

CHAPTER X.

Victory in Conflict.

IN a previous chapter we have seen the way of deliverance from possession by evil spirits. The great question here is, how to be victorious over the powers of darkness as a whole. How to have authority, and victory over the wicked spirits in place of their mastery over the believer; who, having learnt the devices of the enemy, and the way of deliverance, is now deeply concerned that others should be set free, and brought into the place of victory "over all the power of the enemy." For this he must now understand that the degree of Christ's "authority" the Spirit of God will energize him to exercise over the spirits of evil, will be according to the degree of victory he has over them in the personal conflict, which he must now settle down to face in the sphere of the spiritual life into which he has emerged.

DEGREES OF DELIVERANCE AND VICTORY

The believer needs to have thorough knowledge and understanding of their ways and works, and of the laws of the spirit, and how to keep in mastery of spirit in all the vicissitudes of life. As there are (1) degrees of deception, and degrees of possession and deliverance from possession; so there are (2) degrees of victory over the devil; (3) degrees of temptation, and victory over temptation. The power to co-operate with the Holy Spirit in the wielding of Christ's authority will also be in degrees, and gained according to the aggressive spiritual strength obtained by overcoming the devil in his various workings; just as victory over sin deepens in its strength as the man overcomes temptation to sin; and victory over the world (1 John v. 4-5) is increasingly known by faith in the Son of

God. These degrees of overcoming power with the consequent degree of reward, are to be clearly seen in the Lord's call to the churches recorded in the Apocalypse. Degrees also of the future authority in the reigning with Christ are indicated in His words in one parable, "Be thou ruler over ten cities . . . over five . . ." (Luke xix. 17-19).

The believer delivered from deception and possession by the spirits of evil, must now learn to walk in personal victory over the devil at every point, if he is to have the fullest victory over the powers of darkness. For this, just as he needs to know the Lord Christ in all the aspects of His Name and character, so as to draw upon His power in living union with Him, so the believer must learn to know the adversary in his various workings, as described in his names and character, that he may be able to discern his presence, and all his wicked spirits, wheresoever they may be, either in attacks upon himself, in others, or working as "world-rulers" of the darkness in the world.

VICTORY OVER SATAN AS TEMPTER

Victory over the Devil as a Tempter, and all his temptations personally, direct and indirect, must be learnt by the believer in experimental reality; remembering that all "temptations" are not recognizable as temptations, nor are they always visible, for half their power lies in their being hidden. A believer thinks that he will be as conscious of the approach of temptation, as of a person coming into the room, hence the children of God are only fighting a small proportion of the devil's workings; that is, only what they are *conscious of* as supernatural workings of evil.

Because their knowledge of the devil's character and methods of working is limited and circumscribed, many true children of God only recognize "temptation" when the nature of the thing presented is visibly evil, and *according to their limited knowledge* of evil, so they do not

recognize the Tempter and his temptations when they come under the guise of natural or physical, or lawful and apparent "good."

When the prince of darkness and his emissaries come as angels of light, they clothe themselves in light, which, in their case, stands for evil. It is a "light" which is really darkness. They come in the guise of good. Darkness is opposed to light, ignorance is opposed to knowledge, falsehood is opposed to truth. Darkness is a term applied to evil morality and moral darkness. The believer may need to discern evil spirits in the realm of the supposed good. That which comes to them as "light" may be darkness. The apparently "good" may be really evil; the apparent "help" which they cling to may be really a hindrance.* For instance, a difficulty in work may arise out of accepting a degree of weakness,† which is really the result of demon possession; so while desiring strength the believer may fulfil conditions which make him weak. The devil then tempts him because he is weak, and he succumbs.

There needs to be a choice between good and evil perpetually by every man, and the priests of old were specially called to discern and teach the people the difference between "the holy and the common," the "unclean and the clean" (Ezek. xlv. 23). Yet is the Church of Christ to-day able thus to discern what is good, and what is evil? Does she not continually fall into the snare of calling good evil, and evil good? Because the thoughts of God's people are governed by ignorance,‡ and limited knowledge, they call the works of God, of the devil; and the works of the devil, of God, and they are not taught the need of learning to discern the difference between the "unclean and the clean", nor how to decide for themselves what is of God, or what is of the devil, although they are unknowingly compelled to make a choice every moment of the day.

* Cf. page 75. † Pages 91, 92.

‡ *i.e.*, of the powers of darkness. See pages 1 to 3.

Neither do all believers know that they have a choice between good and good, *i.e.*, between the lesser and the greater good; and the devil often entangles them here.

VARIOUS KINDS OF TEMPTATIONS

There are unseen temptations, and temptations in the unseen. Physical temptations, soulish temptations, spiritual temptations; direct and indirect temptations, as with Christ when He was directly tempted in the wilderness, or indirectly through Peter. The believer must not only resist the devil when he tempts visibly, or attacks consciously, but BY CONSTANT PRAYER HE MUST BRING TO LIGHT HIS HIDDEN AND COVERED TEMPTATIONS, knowing that he is a "Tempter," and therefore is always planning temptation for the believer. Those who thus, by prayer, bring to light these hidden workings, are by experience, widening their horizon in knowledge of his work as a Tempter, and becoming better able to co-work with the Spirit of God in the deliverance of others from the power of the enemy; for in order to be victorious over the powers of darkness, it is essential to be able to recognize what they are doing. Paul, on one occasion, did not say "circumstances," but "Satan hindered me" (1 Thess. ii. 18), because he was able to recognize when circumstances, or the Holy Spirit (Acts xvi. 6), or Satan, hindered or restrained him in his life and service.

There are degrees also in the results of temptation. After the wilderness temptation, which settled vast and eternal issues, the devil left Christ, but he returned to Him again and again with other degrees of temptation (John xii. 27; Matt. xxii. 15) both direct and indirect.

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN "TEMPTATION" AND "ATTACKS"

There is also a difference between the "temptations" and "attacks" of the Tempter, as may again be seen in the life of Christ. "Temptation" is a scheme or a plot, or compulsion on the part of the Tempter to cause another to do evil, whether consciously or unconsciously; but an

attack is an onslaught on the person, either in life, character, or circumstances, *e.g.*, the devil made an onslaught on the Lord through the villagers, when they sought to hurl Him over the brow of the hill (Luke iv. 29); when His family brought a charge of insanity against Him (Mark iii. 21); and when He was charged with demon possession by His enemies (John x. 20; Matt. xii. 24).

Temptation, moreover, means suffering, as we see again in the life of Christ, for it is written, "He *suffered* being tempted" (Heb. ii. 18), and believers must not think they will reach a period when they will not feel the suffering of temptation, as this is a wrong conception, which gives ground to the enemy for tormenting and attacking them without cause.

PRAYER BRINGING HIDDEN TEMPTATIONS TO LIGHT

For perpetual victory, therefore, the believer must unceasingly be on guard against the Tempter, praying for his hidden temptations to be revealed. The degree of understanding his working will be determined by the degree of victory experienced, for—"In vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird." We have given in preceding chapters much knowledge needed by the believer, if he is to gain victory over every aspect of the Tempter's workings, but especially does he require power of discrimination between what is temptation from the Tempter working upon the uncrucified "old man"; tempting through the things of the world (1 John ii. 15, 16; v. 4, 5); and temptation direct from the spirits of evil.

In temptation the crucial point is for the tempted one to know whether the temptation is the work of an evil spirit having gained access to him,* or from the evil nature. This alone can be discerned by the experimental knowledge of Romans vi. as the basis of the life. Temptation from the fallen nature should be dealt with on the foundation of "Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead unto

* Cf. pages 133, 147.