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Satan's Short Road to Plenty Rejected.

SHORT SERMON BY REV. DR. McMULLEN, WOODSTOCK.

TEXT—Matt. iv. 4: "Man shall not live by bread alone."—These words contain Christ's reply to the tempter's first assault when Jesus was led of the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. It was necessary that the Saviour should be conformed to His people and be made like unto His brethren in all things, sin excepted, and therefore, that He should be tempted. Nor would it be correct to suppose that His temptation was limited to the one occasion here recorded. It extended through His whole life of suffering. He was over being tried and put to the proof, but this chapter records

I.—SATAN'S SUPREME ATTACK.

1. The first stratagem which Satan employs is the same one used with such fatal effect in the assault on the first Adam. The bodily desire and need of sustenance is the avenue through which unsuspected approach is attempted, and in the case of the Saviour the place and circumstances are peculiarly favourable for success. The first Adam, unless also, had outwardly the odds in his favor in so far as a garden of abundance differs from a wilderness of barrenness and hunger. 2. Another feature in the case is Satan's adroit use of the anomaly that one claiming to be so great and exalted should be in circumstances of such hardship and destitution. "If thou be the Son of God command that these stones be made bread." Had Satan been a witness of Christ's baptism, when the voice from Heaven proclaimed, "This is My Beloved Son," or was it Christ's own professed claim Satan had in view when instigating the doubt "If Thou be the Son of God," etc. Whatever answer be given to these questions, it is manifest that Satan did not know Jesus fully. However vast Satan's knowledge may be, it is yet finite and limited, and hence his hope of succeeding by measures which proved abortive. In like manner does Satan hope to overthrow those who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. Marvel not, believer, if his attacks on you are persistent, and as profound in their depths of cunning as they are replete with malignant hostility against your peace and purity.

II.—Note the position which Jesus selects for vanquishing the tempter.

1. It is written—he does not say where it is written. He is not careful to distinguish between one part and another of existing Scripture, as if some parts were especially worthy of confidence and others less so. By this unqualified "It is written," he, by implication, endorses as of absolute authority the existing Scriptures. The quotation is taken from Deut. viii. 3, "He fed thee with manna which thou knowest not, neither did thy fathers know, that He might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only," etc.

2. It is merely by God Himself we live, and He can sustain us in one way or in another according to His sovereign pleasure. Mere bread will not ward off death.

3. Man's nature is too complex and his life in the full sense too comprehensive and exalted to be sustained by bread alone. The rich fool said "Son, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink and be merry." A man's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesseth. As man has a higher life than that of the body, there are higher elements and interests in this problem than mere bread, important and needful as that may be.

III.—If Christ had adopted Satan's suggestion, certain consequences of a very serious nature would have been involved. In the first place he would have admitted the very position which He denies, viz., that man lives by bread alone. Further, He would have so far ceased to be an example to you and me in meeting and grappling with temptation. We cannot work miracles for our own relief or benefit; but we can say "It is written," etc. We can take our stand on the word of God, and endure hardness as good soldiers in a spirit of faith; we can fight the battle on the same principle upon which He fought and conquered. And further still, had Christ adopted Satan's suggestion He would have been using for Himself and for His own deliverance a power which must be held in reserve if He was to save us by being our suffering substitute. The grand crucial test to which all through His life as well as in His death He submitted, was this: that He suffered and yet possessed the power at any moment to deliver Himself. Herein lay the continuous test and proof of His suffering being voluntary. He had power to lay down His life, and if so, not to lay it down, and power to take it again. But His power to save Himself He must not use, if He is to save us, for He cannot save both Himself and us. This principle held good when He suffered, being tempted, even as it held good when He refused to prove His sonship by coming down from the cross. All these considerations and consequences combined to emphasize the vital importance of His stand here taken: "It is written, man shall not live by bread alone."

IV.—But when all that can be said has been said in illustration of the soundness and importance of the position that man shall not live

by bread alone—after all, is bread not necessary? Yes. Our Lord, Himself, admits it is—Matt. vi., 32-33.

How shall we live, how shall we gain a livelihood, is a problem that every individual has to solve for himself. It concerns the statesman to devise such regulations for the government of society, that every class and individual shall have a fair chance of reaping the reward of honest labour. Many there are who assume that the Scriptures render but little, if any, help in the solution of the problem. Religion is religion, and business is business, and according to their thinking, the two are distinct and separate. Our Lord's teaching is, "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you." Now do the actual facts of the past and the present verify and confirm our Lord's teaching on that subject? Why did the great nationalities of antiquity, Babylon, Egypt, Assyria, Persia, Greece and Rome, with all their civilization go down in ruin and perish from the earth? Was it for lack of bread? Assuredly not, but for lack of righteousness. Wrongs and injustice of various kinds bred internal dissension, and this combined with outward assault resulted in their going down in ruin. Man shall not live by bread alone is a principle that holds good in national as well as individual life. And as regards the facts of the present, what is their testimony in reference to Christ's teaching on this question? He makes righteousness the condition and basis of social well-being, and says: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." Many of you whom I address have visited the great Columbian Exhibition, or World's Fair, in Chicago. There you have seen the products, manufactures and industries of the nations of the world, and you have had opportunity of comparing one with another. Now, what nations have the best food, the best clothing, the best furniture for their houses, and the best houses to live in? The most Christian nations of the world are immeasurably in advance of all the others in everything contributing to the support and social comfort of all classes of the people. Take such nations as the British Empire and Germany in the old world, and the United States and Canada in the new, and compare their exhibits with those of the greatest and most advanced of heathen nations, and what a commentary you have on the influence of Christianity on individual and national life; and is not a most important and striking confirmation of the hopes and promises of Christianity for eternity, that it does so much and such great things for man in time? If its first fruits are so goodly, are they not an assuring pledge of the excellence of its coming harvest?

Let us, then, endeavour to catch more and more of the inspiration of the Saviour's words, "Man shall not live by bread alone." Let us live in the consciousness of a life so comprehensive, exalted and spiritual, that nothing less than God Himself can be its real and satisfying support. When our temporal supplies are stinted, and the tempter suggests a prohibited method of immediate plenty, let us remember the maxim of Him who said "Man shall not live by bread alone." Let us live in the spirit of that godliness which hath the promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come. Then shall we know in ever increasing measure the blessedness of partaking of the true Bread which came down from heaven, of which if a man eat he shall never die. Let us stand strong in faith against the temptation to adopt prohibited short roads to abundance. Let us,

after the example of our Lord, prefer to suffer rather than to have recourse to illegitimate methods of escape—for we, too, are tested in like manner as He was.

BEHIND all the clamour for pulpit oratory there lies the notion that somehow the preacher is to do it all. There is a Protestant sacerdotalism only less injurious than the Roman Catholic type. The preacher is not to do it all. If Christianity is to prevail in any community, it must be by each Christian's exercising his gifts for the cause of Christ. The people who long for an "eloquent" preacher, could probably make their minister, if he is a good man, adapted to his place, eloquent enough for all practical purposes, by rallying about his ministry, and not depending on him to "draw" them as well as those who care nothing for religion.—The Watchman.

PAUL is ever dwelling on the importance of the death of Jesus, his blood. He conceives of men as utterly lost and needing redemption, and that redemption as one which must cost the life of the Redeemer. He says elsewhere, "Christ redeemed us, bought us out, from the curse of the law, being made a curse in our behalf." (Gal. iii. 13.)

It is important to have a deep sense of the heinousness and curse of sin. It is necessary to hate it, to try and avoid it. A sense of sin is the condition to salvation. A man cannot repent until he sees his sin and the loss it involves.

Where Paul talked about there being no distinction between a Jew and Gentile in the matter of sin and salvation, we must speak of there being no distinction among us, between rich and poor, learned and ignorant, churchgoer and outsider.

THE one gift that includes all spiritual gifts, the blessing that envelops all blessing for our churches, is Jesus. A personal Jesus accepted is salvation; a personal Jesus accepted in sanctification; a personal Jesus trusted is a constant joy; a personal Jesus possessed is our only power.—Cuyler.



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