

## 17. Was Jesus Tempted Just Like We Are?

“For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feelings of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.” Hebrews 4:15. This verse of Scripture has been, and still is, the basis for a great deal of unhealthy discussion regarding the human nature of Christ. There are some who claim Jesus had to be tempted in the identical manner as every human being has been tempted in order to meet the requirements of this text. This conclusion is arrived at without taking into account all that God has revealed to His church on the subject.

If Jesus was tempted to steal, lie, swear, be impure in thought or deed, he resisted that temptation in one of two ways: (1) by resisting the inclination to yield or (2) by realizing that He was helpless and turning the problem over to His Father. In either case He would have had to have a propensity, or inclination, for Satan to appeal to. Yet, Jesus said, “Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath found nothing in me.” John 14:30. This was very close to the end of Jesus’ life on earth. Satan had probed into every corner of Christ’s life and could find nothing to build any temptation upon.

“Not even by a thought could Christ be brought to yield to the power of his subtle temptations. Satan finds in human hearts some point where he can gain a foothold—some sinful desire is cherished by means of which his temptations assert their power.”<sup>1</sup>

Remember, it was as a human being that Jesus met these temptations. “Not a single thought or feelings responded to temptation.”<sup>2</sup> Notice, there was no response by either thought or feeling which must precede a temptation. “Every sin, every discord, every defiling lust that transgression had brought, was torture to His spirit.”<sup>3</sup> “Never, in

any way, leave the slightest impression upon human minds that a taint of, or *inclination* to, corruption rested upon Christ, or that He in any way yielded to corruption.”<sup>4</sup> “As the sinless One, His nature recoiled from evil.”<sup>5</sup>

Our text being considered says, “. . . (He) was tempted in all points like as we are . . .” and this is true. In order to find the answer to the “how” question, let us look at another quotation about our Lord.

“It was a difficult task for the Prince of life to carry out the plan which He had undertaken for the salvation of man, in clothing His divinity with humanity. He had received honor in the heavenly courts, and was familiar with absolute power. It was *as difficult* for Him to keep the *level of humanity* as for man to rise above the low level of their depraved natures, and be *partakers of the divine nature*.”<sup>6</sup>

“To keep *His glory veiled* as the child of a fallen race, this was the most severe discipline to which the Prince of life could subject Himself.”<sup>7</sup> This is where we all have our difficulties. It is a problem for us to let the divine nature of Christ be reflected in us.

Let us analyze what this quotation is telling us. It was extremely difficult for Christ to clothe His *divinity with humanity*. Why? “Jesus revealed *no qualities*, and *exercised no powers*, that *men may not have through faith Him*. His perfect humanity is that which all His followers may possess, if they will be in subjection to God as He was.”<sup>8</sup>

Jesus said, “I can of mine own self do nothing . . .” John 5:30.

It is quite clear that when Christ “laid aside His royal robe and kingly crown”<sup>9</sup> He took upon Him the nature of man “*as God created him*.” “Christ came to the earth, taking humanity and standing as man’s representative, to show in the controversy with Satan that man, as *God created him*, connected with the Father and the Son could obey every divine requirement.”<sup>10</sup> “*He began where the first Adam began*.”<sup>11</sup> Christ, as the

second Adam, must succeed where the first Adam failed, using only the same power the first Adam had available to him. "When Adam was assailed by the tempter in Eden he was without the taint of sin . . . Christ, in the wilderness of temptation, stood in Adam's place to bear the test he failed to endure."<sup>12</sup>

There is no evidence in the Word of God that sinful nature can ever be obedient to God! The message of God to man is that he *inherently* has a sinful carnal nature which is unredeemable.

"The inheritance of children is that of sin. Sin has separated them from God. Jesus gave His life that He might unite the broken links to God. As related to the first Adam, men receive from him nothing but guilt and the sentence of death."<sup>13</sup>

"Because the carnal mind is enmity (hatred) against God: *for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.*" Romans 8:7. (Italics supplied.) Christ never tried to show to anyone that *sinful nature* could become *sinless nature*. His message was always, ". . . Ye must be born again." John 3:7. ". . . Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone . . ." John 12:24. ". . . Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? . . ." Matthew 20:22.

If Christ had sinless nature how could He be tempted like I am? What is temptation? "Temptation is resisted when man is powerfully influenced to do a wrong action and, knowing that he can do it, resists, by faith, with a firm hold upon divine power."<sup>14</sup> Temptation only exists when there is a "powerful influence to do wrong action." "But every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed." James 1:14. How could Christ be tempted to do an evil thing when "the refined sensibilities of His holy nature rendered contact with evil unspeakably painful to

Him.”<sup>15</sup> Christ hated sin with a perfect hatred. His Spirit, dwelling in man, is the only power that brings man to hate sin, which every born-again Christian must learn to do.

Christ, in order to be tempted as we are, must have had a strong desire to do a wrong act, but resisted by trusting in His Father. How could Satan find something that would fit these criteria? Satan learned, even when Christ was a child, that it was useless to try to tempt Him to retaliate. Even when abused, to be irritated, angered, or to do any *bad thing* was unthinkable to Him.

“Of the bitterness that falls to the lot of humanity, there was no part that Christ did not taste. There were those who tried to cast contempt upon Him because of His birth, and even in His childhood He had to meet their scornful looks and evil whisperings. If He had responded by an impatient word or look, if He had conceded to His brothers by even one wrong act, He would have failed of being a perfect example. Thus He would have failed of carrying out the plan of our redemption.”<sup>16</sup>

Satan knows how difficult it is for man to live here as a born-again Christian, keeping his natural sinful nature crucified. He knows that it takes a daily dying to self (1 Corinthians 15:31)—even a continuous crucifixion of habits from that old, but natural, nature. 2 Corinthians 4:10-12. Therefore, he switched his approach to Christ, tempting Him to reveal *His natural nature*, which He had laid aside when He came to this earth. To reveal His natural divine nature would have ruined the plan of salvation, for Christ must use only that which is available to man.

Never had there been born a sinless human being until Christ was born of Mary. Never has there been born one since. Satan’s experience in dealing with *sinful* babies, children, youth or adults was of no value when dealing with *sinless* human nature. He tried in every way possible to force Christ to reveal His *natural divine nature*. Realizing

that Christ's greatest problem while here on earth was to be *accepted as the Messiah* (the anointed One), Satan would use *this natural desire* and try through temptations to get Him to take Himself out as His Father's hands and respond by using His own divine nature that He had laid aside. From His childhood to Calvary this one goal was never given up by Satan. His temptations become more powerful until at the cross the challenge was hurled at Him for hours, "If you are the Christ come down and we will believe." Christ, knowing that He could respond at any time and compel His tormentors to acknowledge Him as Lord and King, refused. He trusted His present and future life to His Father's hands.

"Thus when Christ was treated with contempt, there came to Him a *strong temptation* to manifest His divine character. By a word, by a look, He could compel His persecutors to confess that He was Lord above kings and rulers, priests and temple. But it was *His difficult task* to keep the position He had chosen as one with humanity."<sup>17</sup>

What a temptation! No human could ever be tempted like He was!

How was He tempted as we are? The born-again Christian must die to *his old natural nature*, which is *sinful*. "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." Galatians 5:24. This is stated over and over in God's Word. Selfishness is declared to be the root of all evil.<sup>18</sup> In the judgement all sins come under the heading of selfishness.<sup>19</sup> "What is the sign of a new heart? A changed life. There is a daily, hourly dying to selfishness and pride."<sup>20</sup> It would have shown *selfishness* for Christ to act at any time *on His own desires*.

Let your mind probe to its greatest depths and you will find that all sin is selfishness! It is for this reason that when Satan tempts the born-again Christian to do a wrong thing, the old nature, which he has crucified, still seems to urge him to do it.

How can this be when the old nature is crucified? Here is where Satan's method of working is revealed. Satan takes advantage of the fact that the born-again Christian, who has a new *nature* given to him at justification, does not receive a new *character* in the same way. A character still has to be developed. This was true with Adam and it is still true with all of the human family. God created Adam perfect in every way, but he had to develop a perfect character, which he failed to do. This is where Christ succeeded and Adam failed. Christ then credits to the born-again Christian's account His own sinless character. This is *placed* to the *account* of the Christian who accepts this as a fact and then allows Christ to begin the work of sanctification, which is God *changing* his *character* so that it will reflect the *character* that is *legally credited* to him in justification.

What does this have to do with how Satan tempts us? Let us take a look at what character really is. "The character is revealed, not by occasional good deeds and occasional misdeeds, but by the tendency of the habitual words and acts."<sup>21</sup> Habits, then, make up our *character*. So, when we live with a sinful nature controlling us, the *habits* that we form reflect that *sinful nature*.

Habits or character cannot be given instantaneously; that is why "There is no such thing as instantaneous sanctification."<sup>22</sup> With the *old habits* still alive in the newborn Christian, even though they are being worked on by Christ, we can see how Satan sets the trap. He knows that he has no power to bring back to life the *old nature*, and Christ *will not* bring it back, so Satan's only hope is through the habits. He sets that trap, which may be through people or circumstances, so the natural response is a *habitual* response. Then he blames us for responding, and uses our habitual response as proof that the *old nature* is not dead after all. He hopes in this way to force us into discouragement and to get us to *give up and turn away from Christ*, thinking that the whole plan is not working. It is thus that we resurrect the *old nature*. Only then can Satan take *control* again.

Can you see that Satan is tempting the Christian in exactly the same way he tempted Christ? In both cases he is trying to force the tempted ones to reveal their *natural natures*. The difference is that our *natural nature* is wicked, so we do not want to reveal it. Christ's *natural nature* was *divine*, so He *desired* to reveal it. But *both* must rely on *surrender to divine control—Christ to His Father and us to Christ*. Christ's surrender led Him to Calvary and apparent defeat from every human viewpoint. Our surrender leads us to eternal life and peace with God.

*Selfishness*, the root, is the target. But there is one vast difference between Christ's temptation and ours. If we fail, “. . . we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” 1 John 2:1. If Jesus failed, *all* would have been lost! The *entire* plan of redemption would have failed and Satan would have triumphed.

Yes, “. . . (He) was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin.” Hebrews 4:5.

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- 1 The Review and Herald, November 8, 1887.
- 2 Testimonies, vol. 5, p. 422.
- 3 The Desire of Ages, p. 111.
- 4 The SDA Bible Commentary, Vol. 5, pp. 1128, 1129, Letter 8, 1895.
- 5 Testimonies, vol. 2, p. 202.
- 6 The SDA Bible Commentary, Vol. 7, p. 930, The Review and Herald, April 1, 1875.
- 7 The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 5, p. 1081, Letter 19, 1901.
- 8 The Desire of Ages, p. 664.
- 9 The Review and Herald, June 15, 1905.
- 10 Signs of the Times, June 9, 1898.
- 11 The Youth's Instructor, June 2, 1898.
- 12 The Review and Herald, July 28, 1874.
- 13 Child Guidance, p. 475.
- 14 The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 5, p. 1082, The Youth's Instructor, July 20, 1899.
- 15 The SDA Bible Commentary, vol 7A, p. 451, The Review and Herald, November 8, 1887.
- 16 The Desire of Ages, p. 88.
- 17 The Desire of Ages, p. 700.
- 18 Child Guidance, p. 294.
- 19 Testimony Treasures, vol. 1, p. 518.
- 20 The Youth's Instructor, September 26, 1901.
- 21 Steps to Christ, pp. 57, 58.
- 22 The Sanctified Life, p. 10.