

# Robert R. McLaughlin Bible Ministries

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## The TREE OF LIFE weekly teaching summary from the week ending April 19, 1998

Tree of Life 04/19/98

### Suffering and Solutions

In God's rebuttal to Satan's appeal trial, God entered our Lord Jesus Christ, during the great power experiment of the hypostatic union, as a witness against Satan in the angelic conflict. Our Lord's victory over temptation allowed Him to arrive at the cross impeccable thereby paving the way for the great power experiment to continue into the church age. (p)Another witness in the rebuttal phase of the church age is any winner believer who utilizes His power to attain spiritual maturity. Such a believer is entered by God into evidence testing or rather, Satan's cross examination. God enters only those mature believers whom He knows will be victorious over the accuser, Satan, and bring glory to the prosecution: God.

Let us therefore look into the evidence testing of our **Lord Jesus Christ** during the first advent or what we call the hypostatic union (see the Doctrine of the Hypostatic Union) when God became man. First we need to note that, though we are commanded to know his devices, Satan does not like to be exposed, 2Corinthians 2:11. Satan does not want us to know why we are here. He tries to keep believers blinded to the angelic conflict and the trial taking place. Satan wants to demonstrate that independence from God is NOT arrogance. In order to do so he needs witnesses to prove his case. As hard as he tried he could not lure the humanity of Jesus Christ into advancing his argument. **Our Lord Jesus Christ** attained strategic victory during His first advent through residence, function, and momentum inside the plan of God. In the same way every church age believer can attain tactical victory through residence, function, and momentum in God's plan! We know that our Lord Jesus Christ advanced through the different stages of spiritual growth by the following verses:

- 1) Luke 2:40 shows us Jesus Christ at Spiritual Self Esteem**
- 2) Luke 2:52 shows us Jesus Christ at Spiritual Autonomy, "increasing in favor with God."**
- 3) John 1:14 shows us Jesus Christ at Spiritual Maturity, "...full of grace and doc."**

Between the resurrection of Christ and the resurrection of the Church, we find more power available to every believer than in any previous era of human history. The same power which Jesus Christ opted to use is the same power we are offered use of! He did not use any attribute of His deity independently from the Father's plan. He did not rely on His own power but lived by faith and employed the power of God the Holy Spirit and the power of the Word of God. In so doing, He became our example of how to live and execute the spiritual life. We are not to live the spiritual life by our own power but by the power of God the Holy Spirit and the power of the Word of God, John 4:24, "**God is worshipped in Spirit and Truth.**"

Dislodge the idea from your thinking that it was easier for Christ to bear temptations because He was God. All His undeserved suffering and all His spiritual testing took place in His humanity. He cultivated spiritual power in His humanity just as we can do. He never once relied on His deity to get Him through temptations. In fact, His temptations were far greater than we could ever bear, Hebrews 4:15! As we are to refrain from using our human power, He voluntarily refrained from using His own divine power, His deity!! Through total reliance on God's provisions for power (the ministry of God the Holy Spirit & Bible doctrine) Jesus Christ remained impeccable while on earth and offered Himself without blemish to the Father, Hebrews 9:14. He became the perfect sin offering in place of us. Especially upon the cross we see a perfect demonstration of divine power in action. There, while bearing the excruciating pain for spiritual death and the payment for our sins, does He exhibit how to handle all suffering we may encounter. In fact, it is through such sufferings that He executed God's plan and was perfected spiritually. We then should expect and even embrace sufferings that they may mature our spiritual life and glorify God! The very power that our Lord Jesus Christ appropriated in suffering and prevailed with has now been consigned to each church age believer.

God's rebuttal phase continues in us, He says to Satan in effect, watch My winner believers use My provisions and My power as did My Son to advance to maturity and bring glory to Me. Satan says in effect, 'we shall see if they can stand up to the sufferings I implement and still remain faithful to You.' And unfortunately most believers do become casualties in the angelic conflict simply because they cannot handle conflicts and sufferings. No faith means no ability to feel or see beyond the present moment. To such a one, the suffering now being experienced is all encompassing and must be eliminated. This is the thinking of a loser believer, quite unlike the thinking of our Lord Jesus Christ which is highly profiled during His time of evidence testing, Matthew 4:1-10.

There are two types of evidence testing which Satan is allowed to choose

from for the witness that God enters on the stand.

1) The first type of Evidence Testing consists of three parts:

- a) Testing the mature believer's relationship with God the Holy Spirit as we find in our Lord's case in Matthew 4:1-4 and Luke 4:4.
- b) Testing the mature believer's relationship to the word of God as we find in our Lord's case in Matthew 4:5-7 and Luke 4:5-7.
- c) Testing the mature believer's relationship to the plan of God as we find in our Lord's case in Matthew 4:8-10 and Luke 4:8-11.

2) The second type of Evidence Testing also consists of three parts:

- a) Losing one's prosperity as we see in Job's case, Job 1:6-22.
- b) Losing one's health, Job 2:1-10.
- c) Losing one's friends (social life), Job 2:11 to Job 42.

The real issues in evidence testing are:

- \* Will the mature believer continue to rely on divine assets?
- \* Will those assets sustain him under extreme suffering?

In Matthew 4:1, the word "tempted" is peirazo which means to make proof of; to test; to scrutinize; examine; to try or test one's faith, virtue, or character by enticement to sin or to act independently of God. Though Satan is the one doing the testing or tempting, it's God the Holy Spirit who leads the mature believer to the place of evidence testing. So, the three people involved in our Lord's evidence testing are: God the Holy Spirit, Satan, and of course the humanity of Jesus Christ.

The basis for Satan's first attack are the doctrines of the hypostatic union and kenosis, in that the fact that the deity of Jesus Christ had the power to accomplish any miracle. So the first temptation proposed by Satan toward our Lord is an attack against our Lord's relationship toward God the Holy Spirit. Here (Mat 4:1-4), we find Satan violating James 1:13, in that Satan is trying to tempt the deity of Jesus Christ. James 1:13 states that God cannot be tempted by evil. But nonetheless, Satan attempts to lure the hungry humanity of Christ to use His deity to miraculously turn stone to bread. Satan never plays by the rules. Yet he expects God to adhere to the rules of the angelic conflict though he himself has broken them. So in the first part of our Lord's evidence testing, Satan tempted the Lord to operate independent of God the Holy Spirit who was the Father's provision for sustaining the humanity of Christ during His first advent. This temptation to rely on His own power is a temptation we will all meet in life, i.e., we will all be tempted to rely on our own power rather than remain faithful to the power and plan of God. In order to fulfill the mission which Jesus Christ voluntarily accepted, He had to rely on the system of power which the Father designed for Him. Though Jesus Christ could have gotten Himself out of this and any jam, He did not act independently of the Father's plan for His own benefit. Had He done so it would have justified Satan's own rebellion!

The answer our Lord gave in response to the first part of His evidence testing was to quote Scripture proving that the power of Bible doctrine is greater than any miracle. In Mat 4:4 He said *"It is written, man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God."* Here He quotes a passage from Deu 8:3 of the Septuagint which describes the lifestyle of the believer. He was saying that if God could provide food for My people, the people of Israel for forty years (Exo 16:14-36), He can surely provide food for Me. The people of Israel could do nothing to satisfy their hunger just as the believer is helpless to meet his own needs especially under suffering for blessing. God promises to give you everything to sustain you in this world. The problem arises when the believer does not believe it and resorts to his own efforts thereby succumbing to Satan's offer to prove the things of this world.

So, the answer the humanity of our Lord gives Satan in verse 4 of Matthew 4 is that the metabolization of the doctrine of logistical grace is more important than the metabolization of the physical food provided by logistical grace. Or, in other words, God's grace always emphasizes the source more than the survival. In His victory over Satan in part 1 of evidence testing our Lord emphasized doctrine over experience, doctrine over emotion, and doctrine over circumstances. Of course Satan hated this answer since he would much rather see God performing miracles rather than see believers utilizing the power of Bible doctrine, the highest function in the human race! Satan hates Bible doctrine/the word of God and its teaching for two main reason:

- 1) 2Corinthians 2:11, it exposes his devices and schemes.<
- 2) 1Corinthiaans 2:16, it is the very thinking (mind) of Jesus Christ, cf John 1:1.

Whenever the believer accurately uses the word of God, he is operating in a power which comes from God and Satan hates that!

Part b, or the second part of our Lord's evidence testing issued by Satan is the test of our Lord's relationship toward the word of God, Mattheww 4:5-7. Here Satan also quotes Scripture, but when he says **"It is written..."**, he leaves out part of the verse. In so doing, he distorts the word of God through omission. The passage he quotes is Psalm 91:11-12 which is actually a song of deliverance written by Moses in reference to The Lord Jesus Christ (TLJC). In this song, mention is made of guardian angels in the case of the occurrence of accidents, "...to strike one's foot against a stone" describes an accident and the protection found in living in God's plan. This bears no relation to jumping off a 450 foot cliff as Satan's misapplication of doctrine is tempting the Lord to do claiming the angels will catch Him due to what Psalm 91:11-12 states. This is a ploy Satan

often adopts, i.e., he twists Scripture and then gets ignorant believers to advance his errors. But, the humanity of Christ does not constitute an ignorant believer! You can make the Bible say anything you want to if you extract it from its context.

But with perfect self esteem our Lord had nothing to prove. He knew that to jump from a height of 450 feet would be tantamount to suicide and a definite contradiction to the plan of God for His incarnation, or for anyone's life for that matter. God does not advocate senseless, unreasonable actions, regardless of what Scripture some clever individual may misquote as an authority. The Father's plan for the incarnation never required Jesus Christ to do anything absurd. Protection in an absurd action is not proof of God's power but proof of one's stupidity. Now, in our Lord's answer to this, He again uses Scripture. In Matthew 4:7 our Lord quotes Deu 6:16 and says to Satan, "You shall not put to test the Lord YOUR God." Notice He confronts Satan with the truth of Col 1:16-17, in that He, Jesus Christ, created Satan and is his creator and God. Satan loses again... on to the third and last part of our Lord's evidence testing.

Matthew 4:8-10 shows us Satan's test posed to the humanity of Christ in regard to His relationship to the plan of God. Satan was so confounded by Christ's previous answers that he completely changed his tactics in the third round. No longer would Satan mention the deity of Christ, nor would he attempt to use Scripture. Satan, as the ruler of the world, made a bona fide offer to the humanity of Christ: worship me and I will give you all the riches of the world! There are two aspects to this temptation:

- 1) First, avoid the purpose of the Father's plan for the incarnation and bypass the cross and I will promote you, says Satan.
- 2) Secondly, avoid the purpose of the Father's plan for the second advent and take the crown and kingdom now!

Satan does have the right to make this offer as he did and continues to do throughout human history... worship me (my ways which are found in this world), and I will give you the riches of this world. This is Satan's ploy to hinder believers through the offering of the things of this world. But, what follows here is Satan's desperation in a losing battle to tempt our Lord to avoid the cross and move to the crown. And, in reality, without the cross there would be no crown. The unconditional covenants to Israel demand that the Son of David return to earth as its king. Our Lord's task in the first advent was to purchase the salvation of mankind so that He might fulfill God's eternal, unconditional covenants to the Jews in the second advent, which require them to have the offering of eternal life. And, eternal life is offered only through the Lord Jesus Christ due to His expiating work on the cross. Without salvation no population would exist in Christ's eternal kingdom.

So, when Satan proposed a plan to bypass the cross, his brilliant arguments had run out. His game plan had been defeated and his poise had been shaken. The subtle sophistication that characterized the first two tests disappeared in this third, blatant temptation. However, the humanity of Christ retained His perfect poise. His personal love for the Father is implicit in His reply to Satan. It was personal love for the Father not greed which motivated our Lord's answer, Matthew 4:10, "**Begone, Satan! For it is written, You shall worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only.**" Jesus Christ did what Satan did not. Rather than worship God, Satan originally fell due to his attempt to elevate himself to receive the worship which belonged to God alone. And that is why the devil stands condemned and guilty of the charges against him in the prehistoric trial. But his arrogance spurred him to appeal the sentence of Mat 25:41 and so he continues to tempt believers today.

In part three of our Lord's evidence testing, He refused to gain the kingdoms of the world by any other means but by the plan of God the Father. TLJC was and would always continue to be loyal and a winner who utilized the prototype plan of God to the maximum. In so doing He pointed out to Satan that all creature obligation and loyalty is to the plan of God. Satan, the most powerful of angels, could do nothing but obey the command of Christ and departed. Our Lord provided the exact means by which the mature church age believer passes evidence testing. Supplied with the very same power, we too can withstand the temptations of Satan. Supplied with the example set forth by our hero, the Lord Jesus Christ, we too can glorify God in Satan's appeal trial if we are ever called to the witness stand by God.

After our Lord's forty days of hunger and evidence testing He celebrated His victory with no doubt the best meal He enjoyed in His earthly life. Matthew 4:11!

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