

## **Philippians: The Triumph of Joy over Worldliness (3)**

This past Sunday I said that there are three great enemies of the church: sin, Satan, and the world. As we witnessed in Genesis 3:1-13, Eve was tempted by the three great temptations of the world: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. These three things we find in the book of 1 John 2:16 and they illustrate for us a pattern that is witnessed not only in Genesis 3, but throughout the scriptures.

As a Christian you ought to be very mindful of these three great temptations in your life. The appetites of the world really are enticing. But, we have to understand how it is that we are to overcome them. Before we look at the epistle to the Philippians, we must first travel to the wilderness of fasting where we find the wearied Jesus resisting the temptations of the world offered by Satan. There we read in Matthew 4 that Jesus was tempted by three great temptations. Satan tempted Jesus with the first great desire of the world: the lust of the flesh. He told Jesus to turn the stones into bread that he might fill his hungry desire. But, Jesus countered with "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God". Satan then tempted Jesus to test God by throwing himself off of the temple. But, Jesus quotes him, "thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God". Satan saves the best for last, tempting Jesus eyes and his pride with all the kingdoms of the world. Jesus answers him by saying, "thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve".

We see in these combinations the three great temptations of the world. We have to be realistic about these temptations and not be surprised when they hit us. We must know God's word well enough to foil Satan's manipulations of scripture. But, knowing God's word will not be enough. One can know very well that it is unhealthy to never exercise, but unless you cultivate a greater desire for the benefits of health and long life, the desire to be inactive will inevitably overcome the good desire to be healthy.

This is why Paul in Philippians 3 commands us to "rejoice in the Lord". The joy of all that heaven offers us in Jesus, his presence, his loveliness, his glory, his name, his attributes of power and righteousness and grace and truth, his devotedness to his church, his suffering, his sacrifice, his blood, and our adoption must be greater than all the delicacies spread out before our appetites, all the treasures polished and shining in our eyes, and all the applaud - the admiration of men, whose "God is their belly, and whose glory is their shame, who mind earthly things" (Phil 3:19). For as Paul proclaims, "our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ" (v. 20). Paul, though rich in this world, counted them all as loss because Paul had found a greater desire. O, that we would desire Jesus more! What a wonder of transforming power would pulse through our lives!

Would we overcome the world? If so, we would look to Jesus and rejoice more and more in the pleasures that "are at his right hand for evermore" (Ps 16:11). There is only one way to overcome the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life: it is to fall in love with the Jesus of the Bible.

Soak up the word of God and let it deepen your desires for heaven. I'll leave you with a final thought. These are words from an old, saintly puritan named Isaac Ambrose, who learned to fall in love Jesus:

Oh! When I look on Christ and consider, That he that was the Lord of heaven and earth, put himself into so poor and low a condition, merely for the redeeming of his elect, how should this but deaden my heart to the world? 'I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; and do count them but dung that I may win Christ,' Phil. 3:8. If Christ be in view, all the world then is but dung and dross, and loss in comparison; the glory of Christ will darken all other things in the world

Yours In Christ,  
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