

Tis the Season for Temptation

I Peter 5:8-9

I. INTRODUCTION: I

1. **2** Satan never takes a day off; he is always scheming to seduce us to abandon God and His truth.

I Pet. 5:8-9: *“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. 9 Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.”*

2. Satan does not fight fair; he will use every trick in his book of lies to seduce us and turn us away from the path of righteousness.

2 Cor. 11:3: *“But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.”*

- A. We need to be aware that Satan is indeed “crafty” (“subtilty,” KJV; “cunning,” NIV).
- B. Satan often employs that which is not sinful in and of itself to woo us away from God.
- C. Often that which is not necessarily sinful, presents many opportunities and situations that can lead us into temptation and sin.
- D. That is why it is so critical that we always be prepared to battle Satan and his “devices.”

2 Cor. 2:11: *“Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.”* (KJV)

Eph. 6:11-13: *“Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. 13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.”*

3. We are at the time of the year in our society of many holiday activities with family, friends, and co-workers.
 - A. Like most folks, I really enjoy what we call the “Holiday Season” (Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year).
 - B. However, the so-called “Holiday Season” is fraught with spiritual dangers.
 - C. Satan is always on the prowl “seeking whom he may devour”; and he doesn’t take a vacation during the holidays!
 - D. The “Holiday Season” is filled with good and wholesome activities that we all find enjoyable, but that doesn’t mean Satan will not use these things to deceive us into sin.
 - E. The old saying goes that “To be forewarned, is to be forearmed.”
- F. **3** That being true, let’s look at some potential dangers of the “Holiday Season” Satan can use to “devour” us.

II. DISCUSSION:

1. **4** Influence of false religion:

- A. Things written aforetime: Rom. 15:4
- B. Recall God’s warnings to Israel before they entered Canaan:

Deut. 29:16-20: *“(for you know that we dwelt in the land of Egypt and that we came through the nations which you passed by, 17 and you saw their abominations and their idols which were among them — wood and stone and silver and gold); 18 so that there may not be among you man or woman or family or tribe, whose heart turns away today from the LORD our God, to go and serve the gods of these nations, and that there may not be among you a root bearing bitterness or wormwood; 19 and so it may not happen, when he hears the words of this curse, that he blesses himself in his heart, saying, ‘I shall have peace, even though I follow the dictates of my heart’ — as though the drunkard could be included with the sober. 20 ‘The LORD would not spare him; for then the anger of the LORD and His jealousy would burn against that man, and every curse that is written in this book would settle on him, and the LORD would blot out his name from under heaven.”*

- (1) There is great danger in false religion: It is appealing!
- (2) God through Moses warned Israel that false religions would attract them (v. 17), then convince their minds and poison their lives (v. 18).
- (3) Their hearts would be deceived to think God is pleased, that all is well (v. 19).
- (4) BUT when they followed “*the dictates of my heart*” all was not “*peace*”!
- (5) On the contrary, God would punish them! v. 20
- (6) When man follows “*the dictates of [his] heart*” rather than God’s Word it is “*as though the drunkard could be included with the sober*”!

C. Do you recall when Jeroboam changed God’s pattern of worship?

- (1) It pleased the people but did not please God!

1 Kgs. 12:28-33: *“Therefore the king asked advice, made two calves of gold, and said to the people, ‘It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Here are your gods, O Israel, which brought you up from the land of Egypt!’ 29 And he set up one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan. 30 Now this thing became a sin, for the people went to worship before the one as far as Dan. 31 He made shrines on the high places, and made priests from every class of people, who were not of the sons of Levi. 32 Jeroboam ordained a feast on the fifteenth day of the eighth month, like the feast that was in Judah, and offered sacrifices on the altar. So he did at Bethel, sacrificing to the calves that he had made. And at Bethel he installed the priests of the high places which he had made. 33 So he made offerings on the altar which he had made at Bethel on the fifteenth day of the eighth month, in the month which he had devised in his own heart. And he ordained a feast for the children of Israel, and offered sacrifices on the altar and burned incense.”*

- (2) When man follows the “dictates of his heart” in an attempt to “improve” God’s pattern—God calls it sin!
- (3) Jeroboam followed a plan to worship God “*he had devised in his own heart.*”
- (4) It had many similarities to God’s ordained pattern; it was “like” God’s pattern; but it was not God’s pattern and God called it sin!
- (5) God not man determines proper worship! Jn. 4:24

D. Well, that’s Old Testament stuff and under the New Covenant we “*are not under law but under grace.*” (Rom. 6:14)

- (1) That is certainly true, but recall that Jesus condemned the Pharisees for tampering with God’s instructions:

Matt. 15:8-9: *“These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. 9 And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.”*

- (2) Again, when we alter God’s instructions to conform to the “dictates of our heart,” whether in the Old or New Covenants, we nullify our worship and make it vain (empty, useless).
- E. Where does the religious celebration of Christmas originate: God’s Word or the dictates of the human heart and mind?
 - (1) The latter and not the former; the religious celebration of Christmas is according to the *“doctrines and commandments of men.”*
 - (2) It is something man has *“devised in his own heart.”*
 - (3) That means it is vain and empty; that means *“The LORD would not spare him; for then the anger of the LORD and His jealousy would burn against that man, and every curse that is written in this book would settle on him, and the LORD would blot out his name from under heaven.”* (Deut. 29:20)
- F. God’s appointments:
 - (1) God appointed a memorial to remember Christ’s death, not His birth (Matt. 26:26-29).
 - (a) Lord’s Supper every Sunday (Acts 20:7).
 - (b) It is designed to remember the Lord’s death:

1 Cor. 11:26: *“For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes.”*
 - (c) God’s Word is silent insofar as a formal remembrance of the Lord’s birth.
 - (2) The Bible is also silent about:
 - (a) Observing the Lord’s Supper on any day except Sunday.
 - (b) On using hamburgers and Coca-Cola for the elements.
 - (c) What if we changed the frequency and day of observance or the elements?
 - (d) We would be guilty of following the “dictates of our heart,” just as God warned Israel that if they did so *“The LORD would not spare him; for then the anger of the LORD and His jealousy would burn against that man, and every curse that is written in this book would settle on him, and the LORD would blot out his name from under heaven.”* (Deut. 29:20)
 - (e) We would be guilty of the same sin as Jereboam as his worship was *“devised in his own heart”* and rejected by God.
- G. So why does man think he can add Christmas as a memorial to Christ’s birth when God’s Word does not authorize it?
 - (1) There are no instruction originating from God’s mind concerning the observance of Christmas as a religious holiday! Jn. 16:13
 - (2) To do so is folly! It’s no different than Jereboam’s golden calves!
 - (3) In fact, Christmas as a religious holiday is borrowed from pagan idolatry of the 3rd-4th century: worship Sun god with revelry in December.

- (4) Christmas was joined to the Catholic “mass” to “Christianize” pagan idolatry and memorialize Christ’s birth.
- (5) Later, in the mid to late 1800s the Protestant denominations adopted and adapted Christmas with special services, choirs, solos, dramas, cantatas, manger scenes, etc.
- H. We must guard against the direct dangers of false religion.
 - (1) The “Holiday Season” is NOT Christ’s birthday.
 - (a) We don’t even know on what date Jesus was born.

Lk. 2:8: *“Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night.”*
 - (b) Historians tell us the shepherds in ancient Palestine kept their sheep “in the fields” from April to November.
 - (c) In a winter month like December they would have been kept in “sheepfolds” (their version of a barn).
 - (2) The point is simply this:
 - (a) God chose not to reveal the date on which Jesus was born (1 Cor. 2:9-11).
 - (b) God gave us no instruction for the observance of Christmas as a day to memorialize Christ’s birth.
 - (c) Here is all God’s Word reveals on the matter (5 show blank slide).
- I. **6** It is not wrong to observe Christmas as a civil holiday; a day to enjoy family, etc.
 - (1) But, the religious observance of Christmas is from the mind of man, designed to please man; not God.
 - (2) God calls all such things “sin” and “vain” worship (e.g. midnight mass).
 - (3) As God’s people we must exercise care we don’t get caught up in the religious observance of Christmas, or even give a hint of involvement (1 Thess. 5:22).

2. **** Compromise with Satan’s agenda:**

- A. God has always expected His people to be separated unto Him:

Deut. 14:1-2: *“You are the children of the LORD your God...For you are a holy people to the LORD your God, and the LORD has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.”*

2 Cor. 6:14-7:1: *“Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? 15 And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? 16 And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said:*

*‘I will dwell in them
And walk among them.
I will be their God,
And they shall be My people.”*

17 Therefore

*‘Come out from among them
And be separate, says the Lord.
Do not touch what is unclean,*

And I will receive you.’
I 8 ‘I will be a Father to you,
And you shall be My sons and daughters,
Says the Lord Almighty.’

7:1 Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”

B. The danger of compromise:

(1) **Challenge of relatives and friends:**

- (a) Sometimes relatives and friends invite us to participate in their churches’ Christmas celebrations.
- (b) When I worked in Cooperative Extension we talked about the “teachable moment.”
- (c) If someone invites you to their churches’ Christmas celebration, or even mentions it, you have a golden opportunity, a “teachable moment.”
- (d) Take advantage of it! Teach them! Speak the truth in love (Eph. 4:15), and don’t be offensive or argumentative, but teach them.
- (e) It is quite possible they will be offended, but never regret standing for the truth.
- (f) Recall how Jesus handled a similar situation: In response to Matthew 15:9

Matt. 15:12-14: “Then His disciples came and said to Him, ‘Do You know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?’ 13 But He answered and said, ‘Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted. 14 Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch.’”

(2) **Challenge of school activities:**

- (a) Songs celebrate this season as the birthday of Jesus.
- (b) Religious songs with instrumental music (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16).
- (c) We need to teach our children, school staff, and friends.
- (d) Some folks can be a real challenge, the “keep the Christ in Christmas” crowd.

(3) **Challenge of decorations and cards:**

- (a) Some have scruples that will not allow them to put up any Christmas decorations or even celebrate Christmas as a civil holiday.
- (b) I don’t believe it is a sin to put up a tree or observe the holiday as a civil holiday.
- (c) However, we should not use pictures, symbols, songs, etc. which celebrate this season as the birthday of Jesus; those things are unbiblical (1 Pet. 4:11).
- (d) We should be very careful to use holiday symbols but not “holy” day symbols; otherwise we are being hypocritical.

C. Danger of compromise with worldliness: perhaps the biggest danger for most.

(1) Holiday parties, for many, are a time of feasting and drinking of alcoholic beverages.

Prov. 20:1: “Wine is a mocker, strong drink is a brawler, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise.”

- (a) We can’t make excuses (“I want to fit in.”; “I’ll just do it this once, for the holiday.”).
- (b) This temptation can be particularly strong for young people (esp. in the workplace!).

- (c) We need to let our light shine! Matt. 5:14-16
- (2) Movies: Often new movies are released into the theatres during the holiday season.
 - (a) Most of these movies are not fit for Christians to watch (even “PG” rated movies!).
 - (b) It is not just the foul language: For example, the “sympathetic adulterers” so common in many movies.
 - (c) When we allow ourselves to think like the world we are in danger of becoming worldly ourselves (Prov. 23:7).
- Prov. 4:23:** “Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life.”
- (d) We especially need to protect our children in regards to these things.
- (e) The Lord expect us to be very different from the world!

2 Cor. 6:17-18: “Therefore:

‘Come out from among them
And be separate, says the Lord.
Do not touch what is unclean,
And I will receive you.’
18 ‘I will be a Father to you,
And you shall be My sons and daughters,
Says the Lord Almighty.’”

3. **** Materialism:** Materialism presents many dangers...

A. Danger of over-emphasizing gifts: Lk. 12:13-21

- (1) Not saying giving of gifts are wrong; but happiness is not found in “things” (possessions):
Lk. 12:15: “Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.”
- (2) True happiness: laying up treasures in heaven!

B. Danger of unreasonable debt:

- (1) “53% of Americans cite expenses as the most stressful part of the holidays, beating even family issues (23%) and weight gain (23%) as the biggest cause for having the Christmas blues.” (Goldman Sachs survey)
- (2) Average household credit card debt in U.S. is \$9,333 and Christmas expenses are a major contributor.
- (3) Unwise to go overboard (ave./person Christmas bill in U.S. is \$633; it adds up fast!).

C. Danger of robbing God:

- (1) Paul describes our giving “as a matter of generosity and not as a grudging obligation.” (2 Cor. 9:5)
- (2) He also said:
2 Cor. 9:6-7: “But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. 7 So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.”
- (3) Not easy to do if we’ve run up a big Christmas bill!

- (4) Puts us in danger of becoming robbers of God (**Mal. 3:8**: “Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, ‘In what way have we robbed You?’ In tithes and offerings.”)

D. Danger to our attendance:

- (1) Christmas is an important time for “family time.”
(2) But some allow holiday activities, and even “family time,” to take precedence over faithful attendance at services.

Matt. 10:37-39: “He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. 38 And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. 39 He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it.”

- (3) Our most important “family” are our brothers and sisters in Christ!

Heb. 10:24-25: “And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, 25 not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.”

III. CONCLUSION: 7

- I. I am not trying to be a “Scrooge.”
A. But the “Holiday Season” presents dangers to our walk with Christ.
B. We need to always be on guard for the schemes of the devil.
I Pet. 5:8-9: “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. 9 Resist him, steadfast in the faith...”
2. The “Holiday Season” presents its own unique challenges that we need to equip ourselves to properly handle.
3. Satan is always active; always crafty; he will use the dangers of the season:
A. The Influence of false religion,
B. Temptation to compromise with Satan’s agenda, and,
C. Materialism
4. Invitation

Adapted from a sermon (*Dangers of the Holiday Season*) by Ron Halbrook.