



TRI-PARISH MAIL MINISTRY

Grace
Valentine

Peace
Mission

St. Paul's
White River

Trinity 8

July 21, 2024

Pre-Service Meditation: Psalm 48

Hymns: 550:1-5, 9; 372; 335:3-4

Scripture Readings: Genesis 3:1-15
James 1:12-20

Sermon Topic: Christian Living; Prayer; Temptation

In Jesus' Name!

Text: Matthew 6:13a NKJV

“And do not lead us into temptation,…”

In Christ Jesus, who overcame all of Satan's temptations in order to save us, and who can help us overcome the temptations we face, dear fellow redeemed:

It was the late comedian Flip Wilson who decades ago coined the phrase “the devil made me do it!” While it brought him many laughs as a stand-up comic, it also served to undermine important religious truths. It brought into question and mocked the existence of the devil. The Scriptures, on the other hand, portray the devil as “*a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour*” (1 Pet. 5:8)—an enemy we must recognize. It also trivialized the whole concept of temptation and the results of falling into temptation. Yet, as our Scripture lessons reveal—Adam and Eve's fall into sin through the temptations of Satan led to devastating consequences for mankind, for the inevitable result of temptations failed is death. That is no laughing matter! Finally, such an expression simply continues mankind's pattern of denying responsibility for sin—blaming others, which interferes with and prevents genuine repentance and the reception of God's grace and forgiveness.

Jesus demonstrated how important an issue temptation truly is by selecting it as one of only seven subjects in the Lord's Prayer. Let us, therefore, consider the 6th Petition—**LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION!** We will see, first, that it is inevitable that **we will face temptations** in our lives; and, second, we can take heart in the fact that **God will help us overcome temptations!**

II.

It is inevitable that **we will face temptations** throughout our lives. Before going further, let us recognize as did Martin Luther in his explanation of the 6th Petition that “*God indeed tempts no one!*” Man, with his perverse nature, regularly blames God for his own sin and weakness. Think of Adam, who, when questioned by God about eating the forbidden fruit, claimed “*the woman who You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate*” (Gen. 3:12). James, however, points out correctly, “*Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am tempted by God’; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed*” (Jam. 1:13-14). God would never tempt anyone to sin! It is true that God does test us, His believing children—permitting situations to arise in our lives, which will challenge us with the goal of strengthening our faith. In some of those situations, God may even permit Satan to tempt us, as was the case with Job. In those situations, however, St. Paul's words hold true: “*No temptations has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it*” (1 Cor. 10:13).

Yes, **we will face temptations**, because we have a sinful nature, and we live in a sinful world. We have by nature a tendency and an inclination to sin. Even though God has worked faith in our hearts through the power of His Holy Spirit, we retain our old sinful flesh, which constantly wars against God and our faith. Theologians have speculated in the past over whether or not human beings would have been confirmed in their perfection had Adam and Eve successfully resisted Satan's original temptation, but such speculations are of little use, for they do not reflect our sinful

condition. St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans, reveals the reality of our condition when he writes: *“For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice.... O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?”* (7:18-19, 24) There are times when we may feel just like St. Paul. In all our relationships there will be points of friction—husbands over against wives and wives over against husbands; brothers over against sisters and sisters over against brothers. As we interact heat will be generated, and we will be tempted to say and do things contrary to God’s expressed will to love one another. Such words and such actions can do great harm. Even though we know better, in our weaknesses we fall into sin. What a joy it is in the midst of such sorrow to know and believe with St Paul that God has saved us *“through Jesus Christ our Lord!”* (Rom. 7:25a)

Yet, in spite of that great and wondrous salvation, **we will face temptations**, because we have great and powerful enemies—Satan, this world, and all of their evil hosts. Satan’s ultimate goal is to destroy our faith and separate us from our Savior God! He will, as he did with Adam and Eve, attempt to move us to question God’s word, God’s love, and God’s care for us. He will lie to us, for he is as the Scriptures say, the *“father”* of lies (cf. Jn. 8:44). He will place before us things to lure us into sin—things that will make our mouths water; things that are expensive, or beautiful, or tantalizing to our minds! Yes, **we will face temptations!** That is why Jesus has taught us to pray: **LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION!**

II.

Just as we know that **we will face temptations** in our lives, we can be certain that **God will help us overcome temptations!** If God had no interest in us and did not care about us; if He was unconcerned about our present sin and future situation—He would not have instructed us to pray as He has! God, however, has so instructed us, and, consequently, we can have the complete confidence that God will both hear and answer our prayers to Him! Let us, therefore, when we find ourselves in situations, which confront us with temptations, turn to our God in prayer and ask for His help. This He has promised to give us! *“Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me”* (Ps. 50:15).

My dear friends, our Savior has given us a clear example of how we can and are successfully to deal with temptation. Consider our Savior’s own responses in the wilderness when tempted by Satan. He responded by using the words of Scripture: *“It is written”* Satan that *“man does not live by bread alone... (that) you shall not tempt the LORD your God... (and that) you shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve”* (Mt. 4:4, 6-7). With the word of God in His mind and on His lips, Jesus sent Satan packing! This is what we must do by the grace of God and through the enabling power of His Spirit.

Oh yes, the temptations confronting us in our day are numerous and difficult, but they are really no greater than the temptations faced by Christians of previous generations. There is, after all, *“nothing new under the sun”* (Ecccl. 1:9b). We are challenged, are we not, by the sexual impurity of our age, but did not Joseph have to fend off the illicit sexual advances of Potiphar’s wife in his day? He did so, did he not, be keeping His Lord in mind and expressing His commands openly: *“How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?”* (Gen. 39:9) We are challenged by the temptations to become angry at the unfairness and foolish ignorance of some people, even to the point of wanting to “give them what they deserve.” Yet, this was no different than David wanting to punish the foolish Nabal, who refused to compensate David and his men or the protections they provided. The Lord, however, sent Nabal’s wife, the wise Abigail, both to defend her husband and to prevent David from committing a sin that he would no doubt later regret! What did she use to dissuade David from his plan of revenge? She used God’s word and the promises she was aware the LORD had made to David! (cf. 1 Sam. 25:2ff.)

St. Paul urges us *“to put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil”* (Eph. 6:11). Among those pieces of armor is *“the sword of the Spirit, which is the*

word of God" (Eph. 6:17). My dear friends, let us commit ourselves to a regular study of God's word. Then, as the temptations of life confront us, we can and will with the Spirit's help be able to meet them and defeat any attempt by Satan to derail our faith and destroy our hope of eternal life! St. Paul's encourages us: *"Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure"* (Phil. 2:12-13).

Will we at times fail in those efforts? No doubt we will, as did Abraham, Moses, David, and the other heroes of faith. When such failures occur, let us not make excuses or seek to blame others, especially our God. Rather, let us acknowledge with David: *"Against You (LORD), You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight—that You may be found just when You speak, and blameless when You judge"* (Ps. 51:4). Having made our confession, let us request with David that the LORD *"purge"* us of our sins and that He fill our hearts with *"joy and gladness."* May we each pray that He *"create in me a clean heart...and renew a steadfast spirit with me"* (Ps. 51:7-8, 10), for ultimately that is the secret to overcoming temptation. We cannot and will not overcome the temptations of this life by depending upon our own strength and will power. If that is what we attempt to do, we are sorely mistaken and will be sorely disappointed. No, the power, strength, wisdom, and might necessary to overcome Satan, this world, and all of their temptations lie with Him for whom *"all things are possible"* (Mt. 19:26).

My dear friends, Jesus, our Savior, has defeated Satan for us (cf. 1 Jn. 3:8). He has overcome death through His own death and resurrection (cf. Heb. 2:14). He has promised life and salvation to all who believe in Him (cf. Mk. 16:16). He has called us all to lives of dedicated service in His kingdom (cf. Mt. 28:18-19; Acts 1:8). Such service will not be easy, but rest assured that as the trials and temptations arise we need not doubt that **God will help us overcome temptations** and share in His victory! Dear Lord Jesus, **LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION!** Amen.

Prepared by Pastor Paul D. Nolting
To God alone be the glory!

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