

Week of December 9-15

THE THREE G'S

Scripture Reading: Read 1 John 2

Years ago, I remember reading an account of a conversation that had transpired decades earlier between an aged pastor and a young preacher by the name of Billy Graham. Billy was just getting started in ministry and the older pastor was providing him with some godly counsel on how to last over the long haul and not be tripped up along the way. He specifically warned him about what could conveniently be called the 3 G's or the 3 F's: The old preacher was speaking about greed, glory and girls or fortune, fame and females. He noted that many a male preacher had been tripped up and had been unable to finish well the race of life because of failure in one of these three areas. Indeed, history leaves us a trail of ministries shattered and lives broken because a minister crashed and burned at the feet of one or more of the 3 G's.

Such dangers, however, are not unique to the 20th or 21st centuries. They go back farther, much farther. We see them in today's chapter reading recorded over 1900 years ago. Oh, they're not called specifically the 3 G's or the 3 F's in the text but they might as well have been. Take a look for yourself: *"For everything in the world--the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does--comes not from the Father but from the world."* John's threefold description of what constitutes the world's substance summarizes well the greed, selfishness, worldliness, sexual craving, fleshly appetites, and self-centered, boastful "it's all about me mindset" that is so prevalent in the world around us.

We also see them in the temptation of Jesus described in Matthew 4 and Luke 4. Satan tempted Jesus to satisfy his cravings by turning stones to bread. He tempted Jesus, as well, to throw himself off the temple mount so that everyone would know that he was the Messiah. Jesus could have drawn a crowd but to do so would have required rejecting the cross and doing things his own way rather than his Father's, falling prey as a result to the pride of life. Satan also tempted him with greed and power by offering him all the kingdoms of the world if Jesus would just bow and worship him.

If we go back, all the way back to the Garden of Eden, we find the three temptations present again in the serpent's conversation with Eve. Eve saw that the tree was good for food – cravings of sinful man. She also saw that it was pleasing to the eye – lust of the eyes. The devil claimed they could be like God if they ate – pride of life.

The devil uses the same kinds of temptations today, not only to pick off pastors but to trip up all believers. The three G's are deadly and believers would be wise to stay alert, be sensitive to the Holy Spirit's direction, and maintain accountability within the body of Christ in order to avoid being his next victim.

Action Step & Prayer Focus: Reflect back upon the last time you faced temptation. Was it one of the three G's (greed, glory and girls [or guys if you're a female!])? What steps is the Lord calling you to take to avoid getting tripped up the next time? Read I Corinthians 10:13 in light of today's devotional and, then, pray for God's escape hatch.

Take-a-way: *The three G's are just as deadly today as they were in the beginning.*