

## DEDICATION.

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"Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him." Matthew 3:13.

Batism was an old rite thousands of years before Christ was born. It was used in the Hebrew religion almost as far back as Abraham. It was used in many pagan religions from the dawn of civilization. Water was used as a cleansing agent from the time man found he was dirty and wanted to be clean. Since it was universally used as cleansing agent it became the universal symbol of inner cleanness or a spiritual dedication.

Why was Jesus bapized? Water baptism was a symbol of a greater baptism which He would administer Himself. His life was here dedicated anew to the great cause for which He came into the world. Was it necessary for His life to be dedicated? Was it necessary for it to be dedicated anew? If it had not been good to do so, why did He do it? "Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness."

Why was it necessary that He be tempted? Every dedicated life must have its temptation. Temptation is usually just looking for a way around the hard path of dedication. It comes of itself many times. It is the direct result of the hard road ahead.

A boy was standing near a barrèl of apples in a store, looking hungrily at them. The merchant said, "Get away from those apples, boy. You are just trying to snatch one." The boy said, "You are wrong, Mister. I was tryin' to keep from takin' one."

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Are all temptations from the Devil? An old colored preacher was on some of his congregation for drinking. He said, "You say the Debil tempted you to drink. Shucks, de Debil couldn't keep dat stuff away from you if he tried."

The person who yields to temptation usually finds his mistake after it is too late. An old man was taking two calves to the pasture with each end of the rope tied to a calf. When he came to the gap there was no tree to tie the rope to, so he looped it around one leg and started to let the gap down. Just then the calves became frightened and went across the field, dragging the old man by the leg. When he was finally rescued, they asked, "Grandpa, didn't you know better than to loop the rope around your leg?" He said, "Well, I saw my mistake before those calves had drug me forty yards."

Would a life be tempted that is not dedicated? A life that is not dedicated has already yielded to temptation. The life that is not dedicated has already gone around the path of dedication. Such a life certainly would not be tempted severely. It is safe to say that the hardest temptations come to a life that is dedicated to some great cause.

In making change an Indian was given a bill of large denomination through mistake. On the way home he discovered that he had been given too much money. Although it was a long way back to the store, he took it back. The merchant appreciated his honesty, and told him so. The Indian said, "I got two men in my heart. One said, 'Keep it; he never will know.' The other said, 'It is not yours; take it back'." Every dedicated life has two persons trying to direct it.

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Should a life be dedicated to more than one cause or object? Most lives are dedicated to more than one. There are many things in life that claim our devotion and time. We dedicate our lives to God, to our loved ones, to the church, to the state, to the nation. A life can be dedicated to all these at the same time. But a life that is dedicated to one thing today and another tomorrow is generally not dedicated at all. No life should be dedicated to a cause or object not <sup>worthy</sup> worth of it. But, once it is dedicated, there should be no turning back. Jesus said, "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

All three of the temptations of Christ grew out of His great dedication. They were simply easy paths around the hard road of dedication. Why didn't Satan tempt Christ to turn back? He knew it was no use; that was not His weak point. "Command that these stones be made bread." That would be an easy road to success. Most temptations are. He met this temptation over and over. Out of compassion for the fainting multitudes He did provide food in this way. But He soon found He was expected to do this again, over and over. This He refused to do. That would have been the easy way. But He knew that fish and bread would not change the hearts of men and women. It would have won Him high honors among men. But it would not heal their blindness and darkness. He came to bring life to men, not bread only.

On the pinnacle of the temple He was again tempted to take the easy way. "If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge of thee; and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone."

Had He taken this easy way He might have been hailed as the greatest magician of all time. He would have been supped and wined by the rich and great. He would have been feared and fawned on by men. But He would not have been the Saviour of the world. He did not come to receive the adulations of men. He came to die for them.