

MOODY'S LATEST SERMONS

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SERMON THREE -

TEMPTATION

ONE of the most real things in this world is temptation, and the quicker we find it out the better.

When CHRIST was in the garden of Gethsemane praying, and His disciples were asleep, He woke them up, and said to them:

"Watch ye, and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak."

The flesh is weak. Is there anyone on earth that dares to dispute that statement? Is there anything weaker under the sun than the human flesh? The spirit is willing. Most men would rather do the right thing, and think they will do it. Tell them that they will do certain things inside of twelve months, and they would say, as the king did, **"Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?"** No, never. But they will do it, just the same. **"The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."**

I don't suppose that one of those eleven men who gathered around CHRIST that night believed it. He spoke these words to the three that were in the inner circle - Peter, James, and John. No doubt they thought, "There is no danger of our falling. We can sleep all right, even when He tells us to be awake, and on the alert, and watching." But one of the twelve had already fallen, though they didn't know it. Peter, the chief speaker of the twelve, was going that very night to curse and swear, and say that he never knew Him.

John and James were to leave Him, for **"all forsook Him, and fled."** You probably couldn't find eleven better men on the face of the earth than those eleven: and yet CHRIST warned them that the spirit was willing, but the flesh was weak.

There has never been a man that has trod this earth that has not fallen some time in his life, except the Man CHRIST JESUS.

There is no one beyond the reach of the tempter. Keep that in mind. Life may run smoothly for a while, but the testing time is coming. Those eleven men were to be tempted that night as never before, and when the testing time came everyone of them fell. **"Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation; for the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."** Oh, that GOD

may open our eyes to see how very weak the flesh is! I believe firmly that if the iron plough has not gone down deep into a man's conscience, if he has not made a thorough work of sin, when the testing time comes, he will surely stumble and fall.

See what CHRIST says in the memorable parable of the Sower, found in Luke 8: "**They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root**" - (a house on a rock is a very good thing, but it's a poor place for a tree) "**these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away.**" Don't you see that in everyday life? Don't you know young men who started out and ran well for a season? Where are they today? What has become of them? They fell in the hour of temptation.

The strength of a chain is in its weakest link. Mark that; in its weakest link. Let a man be at work on the ceiling, and the platform be held up there with a chain of ten links, and one of the ten very weak. The testing time comes. The man steps on the platform. That one link gives way, and down comes the man just as surely as if every link breaks. So, bear in mind, fair-weather Christians are not going to stand the test; when the storms of temptation sweep over them, they will fall.

There is no dress parade about Christianity. When the battle comes, where are these fellows you see at dress parade? They are gone. And just so with a Christian that has to be bolstered up by a godly mother, or father, or friend, or it may be his wife.

When they are gone, he is gone. I have seen it over and over again. Lot stood all right as long as he was with Abraham. When he left the plains of Mamre and went down into Sodom, away from Abraham, he stumbled and fell. I can find about one million Lots where you will find one Abraham to-day. Few men can stand alone when the storm sweeps over them. Away they go!

Have you ever been in a forest after a great storm has swept through it? Where the roots just run along on the surface and do not have any depth of earth, acres and acres of trees will be torn up. A friend from Scotland said to me, speaking of a place where I had been, "Some time ago they had a storm that blew down between four and five thousand of the finest trees on that old estate. Do you know why? Because the storm came in an unexpected direction. It had never come from that quarter before. It had blown in every direction but that one, and the forest wasn't prepared, and away the trees went."

It is said that Edinburgh Castle, in all the wars of Scotland, was never taken but once. Then the enemy came up the steep rocks at a place where the garrison thought it was so safe they needn't guard it. Very often temptation comes in an unexpected form or from an unexpected quarter, when you are off your guard; hence, the necessity of watching and praying, because if you are not on the alert, you will be tripped up by the tempter.

Then CHRIST adds: "**Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.**" No man on earth is beyond the reach of the tempter. I used to think that when I got along a certain distance in my Christian life I would get beyond the tempter, and he would have no more influence over me. I have given that up.

The tempter will follow you from the cradle to the grave, and the nearer you get to CHRIST, the

hotter the fight will be. As some one has said, Satan aims high. When he wanted one to sell the Lord, he went to the treasurer of the company; and when he wanted one to deny Him, he went to the chief apostle. When he wanted to call down fire from Heaven on those Samaritans who refused the disciples hospitality, he went to John, who was nearest the heart of the Son of GOD. The angels fell, even in Heaven. Adam fell in Paradise. Think of it!

Speaking of the four watches, some one has said, that the time a man is most liable to fall is in the second and the third watch. The first watch, he starts out, and says, "I must be on my guard; I am weak." He realizes his weakness, and keeps his eye upon the Master, going to Him daily and hourly for strength; and so he is not so liable to fall. But in the second and third watches he begins to feel his manhood, and says, "I am strong now, and I can stand." So he begins to lean on the arm of flesh, and then the peril comes, and the fall. As he gets into the fourth watch, he is nearing home, and he begins to see this old world receding from his vision. He realizes how weak the flesh is, because it has failed him so often, and he is on his guard again. He is not so liable to fall if he passes through the second and third watches, though he is always liable.

Another thing about temptation. We are apt to think we have peculiar temptations. Not a bit of it; they are known to all men. See what Paul wrote to that church in Corinth:

"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."

Keep that in mind. The temptations that come to you and me are common to man. Every man who has gone on before us has had the same kind of temptation, although it may come to us in a different way. Men have always had the same jealousy to contend with, the same pride, and covetousness, and love of money, and love of pleasure, that you and I have.

There are four great temptations that threaten us to-day.

THE THEATRE

First, the theatre.

You say, "My folks go."

That may be. They may do lots of things, but the temptation is the same.

I don't know of a theatre, from Maine to California, that hasn't a bar connected with it, or near by. What is that bar there for?

Fallen women go to the theatres, and for no good purpose, whenever they can.

You say it is part of one's education to see good plays. Let that kind of education go to the four winds! For a child of GOD to help build up such an institution as the theatre of the present day is iniquitous.

A prominent and wealthy elder of a church in the West, who used to say that I was bigoted and narrow-minded and puritanical in my ideas about the stage, had a son who got married. Soon afterwards a woman came along, and put a bullet through his heart, and killed him. He had got acquainted with her at the theatre, and she claimed him. The father went trembling down to his grave a few years ago, all the sweetness of life crushed out of him.

I would rather be narrow and right, than broad and wrong. I don't want to take my two sons into a place where they will be tempted. Men are willing to be Christians now if it doesn't cost them anything, if there is no self-denial. But I wouldn't give a snap of my finger for a Christian that goes to all these places of amusement, and offsets his testimony. What we want to-day is separation from the world. It is one thing to pray GOD to fill you with the Spirit, but if He does, you must be separated from the world.

When you want to fill a man with electricity, you have to put him on a chair with glass legs and insulate him from the earth, and then pour the electricity into him until the sparks flame from him. And if you want to get filled with the power of Heaven, you'll have to get separated from the world.

You don't want your daughter or sister on the stage, do you? You wouldn't like to see your mother there. Then why patronize some one else's sister? Why encourage some one else's wife? Twenty-five thousand divorces in this country last year, and many of them the result of the theatre.

Did you ever hear of a party having a little prayer-meeting before they went to a theatre? Try it, and see how you get along. Just pray that the actors may have a wonderful influence over you, and build you up, and do you a lot of good. The words would choke you.

But you say, "I know a number of good people that go."

So do I, but I know a number of people that have to reap in their children. I have had poured into my ears, by the hundreds, tales of the untold woe and misery that has come into these families through the influence of the theatre. It is easy enough to lead your children into Sodom, but it is mighty hard to get them out. It is easy enough for the father and mother to take their children in the way of temptation, but when they want to get them away, it is a different thing.

You must be separated from the world if you want power.

But you say, "I shall lose influence."

Certainly you will. Let it go. You can't have that kind of influence and power too. Do you know the difference between influence and power? I will tell you. Ahab had influence: Elijah had power. I have never known card-playing, theatre-going, horse-racing Christians to get anybody really converted.

They talk about their immense influence. I haven't any doubt that if you had dropped down into Sodom a week before its destruction, men would have told you that Lot was the most influential man there. You would have found him sitting in the gate. He had got into office, perhaps he had been elected Judge, or Mayor of Sodom. He had got on wonderfully. He owned some of the best

corner lots. Mrs. Lot moved in the highest circles. Those Sodomites would have told you he was a good deal shrewder, a far better business man than his uncle Abraham, and if he lived twenty years longer, he would be the richest of the two. A man of amazing influence! But I would like to know what power he had? I have an idea that when Abraham pleaded for Sodom, he thought:

"Lot has great influence in Sodom. I heard some of the people speak very highly of him when I was down there a few months ago. He has been there twenty years, and he must have get more than half a convert a year. Surely there are ten righteous men in Sodom." But Sodom was destroyed. Lot never won a convert, but ruined his own family.

Go in for influence with the world, if you want to, but it will die when you die. Where is Ahab's influence to-day? Where is Nebuchadnezzar's influence, and the whole crowd of them, compared with Elijah's and Daniel's? Daniel has been gone these twenty-five hundred years, and still he shines, and is going to shine forever. He overcame temptation. It would have hurled him into the pit if he hadn't, and he would have gone down like those other men. He might have said:

"I shall lose rank and position if I do not eat the same kind of meat as the king does, and drink the same kind of wine. I shall lose influence."

He may have lost influence, but thank GOD, he got power! Can you tell who the millionaires of Babylon were? or any of the great generals? Their names have rotted with their bodies, and their influence has gone centuries ago, but Daniel lives on.

Why? Because he chose to do right, and overcame temptation.

DISREGARD OF THE SABBATH

2. Another great temptation is to disregard the Sabbath.

We have a good deal worse foe than any foreign power right in our midst. This country will go to pieces if we give up the Sabbath. No country has existed a great while and been prosperous that has wiped out the Sabbath. It is easy to destroy, to tear down, but it is a thousand times better to build up.

One great means of Sabbath breaking is the bicycle. "Oh," you say, "what is the matter with the bicycle? Isn't it a great blessing?"

Yes; and like all good blessings it can be turned into a curse by misuse. Even the Sabbath has become a curse to many. There are more cases Monday morning in the police court than any other morning of the week. When a man says, "I will leave my Sabbath school and my church work, and take a spin in the country, and worship the GOD of nature," then the bicycle has become a snare and will help bring about his ruin. I don't know what will become of the church of GOD if we cannot hold back the tide that is coming upon us.

I was in Brooklyn not long ago, and I saw something that was a revelation to me. Right opposite the church where I was to preach, a bicycle club started off for a run, at half-past ten, just as people were going to church. A few years ago that wouldn't have been countenanced in

Brooklyn, the city of churches.

It wasn't the scum of Brooklyn that were there, but some of the leading young men. And in that church where preached there hardly seemed to be twenty-five young men.

Your bicycle can be a blessing, but when you go off and spend GOD's day in recreation, and neglect the house of GOD, what will become of your soul? Are you not putting yourself in the way of temptation?

"Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." Do not turn GOD's holy day into a holiday.

SUNDAY NEWSPAPERS

3. Then there are the Sunday newspapers. I would not dare to ask how many of you read the Sunday newspapers. You think you must have them to find out the news. They have sermons, too; fine sermons. Some one took pains to look over seven of the New York Sunday papers a while ago, and this is what he found in them:

Murders and assaults, twelve columns.

Adulteries, seven columns - [first-rate Sunday reading!]

Thefts, etc., twenty-four columns.

Sporting news, eighty-one columns - [splendid Sunday reading!]

Theatrical notes, forty-four columns - [must have that for Sunday reading, you know!]

Gossip and fashion, seventy-seven columns - [your soul would get fat on that, wouldn't it?]

Sensational topics, forty-two columns - [people don't like sensational preaching, but they like forty-two columns of sensationalism in Sunday papers.]

Fiction, ninety-nine columns.

Unclean personals, eight columns - [think of a Christian man putting that paper before his children!]

Foreign news, forty-seven columns.

Political news, one hundred and thirteen columns.

Miscellaneous news, ninety-two columns.

Editorials, thirty-nine columns.

Specials, one hundred and ninety-nine columns.

Art and literature, twenty-four columns.

Religious, three and a quarter columns - [splendid sermons in Sunday papers!]

Nine hundred and eleven and a quarter columns, and only three and a quarter columns of them religious. That is Sunday reading! Gabriel himself couldn't hold an audience whose heads were full of such stuff as that. I tell you what we want is a revival that will sweep these Sunday newspapers out of our country.

There was a time when a man used to lock up his store Saturday night, and have a rest on the Sabbath. It was a time of meditation and prayer and food for his soul. But now he locks up his store, and he puts a flaming advertisement in the Sunday paper, and does a bigger business than any other day in the week.

"Monday bargains." He takes up the Sunday paper to see if his advertisement is in right, and his children wait for a chance to read about the games, and the scandal that has been accumulating all the week. Then men wonder that their children are led astray. It is a wonder that more of them are not.

Men, where is your conscience? I hope it will smite you the next time you offer to patronize a Sunday paper.

Yes, a man will walk right into temptation, and then wonder why he isn't kept from it. What the world needs is men who will face these issues, and stand by the right, even if he has to stand alone.

FALSE DOCTRINES

4. Then there is a fourth temptation, false doctrines and false teachers.

I asked an atheist some years ago how he accounted for the creation of the world.

"Well," he said, "force and matter worked together and by chance the world came out."

That is as clear as mud to me; It is strange a man's toes are not sticking on the top of his head if things were thrown together in that way.

A man won't believe that a watch was made without a maker, but we have more absurd doctrines. Some people would have us believe nowadays that there is no matter anyway. A man thinks he exists, but he doesn't!

What is to me still more awful is that they say that there is no such thing as sin. I asked a lady who held this doctrine, what she would call it if I should willfully and in cold blood take by violence the life of another friend who was present.

"It would be an error of judgment," was her answer.

In the four years 1895-98 we had in this country 38,512 murders, while England in the same length of time had less than 600. Think of it! Less than 300 lives were lost on the Maine, and every twenty-four hours 300 in this country reel into drunkards' graves. And yet there are men and women teaching that there is no such thing as sin! O, come forward and stand against these false doctrines like men.

The temptations are all around us, but blessed is he that endureth temptation - not "Blessed is he that is tried and tempted," but "**Blessed is the man that endureth temptation, for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life.**"

~ end of chapter 3 ~
