

NOTES FROM TIM SHENTON'S SERMON- Sunday 21st July 2024 am

TITLE: "Temptation" TEXT: Ephesians 6 verses 10-18

SERIES: "The schemes of the devil Part 4"

Scripture references from the ESV

Ephesians 6:10-18 ¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. ¹¹ Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. ¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. ¹³ Therefore take up the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. ¹⁴ Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, ¹⁵ and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. ¹⁶ In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; ¹⁷ and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, ¹⁸ praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints

When we consider the schemes of the devil, there are many aspects to look at. To stand against any, or indeed all, of them, we need to put on the whole armour of God (v11 above). We may have to fight doubt or discouragement, for example, but temptation plays a major part in all of the devil's schemes.

Temptation, in and of itself, is not sin, though often we feel guilty and ashamed because we are tempted. However, there is no need to repent when we are tempted. We can know that it is not sin because Jesus himself was tempted in the wilderness, and yet was without sin. Instead, we need to look at it as Frederick Wood did:

Temptation is not a sin; it is a call to battle

The battle is against sin, so that we do not fall into it. Temptations are an inevitable part of the Christian life. Since even Jesus was tempted, we should expect the same.

A man, who was entrusted with large sums of money at work, out of the blue found himself tempted to put some of it into his own account, knowing he could get away with it. Although he resisted it, the temptation

kept recurring (as temptation often does) and he sensibly decided to tell someone about it. It is wise to get support and prayer from someone else in this kind of situation. He went to his predecessor and told him about it. To his surprise, the man did not reprove him, but confessed that the same thing had happened to him when he was responsible for the money. He quoted from the Bible: **For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. (Hebrews 4:15).**

When temptation comes to us, we can safely run to Jesus and tell him about it, because he has been through a similar, though much more severe, experience.

There are two main sources of temptation:

- Within – from our own evil desires. **Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God”, for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one.** ¹⁴ But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. ¹⁵ Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death. (James 1:13-15). We must not blame the devil for what is our own fault, and nor must we blame God. Every one of us has to do battle with evil desires.
- Without – from the devil. He is the great tempter, and the Bible shows clearly his handiwork from Eve onwards, through the life of David, Jesus in the wilderness, and Judas at the Last Supper, to name but a few examples. He tempts us to lead us into sin, and if possible, to destroy us. Temptation and sin are very close together. If we open the door that stands between temptation and sin, sin will grab us and hold us.

What is the remedy for temptation?

We must put on the full armour of God (v11) so that Satan does not gain a foothold in our lives and pull us away from God. He cannot take our salvation away, but he can destroy our relationship with God and destroy our effectiveness in his kingdom. We need to put on:

- The belt of truth (v14) Temptation lies to us – it promises paradise, but actually takes our paradise away.
- The breastplate of righteousness (v14) – we need to put on Christ's righteousness, but also to put on our own, because God has called us to live lives that are pure and holy.
- The shield of faith (v16) – to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one
- The helmet of salvation (v17) – because so many temptations come to us through our minds and imaginations
- The sword of the Spirit (v17) – following the example of the Lord Jesus Christ, who defeated the evil one by the Word of God.

We need the full armour of God because once Satan has a foothold, it is very hard to close the door against him.

We need to take practical steps to strengthen us in our battle with temptation.

1. **Recognise and acknowledge that we have evil desires within us and an evil one to fight.** There is nothing more dangerous than to deny the evil in our own hearts or the existence of the devil. Our sinful nature was not removed at regeneration and is not refined by our sanctification. It is the same sinful nature it has always been, and we are all capable of sinning in any of the ways mentioned by Paul in Galatians 5:19-21: **Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, ²¹ envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these.** If you think you would never do any of those things, then you are under a delusion. The two-pronged attack from within and without means we have the propensity to sin in all sorts of ways.

The best of saints can be tempted to the worst of sins (Matthew Henry)

We must never fully trust ourselves. Complacency or self-confidence will be our downfall, as it was for Peter when he denied Christ after all his protestations to the contrary. Our confidence must never be in ourselves, but in Christ – his person, his work, his blood, his power and his word.

Recognise the evil desires within you and that you have the evil one to fight.

2. **Recognise your main areas of weakness.** Start with the 10 Commandments (Exodus 20:3-17). Both our sinful nature and the devil hate these and use them to tempt us. Write out your top three areas of weakness and pin them up so that you never forget where you are most likely to be tempted. Some issues to think about:

- Are you covetous – do you buy something because you need it or because you want it?
- Do you honour your father and mother in how you talk about them, even when they are no longer alive?
- Do you watch films in which the name of Jesus is abused?
- What about the Sabbath?

Recognise your main areas of weakness.

3. **Take practical steps to avoid temptation.** Follow the example of Jesus and memorise scripture. Do not live near the edge – be careful what you read and watch, and who you spend time with. If you have a problem with gambling, do not walk past the betting shop! Never put yourself in a position where you will be tempted. Do not download apps that can tempt you in areas where you struggle. Beware of alcohol which lowers your power to resist. **If you don't want the devil to tempt you with forbidden fruit, you had better keep out of his orchard.** (Doug Barnett)

Take practical steps to avoid temptation.

4. **Consider carefully the sinfulness and danger of sin.** When you are tempted, consider:
- sin's disgrace and filth, and the guilt and shame you will feel. Consider the regret and remorse that will follow, as well as the harm and pain it is likely to cause, not just to yourself but to others. **One leak will sink a ship and one sin will destroy a sinner** (John Bunyan). Consider how hard it is to extricate yourself from sin, especially once it has become a habit. Only the blood of Christ will enable you to overcome sin.
 - what Christ had to suffer for sin. Go to Calvary and see Christ writhing in agony, see the blood the nails and the crown of thorns. Listen to his tormentors and hear

his own cry as he knows he is separated from the Father. See the darkness, and the judgement and condemnation that came upon our Saviour. Consider how abhorrent sin is to God (Hab 1:13): **You who are of purer eyes than to see evil and cannot look at wrong,**

- the wrath of God against sin. Take a look into the mouth of hell, and fix your gaze on the fiery lake of burning sulphur, where the damned are **tormented day and night for ever and ever** (Rev 20:10). Sin is the only reason people are in hell. Sin puts hell into the soul and the soul into hell.

Recognise the evil desires within you and that you have the evil one to fight.

Recognise your main areas of weakness

Take practical steps to avoid temptation.

Consider carefully the sinfulness and danger of sin

We must fear sin and fight temptation at all costs.

**If Jesus had not resisted temptation,
every single one of us would be on the broad road
that leads to destruction and there would be no escape.**

**Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of
the devil.**