

April 2009

TEMPTATION

Fellow Pilgrims:

For us Christians, salvation requires inward belief (“with your heart”) and outward confession (“with your mouth”) (Romans 10: 5-13). Never forget, we follow a Lord, Who was tempted as we are since He was fully human and fully God. He understands our difficulties because He has experienced them.

After Jesus’ baptism, He had a mountain top experience when God said to Him, “You are my Son, whom I love; with You I am well pleased.” Then Jesus spent forty days in the desert, eating nothing, and being tempted by Satan.

How should we deal with temptation? We know that there is no one righteous, not even one (Romans 3:10, 23) and all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. How do we face temptation? Can we learn from the example of Jesus in the desert? His experience in the desert gives us the model for handling temptation.

We need to confess Jesus is our Lord. Do I believe this? Do I trust in Jesus? Do I love Him? Do I follow Him? Paul (Romans 10: 9 said, “If you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.” So how does our Lord handle temptation?

Satan (Matthew 4: 1-11; Mark 1: 12-13; Luke 4: 1-13) tempted Jesus three ways in the desert: (1) Hunger-Bread/”If you are the Son of God”/Jesus quotes Scripture & doesn’t satisfy an immediate need by prematurely doing a miracle, (2) Worldly Power-“Worship Satan”/Jesus quotes Scripture & does not take a shortcut to earthly power and also avoid the cross, (3) “Jump off the Temple”-disarm your enemies in the Jewish and Roman authorities through a miracle/Satan & Jesus quote Scripture & Jesus chooses the road to the cross and our salvation. Satan now leaves Jesus for a time.

Satan’s temptation of Jesus is initially through strengths starting with, “If you are the Son of God,” and not weaknesses such as hunger. This is Satan’s strategic plan with Jesus and with us. We are usually on guard in areas of weakness. We know we need help. It is in our areas of strength where we think we can do it alone, but we are wrong. We always need God.

We must quickly pray to God as we face temptations. We may recognize the temptations that play to our weaknesses, but what about temptations that play to our strengths when we might tend to rely on ourselves and not God. Remember, we are facing more than human and natural sources of temptations and these are powerful enough as they are. Paul reminds us, “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.” (Ephesians 6: 12) Nothing can come between God, and us unless we allow it. “For I am convinced that

neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, not any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8: 38-39)

This prayer may help you at the beginning of the day as we face the ups and downs of our life: “God be in our heads, and in our understanding; God be in our eyes and in our looking; God be in our mouths and in our speaking; God be in our hearts and in our thinking; God be at our end and at our departing. Amen.”

In Christ’s love,
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