



Higher Ground

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NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. This year is passing so quickly! What have we done for Christ? Have we made efforts to enlarge His kingdom? Have we drawn closer to Him? Have we *TAKEN TIME* to learn the things of God, or have we allowed business to keep us from doing and being what we should?

These articles are included with the intention that they will be a blessing to you. Thank you all who passed on quotes or articles. It is exciting to see God working in

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How to Make a Success of the Christian Life

Search the Scriptures daily. (Acts 17:11; 1 Peter 2:2). Take time to allow God to speak through His Word. Do it every day. Feed your soul as regularly as you feed your body.

Unceasingly pray. (1 Thessalonians 5:17). Regardless of what must go undone, take time to talk with God every day. Don't be satisfied with just saying words, but really pray.

Confess every known sin and transgression to God. (1 John 1:9). Be unmerciful with sin in your own life. Judge yourself, but do not seek to justify yourself.

Contact others on behalf of Christ. (Acts 1:8). Let the world know you are a Christian. Tell others of what Christ has done for you, and invite them to accept Him as their Saviour.

Enter into the work of the Lord with enthusiasm and without reservation. (Romans 12:11). Put your entire being into the cause of Christ. Be wholehearted in your Christian witness.

Surrender to the Spirit's promptings. (Galatians 5:16; Ephesians 5:18). Allow the Holy Spirit to control and direct every department of your life. God's way is always the best way.

Set aside Sunday for the Lord. (Acts 20:7). Don't allow anything to rob you of the blessing and fellowship which may be yours on the Lord's Day in the Lord's house.

this way! Don't be afraid to send anything you think may be worthwhile – the worst that can happen is that it could be left out! Go on, be a blessing!

Joshua

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

The editor of Higher Ground is Joshua McPherson. He is a young man who desires to walk closer to the Lord each day, and encourages others to do the same.

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But let all those that put their trust in thee rejoice: let them ever shout for joy, because thou defendest them: let them also that love thy name be joyful in thee.

Psalm 5:11

THE TEMPTATION OF JESUS — PART 1

“And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, being forty days tempted of the devil...” Luke 4:1-2

The beginning of Jesus’ formal earthly ministry was marked by an unusual event – a period of 40 days of temptation in the wilderness. Jesus had just been filled by the Holy Spirit at His baptism, in the process revealing to John the Baptist that He was the Son of God. The outworking of being filled by the Spirit is to be led by the Spirit, and we see that is exactly what the gospel writers record. Luke precludes this event with “And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan and was led by the Spirit...” (Luke 4:1). In his very condensed account, Mark uses a stronger word to describe this as a “forceful sending” of the Spirit: “driven” – the same word used 11 times by Mark referring to casting out of demons. Where did the Spirit lead Jesus? If the account were not so familiar to us, I’m sure it would seem rather strange that our Lord was led to a place of solitude, a place of testing. For forty days, He faced numerous temptations and trials, three of which are specifically recorded in the gospels (Luke 4:2 suggests that there were many more that are not recorded).

In the first, the devil tempted Jesus to turn a stone into bread and satisfy His hunger. I believe he was appealing to the lust of the flesh, tempting Jesus to use His supernatural powers for self-satisfaction. However, by coming to earth as a human, Jesus had relinquished the freedom to use His divine powers unless it was specifically in doing the Father’s will. The Lord’s response to this temptation was to quote from the Scriptures, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” He made it evident in His response that His focus was on the spiritual sustenance, not on the physical.

The second temptation (as in the sequence found in Luke’s account – Matthew’s sequence appears to be the chronological one) was a subtle yet powerful temptation. By taking Jesus up to a high place, showing Him the kingdoms of the world and offering Jesus authority over them in exchange for worship, the devil was tempting Jesus to take the easy road rather than the path of suffering. Jesus knew that one

day He would have authority over all the world (the day that every knee will bow before Him), but the path to accomplish this would involve great suffering culminating in the Cross. We get a glimpse of just how difficult a path this was when later, Jesus under intense emotional and physical stress (“in agony” Luke records) says “Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me; nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done” (Luke 22:42). The devil offered Jesus an easier way to get something that was rightfully His as Creator in return for something he tried to pass off as trivial – he put it to Jesus as a win-win situation. He appealed to the “lust of the eyes” in a similar way he did with the first temptation of mankind in the Garden of Eden, saying, “Look at this, it’s wonderful, there’s nothing wrong with wanting it, and you can have it now!” Unlike the first Adam though, Jesus did not take the bait. He again quoted from the Old Testament, Deuteronomy 6:13, and equated worship with service – we are commanded to worship and serve God alone.

The devil tried another approach – he tried to question God’s faithfulness in taking Jesus up to the highest point of the temple, and saying, “In light of the fact that you are the Son of God, you should be able to prove God’s faithfulness by throwing yourself off and letting the angels take care of you, as the Scriptures say they will.” This was tempting Jesus to put Himself into a circumstance that would demand a miracle of God to save Him. It is wrong to presume upon God’s promises to rescue us from situations that we put ourselves in through our own bad choices or lack of common sense. So even though the angels were watching over Him, ready to catch Him if He stumbled, Jesus was not going to do something that would force God’s hand into divine intervention to rescue Him. His response was simple: “Thou shalt not tempt (or test) the Lord thy God,” quoting from Deuteronomy 6:16. Jesus did not try to negotiate or debate, even though He could have made a logical case against the temptation. Instead, He showed us how to resist the devil.

By A. Budimir

Part 2 – Why was Jesus Tested?

will be found in the next edition of Higher Ground

“Thou shalt not tempt the
LORD thy God”

Luke 4:12

THREE CHOICES

"But one thing is needful; and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her." Luke 10:38-42

Every person must make decisions, or choices for good or bad – every day. The choices we make today affect the choices we make tomorrow. Consequently, EVERY decision we make is of vital importance.

Think about it like waiting for a bus. Every 15 minutes a bus leaves our stop. We can take any one of these buses, but we would be foolish just to take the first bus that comes. Why? Where is that bus going? Is it going the same way we wish to go? What is its ultimate destination? Is it what we are aiming for?

In Luke 10:38-42 we find the history of Christ's visit to Mary and Martha. Essentially we find that Martha is busy serving – providing the necessary food, etc. while Mary sits at Jesus' feet listening to Him. Martha comes and almost demands that her sister be told to come and help. Christ replies that Mary had made a good decision – she had made the best choice.

This brings us to the three most important choices we must make in our life.

1. Choose Life

Deuteronomy 30:15 is a challenge given by Moses to the children of Israel, exhorting them to choose the good and right way. They could choose life – the good way, or death – the evil way. What is life? I John 5:12 "he that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." Have we chosen to follow Christ? What is our decision regarding Christ, the Saviour of the world? Have we given all for Him, or do we despise His great gift, and refuse to take it as our own?

2. Choose who we will serve

It was at the end of Joshua's life that he, like Moses, challenges the people of Israel: "...choose you this day whom ye will serve;" (Joshua 24:15). This is the next step in the Christian life. Any person that truly appreciates what Christ has done for him *will* desire to serve the One who has bought his salvation with His own blood.

Such a person, in fact, will be different after his conversion than he was before. The Scriptures repeatedly illustrate this, but consider for a moment Christ's words in John 12:26: "If any man serve me, let him follow me; and *where I am, there shall also my servant be*: if any man serve me, him will *my* Father honour." Would Christ go to some of the places we go? Say some things we say? Do some things we do? If we desire to serve Christ, our lives must change.

How do we serve? Romans 7:6 – in newness of spirit. Rather than a bland service "filling in the blanks" – doing the bare necessity, we ought to be seeking what new ways we may serve our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Our Christian walk should

never suffer from dry, uninteresting, legalistic service, but be ever fresh and new

We should serve in gladness – Psalm 100:2. This is no ordinary service, but a great privilege and joy. It should excite in us a sense of great responsibility, but at the same time gladness that our great God would allow us to serve Him.

I Chronicles 28:9 reminds us that our service should be with a perfect heart – there should be no personal motives of ambition, or gain behind what we do for Christ (else it is not done for Christ) – and with a willing mind – willing to do anything that He may ask us to do, no matter what the cost, financially, or in any other way. Some writers have referred to this idea as a reckless abandon to Christ.

Also, it is important that our service be in love (Galatians 5:13). Many a good man has wasted his time, and efforts trying to help a fellow Christian, because he has been so stiff and starchy in doing his "duty" that he has failed to communicate the true reason for all service – that of the glory of God. Our service should lead others to Christ in gladness and thankfulness – and not in desperate prayer, wondering why this affliction has been allowed in their life.

3. Choose to sit at His feet and hear His Word

Here we seem to come across an impossible paradox. How can we serve like Martha, yet sit at Christ's feet like Mary? How can we be busy in service, yet quiet and relaxed at Jesus' feet? Did not Christ commend Mary's action? Shall we stop active service then, and just sit at Jesus' feet?

Perhaps there are two sides to look at here – firstly, if we are to serve effectively, we must not neglect to spend time with Christ – this is, in fact, the basis of our service. A deaf person has difficulty speaking sounds we understand because they cannot hear what they sound like, or what they should sound like. The Christian walk is the same – how can we expect to speak "Christian sounds" if we do not take the time to listen to what they sound like. What goes in must come out. What goes out must have come in. Bear in mind that the position of sitting at the feet of someone is one of humility and learning (Acts 22:3).

Secondly, Martha's service was not bad – it was a good thing – she was taking care of the Saviour! Yet, she got so caught up in the service of the One she loved; she failed to take the time to love Him – to learn his ways by spending time with him. Thus, the service became an evil thing to her, for it prevented her from learning at His feet.

Take time to spend at His feet, and find that such dedication leads to true, effective service. From a message by G. McPherson

PERSPECTIVES

"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God..." Rom 8:28

The literature that one gets into the habit of reading will determine very largely what he will accomplish in life. We realize that the company one keeps has a great bearing on his character, his aims, plans, and purposes in life, but so does his reading. Perhaps it is more common to warn a young man or woman of the company they keep that could be ruinous; but remember that the books and literature being read may be just as dangerous.

"THE BIBLE WILL KEEP YOU FROM SIN, OR SIN WILL KEEP YOU FROM THE BIBLE."

There is no doubt that young people are greatly affected by what they read. If one associates with bad company, he will become a part of such company. If one reads a low class of literature, his reading matter will become a part of him. If one reads books and other literature written by atheists and agnostics, he may believe it to the extent that he will become influenced by their philosophies. It is very dangerous for young people to read such material without proper guidance and a firm grip on their own convictions.

If one reads pornographic material, it may be the means of making him adulterous and causing him to lay a very low estimate upon the life, soul and character of himself as well as others. Such material should never be published, but since it is published, no youth – or anyone else for that matter – should buy and read it. Such publications should be committed to the flames of a great bonfire.

Anything that lowers the mind, excites passion, and causes evil thoughts to take possession of the inner life is dangerous. Whatever causes anyone to place the wrong emphasis upon life, upon character, upon manhood and womanhood – either by way of books and other literature or the company he may keep – is to be absolutely shunned.

We would advise every young person to choose a clean, uplifting, moral, spiritual class of things to read. The Holy Bible should be chosen above all other books as the main Book to live by. No one can become highly successful and useful who rejects the Bible or neglects its wonderful lessons, commandments, teachings, and truths. Young people should cherish the Bible. To leave it out of one's study, out of his life, and out of his library is a mistake that will eventually prove a great defeat.

Submitted by E. Brown



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