

Place: Lurgan Baptist: 27:11:2007

Reading: Matthew 4:1-11

THE WELL DRESSED CHRISTIAN

10. CHRIST, OUR EXAMPLE

Mark Antony 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. Being a Christian does not exempt you from temptation. *Temptation is a solicitation to do wrong. Temptation is when you are asked to do it. Sin is when you do it.* Now throughout His earthly ministry Christ was assailed by the Devil. But probably the best known temptation that Christ faced is recorded for us in (Matt Ch 4 & Lk Ch 4) Now I want you to notice here several things by way of introduction.

1. The Time of It:

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 ? 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.***” That is worth thinking about. 1.

2. The Territory of it:

For the environment of Christ’s temptation was that of a wilderness. (4:1) The wilderness of Judea is a hot, barren and desolate area that extends west from the Dead Sea almost to Jerusalem, and is some thirty five miles long and fifteen miles wide. Nowhere in Palestine could the Lord Jesus have been more isolated or in less comfort. Adam was tempted in a garden and he fell, the last Adam was tempted in a wilderness and he stood. Do you know what that tells me ? *It tells me that there is no environment where you are safe from Satan and there is no place where you cannot overcome him.* Some think if we can change the environment, we can change the man. Well, who had a good environment ? Adam, and yet it was in the Garden of Eden that he fell. *Who had a bad environment ?* Christ, and yet it was in the wilderness that He overcame. 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.

3. The Target of it:

“ *Then was Jesus,*” (4:1) 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. Now having said that by way of introduction, lets notice several things regarding the temptation of Christ.

(1) THE REASONS FOR CHRIST’S TEMPTATION

Now theologians have raced their theological motors to ask this question. ***Could Jesus Christ have sinned ?*** I want to tell you that it was impossible for the Lord Jesus to sin. He could not sin. God cannot sin. The Bible declares that He knew no sin (2 Cor 5:21) He did no sin (1 Pet 2:22) He had no sin (1 Jn 3:5) What then was the purpose of this temptation ? **The purpose was not to see if He would, but to prove that He could not sin.** Many years ago during the settling of the West in America a railroad company faced a problem. A deep bridge spanning a deep chasm had gained the reputation of being unsafe. Careful examination by railroad officials showed this to be totally unfounded, but still the rumour persisted. Finally, a train was formed made up of only heavy locomotives. For an entire day as hundreds watched, this train crossed and recrossed the bridge. Why was this done ? *Did the railroad engineers arrange the experiment to see if the bridge would hold or did they do it to prove that it would hold ?*

The obvious answer may be applied to the purpose of Christ's temptations. **The purpose was not to see if Christ could, but to prove that He could not sin.** Yet I believe that God had some reasons for allowing His Son to be tested in this way. The first one I believe was,

(a) TO PREPARE THE SON FOR MINISTRY:

You see, the Father allowed Christ to be tempted to prepare Him to be our High Priest. Let's look for a moment at the book of Hebrews, for here the writer tells us because Christ was tempted He is able to do two things.

1. Christ is Able to Sympathise:

Look if you will at (Heb 4:14-15) Those words “ *can be touched,*” mean “ *to suffer with another person, to sympathise with him, to the extent of entering into his experience and feeling his heartache yourself.*” Isn't that exactly what the Saviour does ? Not only does He know all about as the omniscient God, but having lived in this world in a fleshly body, He knows all about us as the representative man. He understands our needs and has a heart for us. Christ knows what it is to be in the fire, to be in the midst of conflict and temptation. He is just the High Priest that a tempted people need. My Christ knows exactly what you're going through, because He endured the same temptations and suffering while on earth.

*Is there anyone can help us,
One who understands our hearts
When the thorns of life have pierced them till they bleed
One who sympathises with us
Who in wondrous love imparts
Just the very, very blessing that we need ?*

*Yes, there's One, only One
The blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus He's the One
When afflictions press the soul
When waves of trouble roll
And you need a friend to help you
He's the One*

2. Christ is Able to Succour:

Look if you will at (Heb 2:17-18) The word “ *succour,*” here means “ *to run to the cry of those in danger and distress and bring them aid.*” It's the picture of a mother responding to the cry of her distressed child. Is it not wonderful to know that in the midst of temptation, the Lord Jesus always stands ready, eager to run to our cry and bring us help ?

*In every pang that rends the heart
The man of sorrows has a part
He sympathises in our grief
And to the sufferer sends relief*

So God allowed His Son to be tested in this way to prepare Him for ministry.

(b) TO DECLARE THE SECRET OF VICTORY:

Do you know what the Devil does not want us to know ? What his tactics are. You see, when we realise that he is tempting us, we are much more capable of resisting him. So he lurks in the darkness and disguises his temptations so we will be deceived into sinning. He knows that if he can keep us in the dark he will have a much easier time holding us in bondage. *Do you know what this event in the wilderness did ?* It dragged Satan out of the darkness into the light where all his tactics could be exposed. You see, the key to winning any war is discovering the battle plan of the enemy. So God allowed His Son to be tempted so that He could expose Satan's battle plan to us. Now when we understand the methods Satan used in tempting the Lord Jesus, we'll better understand how he works and how we can defeat him. So Christ was tempted to (a) (b)

(c) TO COMPARE THE STAGES IN HISTORY:

I wonder did you ever compare the temptations that were experienced by the first Adam and the second Adam ? You see, all temptation is the same. I don't care what you are facing, there are only three temptations. **Only three.** John mentions them in his first epistle. (1 Jn 2:16) The lust of the flesh has to do with the desire to enjoy things, it deals with our passions, the lust of the eyes has to do with the desire to obtain things, it deals with our possessions, the pride of life has to do with the desire to achieve things, it deals with our pride. It means the vain boasting one's lifestyle. Now the,

1. The First Adam was Tempted in each Area:

Do you recall the Scripture ? “ *The tree was good for food,* ” what is that but the lust of the flesh ? “ *It was pleasant to the eyes,* ” is that not the lust of the eyes ? “ *And a tree to be desired to make one wise,* ” surely that is the pride of life. 1.

2. The Second Adam was Tempted in each Area:

Look if you will at (Matt 4:3) “ *Command that these stones be made bread,* ” that is the lust of the flesh. Look if you will (4:8) “ *The Devil taketh him up and showeth him all the kingdoms of the world,* ” is that not the lust of the eyes. Now look at (4:6) Is this not the pride of life ? Now as I have said before the first Adam was tempted in a beautiful garden, but the second Adam met Satan in a desolate wilderness. And while the first Adam experienced total failure, the second Adam was completely victorious. So why did God allow His Son to be tempted ? (a) (b) (c) 1.

(2) THE REALITY OF CHRIST'S TEMPTATIONS:

Have a look at Dr. Luke's account of the temptation. (Lk 4:13) Note especially those last three words. For Satan tempted Christ all through His ministry. There are at least three specific instances that come to mind, in which at a later date, Satan continued His tempting work against Christ. Those temptations were,

- Expressed by the 5,000 men that Christ Fed:

John tells us that “ *when Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take Him by force, to make Him a king He departed into a mountain Himself alone.* ” (6:15) Do you know what they were saying ? “ ***Bypass the cross and grab the crown.*** The second temptation was

- Expressed by Simon Peter:

“ *Then Peter took Him and began to rebuke Him saying, be it far from thee Lord, this shall not be unto Thee. But He turned and said unto Peter, get thee behind me Satan.* ” (Matt 16:21-23) Do you see what Peter was saying ? “ *Don't even talk about the cross.* ” The third temptation was,

- Expressed by the Mob at Calvary:

For we read “ *And they that passed by, reviled Him if Thou be the Son of God come down from the cross.* ” (Matt 27:39-40) Do you see what they were saying, “ *Come down from Calvary.* ” So right throughout His ministry the Lord Jesus was tempted by Satan. The writer to the Hebrews says “ *He was in all points tempted like as we are.* ” (4:15) Does that mean that Christ was tempted to drive through a 30 mile speed limit at 100 miles per hour ? I don't think so. It means that all temptation is only of three basic things and Christ endured all three, and overcame all three. Leander S. Keyser has suggested that temptation came to man along only three avenues. All other temptations are merely variants of these three. Notice then that,

(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,

1. 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.* ” One of Satan's most successful strategies is to tempt us to satisfy our needs in a wrong way. A temptation is an opportunity to satisfy a legitimate need in an illegitimate way. 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. But if we satisfy our desires apart from the will of God we are sinning. 1.

2. To Doubt God's Love:

The purpose of this temptation was not simply for Christ to satisfy His physical hunger, but to suggest that His being hungry was incompatible with His being the Son of God. He was being tempted to doubt the Father's Word, the Father's love, and the Father's provision. Satan

wanted Christ to distrust His Father, to act independently, to take matters into His own Hands. Satan said to Christ in effect “ *Didn’t God just tell You, this is my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Well, if the Father loves You so much, why are you hungry ? Why hasn’t He met Your needs ?* ” You see, one of Satan’s most effective weapons to day is the idea that once you become a Christian, you’ll be free from sorrow, pain, and suffering for the rest of your life. This is the health and wealth gospel that has preached in many circles today. Then when you experience trials you are unprepared to handle them. Have you been tempted by Satan to doubt God’s love ? Have you heard the tempter’s voice saying, “ *If God really loved you, He wouldn’t allow this to happen to you. He would take care of you and give you what you want.* ” My if Satan can make us doubt God’s love he has achieved a great victory. (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.

The tense of the Greek verb for “*thou wilt worship*,” indicates an action that would occur just once. How many times have you heard that lie of Satan’s? “*Just do it once. You don’t have to do it again. Besides everyone is doing it.*” Satan said, “*Just fall down once and worship me.*” But the Saviour replied, “*Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and Him only shalt Thou serve.*” Do you see what Satan was saying? “*You have this future promise. There’s glory ahead for You. But if You fall down and worship me, I will give it to You now, and then You won’t have to go to the cross.*” (Ps 2:6 Jn 14:30 Eph 2:2 1 Jn 5:19 Rev 11:15 13:7) Satan was saying, “*You can have joy without pain, a crown without a cross.*” A temptation usually is a shortcut isn’t it? Satan will say to us, “*I can give you the same thing God offers you, but I’ll give it to you an easier way.*” There is a principle we need to grasp here.

Satan’s glory always leads to suffering, while God’s suffering always to glory. Satan will offer you an easy route to glory. It will look wonderful. All you have to do is obey him, worship him, but eventually that glory will turn to shame and suffering. On the other hand, the Lord Jesus offers you suffering, He says, “*Whosoever will come after Me, let Him deny Himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.*” (Mk 8:34 10:21) But the suffering Christ asks you to endure, will ultimately lead to glory. (2 Cor 4:17) Now has the Devil been offering you a quick and easy road to what you want? Has he been tempting you with shortcuts to success? Will you remember that Satan offers you joy and pleasure, which leads to pain, but Christ offers you suffering and death to

self which leads to glory. (Ps 16:11) Now will you notice when the Lord Jesus was tempted He used certain resources. Look at,

(3) THE RESOURCES IN CHRIST’S TEMPTATIONS

For one thing the Lord Jesus had,

(a) *THE INSPIRED WORD OF GOD:*

How did Christ answer Satan? By the Word of God. Now we have got to,

1. Know this Book:

Look at the first response. (4:4) Now that is a quote from the book of Deuteronomy (8:3) Incidentally Christ quotes from this book each time. Now that is no accident. Higher criticism in Germany began with Deuteronomy in its vicious attack on the Word of God. But 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.*” 1.

2. Balance this Book:

Look at the second response. (4:7) Now if you compare Satan's quote in (Matt 4:6) with (Ps 91:11) you will discover that the Devil deliberately left out a phrase. In (Ps 91:11) we read this, "*For He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.*" The child of God has the protection of God in the will of God. But I want you to see what Satan was trying to do here. He was trying to make Christ separate the Word of God from the Word of God. Satan wanted the Lord to claim this one promise literally without balancing it against the rest of the teachings in His Word. But Christ told the Devil, "*It is written again, thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.*" Now Christ was quoting (Deut 6:16) The Lord compared the passage Satan quoted with what the verse in Deuteronomy said. He knew that following the first would be disobeying the second.

Dr. Campbell Morgan was one of the greatest expositors of the Scriptures. In his book "*The Crisis of the Christ,*" he made a profound statement. "*What infinite value there is in that word 'again.' How excellent a thing it would be if the whole church of Christ had learned that no law of life may be based on isolated text. In a study of the heresies of the church it will be seen that all these have been based on Scripture used as the Devil uses it Scripture taken out of its context, and out of its relation to the whole of the revelation. Every false teacher who has divided the church, has had an "it is written," on which to hang his doctrine. If only against the isolated passage there had been the recognition of the fact that 'again it is written,' how much the church would have been saved.*"

My we must balance Scripture with Scripture. Do you see what Christ said in (4:4) ? "*Every word.*" We must live by every word, not just the ones we like. 1. 2.

3. Use this Book:

Look at the third response. (4:10) This time the Saviour quoted from (Deut 6:13) and the result ? "*Then the devil leaveth Him.*" My when Satan gets on your case, do not argue with him. He's not worth it. Know the Word, balance the Word, use the Word to combat his advances.

(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) Here are the resources we have in the heat of temptation. (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) 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 black
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.