

consider the sorrow and suffering that follow in the wake of sin and yet continue to sin. It is not until he repents—turns back—that there is any hope for him. The sense of sin precedes salvation—"God be merciful to me the sinner" is the prayer that reaches the throne. It unlocks the door to God's forgiveness.

Fortunately, repentance can be as instantaneous as the decision that leads one into wrong doing.

A man may contemplate stealing for a long time; he may count the money and calculate the possibility of escape, but it only requires an instant to become a thief—the instant in which he resolves to take that which is not his own.

So one may ponder over a wrong, real or fancied, and cherish revenge, but it only takes an instant to resolve to be a murderer.

So the prodigal son doubtless reviewed his downward course and recalled the pleasure of his home, but it required only the instant to say, "I will arise and go to my father."

"DO VIOLENCE TO NO MAN"

John the Baptist was a mighty preacher. He poured his whole soul into his work; his words shook his hearers loose from indifference and brought them face to face with their own iniquity. His words penetrated their hearts and stirred new resolves.

He was not only a preacher, but he had the wisdom to advise those who came unto him.

The inquirers are divided by Luke into three classes. Reversing the order given in Gospel, let us consider first John's answer to the soldiers who asked, "And what shall we do?"

He said unto them: "Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages." He dealt with the special temptations that they were subject to.

"Do violence to no man"—it is difficult for one to have power without abusing it.

A soldier has not only the physical advantage that comes with a strong body, but he has the greater advantage that comes with the use of weapons.

The difference between the armed and the unarmed is much greater today than it was in the day of John the Baptist. We have the revolver and the repeating rifle, the machine gun and shells. During the recent war I met a manufacturer who had a contract for three million shells; each was guaranteed to burst into one hundred and twelve pieces—think of the butchery!

Today a few are a match for a multitude, but even nineteen hundred years ago the soldier was able to extort from the civilian, and John warned them against yielding to this temptation.

ACCUSE NO ONE FALSELY

"Neither accuse any falsely." When injustice is done it is usually excused by false accusation. The sin of false swearing is so common that the ninth commandment is directed against it:

"Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor."

The third sin against which he warned, "Be content with your wages," might be construed as enjoining respect for government.

The soldier is the agent of the government, its arm in the exercise of authority. Mutiny among soldiers is a high crime and desire for increase in wages is sometimes the cause of such an uprising.

When the publicans came to John and said, "What shall we do?" his answer dealt with the sin most common among them—"Exact no more than that which is appointed you."

The collection of taxes does not tend to make one popular, but the tax gatherer arouses the minimum of resentment when there is no doubt about his integrity. If to that which he is authorized to collect he adds graft for himself, he becomes an object of contempt.

John would make the way of public officials as easy as possible by keeping them within the line of duty.

JOHN'S ADVICE FOR EVERY MAN

But the Baptist's answer to the multitude was intended for all. To the people's query, "What shall we do then?" he replied:

"He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise."

This lays stress on sympathy, the deepest human chord.

It is lack of sympathy that causes most of the distress in this world.

The ten commandments forbid the doing of evil, but obedience to them is not built upon sympathy. We must, as a matter of justice, refrain from injuring others, but this would be a cold world if there were nothing warmer in it than justice.

Possibly justice would approach more nearly

to sympathy if it were interpreted in a larger way.

Social injustice is often the cause of want among the poor. When hard times come the poorest suffer first and most. Because some escape suffering we are prone to condemn the poor for not making provision for emergencies; they are not always to blame.

SYMPATHY ALL WOULD FEEL

The individual cannot excuse himself for refusing to aid the needy if the suffering is due to something which he has joined in bringing or has failed to prevent when it was in his power to prevent. John is dealing with that sympathy which all should feel—the sympathy that is invoked when one who has become acquainted with one who needs.

Christ expresses this in the second commandment, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

That does not mean that one is not to love himself—if he did not love himself it would be of little value to another to be loved as he loves himself.

The love that one has for himself is based upon necessity for self preservation; this is the love to which sympathy appeals. If we feel about others' needs as we do about our own we will share with them to the extent of our ability and their need.

Organized charity has to some extent relieved the needy, but to the extent that it has done so it has denied to the individual the real pleasure that comes from a personal knowledge of aid personally given to those who deserve help.

COURIERS OF CHRIST

No wonder some among the many hearing John asked in their hearts whether he were the Christ. The wisdom that he manifested set him apart from those to whom they were accustomed. John promptly answered them all in the same way:

"I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose; he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire."

He recognized that he was not the looked-for Messiah; he was content to be the forerunner; he must prepare the way. He understood the nature of the expected One and was proud to precede Him. He was a courier; he ran ahead and announced the coming of his Messiah.

And may not all of us be, in a smaller way, couriers of Christ? Unworthy to unloose the latchet of His shoes and yet each of us able to turn the attention of some wanderer to the One who is mighty to save by His blood, to inspire by His example, and to guide by His wisdom.

JESUS TEMPTED OF THE DEVIL

By WILLIAM JENNINGS BRYAN

BIBLE TEXT—LESSON FOR OCTOBER 22. (Luke 4:1-13)

And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness.

Being 40 days tempted of the devil. And in those days he did eat nothing; and when they were ended, he afterward hungered.

And the devil said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread.

And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone but by every word of God.

And the devil, taking him up into an high mountain, shewed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time.

And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them; for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will give it.

If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine.

And Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.

And he brought him to Jerusalem, and set him on a pinnacle of the temple, and said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence:

For it is written, He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee:

And in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.

And Jesus said unto him, It is said, thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.

And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him for a season.

No chapter of the Bible holds greater encouragement to those who strive to lead godly lives than Luke's graphic account of the devil's bold effort to lead the Saviour astray.

No more dramatic situation is to be found in all the Bible, and none more human in the lesson it brings to every man.

After He was baptized by John and received the manifestation of divine approval, Christ was

led by the Spirit into the wilderness, where He remained for 40 days preparing Himself for the work which He was about to undertake. Here He was tempted of the devil—an actual experience which cannot be explained away as poetry or allegory.

The lesson that this fourth chapter of Luke, and the same chapter in Matthew, hold for us naturally divides itself into two parts, one dealing with the tempter and the other with the temptations.

Is there a personal devil?

Bible passages leave no doubt of it. Nothing is more clearly stated or more repeatedly emphasized than that there is a personal devil—invisible, but present and active.

CHRIST'S TESTIMONY OF THE DEVIL

Christ says: "I beheld Satan fall as lightning from heaven."

In Job we read: "And the Lord said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it."

Moses tells us that in the form of a serpent the devil tempted Eve.

Satan is represented as presumptuous, proud, powerful, wicked, malignant, subtle, deceitful, fierce and cruel. He is described as "the prince of the power of the air," and "the prince of this world."

Luke tells us that Satan entered into Judas—this is the explanation of the betrayal of Christ. John also brings this indictment against the devil: "And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray Him."

The wicked are described as "the children of the devil," as "turning aside after" him, as doing the lusts of the devil, and being possessed by, blinded by, deceived by, ensnared and troubled by the devil. These references are sufficient to show that the devil is not an imaginary person or a figure of speech or a symbol of evil.

GOD TEMPTS NO MAN

But the existence of a devil is proven by individual experiences as well as by quotations from Holy Writ.

Who has not been made aware of his presence?

Whisperings come to man from without; they do not come from God—"neither tempteth he any man"—and they do not emanate from the ego—the man himself. They come from the outside and are at war with God's plans and with God's purposes. The struggle between the better self and the devil is titanic and continuing.

Even so consecrated a life as Paul's could not rid itself of Satan's hated presence. In his distress he cried out, "When I would do good, evil is present with me."

If one who suffered shipwreck, was beaten with stripes and threatened with death must continually be buffeted by this liar and father of lies, what hope have those of lesser faith and devotion of traveling beyond the devil's power to annoy and to harass?

Luke tells us that this brazen and impudent enemy of all good dared to approach the sinless Saviour and to test Him with the greatest of temptations that can be placed before man. It is a consolation for us to know that Christ "was in all points tempted like as we are," and that He has promised that His strength shall be sufficient for us in the hours of trial.

THE FIRST TEMPTATION

There are many weak points in man's armor; he has many easily besetting sins. The devil selected three points of attack on Christ and each time the Saviour answered in the language of the Bible.

The first temptation was addressed to His physical needs after 40 days of fasting and it was strengthened by an appeal to Christ's conscious power: "If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread."

Christ needed only to manifest His power to rebuke Satan and satisfy His own hunger; the power that could make the water gush forth from the smitten rock could convert stones into bread. But Christ answered:

"It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God."

The answer silenced the tempter; Christ lifted the discussion to a higher plane, a plane to which the devil could not ascend.

This is a strategy of which the Christian may well avail himself. When we are tempted to allow ourselves to be absorbed in thought for the body and indulgence in physical pleasure