

gining. That was the first time anyone had ever asked me to get back into Church activity. In those fireside meetings my wife and I learned things about the gospel that we had never understood before. When testimonies were expressed, we felt feelings that had been dulled by many years of inactivity.

"As we started having family prayers together, we felt a special spirit enter into our home. Before long I became so anxious to learn about the gospel that I found myself reading the scriptures on the bus going to and from work and even during my noon hour."

His letter then tells of the great joy he and his wife felt when they went to the temple, where they and their children were sealed together for time and for all eternity. And now they are helping prepare their three sons for missionary service.

Perfect our lives

To you who are not now involved in Church activity, we extend to you our love and want you to know how eager we are to share with you the blessings of the priesthood and the gospel. There will never be a better time than now to become active in the process of self-

perfection. I promise you it will bring you peace, happiness, and joy, along with growth and development.

May all of us seek to perfect our lives in the pattern of the Savior, and may we help each other in the perfection process. I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

President Spencer W. Kimball

We have just heard from Elder Franklin D. Richards of the First Council of the Seventy.

The Tabernacle Choir will now sing for us.

The Tabernacle Choir sang "Thanks Be To God," after which Alexander Schreiner played an organ interlude.

President Kimball

It is now our privilege to hear from Elder Howard W. Hunter of the Council of the Twelve Apostles. He will now address us.

Elder Howard W. Hunter

Of the Council of the Twelve

There are times in our struggle with the adversities of mortality when we become weary, weakened, and susceptible to the temptations that seem to be placed in our pathways. A lesson for us lies in the account of the life of the Savior.

Temptations of Christ

Soon after his baptism Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wild, unculti-

vated wilderness. There he remained for forty days and nights, preparing himself for the formal ministry which was then to begin. The greatest task ever to be accomplished in this world lay before him, and he needed divine strength. Throughout these days in the wilderness he chose to fast, that his mortal body might be completely subjected to the divine influence of his Father's Spirit.

When Jesus had completed the fast of forty days and had communed with God, he was, in this hungry and physically weakened state, left to be tempted of the devil. That, too, was to be part of his preparation. Such a time is always the tempter's moment—when we are emotionally or physically spent, when we are weary, vulnerable, and least prepared to resist the insidious suggestions he makes. This was an hour of danger—the kind of moment in which many men fall and succumb to the subtle allurements of the devil.

Tempting physical needs

Satan's first temptation was to entice Jesus to satisfy his craving for food, that most basic, physical, biological need. It was a temptation of the senses, an appeal to appetite, and in many ways the most common and most dangerous of the devil's allurements. "If thou be the Son of God," he said, "command that these stones be made bread." (Matt. 4:3.) During the long weeks of seclusion, the Savior had been sustained by the exaltation of spirit that would naturally accompany such meditation, prayer, and communion with the heavens. In such a devoted spirit, bodily appetites were subdued and superceded, but now the demands of the flesh were inevitable.

Satan was not simply tempting Jesus to eat. Had he suggested, "Go down out of this wilderness and obtain food from the bread maker," there would have been no temptation because undoubtedly Jesus intended to eat at the close of his fast. Satan's temptation was to have him eat in a spectacular way—using his divine powers for selfish purposes. The temptation was in the invitation to turn stones into bread miraculously, instantaneously, without waiting or postponing physical gratification. His reply to the tempter was crystal clear: "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." (Matt. 4:4.)

Second temptation

Then followed the second temptation. Realizing that he had utterly failed in his attempt to induce Jesus to use his divine powers for personal, physical gratification and having seen Jesus defer totally to the will and spirit of his Father's sustenance, Satan went to the other extreme and tempted Jesus to wantonly throw himself upon the Father's protection. He took Jesus into the Holy City, to the pinnacle of the temple overlooking the spacious courts and people below, and quoted scripture:

"If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone." (Matt. 4:6; see also Ps. 91:11-12.)

There lurked in this appeal from Satan another temptation of the human side of mortal nature—the temptation to perform some dazzling feat, some astounding exploit which might bring crowds of amazed and attentive onlookers. Surely leaping from the dizzy heights of the temple turret and landing in the courtyard unhurt would be such a feat. This would be public recognition that Jesus was a superior being and did have a message from on high. It would be a sign and a wonder, the fame of which would spread like wildfire throughout all Judaea and cause many to believe that the Messiah had indeed come. But faith is to precede the miracle; miracles are not to precede the faith. Jesus, of course, answered scripture for scripture by replying, "It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." (Matt. 4:7; see also Deut. 6:16.) Once more the purposes of Satan were thwarted and Christ became the victor.

A final ploy

In his third temptation, the devil casts away all subtlety and scripture and

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all deviousness and disguise. Now he staked everything on a blunt, bold proposition. From a high mountain he showed Jesus all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them—the cities, the fields, the flocks, the herds, and everything nature could offer. Though they were not his to give, Satan offered them all to Jesus—to him who had lived as a modest village carpenter.

With wealth, splendor, and earthly glory spread before them, Satan said unto him, "All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me." (Matt. 4:9.) In a final ploy Satan was falling back on one of his false but fundamental propositions, one which resulted in his leading one-third of the hosts from heaven and continues to direct his miserable efforts against the children of men here on earth. It is the proposition that everyone has a price, that material things finally matter most, that ultimately you can buy anything in this world for money.

"Get thee hence, Satan"

Jesus knew that if he were faithful to his Father and obedient to every commandment, he would inherit "all that [the] Father hath" (D&C 84:38)—and so would any other son or daughter of God. The surest way to lose the blessings of time or eternity is to accept them on Satan's terms. Lucifer seemed to have forgotten that this was the Man who would later preach, "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

"Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Mark 8:36-37.)

In power and dignity, Jesus commanded, "Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." (Matt. 4:10.) Anguished and defeated Satan turned and went away. "And when the devil had ended all the temptation," Luke adds, "he departed from him for a season." (Luke 4:13.) Matthew tells us that "angels came and ministered unto him." (Matt. 4:11.)

As with Jesus, so with us, relief comes and miracles are enjoyed after the trial and temptation of our faith. There is, of course, running through all of these temptations, Satan's insidious suggestion that Jesus was not the Son of God, the doubt implied in the tempter's repeated use of the word if. "If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." (Matt. 4:3.) "If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down." (Matt. 4:6.) These, of course, were foreshadows of that final, desperate temptation which would come three years later: "If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross." (Matt. 27:40.) But Jesus patiently withstood that ploy also, knowing in due time every knee would bow and every tongue confess.

It was not necessary then, or ever, for Jesus to satisfy the curiosity of men, least of all unholy men. So as victory in every encounter came to Jesus, the pathos and tragedy of Lucifer's life is even more obvious: First bold and taunting and tempting; then pleading and weak and desperate; finally, and ultimately, simple banishment.

Will we resist?

The question for us now is—will we succeed? Will we resist? Will we wear the victor's crown? Satan may have lost Jesus, but he does not believe he has lost us. He continues to tempt, taunt, and plead for our loyalty. We should take strength for this battle from the fact that Christ was victorious not as a God but as a man.

It is important to remember that Jesus was capable of sinning, that he could have succumbed, that the plan of life and salvation could have been foiled, but that he remained true. Had there been no possibility of his yielding to the enticement of Satan, there would have been no real test, no genuine victory in the result. If he had been stripped of the faculty to sin, he would have been stripped of his very agency. It

was he who had come to safeguard and ensure the agency of man. He had to retain the capacity and ability to sin had he willed so to do. As Paul wrote, "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered" (Heb. 5:8); and he "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15). He was perfect and sinless, not because he had to be, but rather because he clearly and determinedly wanted to be. As the Doctrine and Covenants records, "He suffered temptations but gave no heed unto them." (D&C 20:22.)

What about us? We live in a world of temptation—temptation that seems more real and oppressively rampant than any since the days of Noah. Are we remaining faithful in such a world? Every individual in this church should ask himself, "Am I living so that I am keeping unspotted from the evils of the world?"

All temptation classified

In speaking of the three temptations that came to Jesus, a former President of the Church made this statement concerning them: "Classify them, and you will find that under one of those three nearly every given temptation that makes you and me spotted, ever so little maybe, comes to us as (1) a temptation of the appetite; (2) a yielding to the pride and fashion and vanity of those alienated from the things of God; or (3) a gratifying of the passion, or a desire for the riches of the world, or power among men." And then he said: "Now, when do temptations come? Why, they come to us in our social gatherings, they come to us at our weddings, they come to us in our politics, they come to us in our business relations, on the farm, in the mercantile establishment, in our dealings in all the affairs of life, we find these insidious influences working, and it is when they manifest themselves to the consciousness of each individual that the defense

of truth ought to exert itself." (David O. McKay, *Conference Report*, Oct. 1911, p. 59.)

Withstand temptation

Is it just for an individual, or can a body of people withstand the temptations of Satan? Surely the Lord would be pleased with the Saints if they stood before the world as a light that cannot be hidden because they are willing to live the principles of the gospel and keep the commandments of the Lord.

With faith, and prayer, and humility, and sources of strength from an eternal world, we are able to live unspotted in the midst of a world of temptation. With the Psalmist we will sing:

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

"Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies; thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." (Ps. 23:4-6.)

May this be our destiny, I pray in the name of our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Following Elder Hunter's address, the Tabernacle Choir sang the number, "Great Is the Lord: 'Tis Good to Praise."

President Spencer W. Kimball

Elder Howard W. Hunter of the Council of the Twelve has just given the concluding address, followed by the Tabernacle Choir singing, "Great Is the Lord: 'Tis Good to Praise."

We are grateful to the managers