

**St. Matthew AME Church
Bible Study
Monday, May 14, 2007**

Temptation Part 2

When temptation comes we often feel very much alone and abandoned and believe we struggle alone. This is incorrect however for our Heavenly Father takes very seriously every victory or defeat in the life of every believer. Every battle, every defeat and every victory is part of a broader struggle that began long before you or I came into the world and will continue long after we are gone.

In the Genesis account of creation (Genesis 1:1-3) we have a description of God bringing order out of disorder, creation from chaos. In the account God completed creation by creating man. Unlike the rest of creation, man had a special role to fulfill. He was to rule over all God created. (Genesis 1:26-30) Man was to be God's representative and to rule on earth. To ensure that man was equipped for the job, God gave man some special qualities. Much has been written on what it means to be created in God's image.

First, the image of God implies personality. That is man is unlike any other part of creation, shares with God an intellect, a will, and emotions. He has the ability to reason and make decisions, a necessary quality for ruling. This ability means man can love, obey, and even disobey. Second, being created in the image of God means that man had a unique relationship with God. Man was and is God's prize creation That man was God's favorite is clearly seen in God's special provision for him. God provided a special garden (Genesis 2:8-9). When He saw man was lonely, He created a special counterpart (2:18). He desired man's loyalty and obedience (2:16-17). He desired to communicate with man (3:8-9) All these point to God's unique relationship with man. It was different from God's relationship with any other of His creations. God's original plan was to rule the earth through man and his helpmate as they exercised their free will in obedience to and dependence upon God.

Things however did not work out as God had originally planned. Sin entered the world through Adam and Eve and creation was again placed in chaos. The question may be asked what does this have to do with temptation? Well ask yourself this question why did Satan go to the trouble to tempt Adam and Eve? What did he have to gain?

The prophets Isaiah and Ezekiel inform us of a cosmic war that took place sometime before the creation of the world. (Ezekiel 28:14, Isaiah 14:13-14, Ezekiel 28:16-17). Satan's rather swift exit from Heaven was assign of ultimate defeat and humiliation for him. He knew that a direct attack against God was a futile attempt. If Satan, could not defeat God, what would be the next best thing? Satan went right to the top of God's order of authority- man. To defeat man would be to defeat all of God's creation on this earth, for it had been put under man's authority. Satan's attack on mankind was simply his way of striking back at God. His intent was to reverse God's process and return the world to a

state of disorder and chaos. History is a record of how successful Satan has been. Man has suffered and so has everything under his authority. (Genesis 3:17, Romans 8:19-22).

Sin is an agent of decay, once sin is introduced into anything it begins to decay or diminish. Evil is not a thing; it is a lack in a thing. Evil is a lack of perfection. God's creation was perfect. He was able to say, "and it was good."

Fortunately God has not just been sitting back watching what has been happening. After Adam and Eve ruined things, God decided to wipe everything out and start over. (Genesis 6:5-7) But the next verse (Genesis 6:8) explains why God did not destroy the whole earth and came up with another plan. His ultimate goal was to restore man and His world to its original state. But there was still the problem of sin and the curse it brought upon all creation. What resulted was a two part plan by which sin and its consequences could be dealt with once and for all.

First, God tackled the problem of His relationship with man. Sin had put a barrier between God and man. Until it was removed, the two could never come together as they had in Eden. In sending Christ to die for man's sin, God dealt with the problem of personal sin. Through Christ, men and women have the opportunity to deal with both the penalty and the power of sin in our lives. Before we put our trust in Christ a constant decaying process is taking place; after we trust Christ, a new process goes into effect. The cycle of sin is broken, and a renewing process begins. God reverses the chaotic cycle of sin. (2 Corinthians 4:16) God has recreated us on the inside. We become new creatures when we are saved. While our physical bodies continue to decay, our inner man- our eternal aspect is getting stronger and more sensitive to God. This is why we use the term born again.

Making man new was only the beginning. All creation suffered when Adam fell. In order to gain final victory over Satan, God had to redeem nature as well. By nature we refer to the physical world. This part of God's plan has not yet been accomplished. In the Book of Revelation the Apostle John describes what part two of God's plan will be like. The Book of Revelation is God's promise to men that He will complete what He has begun in Christ. One day the world will be restored, and evil will be banished completely from the scene.. Order will be restored and creation will be as it was intended to be. (Revelation 21:1-5)