

## Devotional Service.

By Rev. T. J. PARR, M.A.

Again the readers of these columns are treated to bright thoughts and helpful suggestions from ministers active and alert in the far West. To the Manitoba ministers we have kindly rendered this valuable service, our thanks are due and cordially extended.

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### FEBRUARY 16.—"TEMPTED AND TRIED."

1 Cor. 10. 13; Heb. 2. 17, 18-4. 15.

#### HOME READINGS.

Mon., Feb. 10. Mastering temptation ..... Matt. 26. 39-41  
Tues., Feb. 11. The armor against sin ..... Eph. 6. 10-18  
Wed., Feb. 12. The temptation petition ..... Matt. 6. 9-13  
Thurs., Feb. 13. Glean from temptation ..... Jas. 1. 2-14  
Fri., Feb. 14. Don't tempt others ..... Rom. 11. 13-19  
Sat., Feb. 15. Christ's temptation ..... Matt. 4. 1-11

In dealing with this subject, it might be well in the very outset to point out the significance of the term "temptation," as used in the Word of God. The word evidently has a twofold meaning. Sometimes it is used to denote testing or trying, as, e.g., in Jas. 1. 2, where the apostle says, "My brethren, counted it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations, knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience." At other times it is used in the sense of solicitation to evil, as in Jas. 1. 13, "God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man." And frequently it may be understood as including both. This, however, need not involve us in any serious difficulty, since in every case a careful study of the context, together with the general analogy of scriptural teaching will enable us to arrive at the truth.

Temptation, then, in both these senses has ever been the common lot of all Christians, nor does there seem to be any good reason for believing that we shall ever in this life be beyond its reach. This is a permanent factor in human experience, with which we all have to reckon. Our temptations will vary, but in one form or another all will be tempted and tried. The rich man may be tempted through his riches, and the poor man through his poverty; the wise man through his wisdom and the unlearned through his ignorance. One may be tried by adversity, another by prosperity, one by sorrow, another by happiness. I may be tempted from within, or I may be tempted from without. But of this we may rest assured, all will be tempted. Nor can we reasonably cherish the hope of exemption from such during our natural life here.

Neither is it clear that such a condition would be desirable, the best for us even if it were attainable. For, while Christ taught us to pray, "Lead us not into temptation," he nowhere promises his people immunity from the trials and conflicts of life, but rather assures us that in the world we shall have tribulation, and admonishes us to "be of good cheer." St. James, too, as we have already seen, exhorts the Christians to whom he writes, "to count it all joy when they fall into manifold temptations," giving as his reason for this strange advice, "that the trial of their faith would work patience." Hence it would appear that the trials and temptations which are incident to life here are not to be deplored as that which is necessarily evil, but are rather to be regarded as part of the discipline which God employs or permits for the strengthening and developing of our characters. This life is simply a probation, but if temptation were completely eliminated, it would cease to be such. The ship is tested before going to sea, not in order to destroy or injure it, but to prove

whether or not it is able to breast the storm and carry its precious cargo of souls to the desired haven. Even so we are tested from time to time to prove whether we are fitted to assume the responsibilities and duties which God would lay upon us. Or, to use the figure employed by Peter, the gold tried in the fire is purified thereby, separated from all alloy and heterogeneous substances, and proven to be pure by enduring the action of the fire unimpaired, so the fiery trial through which we are called to pass tends to purify which we are revealing and removing what is false of superficial, and proving what is genuine and true.

Sometimes, too, we are disposed to think that our lot is especially hard. We imagine that the tests to which we are subjected are more than ordinarily severe, and perhaps are inclined to murmur, or to seek to excuse our unfaithfulness on the ground of our exceptional trials. And this appears to have been about the position of the Corinthian Christians to whom Paul wrote. Surrounded as they were by idolatry, and having just broken away from it themselves, they no doubt found it hard to discard all their heathen practices, to absolutely renounce the religion of their earlier life, and to turn their backs completely upon parents, friends, social customs, and all that they had so recently held most dear. And hence they seemed inclined to render only a divided allegiance, and sought to justify themselves on the ground of the character of their environment. But the apostle would dissuade them from any such erroneous conclusion, and so he assures them that the temptations to which they are exposed are after all only such as are common to men, and that God will not suffer his children to be tempted beyond their strength, but will always provide a way for their escape. And here surely we have a promise that is most reassuring and comforting to us. No matter what our environment may be, or what forces that are arrayed against us, God is mightier than environment, and more than all that can be against us, and he has promised that he will not permit us to be tempted beyond our ability to resist.

Heb. 2. 17-18, and again in 4. 15, Christ is represented as our High Priest, and as such he makes atonement for our sins. In some important respects, however, Christ differed from the Jewish high priests. They as sinful men were under the necessity of first offering sacrifice for their own sins before making atonement for the sins of the people, but Christ, our High Priest, was sinless. They offered animal sacrifices, but he offered his own life, and he sacrificed himself by their law, and he sacrificed his own life. Their sacrifice was to be repeated annually, but Christ's was once for all. They, generally speaking, were merciless and unsympathetic, but Christ voluntarily took upon himself the aspect of sympathy to temptation, manly, exposed himself to temptation, and entered into the sufferings of the sufferer. In all other respects he was tempted like as we are, and as he having experienced these things in himself, he is able to enter into the fullest sympathy with us, and to render the aid we require. It is a truth, generally if not universally recognized, that suffering is a real law of sympathy, and the passages under consideration teach this explicitly. But just how, or in how far the actual experience of these things is necessary to enable Christ to fully sympathize with us, it is difficult to say. The comforting assurance, however, is ours, that Christ as our great High Priest does sympathize

with us in all our temptations and trials, and that he is able and willing to render the assistance we need under every circumstance in life that we may always triumph. Our lives are not the product of chance. An all-wise and gracious providence rules, and

"He who knows our frame will spare Burdens, more than we can bear."

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### FEBRUARY 23.—"OBEDIENCE."

1 Sam. 15. 22, 23; 1 Kings 3. 15; Rev. 22. 14.

#### HOME READINGS.

Mon., Feb. 17. Obey your parents ..... Eph. 6. 1-4  
Tues., Feb. 18. Obey your ruler ..... Rom. 13. 1-7  
Wed., Feb. 19. Obey the law ..... Deut. 23. 1-11  
Thurs., Feb. 20. Obedience rewarded ..... Josh. 1. 22-28  
Fri., Feb. 21. Disobedience punished ..... Levit. 25. 15-29  
Sat., Feb. 22. The first disobedience ..... Gen. 3. 1-19

We need continually to remind ourselves of the spiritual truth which is the subject of religious truth. Jesus said, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine." An obedient will is indispensable to spiritual knowledge. We must not only seek an intellectual understanding of it, but also make spiritual application of it to our own character and conduct. The ideal for Bible study in our devotional service, and everywhere, is intellectual light and spiritual warmth. And so we desire to approach this subject as earnest souls who seek to know the truth that we may live by it.

Following the leadings in our Scripture passages, we shall ask, and seek to answer to ourselves, four important questions concerning obedience.

#### I. HOW DOES GOD'S CLAIM TO OBEDIENCE COME?

The law of God came to King Saul, as related in our first passage, at the lips of an acknowledged prophet of the Lord. Through Samuel came the divine command to Saul to wage war against Israel's ancient enemy, Amalek, and not to take any booty. "The reason was no doubt to hold the motives of the Israelites on a high plane. They were executioners of God's will, not marauders seeking plunder." Saul's duty was clear, for he knew God spoke to him through Samuel. "And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the Lord," and Saul knew it.

To Solomon the commands and promises of the Lord came as an inspiration of the noble night-vision. "In Gideon the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream by night; and God said, Ask what I shall give thee." Solomon asked for an understanding heart; and God promised him, and to him, and also riches and honor, and long life, if he should obey the Lord's commands.

God's claim to our obedience comes to us in both these ways: by the messages of prophets and apostles, and by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in our own hearts. "Be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour." . . . "until the day dawn, and the day shall arise in your hearts." And God's law is spoken unto us by the Holy Spirit. The Prophet Isaiah, as Phillips Brooks, in his own noble way, tells us how Christ claims our obedience: "Obeying Christ, we say; and what is Christ? I think over all men of God, the Father of the eternal life: First, he is the uttermost of the righteousness, the setting forth before the world that of supreme nature in which there is the source and pattern of all goodness—God; second, he is a man of clear, sharp, definite character, who lived a life in Palestine which still shines with