

The Temptation To Compromise

By Roelf L. Ruffner

“Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me” (Mat. 4:8,9).

In this scene, after forty days and nights of hunger for the Son of Man, the Deceiver pulls out one more temptation from his bag of tricks. The Lord is shown the fleeting glory of this physical world “in a moment of time” (Luke 4:5). He had already tempted Jesus to doubt God’s Providential care (Mat. 4:1-4). He then offered Him the easy way to a kingdom in this world (Mat. 4:5-7). But in both temptations the Christ defeated the Devil with the sword of the Spirit – “it is written” (Verses 4,7).

Yet in his third attempt Satan tempts the Lord to compromise. In essence he was saying, “Why not avoid the struggle you are about to undergo on the earth. Avoid the agony of the cross and obtain the kingdom you are entitled to without suffering. We have already been struggling for forty days and nights. Let us call a truce. Come and share with me material wealth and power; just trade the spiritual for the material.” “For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Mat. 16:26).

The Deceiver’s tactics have not changed much in 2,000 years. Men still want to have the best of both worlds (They think!) by compromising their beliefs. Many Christians compromise Godly living for earthly acclaim: social drinking, cursing, immodesty, materialism, etc. “And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” (Luke 6:46). Others water down the Gospel to please the world: deemphasizing baptism as essential for salvation, unity in diversity, unauthorized worship, unscriptural marriage-divorce-remarriage, fellowship of denominations, and the “go-along-get-along” mentality. “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them” (Eph. 5:11).

The Savior's response to Satan in Verse 10 struck to the heart of the matter. "Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve" (Mat. 4:10). Notice the authority of the Master of Temptation:

1. "Get thee hence" – He orders the Devil to leave.
2. "It is written" – the final, end-of-argument authority of God's word.

Jesus understood that to compromise the truth of God's word is to worship the god of this world – Satan. "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Mat. 6:24).

Dear reader, who are you and I worshipping? If we succumb to this temptation and do not repent, we are taking the well traveled road of compromise and accommodation. In truth we are worshipping the Deceiver. The consequences of this sin will last for eternity. "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in there at: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Mat. 7:13,14).