

Ever wonder why 'revivals' or 'movements' never lasted beyond the first generation, if it got that far?

Sure the successors carried on doing that which they had learned to do, believing pretty much what they had been taught. But the Holy Spirit was no longer involved.

The same thing can be true of individuals. It was of me. I began in the Spirit but I ended up in the flesh. Not God's fault.

We need to know, and keep focused on this fact, that we have opposition. We have an enemy of our souls. He is fully committed and focused on what he wants to do to us.

And we seem to make it easy for him.

Satan is not responsible for us having a carnal nature, any more than he was for there being a tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the garden.

But he plays on it. He exploits our weaknesses.

Our weaknesses can be given to Jesus, and so become an opportunity to know Him in His saving power. They can also lead us to setting up an alternative to Jesus, another way to deal with our wounded conscience, something to make us feel good and at peace with ourselves as we are. Outside of Jesus.

This, of course, need not be fatal. So long as we come to our senses and fall down at the feet of Jesus, confessing our stupidity and sin, and faithlessness. He is gracious to forgive, and to pour in the oil and the wine.

Just as Satan pointed out the tree of the knowledge of good and evil to Eve, diverting attention from the Tree of Life, he is quick to point out to us an alternative to eating of the Tree of Life that is Jesus.

Indeed, it is Satan's life's work, to divert us from Jesus. Jesus who alone can save us, who alone gives us to drink of the Holy Spirit, who alone can give us to eat of himself, that we might live the abundant eternal life that is only found in Him.

Satan gets on our case straight away the moment we receive the revelation of Who Jesus is by the Spirit.

He will suggest that this is great and that we should be doing something to make this permanent. We should organise, or let someone else organise, and build booths so that this wonderful experience will not be lost. He will suggest we build a fridge to keep the manna in overnight! He wants to take our minds away from the fact that Jesus isn't going anywhere without us.

Mat 28:20 'lo, I am with you always, *even* unto the end of the world.'

Once our hearts are distracted away from the present Jesus into an imaginary tomorrow without Him it is as if we have rejected the Tree of Life that is the present Jesus for something that we can do.

The form this alternative to Jesus takes can vary; Satan has a tailor made alternative strategy for each one of us.

For me, in the beginning, it was a desire for knowledge about God and stuff from books. I thought that if I get all the religious books out of the public library and read up on them I'll know about Jesus and God and the Holy Spirit and I'll learn the right techniques to 'worship' and re-create the initial experience as much as possible. The Tree of Knowledge.

For many it is finding and joining a religious group, often the old favourites, whatever the historic or local variant may be. Satan is happy with us reading about Jesus, singing about

Jesus, thinking about Jesus, talking about Jesus – writing about Jesus! Just so long as we don't actually talk to or sing to Jesus.

Jesus wants a love affair with us, he is our Husband, our Lover, the One who loved me, and gave His life for me. A relationship, not a fan club.

A man is faithful to his wife by keeping her near him. By keeping company with her. By choosing her presence above others. By preferring her to all others.

We are faithful to Jesus by choosing His presence, His company, His companionship, His conversation, above any other distraction.

This, of course, is only possible through the cross. While we live, we are yet dead. In dying to our self we can live unto Jesus.

Taking up our cross and sticking with Jesus (my literal translation.)

The second line of attack I fell for was joining a religious organization in the belief that this would help me get to know Jesus better and that joining this was what God wanted. It was easier for me to go along to meetings (almost every day) than to die daily and live in the resurrection power of Jesus. A lot easier, for this son of Adam. 'Churches' are all around most of us. We are misinformed that these things are in the Bible and that they are the creation of God. All the 'good guys' go to them, run them, are visible because of them.

They actually came about because the second generation after the first apostles created a form of godliness based on what they knew of their forefather's life in Jesus, while not living in the same power of the Holy Spirit themselves.

Rules, regulations, observances, 'good practice' and so called knowledge filled the void left by an absence of the Holy Spirit.

They have the effect of wearing out the saints. Causing us to fester and rot. Like fungus or leaven (yeast).

In a world where church is a part of everyday normal life, it is as tempting as the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil must have been in the centre of the garden.

It's there. Surely it must be a good thing if it's in the garden?

God truly knows what He is doing in it all.

We don't seem to.

Ananias and his wife Saphira were in the midst of a vibrant assembly of disciples of Jesus in Jerusalem.

They saw others selling real estate and bringing the proceeds to the feet of the apostles.

They saw that it went down well.

They decided to make an impression also.

They died.

Their eyes were off Jesus.

They were no longer absolutely in love with Jesus. They loved something else.

While we are besotted with Jesus, other things fall into their rightful place relatively easily.

When we have a thought for ourselves, Jesus quickly disappears from our view.

It can be either Jesus or ourselves. Our 'self's will be attracted to the world. There's so much of it!

The wise choose Jesus.

He still chooses you.

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