

Beware of the Leaven of Politics

by Larry Rouse

The lure of the political spirit is a genuine danger to the cause of Christ. There is a legitimate realm where the Christian can seek to exercise influence for good in the community and country where he lives. Working for proper causes through the government or other organizations can be a good choice when proper considerations and priorities are in place. We need to be reminded, however, that the political realm remains firmly in the hands of “the ruler of this world.”

Jesus gave a grave warning concerning His disciples partaking of the spirit (a condition of heart that comes through shared ideals) of influential groups of His day. “...He began to say to His disciples first of all, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will not be known"” (Luke 12:1). The spirit of this world seeks to obtain its objective at any cost. The worldly man may show concern for a given issue, be it serving God, helping the poor, etc., when the real goal is the obtaining of personal power. This is hypocrisy. The ruler of this world has no concern for principles, people and especially of God’s way.

The political way of creating crisis

It is far easier to stir emotions that shut down the mind rather than build a reasonable case for a cause. H.L. Mencken said this over 50 years ago:

“The whole aim of practical politics is to keep the populace alarmed -- and hence clamorous to be led to safety -- by menacing it with an endless series of hobgoblins, all of them imaginary.”

We must learn to guard our spirit from those who would lead individuals or crowds to act out of emotion that shuts down both reason and fairness! God warned long ago: “You shall not follow a crowd to do evil.” (Ex 23:2)

The spirit of politics comes from the ruler of this world. When the Roman and Jewish authorities sent their forces to crucify our Lord, He knew that it was Satan that was coming to try to defeat His cause. "... for the ruler of this world is coming, and he has nothing in Me” (Jn 14:30). Before Pilate, Jesus indicated that His followers were part of a kingdom that does not fight for political causes nor use the carnal weapons that are common to that realm. Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here." (Jn 18:36)

The spirit of bitterness, fear, revenge and slander are some of the prime tools men use to gain power over “the crowd.” In 1895 Gustave Le Bon wrote about crowd psychology in a book

appropriately called "The Crowd." He observed that crowd psychology has:

"impulsiveness, irritability, incapacity to reason, the absence of judgement of the critical spirit, the exaggeration of sentiments, and others..."

Le Bon claimed "that an individual immersed for some length of time in a crowd soon finds himself – either in consequence of magnetic influence given out by the crowd or from some other cause of which we are ignorant – in a special state, which much resembles the state of fascination in which the hypnotized individual finds himself in the hands of the hypnotizer."

Guarding our hearts from the ruler of this world

Satan's game plan has been consistent throughout time – He works to poison the heart through the works of the flesh. Just one individual can spread a terrible leaven within a local church by sharing the "demonic spirit" of bitterness, pride and a learned dishonesty. Most division starts with a poisoned heart that then irrationally fights the spirit of Christ. James wrote: "But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there. (James 3:14-16)

Jesus warned against the leaven of both religious and political worldly forces. "Then He charged them, saying, "Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod"" (Mk 8:15). Our recent election and its aftermath is a product of worldly forces fighting for an earthly cause. I beg each of you who love the Lord to back away from the poisoned wells that are daily offered in both the public media and social media. These can destroy your soul.

Once we lose control of our hearts we have lost everything! When we find ourselves making "reviling accusations" about others being "racist, fools, greedy, etc." then we are doing things that Michael the archangel would not do towards Satan himself! "Yet Michael the archangel, in contending with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!" But these speak evil of whatever they do not know..." (Jude 9-10).

When Jesus saw this spirit come within His disciples "He turned and rebuked them, and said, "You do not know what manner of spirit you are of. For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives but to save them.".... (Luke 9:55-56) How can we know what is our manner of spirit?

Some Questions to consider

1. Do I become stressed about who wins elections and who wins political battles?
2. Do I join in the scoffing and railing of the crowd in personal slander of others contrary to Jesus' teaching about justice and mercy?

3. Am I willing to overlook and even discard moral truths taught in God's word because of my love or hatred towards political figures and movements?

4. Do I find most of my conversation, concerns and associates to be centered on politics and find much less time spent on God and His people?

5. Do I find that in my thoughts I am looking down on and even having anger towards my brethren just because of their political views?

6. Is my love for God and my desire to reach the lost is fading because of a poisonous spirit implanted by partaking of the leaven of politics?