

Temptation

Matthew 4:8-10: Again the devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. All this I will give you, he said, if you will bow down and worship me. Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: Worship the Lord your God and serve Him only" (NIV) (The verse Jesus quoted is Deuteronomy 6:13)

When one of our former presidents, Lyndon Johnson, was a leader in the U.S. Senate, he made a point to know what the favorite project of each Senator was. When he would meet with a Senator, he would discuss that project with him. When a Senator's vote was needed to pass a crucial bill, Mr. Johnson would attach funding for that Senator's favorite project, which would get him to vote for a bill he would otherwise have not have voted for.

In a more sinister way, this is what the devil does with us when he tempts us. That is what he tried to do with Christ, also. He knew Christ wanted everyone in the world to come to him. He used this information when he tempted Him. The devil wanted Christ to pursue His goal even if it was in a way that was not in line with the will of His Father. Of course, Christ saw through this scheme, and quoted a verse from Deuteronomy to resist this temptation.

Often a temptation will be to pursue noble, even Godly goals, but in a way that is not approved by our Father in Heaven. The devil would like us to elevate whatever goal we see as the most important in life to a level that will drive us to engage in anger, rage, bitterness, and a power struggle with the forces opposed to us and our cause. When we do this, we operate like the devil, and will easily become an embarrassment and hindrance to the advancement of the Kingdom of God on earth.

The world will recognize us as truly different from them only if we are willing to emulate Christ; the willing Lamb led to the slaughter. When we play the power games that the world plays, even in the name of Christ, the world will see us as nothing more than a competitor with an big ego, since we claim to be doing the work of God while they are not.

The temptation to develop a power base, then to rise up and crush opponents afflicts even those trying to serve the Lord. But that method is the way the devil works. He wants to engage us in a direct power struggle. He wants us to make winning more important than how we treat others. If we engage Satan in a fight, we will not fare well. If we follow scripture and leave the outcome to God, the devil is left powerless. In dealing with those who oppose us, we should seek to win them for Christ, not to allow the desire to defeat them overwhelm us and miss this opportunity.

The Bible says the kingdom of darkness as a whole is beyond redemption and will ultimately be defeated by the power of God. But we still live in a day of grace. The people who knowingly or unknowingly belong to the kingdom of darkness can be rescued from its grip by the power of the gospel and made partners in the kingdom of God.

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