

Sunday, March 11, 2012

The victorious Christ in the temptation (2)

In the previous article, we talked about Jesus, our leader in spiritual warfare, who joins our battle and wins victory for us. He accepted the challenge of the devil, and came out to confront him on the mountain of temptation to crush him, and to grant us His victory.

Moreover, we know that the Lord Jesus did not need to fast. Rather, He fasted to sanctify our fasting and strengthen it, and to encourage us to fast, just like a mother who tastes the medicine before her sick child to encourage him to drink it. Fasting is the weapon the Lord gives to His believers to be equipped with in spiritual warfare. Fasting, coupled with prayer, is a striking force against the enemy who is stirred up as soon as we begin fasting and starts to intensify his war.

Now let's talk about the warfare of the enemy of good, the devil:

First, all his warfare is full of deception and it permeates with trickery, it is full of fraud and craftiness. We need to be always vigilant and alert, and reliant on the mighty grace of God, and His words that reveal to us the deceit of the enemy and expose his tricks. In the first temptation, for example, Satan tries to press the Lord Jesus to find an unusual solution to the problem of hunger, outside the natural law, which is written in the commandment: *"In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread"* (Genesis 3:19). In the second temptation, he tries to twist the meaning of a verse, which emphasizes that God sends His angels to protect the righteous in their path, so he suggests to the Lord to jump off the pinnacle of the temple. In the third, he claims that he is able to give to Jesus all the kingdoms of the world in exchange of something that seems simple. In fact, he does not own anything, but he is merely a usurper of what is not his own, and he has no proof of ownership of anything in the world that he may want to give.

He is always a liar, deceiver, and swindler.

Also, it is worth noting that the enemy's attacks are diverse and come from all directions. We see that the three temptations of the devil to the Lord are comprehensive and include all kinds of temptations that mankind can encounter. They are the same temptations that Saint John the beloved mentioned in his first epistle, *"For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life... The world is passing away, and the lust of it."* (1 John 2: 16-17). The lust of the flesh is embodied in the temptation of turning stones into bread. The lust of the eyes is depicted in the temptation of flying off the pinnacle of the temple, meaning that the eyes would see us and glorifies us. The lust of the pride of life is illustrated in the temptation of the kingdoms of the world and its glory that is always offered to us in exchange of submitting to Satan and worship him. In all three cases, the Lord Jesus revealed to us how to overcome by using the divine scriptures.

We thank God that He faced all kinds of temptations in order to help us facing them, so we may overcome with His power, as our teacher Saint Paul said: *"For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted."* (Hebrews 2:18).

If these three temptations represent all kinds of enticements that Satan offers us, we should remember that in our baptism, we renounced the devil three times, i.e. we rejected him, and ousted him from our lives together with his unclean offerings. Thus, it is unfit for us to accept anything from his evil offerings into our lives, no matter how much he tries to make them appealing in our eyes.

We also notice that Satan seriously exploits all opportunities. He waits for the right time to wage his wicked war. He came forward to tempt Christ when he saw Him hungry by the flesh at the end of forty days of no food or drink. He, the devil, does the same with us. He waits for a moment of inattentiveness, weakness, complacency, busyness, or if we momentarily forsake our powerful weapons of prayer, praise, or the nourishing word of God. This is the moment that he would exploit to attack us.

So how do we benefit from all temptations that the Lord Jesus faced?

This will be the topic of the next article, by the grace of God.

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