



November 27, 2005

The Temptation Of Privacy

“Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.” (Matt 4.1). In one of the most familiar episodes in Christ’s life we find the son of God tempted, face to face, by the devil himself. We find that Christ is hungered (**Matt 4.2**) after fasting forty days and nights. It is easy to understand that Christ was then tempted to turn stones to bread so that this basic need might be met (**Matt 4.3**). Satan then challenged Christ and the care of God for him by setting him on a pinnacle of the Temple and telling him to cast himself down (**Matt 4.5-6**). Finally Satan offered Christ all the kingdoms of the world to have and rule over. An offer which Christ refused (**Matt 4.8-10**). Over the years we may have thought about these temptations and the impact that they had on Christ. We usually focus on the actual temptations that are presented by Satan, but there is another dimension that may be overlooked.

We are told that Christ was tempted as we are (**Heb 4.15**) and yet he did not sin. These temptations were presented in an environment that was conducive to compromise. Christ was isolated. There was no one around to have seen or heard him. No one would be aware that he had done what the devil wanted him to, if Christ thought as we do sometimes. It has been said that the real test of integrity is not what one does when others are watching, but what one does when others are not present. Christ could easily have compromised who and what he was. He could have given in, eaten some bread and then been able to meet the challenges of the tempter more securely. No one would have known, except for God. Now we find that there is an even greater statement of faith in God on the part of Christ in that he realized that he was in the presence of God at all times.

There are those who believe that they can have faith in God without being around others who also serve Him. Many times this is concealed in a denouncement of “organized” religion. Usually the term “organized” religion refers to the body of false doctrine that has given rise to distortions of what the Bible teaches. The Lord’s church is not only “organized” in the way in which Christians worship, but also by the fact that there is a recognized fellowship, or brotherhood, to which we all belong, so long as we are faithful to God.

One of the symptoms of a lack of faith is when one refuses to associate with others of like precious faith. This many times reflects that one has compromised their life and being around others who are working to be more faithful is only a reminder that all is not as it should be. Satan can use this to work against us. Our minds may begin to criticize what others are, or, we may constantly see the faults of others. I have heard some who say that they do not need to be part of a “church” voice their reasons for what they perceive as hypocrisy on the part of those who claim to be Christians. If we take an honest look at the situation we find that the one who opposes hypocrisy in this instance has become a hypocrite by claiming to be something that exists outside the standards of conduct that God has established.

Serving God means that we recognize that we have a need to be around others who also serve God. If we do not sense this need, and do not enjoy the company of other Christians, it is time that we take a look at our lives and make the necessary corrections. Privacy, while being a great value in our country, works against us when we try to stand against the wiles of the devil. We are made weaker without the strength of others, not stronger. Satan is only too happy when we try to fool ourselves into believing this.

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