

The Cowardly Response A small poodle loved to sit on a chair on the front porch and wait for a big Doberman dog to trot by, as he did every day. When he did, the little warrior would begin “yelping” loud. He would jump out of the chair and off the porch and run to the gate yelping all the way. He would jump on it and snarl as he stuck his little paws through the gate trying to catch the Doberman. One day when he jumped on the gate it swung open. Someone had forgotten to latch it. The Doberman did a “work” on him and he hobbled back to the porch, with a gash on his head; holding a front paw up and hobbling on his back legs. When he finally made it to his chair he said, “Who in the h*^# left the gate open?”

A lot of friends stand with us as long as the “gate is locked” and there is little danger. But when danger comes, they are nowhere to be found. We call them “fair weather” friends, and Jesus has a lot of them. They are faithful to the church and to the Christian life until it costs them something.

Jesus compares this to seed that falls on a thin layer of soil on top of a layer of rock. Grass pops up but when the sun hits it, it has no firm root system, and dies. This represents cowardly people who joyfully “receive” Jesus and get involved in the church, but when they are “**tested**” by “**persecution**” or “**pressure**”, they go back to their old way of life.

If they refuse to do things at work, they feel a Christian should not do; they know they will get passed over at promotion time, or worse, lose their jobs. With a house payment due and medical bills to pay, they experience persecution and pressure. None of us knows what we would do in such a situation. That is why Jesus calls it a “test”.

The Crowded Response Jesus says some seed falls among weeds and thorn bushes. Grass comes up, but it doesn’t get enough nutrients from the soil. The junk all around it

absorbs it. He says people make the decision to walk with God, but they are “**seduced**” (like a man or woman tempting us to immorality) by pleasures and money worries.

Later, Jesus said a lot of people would not be ready when He returns. He listed their “sins” as eating; drinking (not a word about it being alcohol); building; getting married; etc. (Luke 17:27-30). None of these things are bad or wrong. They are part of everyday life. They become “bad” when they crowd God out and are placed above Him and His church.

We crowd God out, thinking about pleasure or profits. We get serious about God, when we are in some kind of danger. He is like our “spare tire”. Let me ask you a question. Do you know if your spare has air in it? We don’t think about that; but if we are stranded in a dangerous place, out of cell phone range, we will think about it.

Society is out to get our children with enticements to sexual promiscuity, drugs and the love of money. Church, parents and the Holy Spirit combine to make up a powerful team to help protect our children from our evil society that seduces them.

Before the days of video recorders, I watched parents who did not bring their children to Sunday night children’s activities at church. They wanted to stay home and watch “Walt Disney”. And when their children later broke their hearts, and went the wrong way, they came to me for help. I did all I could, but when children become teens, it is almost always too late. (To be honest, I felt like telling them to go ask Walt Disney what to do.)

We need our church, a place of Christian influence; far more than our church needs us. God’s work will get done without us; but our work as parents and as people fighting the seductions that are pulling us down, will not get done without Him.