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Exhortation

"Let this mind be in you . . ."

5. "Get thee behind me, Satan"

Jim Wood

TWICE JESUS uttered these words. The first time was during the forty days' wilderness sojourn when he was "tempted of the devil" (Lk. 4:2). Having seen "all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time" (v. 5) he was told: "If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine" (v. 7). To this Jesus answered: "Get thee behind me, Satan . . . Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve" (v. 8).

Few of us will not have been faced with an opportunity which seems to 'promise the earth' in the twinkling of an eye; times when, just for a moment, there seems to be a way of achieving what will bring unending happiness in personal terms and all we could ever want in material terms, if only . . .

Such, however, is a figment of the imagination, a blinkered view of this present life, which deceives us. We need the perception to see through the deception, to see that we would be committing ourselves to things that would deplete our service to God. We need to reply, "Get thee [person, thing or circumstance] behind me, Satan", and to act so that no longer are we faced with the temptation.

The second time was in response to Peter's rebuke on hearing Jesus say what must befall him at Jerusalem. "Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee", insisted Peter (Mt. 16:22). Jesus's response was, "Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me" (v. 23). The Greek word translated 'offence' is *skandalon*, from which our word 'scandal' comes. The first meaning of 'scandal' given in *Chamber's Twentieth Century Dictionary* (1972 edition) is "a stumbling block to faith; anything that brings discredit upon religion".

It would therefore have been scandalous for Jesus to have hearkened to Peter's insistent suggestion. It was clear to Jesus that God's plan for him required the ultimate sacrifice. However, he knew that obedient faithfulness to his Father's

expectations of him would lead to the assurance of life for himself and the possibility of the same for others. To trip over the stumbling block which Peter's proposal presented would be to bring discredit on his role as Saviour, and impotence to God's plan through him. The opposition, the possible cause of failure, must be removed. His response was decisive: "Get thee behind me, Satan".

There is not one of us who has not caused a scandal because we have failed to have the same mind in us. God has chosen us, called us, given us a role and made us an integral part of His plan for the re-establishment of His earthly-based Kingdom. Routinely we are faced with situations which test our faith. Sometimes the tests are small, yet sufficient to prevent our role being entirely fulfilled. Some are large, with the potential to cause us to renege on the partnership we are privileged to have been granted. It is scandalous every time we allow ourselves to stumble over the influence of any form of 'satan'. If only at such times we were able to be as decisive as our Master!

Though there are only two reported uses of this phrase, there were not only two instances when the principle was applied by Jesus. Always, instead of having before him, to the forefront of his mind's eye, desires that would divert, these were promptly placed behind, so that forward progress should not be impeded and he would not dwell on things no longer seen. Rather, he placed before him the desire of his Father. He set to the forefront the joy of the things his Father had promised. These drew him unerringly and safely towards his goal.

In our walk we will not fall over the things that we have placed behind us, so let us be like Paul, so that we might be like Jesus: ". . . forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before . . . press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God" (Phil. 3:13,14).