who have not

seen and yet have believed.” (John 20:29.)

“Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” (Hebrews 4:14-16.)

— Neasho, MO

Old Paths

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“ask for the old paths” (Jer. 6:16)

LIGHT YOUR CANDLE!

By Bobby Key

Did you ever enter into dimly-lit surroundings and experience difficulty in seeing, only to have your eyes get used to the dark? Funny, isn’t it, how easy it is to get used to the dark? As strange as it is how we get used to physical darkness, it is also strange how we may grow comfortable with the darkness of ignorance and sin.

We are living in the dark! Listen to God’s Word: “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.” (Ephesians 6:12.) The depths of present-day depravity are too wretched for us to describe. We have our broken homes, mate swapping, alcohol, profanity, corrupt and dishonest business deals, trashy movies, vulgar novels, pornography, illicit drug use - and the list goes on and on. Yes, our world is a dark one!

We not only live in the dark but we are growing accustomed to the dark. Many of us know so little about the Bible and associate so much with unbelievers that false teaching has come to seem less and less objectionable. We have some folks who are so busy mixing error with truth that they actually think the darkness is lifting! There are also those who find the practices of this world less and less repulsive.

Friends, too many of us are not only living in the dark but we are getting used to it!

As a child of God, I must not allow myself to get used to the dark; I must instead light my candle! I must light my candle by holding forth the Lord, as the “light of the world.” (John 8:12.) I must light my candle by learning, living and teaching the Bible’s light. (Psalm 119:105.)

I must also light my candle by faithfully living the Christian life: “You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lamp stand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.” (Matthew 5:14-16.)

Friend, don’t get used to the dark. Light your candle!

“That you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world.” (Philippians 2:15.)

DON’T FORGET TO WEEP!

By Chris McCurley

In Luke chapter 19, we find Jesus looking out over the city of Jerusalem. As He assessed the grim condition of the inhabitants of this great city, He wept. Actually, our English translation doesn’t do it justice. The word used is *klaio*; a word that refers to “loud wailing.” Jesus didn’t shed a few tears. He wailed out loud. If only the citizens of Jerusalem would have accepted Him as their Messiah, they would have known the true meaning of peace. As a result, they were about to endure destruction. Through the tears Jesus said these words: “For the days will come upon you when your enemies will throw up a barricade against you, and surround you and hem you in on every side, and they will level you to the ground and your children within you, and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not recognize the time of your visitation.” (Luke 19:43,44.)

This tragic prophecy was fulfilled less than 40 years later when Roman armies surrounded the city. Six hundred thousand Jews were slain and thousands more were captured, and all of it could have been avoided. God had come to Jerusalem in the person of Jesus Christ, but the city rejected Him. And they paid a terrible price for their missed opportunity.

Many of us weep for the condition of our surroundings. We are saddened by the immorality that persists in our country. We are grieved by the fact that so many in our culture are turning their backs on God and His word while sanctioning sin. We are outraged that God is being removed from the public square and religion is under attack, all in the name of tolerance. Notice that Jesus didn’t resort to throwing verbal darts or vicious personal attacks. He wept. He wept over the city because it didn’t have to be this way. The citizens didn’t have to suffer, but they did because they forfeited a golden opportunity.

It should concern us when God’s word has been ignored or when our Lord’s character is under fire. We must stand firm for the truth when it is under attack. But we also mustn’t forget that souls are involved. There are many living in sin and promoting sin because they don’t know the truth. These folks don’t know the things that make for peace. They need to hear from us. Like the residents of Jerusalem, they may forfeit the opportunity to know the Messiah but at least we should give them the opportunity. Remember, Jesus prayed for forgiveness for those who were driving the nails through His wrists and feet. Do we weep for the condition of our nation? And does our sorrow motivate us to do what we can to change hearts?

Where is your Jerusalem? Look around you. You are among throngs of people who do not know the things that make for peace. You are walking among the walking dead. Does the sinful state of others cause you to mourn? Do you see the sinner as an enemy or as a victim? These are pertinent questions as it relates to Jesus’ mission because if we do not have a deep sense of sorrow for those who are without a Savior, we will never go to them. Like Jesus, we must have a passion for compassion. We should see the sinful through tear-filled eyes.

— Abilene, TX

Spiritual Vertigo

By Joe Slater

I would never make it as a pilot. What if I had to fly at night in fog or a strong wind? Pilots must trust their instruments in such conditions – easier said than done!

Pilots are not immune from vertigo, the loss of their sense of direction, balance, and equilibrium. That's when trusting instruments is especially important! Fifteen percent of airplane accidents are due to vertigo; most of them are fatal. It's far worse for pilots who are not instrument rated.

Christians must trust God and His word just like an airplane pilot must trust the instruments. It's far too easy to become disoriented and rely on our feelings, sincerely believing that we're headed in the right direction. Jeremiah correctly wrote, "Oh Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps." (10:23.) Two passages in Judges state: "In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes." (9:6 & 21:25.) It was one of the lowest points in Israel's history.

How can I be saved? What does God accept as worship? How should I behave each day? What about my relationships with other people? The Bible answers all of these questions and more. However, some presume that their feelings are promptings by the Holy Spirit that somehow out-rank what the Scriptures say. Others think, "God wants me to be happy, and here's what makes me happy, so it must be ok regardless of what the Bible says."

We must deal with spiritual vertigo by trusting God and His word as we fly toward heaven. God and His word are more reliable than the best human instruments, and certainly more trustworthy than our feelings!

— Justin, TX

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths. Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the Lord and depart from evil. It will be health to your flesh, and strength to your bones." (Proverbs 3:5-8.)

EDITORIALLY SPEAKING . . .

(EDITOR'S NOTE: This issue of OLD PATHS completes 42 years of continuous publication. Thanks so much to those of you who make this work possible through your ongoing and generous support. Your help has always made the difference in keeping us afloat. As many of you choose either year's end or a new year's beginning to contribute, allow me say in advance and once again: Thank you!)

A POWERFUL PERSPECTIVE

By Dalton Key

The apostle Paul's life was anything but easy. Following his conversion to Christ, his life was littered with countless examples of opposition, affliction and painful persecution. He wrote the Corinthian brethren recounting several examples: ". . . in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in hunger and nakedness - besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches." (2 Corinthians 11:23-28.)

A lesser man might have complained of his fate and given up the fight. But Paul was made of sterner stuff. While imprisoned in Rome, his words to the Philippians ring forth with amazing faith and faith-based optimism. "For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain . . . one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus . . . Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say rejoice!" (Philippians 1:21; 3:13,14; 4:4.) The zenith of the apostle's positivity is revealed in the powerful words of Philippians 4:13: "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

This powerful perspective runs counter to the message put forth by today's modern, conventional wisdom. Paul's attitude appears unthinkably naive to the insulated intellectuals dominating our airwaves presently. Did Paul not realize - could he not own - his victimhood? Was he unaware of just how unjustly he was being treated? We can imagine today's talk show hosts sobbing over Paul's pitiable story while insisting he "open up" and "vent his rage."

Paul's view of things may have been unusual and may still be out of the ordinary, but his mind-set squarely agrees with heaven's will. "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18.)

Paul believed with unbridled fervor that which many of us have either never known or long forgotten. He believed in personal responsibility - "I." He believed in positive, forward-thinking affirmation - "I can." He believed in assertive action - "I can do." He believed in limitless potential - "I can do all things." And of highest importance, he believed in divine providence - "I can do all things through Christ."

Do we believe what Paul believed?



FAITH IS THE BEST TEACHER

By Danny Tunnell

God created us to believe in Him, and not just to believe in Him, but to believe what His Word says, and that it always produces the desired result.

There are a lot of areas we could look at. For example, in marriage, if we forgive one another as the Word says it will produce a good result.

God created us with a purpose. He created us to believe. God told Adam that he could eat freely of every tree in the garden, except one tree, and if he ate from that tree he would surely die. (Genesis 2:15-17.) Let's not look at that as God giving him a rule or a do or don't. Look at it as God giving him a warning. He was letting Adam know that if he ate from that tree you're going to die. And God was saying, "I don't want you to die."

God created us to believe Him first. God's desire was that Adam and Eve simply believe Him. His desire was that when He said, "If you eat you will die," they would believe Him.

This is every parent's desire. You want your children to believe you. Some say, "Experience is the best teacher." No! It is not the best teacher. In fact, it can be a horrible teacher!

What is the best teacher? Faith is the best teacher. A parent tells a child, "Don't do that!" You don't want your children to have to learn by experience. When you say, "Don't drive fast," you want your children to believe you. You don't want them to be in a car wreck and learn that way. You don't want them to get hurt. What God wanted was for Adam and Eve to believe Him.

God created us to believe. What kind of relationship do you have with someone that you don't believe? Why would anyone expect to have a good relationship with God if they really just don't believe Him?

Throughout the Bible God wanted people to believe Him. In Numbers 14:11, He asked the question, "How long will this people provoke Me, and

how long will it be before they believe Me?"

The reason we don't obey God is because we don't believe Him. It's that simple.

Every time you read the Word of God you are deciding, "Do I believe this or not? Am I going to walk in this truth? Am I going to allow God to put this in my life?"

Believe God first and believe Him last. Who has the last word in how you treat your spouse? Is it the Bible or is it you? Who has the last word about whether you hang in there or not? Who has the last word about your finances? Who has the last word about what you look at on the internet?

If you believe God first and last then you are living by faith. And faith is the best teacher.

— Miami, OK

SINGING PRAISE AND LOVING IT

By Luke Bower

The other day in services, after a song was announced, I heard a young kid a few rows behind me exclaim excitedly, "Yes! My Favorite!"

That made my morning. I couldn't help but smile while we sang that song - and the feeling even carried into the next song, as I thought this might be someone else's favorite too.

I don't know about you, but from time to time I need to be reminded of why we sing.

If you are a regular church attendee, it is easy to dismiss singing as just something you do. It is even easier to get distracted by criticizing the songs. Maybe it's a song you don't know or don't like. Maybe you feel like we have sung it a thousand times, or that we just don't do a good job with that one.

Singing just for singing's sake, no matter how good it may sound, is simply empty and hollow.

We sing first and foremost because God is worthy of our praise: "Praise

the Lord! Praise the Lord, O my soul! While I live I will praise the Lord; I will sing praises to my God while I have my being." (Psalm 146:1,2.)

Another reason we sing praises is to encourage each other. "And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." (Ephesians 5:18-20.)

So, let's not get caught up in a routine or our personal preferences when we sing. Instead let's get lost in our praise to God. He deserves all that and more! May our singing also greatly encourage one another and strengthen our fellowship.

— Abilene, TX

"And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him." (Colossians 3:15-17.)

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