

FRIDAY

“TEMPTATION SYMPTOMS”

SCRIPTURE:

Psalms 119:42-48; James 1:12-15

We are all familiar with the symptoms of being tempted . . . irritability, defensiveness, restlessness, uncertainty, and the loss of peace.

Not only are we familiar with them ourselves, but we can recognize them daily in other people.

In fact, it seems as though when we are being tempted we are more upset, troubled and unnerved than people who have actually given in to a temptation. Why?

Because temptation is a transition period: we still stand with one foot in the right and the other tentatively in the wrong. And like a man with one foot in a moving boat, the other on the dock, the time of indecision is unnerving.

Therefore you will find ironically that once a man has given into temptation, he is temporarily experiencing relief; his choice seems to have brought him peace. But this is a false ‘peace’ for inherently his heart knows defeat. Yet he will defend this choice fiercely for a time.

As long as you feel the restlessness and irritation, you are still feeling God’s tug upon your heart. This is the time to turn from whatever is tempting you and find real peace in obedience to him.

Prayer: Dear Lord, I know that you stand beside me, ready to help when I call. Please forgive me for turning away so often from your love. I pray that you will continue to be my strength and my Counselor. AMEN

SATURDAY

“NOT FOR THE PROUD”

SCRIPTURE:

Ephesians 2:8-10; Jeremiah 29:11, 12

A small boy was preparing to build a hutch for a rabbit he had received as a gift. He was so small he could barely hold the hammer; yet he was determined to build the hutch alone.

His father gave him the boards, nails, and hammer and explained how it should be built. Repeatedly, the father offered his help but the child stubbornly refused, and as the hours went by the boy’s irritation and anger increased. Before long he was in tears — banging bent nails on boards that kept falling. But still he refused help.

At last in desperation, he leaned the boards against the wall, blocked both ends so the rabbit could not escape, and went to bed. The next morning the rabbit was gone, the boards fallen. The boy stood silent, looking at the empty area. Then he said, “I guess I didn’t want to keep the rabbit as much as I wanted to say I built the hutch alone.”

Often we are so intent on being self-made men we forget what our purpose is in building our lives. God will let you go as long as you like without him. Perhaps when your house finally falls and your treasure is lost, you will forget your pride and seek his help. We were never meant to do it alone. This is why God calls us “children.”

Prayer: God, I have tried to live my life as I want it and I keep failing to make it meaningful. Will you help me, please; use it as it should be used. Make it strong and lasting. AMEN

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 2023

“HOW DO WE GET RID OF ALL THE SINS?”

SCRIPTURE:

Mark 1:40-45; John 8:3 1-36; II Kings 5:1-14

When we begin to wonder how we can ever get rid of the many individual sins in our life, it can be a discouraging experience!

But remember this: sin is primarily a desire to be away from the influence of God, free from his authority. All those lesser sins you worry most about are merely the result of the major sin of rebellion against God.

Therefore, when we think of getting rid of our sins, we should think of the *attitude* which led us to each of these in the first place. Are we ready, now, to have this attitude toward God really changed? If so the other sins will go.

Independence from or rebellion against God is the root of all other sins. As a sprawling vine begins to wither once its root is cut, so your life of spreading habits and sins will wither once the root of your rebellion is severed. Then and only then can the delicate spiritual growth of new life be possible.

Rather than being defeated by the overwhelming number of sins, look at the one big sin. Pray about that: do you really want God to be Lord of your entire life? Do you really want to serve him first? Do you really want freedom from the kind of life you have been leading? If so, cut the rebellion and watch those sins wither.

Prayer: Lord, it is so much easier to become involved with the trivia in my life than to face the real problem — which is my relationship with you. I pray that you will guide me. Lord. AMEN

TUESDAY

“THE CATALYSTIC EFFECT OF TEMPTATION”

SCRIPTURE:

Psalms 51:1-9; Isaiah 1:18; Hebrews 10:14-18

Temptation is an insidious, unstable kind of “spiritual dye.” Once it is dropped into our lives, we have no way of knowing the “dissolving” power or the effect it may have upon us. What may take a long time to alter one person’s life may alter ours in half the time. Our absorptive qualities may be greater, our resistance less.

One thing we know, that the longer temptation remains in our lives, the more certain we can be that it will eventually begin to spread out and stain our lives. It is then that a temptation becomes sin: it has become a part of us.

This is why Christ warns against teasing temptation, allowing it to even enter our lives, for once the dye has dissolved and become absorbed by our hearts, how do we change it? How do we remove that color, that stain — that sin? Sin is no longer a “tablet of dye” like a button which we can lift out and be the same as we were. It has become a part of us.

We have overlooked this sobering fact in our nonchalance regarding temptation, haven’t we? We treat it so lightly, never dreaming of the consequences!

Only the powerful additive of Christ’s forgiveness and love can bring back the clarity and light we once knew. There is nothing else in the world but this.

Prayer: Lord, I bring to you now the temptations I have been toying with. They have been coloring my life too long. Cleanse me, forgive me, I pray AMEN.

WEDNESDAY

“WHAT KIND OF PERFECTION?”

SCRIPTURE:

Romans 7:21-8:6

Many people think religion should bring perfection. Most major religious tenets are founded on this — man striving to attain perfection. All of us know the discouragement of such a task, though. Not one of us — except Christ — has known it; this perfection simply cannot be achieved by us alone. There is always that one weak moment, the unguarded word, a thought we could not control — perfection by human will is a farce and heartbreak.

Yet God asks it — and promises it through his Son. What is he talking about? God sees perfection in a different light. What he desires is one of *spiritual attitude and direction*. Once the spirit gives itself to Jesus Christ, it begins to gain perfection and gradually the outer life begins to show the change.

Though we will always experience the flesh or physical weakness warring with our spiritual nature, deep inside where God sees, he sees the development of spiritual perfection under Christ and this obedience brings to us his peace and approval, love and strength.

Our outward life begins to achieve a change in attitude and response that we were never able to find before by ourselves . . .

Could this be what you are looking for?

Prayer: Dear God, how often I really want to be perfect — for you and for the others I love. Lord, grant me the ability to give my life freely to your Son so that he might begin his work in me, I pray. AMEN

THURSDAY

“IF YOU HAD BEEN JOB”

SCRIPTURE:

Job 1:1-2:10; II Corinthians 12:7-10;
Romans 8:37-39

What is your reaction to this Scripture? Outrage? Bewilderment? Disbelief? Apprehension? Uncertainty? Have you wondered what you would have done had you been Job?

We forget two things: Job knew his God and trusted him. And God knew Job’s heart; he knew his faithfulness and his strength. If there had been any chance of Job not coming through, God never would have agreed to Satan testing him.

And you will find this to be true of your life. There will be times, of course, when things will be difficult and you will look up to God and shout “Why?” But inside, where only you can feel it, you will feel those everlasting arms, and you will know in spite of your crying and pain, that you are not really in danger . . . that this will pass and you will be closer to God and richer in your relationship than ever before.

This is living in the highest dimension. This is peace of the deepest kind. (Job 42:10-17)

Prayer: Lord, how often I desire only ease and blessings from life, never realizing that it is the times when I have had to trust you to the utmost that my strength has been made greater and my faith more sure. Help me to face life with the assurance that you are with me, and nothing in all the world can take me from your hands and out of your love. Please make me worthy to serve you and to be a blessing and a proof of your power. AMEN