

Place: Lurgan Baptist: 12:7:2009

Readings: Matthew 4:1-11 6:13

THE PATTERN PRAYER

8. TACKLING TEMPTATION

Mark Anthony was known as the silver-throated orator of Rome. He was a brilliant man, strong leader, and a courageous soldier. But the one thing he lacked was the strength to say “*no*,” to temptation. On the outside he was impressive and magnificent. But on the inside he was weak and vulnerable. On one occasion his tutor became so enraged, that he shouted at him, “*O Marcus. O colossal child able to conquer the world but unable to resist temptation.*” When it comes to temptation, many are like the little boy that got a spanking for eating cookies the mother had told him to get away from. The little boy blamed his friend who told him to do it. The mother said, “*You should have turned a deaf ear to him.*” The little boy said, “*but Mummy I don't have a deaf ear.*” British writer Oscar Wilde, said “*I can resist anything except temptation.*” Can you identify with that? Is it not true that many of us have a deaf ear when it comes to temptation?

William Booth once wrote, “*Though if not greatly deceived, I have had some degree of experimental acquaintance with Jesus Christ for almost 40 years, though I have borne the ministerial character for upwards of 25 years, though perhaps I have been of*

some little use in the church of God, and though I have a greater share of esteem among religious people than I had reason to expect, yet, after all, it is possible for me, in a single hour of temptation, to blast my character, ruin my public usefulness, and to render my warmest Christian friends ashamed of owning me.” You see, one thing is common about all of us and that is we are tempted every day in many ways. The ministry is not immunity. I am tempted, every day. Being a Christian does not exempt you from temptation. That's why we need to utter this petition, “*Lead us not unto temptation.*” Did you notice that (6:11) deals with our *physical needs*, then (6:12) deals with our *spiritual needs*, and now (6:13) deals with our *moral needs*. You see, we should ask the Lord daily, and at the beginning of each day, “*lead us not into temptation.*” Now that at first, sounds like a strange request because we know that the Lord would never lead us into a situation where we could fall. James tells us that God does not tempt any man, he says, “*Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God, for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man.*” (James 1:13) So what does this verse really say? Well, the Greek word here (peirasmos) can have two meanings.

It can mean a temptation which has its goal to cause a person to sin, or it can mean a test a trial of the strength of your faith. So we can translate this phrase, “*Lead us not into the hands or power of temptation.*” That is, “*Do not allow us to be brought under the control of anything that would ensnare us or seduce us into sin.*” You see,

temptation is a solicitation to do wrong. Temptation is when you are asked to do it. Sin is when you do it. Now I wonder are you really concerned about overcoming temptation ? I heard of a man who went to see his Doctor and he said, “ *Doctor, I have been misbehaving lately, and my conscience is bothering me. So I thought I would see you if you could help me.* ” The Doctor said, “ *Well, what do you expect me to do, give you something to strengthen your will power ?* ” He said, “ *No, I was hoping that you would give me something to weaken my conscience.* ” Now are we not a bit like that ? I mean, do you have a strong desire to overcome temptation ? Would you like to be a victor rather than a victim ? An overcomer rather than overcome ? Well, you need to pray this prayer, “ *Lord lead us not into temptation.* ” Now how does the Lord lead us ? Well, one way He leads us is by example, and what better example can we have than that of the Lord Jesus in learning how to tackle temptation ? You see in (Ch 4) there are three ingredients. Firstly, we see ***our Enemy*** who is there, who is Satan. Second, we see, ***the Experience*** that is there, which is temptation. Thirdly, we see ***the Example*** who is there, the Lord Jesus Christ.

So this is a terrific passage to study in “ ***Tackling Temptation.*** ” I want to give you 3 things about temptation that flow out of this passage.

(1) THE FACT OF IT

Look if you will at (4:1) Someone has defined temptation like this, “ *Temptation is the Devil trying to get you to fulfil a natural God given desire or drive in the*

wrong way. ” Now everyone who has ever lived has been tempted. It does not matter whether you are young or old, rich or poor, intelligent or illiterate, a brand new Christian or a seasoned veteran. Temptation has broken up more marriages, destroyed more families, killed more ministries than anything else and everything else put together. (1) Now this fact is made a little clearer when we consider

(a) ***THE PERIOD THAT IS IDENTIFIED:***

Did you notice the first word in (4:1) “ *Then,* ” Then. When ? Well, look at (Matt Ch 3) which closes with the baptism of our Lord Jesus Christ. (3:13-17) Mark in his gospel says, “ *And immediately.* ” (1:12) From a season of honour and glory Christ came to a season of conflict and suffering. First came the testimony of the Father, “ *this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.* ” (3:17) then came the sweeping suggestion of Satan, “ *If thou be the Son of God.* ” (4:3) After the approval of heaven came the assault of hell. After the Dove the Devil. After the benediction the battle. From a Jordan experience to a Wilderness conflict. My it reminds us as Matthew Henry says that “ *special tokens of Divine favour will not secure any from being tempted.* ” My have you discovered that Satan will attack you as he attacked your Lord after your greatest spiritual experiences ? Have you gotten into an argument with your wife or husband on your way home from church, on your way home from the Lord’s Table ? ***Don’t look so pious.*** You see, there’s a spiritual principle here. Its what I call “ ***the devil after the dove.*** ” When the Lord does something great, when you have the approval of God, you’re going to have the attack

of the enemy. As a matter of fact, the more God blesses you, the more the Devil is going to counterattack. I don't want to alarm you, but I want to forewarn you. I think it was Leonard Ravenhill who said, "***when God opens the windows of heaven to bless us, the Devil will open the doors of hell to blast us.***" My don't start coasting. Don't ever say, "*I've got it made,*" because the enemy is going to counterattack. (a)

(b) THE PLACE THAT IS IDENTIFIED:

For the Bible says "*into the wilderness.*" (4:1) Do you know where Adam fell ? In a garden. Do you know where Christ overcame ? In the wilderness. I like that. Do you know why ? Because it knocks to smithereens the so called "*social gospel.*" Do you know what the social gospel says ? "*We've just got to change man's environment, and when we change man's environment, then we are going to fix man.*" Well, let me ask a question. ***Where did man get into difficulty ? In the garden.*** You're not going to have a better environment than that. Where did Christ overcome ? In the wilderness. You see, man's problem is greater than his environment. *This matter of overcoming the Devil is not a matter of isolation, it's a matter of insulation.* It is having God in you, with you, through you, working in His mighty power. Nowhere in Palestine could the Lord Jesus have been more isolated, and yet it was in that wilderness that He was tempted. Some years ago a religious school stated in its catalogue, "*our campus is located 15 miles from any known sin.*" It's obvious that the administrators of this college did not have a proper understanding of Satan's methods of

temptation or of the condition of the human heart. Spiros Zodiates the great Greek Christian scholar tells us that he went to visit the island of Corfu. While he was there he visited a monastery high on a hill, overlooking the beach. He saw a monk there who was asking people to buy him some binoculars, and them to bring them to him, so he could watch the people on the beach. Now I have a feeling that this monk did not want to study the men who were walking up and down the beach. You see, here was a man who had removed himself geographically from the "*temptations of this world,*" yet the pull was still here and he was looking for binoculars. "*Lord lead me not into temptation,*" don't lead me into a situation in my life that will be so strong I can't resist. (a) (b)

(c) THE PERSON THAT IS IDENTIFIED:

" *Then was Jesus*" (4:1) Now let me ask you a question. *How many of you think you're being tempted because there's something wrong in you ?* Something is not just right and that's the reason you're being tempted. If you were a better Christian, you wouldn't be tempted like you are. Do you feel that way ? A lot of people feel that way. They think that when they are tempted there must be something drastically wrong with them, or they would never be tempted that way. My don't think that, because the Lord Jesus was tempted. Forty days Christ was tempted of the Devil. Did you know that Jesus Christ, the very Son of God, sinless and perfect was tempted ? Do you know what that tells me ? ***You don't have to be sinful to be tempted.*** Now we need to stress this, because there are some who think that they face temptation

because they are bad. My it is a not a sin to be tempted, for the Lord Jesus was tempted and He was sinless. But it tells me something else. *You don't have to give into temptation either because Christ didn't.* Do you recall what Hebrews says ? “ *We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are yet without sin.* ” (Heb 4:15) My every temptation that you feel, Christ felt. “ *In all points tempted like as we are.* ” Yet He never sinned one time, and that tells me clearly that is not a sin to be tempted. (1)

(2) THE FOCUS OF TEMPTATION

How did Satan tempt the Lord Jesus ? Where was his activity concentrated ? ***Incidentally, you do believe there is a Devil don't you ?*** He is a deceiver, tempter, and seducer. He is not a mythical creature with horns and hooves, as he is often portrayed. Nor is he is the figure of fun and derision that comedians make him out to be. He is a real enemy, a creature of great power, who is unceasing in his opposition to every aspect of the work of grace in our lives. Peter describes him like this, “ *Be sober, be vigilant because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.* ” (1 Pet 5:8) Now how did the Devil tempt the Lord Jesus ? How does the Devil tempt us ? Do you recall what he said to Christ ? “ *Turn these stones to bread, cast thyself down, fall down and worship me.* ” “ *He was in all points tempted like as we are.* ” (Heb 4:15) Do you doubt that ? Are you saying “ *Did Jesus Christ ever really face what I face ? Was Jesus Christ ever tempted to drive*

through a 30 mile speed limit at 100 miles per hour ? Was Jesus Christ ever tempted to smoke cigarettes ? ” No. Well. You say, “ *I have been.* ” How could Jesus Christ be tempted in all points like as I am and yet He never faced some of the things I face ? ” My you need to understand that there are only three temptations, all others are variants of these three. And Christ felt all three of them right here in this passage. They are the same temptations you're going to face in the workplace tomorrow morning. John summarises them like this, “ *For all that is in the world,* ” Did you get that little word “**all,**” ? How much ? **All.** “ *For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life is not of the Father, but is of the world.* ” (1 Jn 2:16) You see, all temptation is either the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, or the pride of life. The first is a temptation in ***the area of our passions.*** The second is a temptation in ***the area of our possessions.*** The third is a temptation in ***the area of our pride.***

Either in passions, possessions, or pride is the way the Devil is out to get you and me. And Christ felt all three of these. Look at the passage and notice:

(a) Satan Attacked Christ on the Physical Plane:

Look at (4:3) Now John describes this as “ *the lust of the flesh,* ” the desire to **enjoy** things. **Appetite.** I suppose we could describe it with the word “**doing.**” You see, Satan tempted Christ, ***to satisfy His needs.*** “ *If Thou be the Son of God command that these stones be made bread.* ” “ *After all,* ” reasoned Satan “ *You are hungry. You have*

the power to turn stones into bread. Wouldn't God expect You to use Your power to take care of Yourself. Pamper your flesh. Put bread above the will of God." You see, Christ felt the appeal to his body. And in that temptation is captured all of the physical temptations, all of the desires, the yearnings of your flesh. My do you realise that one of Satan's most successful strategies is to tempt us to satisfy our needs in a wrong way. Do you recall what a temptation is ? **A temptation is an opportunity to satisfy a legitimate need in an illegitimate way.** You see, the Devil is a pervert. All the Devil can do, is take what God has made, what God has created and pervert it. My God has given us desires. And in themselves these physical needs and desires are not wrong. The desire for food is normal, but when we use that desire for food to engage in gluttony we are sinning. Sex in and of itself is not wrong. The Bible says that the marriage bed is undefiled. But the Devil wants us to satisfy that normal desire in an improper way. He wants to twist it. But if we satisfy our desires apart from the will of God we are sinning. (a)

(b) Satan Attacked Christ on the MENTAL Plane:

Look if you will at (4:5-7) John refers to this as the "*pride of life,*" the desire to **achieve** things. **Ambition.** I suppose we could describe it with the word "*being.*" The pinnacle of the Temple was probably about 500 feet above the Kidron Valley. According to early tradition, James the head of the Jerusalem church, was martyred by being thrown down from that portico. Here Satan tried to convince the Lord Jesus to jump, quoting an Old

Testament passage as support that He would not be hurt. Now what was the purpose of this second temptation ? Well, look at Christ's reply. (4:7) The Lord Jesus was quoting from (Deut 6:16) which reads, "*Ye shall not tempt the Lord your God, as ye tempted Him in Massah.*" What does it mean to mean to tempt God ? To put Him to the test ? It means to be put yourself in a situation where God must perform a miracle to rescue you. (Exod 17:1) Do you see what Satan was trying ? He was trying to get the Lord Jesus to live by chance and not by faith. Have you ever tested the Lord ? Tempted the Lord ? How often we have heard of Christians who were ill and they have gone to those who claim to have "*the gift of healing,*" and they have come home believing what they have been told that if they attend a Doctor, or a hospital, it's a sure sign that they have no faith in God to heal them. That's not living by faith, that's living by chance. Sometimes this can happen in Christian ministries and churches. Believers who feel "*led of God,*" to quit their jobs, and step out into the Lord's work, yet within a short time they are begging their boss to take them back again.

Why ? Because they were out of the will of God. They had not been walking by faith. They were walking by chance. So Satan attacked Christ on (a) (b)

(c) Satan Attacked Christ on the SPIRITUAL Plane:

Look at (4:9-10) John describes this as "*the lust of the eyes.*" (1 Jn 2:16) The desire to **obtain** things. **Avarice.** I suppose we could describe it with the word "*having.*" In the first temptation Satan suggested what Christ ought to

do for Himself, in the second he suggested what the Father ought do for Christ. Now he suggests what Satan could do for the Lord, in exchange for what Christ could do for him. “ *All these things will I give thee,* ” (4:9)
“ *Do you see it Jesus ? Do you see it ?* ” Did you know that the eyes have an appetite ? Have you ever heard this expression “ ***Feast your eyes upon that.*** ” Or have ever struggled to get through a big meal and said, “ ***my eyes were bigger than my stomach.*** ” Did you know that your eyes can get you into a lot of trouble ? (Jos 7:21) My In our culture we see things and want to buy them. Today’s stores pressurise us to be stylish and improve our image. We are bewitched by beauty. We drive in a different neighbourhood and then become dissatisfied with the houses we live in. Advertising on television is a trap that appeals to the eyes. Do we not need to cultivate the attitude of the psalmist who said, “ Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity.” (Ps 119:37)

But my do you see the focus of temptation ? Do you realise that every temptation will come along one of these ways ? **Physical:** “ *the lust of the flesh,* ” **Mental:** “ *the pride of life,* ” **Spiritual:** “ *the lust of the eyes.* ” You see, Christ faced every temptation that you face, and He overcame every one of them. How ? (1) (2) but,

(3) THE FOILING OF TEMPTATION

How did Christ defeat the enemy ? How did He overcome temptation ? For one thing the Lord Jesus had,

(a) ***THE INSPIRED WORD OF GOD:***

How did Christ answer Satan ? By the Word of God. Every time the Devil would come to Christ, the Lord Jesus would say, “ *It is written, it is written, it is written.* ” And three times Christ ran the Devil through with the Word of God. Here we see the Lord Jesus was living by the Word of God. I like to think that during these 40 days and nights our Lord fed His soul on the book of Deuteronomy. C. H. Spurgeon was once asked how a Christian could obtain a thorough Bible knowledge. The great preacher replied, “ *there are three rules to follow in order to have a deep understanding of the Word of God. First, read the Bible. Second, read the Bible. Third, read the Bible.* ” My there are truths in this book and when you learn them, know them, appropriate them, you will be able to use them to overcome the Devil. It was a saying of Martin Luther’s, “ ***I have had great troubles of mind, but as soon as I laid hold on any place of Scripture and stayed my soul on it, as my chief anchor, immediately my temptations vanished away.*** ”

My do you know what it is to whip out the sword and defeat the Devil ? When Satan confronts you with false teaching or temptation do you respond with verses that specifically address what he is troubling you with ? When he hits you with discouragement do you respond with verses that relate to that ? What Bible verses do you use when you get depressed ? Do you know where to go to defend yourself against sorrow, defeat, the lust of the flesh ? Are you using this sword effectively ?

(b) ***THE INDWELLING SPIRIT OF GOD:***

You see, when the Lord Jesus was tempted He allowed Himself to be guided by the Holy Spirit within. (Lk 4:1) We also have the indwelling Spirit. Indeed John assures us that “ *greater is He that is in you, than He that is in the world.* ” (1 Jn 4:4) ***Isn't it wonderful to know that there is One in us who is mightier than Satan.*** I heard about a lion who was walking through the jungle one day. He was such a proud lion and he came up to a little rabbit and he said to the rabbit, *Grrr, who is the king of the jungle ?* ” The little rabbit just trembled and said, “ *you are, oh mighty lion.* ” The old lion shook his mane, and walked off. He came to a monkey and said “ *Grrr, who is the king of the jungle ?* ” The little monkey said, “ *Oh, mighty lion you are the king of the jungle.* ” The old lion shook the dust off his mane and went on. Finally, he came to a bull elephant, who was about sixteen feet tall, with tusks about six feet long. He said, “ *Grrr, who is the king of the jungle ?* ” That old elephant looked down at that lion, put that long trunk around his body, lifted the lion over his head and threw the lion against the oak tree.

As the old lion slid down to the base of that tree, like melted butter, he looked up to the bull elephant and said, “ ***Well, just because you don't know the answer, you don't have to get sore about it.*** ” My I know the answer to Satan. His name is Jesus Christ and He lives in us by His Spirit. In the heat of temptation we have, (a) (b) And finally,

(c) THE INTERCEDING SON OF GOD:

For He is our sympathetic High Priest and He is

constantly interceding on our behalf. (Heb 7:25) Are you in the midst of temptation ? Be assured that the Lord is watching over and praying for you.

***How He watcheth o'er His loved ones
Died to call them all His own
How for them He intercedeth
Watcheth o'er them from the throne***

My in the heat of the battle be encouraged. You have (a) (b) (c) Let us therefore pray with confidence, “ *Lead us not into temptation.* ” “ *Lead us not into the hands or power of temptation.* ” My we are not fighting for victory, but from victory for Christ has already conquered and we are more than conquerors through Him. I heard the story of the old African American man who was asked if now that he was a Christian he had the victory over the Devil. “ ***No,*** ” he said “ ***I haven't got the victory, but I have the Victor.*** ” My let's go forward with confidence because we have the Victor.