

Young People's Forum (II.5)

Dear forum members,

Talking about the devil and his millions of demons, I must mention too that the devil has access to our minds and wills. It was not so in Paradise, because Adam was without sin. And so when the devil tempted Adam and Eve, he did so through the serpent. He could not get inside Eve's mind. But now he can. He can put evil thoughts in our minds and put evil lusts in our wills. He can distract us with evil thoughts when we are praying. He can make us say evil things when we are talking – even to those we love. He can change our wills so that instead of wanting to go to church and worship God, we rather go to the theater and watch a movie.

This is why the devil is so deadly and why he is a constant enemy.

But, as I said, the world is his ally in this great battle of the ages. The world uses two weapons especially to persuade the people of God to abandon their church and their God and join the world. The first weapon is the attractions and pleasures of the world. Wicked men display before our eyes the glitter of wealth and pleasure, the attractiveness of movies and video games, the fun of drugs and drinking, the ease of going along with the tide of materialism, and what Jesus calls “the deceitfulness of riches” (Matt. 13:22) – deceitful because riches promise happiness and never give it.

In fact, wicked men will tell us that the world is much more pleasurable than the life of a Christian: the life of a Christian is a life of self-denial and cross-bearing. I recall a time, many years ago when my mother was in the hospital. In those days the hospital had large wards in which were sometimes as many as 15 patients. The ladies in this ward were talking one day about all the things they were missing: their shows, their movies, their parties My mother was silent, until the lady in the bed next to her asked her why she didn't join in the general conversation. My mother responded: “I have never been to a movie nor gone to a party such as you describe” (there was no TV yet in those days). In astonishment the woman next to her said, “Whatever do you do for fun? Don't you ever have any fun?” My mother responded, “I have my fun going to church, taking care of my family and having fellowship with my fellow saints. And I am happier than all you put together.” Of course, they could not understand that.

God's people do not always fall for these temptations. They listen to what the apostle John says, “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever” (I John 2:15-17).

If God's people keep themselves from all these allurements of the world, the world has another weapon in its arsenal; that weapon is the weapon of persecution. You can understand this if you look at it from the devil's point of view. He wants everyone in this world on his side. He needs everyone on his side, because he wants to rule the whole creation as its king and all men as his citizens. To do this, there must be no one left in the world who represents the cause of God and God's Christ. God must be banished from the world, and God's cause destroyed. Any mention of God is forbidden,

for it only reminds Satan of the hell that awaits him. And so, if he cannot get you to join him then he has to destroy you.

He will start out by prompting the world to mock the believer, poke fun of him, laugh at him and make him feel like an idiot. He will call him all kinds of names: bigot, narrow-minded, accusatory of others, old-fashioned, one who doesn't know how to laugh, a wall-flower, a person who thinks he is holier-than-others, etc. He hopes to make the Christian feel ashamed, for the Christian might, in his shame, join with these wicked people.

But if that doesn't work, he will get a bit nastier. He will try to deprive the Christian of his livelihood, his job, his means of earning money to support his family and church. Many years ago two men with families came to me and told me that the labor union had succeeded in getting into their dairy company and they were threatened with the loss of their jobs because they would not join the godless labor union. They asked me to go to the union headquarters and ask the union officials to permit them to retain their jobs even though they would not join the union.

I went and had an opportunity to talk with a vice president of the union who actually had his offices in Detroit. When I explained why I was there, he said to me, "You must be of the Protestant Reformed Churches." I was very surprised that he knew of us, and he noticed by surprise. He said to me, "Oh, we know all about you, and we are going to get you someday." I asked him why he was so belligerent and hateful. He responded, "You people refuse to join a labor union; that means you are not Christians or good citizens of this country. You are anti-Christian and traitors to America." When I asked him how that could be, he said to me: "It is Christian and American to help the poor laboring man earn higher wages. The union helps him do that. You are opposed to unions."

Well, I told him why we were opposed to the unions. I asked him whether it was Christian to deprive fathers of their jobs so that their families suffered. He responded with a shake of his head to indicate he wanted me out of there, "Let the _____ starve."

The boss of the company told these men, however, that they could stay in the company if they would pay an amount equal to union dues to a charity of their choice. They choose Hope Protestant Reformed Christian School as the charity and stayed on their jobs. But they could not stay in the company because the union members made life impossible for them in the dairy by putting filth in the food in their lunch pails, letting the air out of the tires of the truck they had to drive to deliver milk, and other acts of cruelty.

Even our young people are having difficulty finding part-time jobs during the summer, for more and more frequently they must be willing to work on the Lord's Day if they want a job.

If even that kind of persecution doesn't work, the wicked will finally turn to imprisonment and death. Already that is happening in various parts of the world. And it is just around the corner in our country and in yours. The time is not too far distant when you will be put in jail for saying in a sermon or in your witnessing that ~~Buddhism is~~ a false religion and is idolatry. In this country a minister may be put into prison for condemning homosexuality. He is charged with a hate crime and punished.

The threat of suffering and death is enough to persuade many Christians to deny their faith and church. This weapon of Satan is very powerful. It is like a soldier, captured by the enemy and threatened with torture and death if he does not join the ranks of those who captured him. It is very hard to remain loyal to one's own country under such circumstances and the temptation is great to deny his country and join the ranks of the enemy.

So it is a temptation for a soldier of the cross to deny his God and his Christ and join the ranks of the world in the midst of which he lives.

More on this will have to wait till next time.

With warm regards and love in the Lord,

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