

Lord Teach Us To Pray

"Do Not Lead Us Into Temptation"

Lesson 9

INTRODUCTION:

- I. No one would deny the fact that we live in a world where we're CONSTANTLY bombarded with the enticement of sin and its consequences.
 - A. We see it everywhere.
 1. On a global level, we're constantly confronted with wars, terrorism, and genocide – all prompted by greed, revenge and bitter hatred.
 2. In our own nation, we're confronted with crime and violence, a growing disrespect for the value of human life, the breakdown of the family and family values, confusion over sexual roles and a blurring of sexual identity, not to mention rampant immorality.
 - B. But on a more personal level, sin is an ever-present reality in the life of every one of us.
 1. From the beginning of mankind in the Garden of Eden – since the days of Adam and Eve – mankind has been out of harmony with the will of God.

- a. There is a propensity – or a natural inclination – toward sin deep within the heart of every person.
 - b. Even for those of us who have escaped the condemnation of sin through our obedience to the gospel of Christ – there is STILL a powerful undercurrent that threatens to pull us back under into the world of sin.
 - c. Satan relentlessly attacks our faith. He works harder of those of us who have named the name of Christ because he wants to prevent us from going to heaven when we die.
 - d. The Devil and his angels have been sentenced to an eternal, burning hell – forever separated from God. And Satan wants to do EVERYTHING in his POWER to take us with him.
2. And so, it's absolutely essential for BELIEVERS to pray the final petition we find in the model prayer Jesus taught His disciples – the petition *“Do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”* **(Matthew 6:13)**

BODY:

- I. When we turn to **Matthew chapter 6** and look once again at this model prayer, we learn that this final petition is seeking the protection of God in our daily walk with Him.

- A. At first glance, this petition seems rather simple: we're asking God to keep us out of trouble.
1. But on closer examination, this request is NOT so simple, and the INTERPRETATION is keyed by ONE WORD in the Greek text.
 2. The word *Peirasmos* (pe-RAZ-mos), which in this text is translated "temptation," is a word that is basically NEUTRAL in the Greek.
 - a. The Greek word simply refers to a TESTING or a PROVING.
 - b. But the word itself doesn't indicate whether the testing or proving is GOOD or EVIL. The only thing that determines whether the test is good or evil is the PURPOSE for the test, and WHO'S administering the test.
 - c. Therefore, this word can refer to either a trial (which is a testing or proving that is designed to draw us closer to God, and strengthen our dependence on God), or it can refer to a temptation (which is a testing or proving that is designed to weaken us spiritually, and thereby lead us to sin).
 3. In THIS petition – "*do not lead us into temptation*" – the word "*temptation*" is clearly equated with "*evil*," and is simply an enticement to sin.

B. But this raises a question: If we're petitioning God, "*do NOT LEAD us INTO temptation,*" does this mean that God is somehow responsible FOR LEADING us INTO temptation?

1. The answer to that question is a resounding NO! God does NOT lead us INTO temptation.

a. God's holiness and goodness simply cannot allow Him to lead anyone – certainly not one of His children – into a place or into an experience where they would intentionally be enticed to commit sin.

b. James affirmed this when he wrote: *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. (James 1:13)*

(1). The preposition "by" ("*Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted BY God"*) is the Greek word *apo*. Among other things, this preposition suggests INDIRECT AGENCY – meaning God is not even INDIRECTLY involved in tempting us.

(2). God certainly doesn't DIRECTLY lead us into temptation, nor can we say God is even INDIRECTLY involved in temptation.

- c. And yet, in the opening comments of his letter, James wrote:

Count it all joy when you fall into various trials (various temptations), knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. (James 1:2-3)

- (1). There's our word again – *peirasmos* (pe-RAZ-mos) – the word, “*temptation*.” But, in THIS instance the word pertains to a trial that is designed to draw us CLOSER to God and STRENGTHEN us spiritually.

- C. But then, this raises ANOTHER question: If God is not even INDIRECTLY involved in leading us into temptation (an enticement to do wrong), then why do we need to pray for God to NOT do something He DOESN'T do? If God DOESN'T tempt us, then why would we pray for Him to NOT LEAD us into temptation?

1. Looking once again at the opening comments in James' epistle, he seems to be telling us that we need to REJOICE when trials come, and NOT to AVOID them. So why would we need to pray for God to keep us FROM the very thing James says will strengthen us?

- a. We're faced with a bit of a paradox here – something that seems almost self-contradictory.

2. I believe the problem's resolved when we understand that Jesus was not dealing with a THEOLOGICAL issue in the model prayer, but rather with the REALITY of human weakness – especially when we're facing trials, or when we face those times when our FAITH is put to the test.
 - a. I think it's fairly safe to say that ALL Christians want to avoid being placed in ANY situation that may lead us to sin – including situations that may test our FAITH.
 - (1). I would certainly rather AVOID those kinds of situations, wouldn't YOU?
 - b. And yet, WE know trials are designed to help us grow spiritually, morally, and emotionally. Our character is STRENGTHENED by trials.
 - c. But at the same time, we have NO desire to be in a place where the trial might lead to sin.
 - d. So we RESIST trials, EVEN THOUGH we realize that they will STRENGTHEN us by exercising our spiritual muscles.
3. Let me illustrate this with a moment taken from the life of Jesus, Himself. In **Matthew 26**, while Jesus is in the Garden of Gethsemane, just hours before He was to be crucified, He prayed,

"O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will." **(Matthew 26:39)**

- a. I believe Jesus was HORRIFIED at the prospect of taking sin upon Himself.
 - (1). And yet, He was willing to endure it to fulfill the will of His Father, which was to be the Lamb of God that would take away the sins of the world.
 - b. OUR reaction to trials – to times of temptation – are very similar to Christ's, but for a DIFFERENT reason. For US it's primarily a matter of self-doubt.
4. Let's be REAL HONEST with ourselves, shall we?
- a. When you and I HONESTLY look at the POWER of certain trials we may have to face in life, and THEN consider our own WEAKNESS and our PROPENSITIES toward sin, we sometimes wonder if we REALLY have the COURAGE and FAITH to endure the trial – EVEN WHEN we KNOW that God will not allow us to endure more than we're capable of bearing.
 - (1). How many times have you secretly wondered if YOU could go through the kind of painful trial someone you know is going through?

5. I was recently reading about some of the horrors first-century Christians endured because they refused to deny their faith in their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
 - a. One particular form of persecution during the days of Nero was the *corpus tunicus* – a rough, cotton tunic that was soaked in tar and then draped over the victim. The person was then led down the streets of Rome to the arena, hoisted by the chains that bound their wrists together, and left hanging by their wrists on a tall lamppost. They would be hanging there for hours, with their mouths sewn shut so they couldn't cry out. As darkness approached, every person hanging from those lampposts knew what was coming next. As soon as it began to get dark, a soldier would come by carrying a torch, and would ignite the *corpus tunicus*. Within moments, the victim would become a human torch to illuminate the night. Those tunics were called *corpus tunicus* because they were tunics of death.
- D. Therefore, I fully intend to pray, “*Do not lead us into temptation*” – Lord, do not lead me into THOSE KINDS of trials.

1. Or to put it another way, "*O My Father, if it is possible, let THIS cup pass from ME; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.*" (**cf. Matthew 26:39**)
 2. As we said earlier, JESUS prayed this prayer because, as God, He was about to take upon Himself the horror of the sins of the world.
 3. But WE need to pray this prayer because, as humans, we're fearful we might not be able to FACE certain trials without the risk of LOSING our faith – even though we know we have the strength to remain faithful.
- II. Although trials (temptations in the form of trials and testings of our faith) are designed to STRENGTHEN us, we ALSO know there is a very real possibility that we might fail the test.
- A. Therefore, every trial that God allows CAN turn into a temptation.
 1. This is NOT saying that God is INDIRECTLY responsible for leading us INTO a temptation.
 2. Rather, it's saying that Satan USES trials as an attempt to weaken and destroy our FAITH.
 - B. In a previous lesson about temptation, we talked about the **50-20 Principle**. Do you remember what that is?

1. It's based on **Genesis 50:20**: Joseph had been sold into Egyptian slavery by his wicked brothers, but in the process, God blessed Joseph and caused him to become second-in-command of all Egypt under Pharaoh himself.
 2. When Joseph's brothers came to Egypt to seek grain during a severe famine, they were brought before Joseph, but didn't recognize him.
 3. After Joseph finally told his brothers who he was, they were shocked, and feared for their lives. But Joseph told them something VERY PROFOUND – he told them WHY he was able to look back on all the terrible things he had been through, and was able to view them as GOOD.
 4. **Genesis 50:19-20** – *Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid, for am I in the place of God? Then comes the **50-20 Principle (v. 20)**: But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good. . .*
- C. As we said before, every struggle and trial we experience is allowed by God to test us, to strengthen our faith – to help us mature.
1. In **Romans 5:3-5**, the apostle Paul wrote: *but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does*

not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

2. James, the Lord's brother wrote (**James 1:2-4**): *My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.*
3. The apostle Peter wrote (**1 Peter 1:6-9**): *In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith — the salvation of your souls.*

D. But the REALITY of trials is this: Satan will ABSOLUTELY turn EVERY TRIAL into a TEMPTATION.

1. He will try to get you to doubt God's LOVE, God's GRACE, God's MERCY, God's FORGIVENESS, and ultimately God's PROMISES.

2. I don't know about you, but depending on the nature of the trial, I can only HOPE I would be completely submissive to, and dependent on God during that trial.
3. Therefore, I would rather for God to NOT put me through trials that would test my faith in that manner.

III. So, what's this petition REALLY saying? How do WE pray this part of the prayer Jesus taught His disciples?

A. I believe this petition is saying: "Lord, please don't lead me into a trial that will present such a test of my faith that I might not be able to endure. Instead, deliver me from any trial where there is even the slightest POSSIBILITY that I might sin against you in a moment of weakness."

1. This is NOT an indication that we DOUBT the promises of God to keep us from temptation.
2. Rather, this is laying claim to the promise that: *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 Corinthians 10:13)*
3. While God won't tempt us to sin, He WILL allow circumstances to come into our lives that become tests.

- a. God has placed us in a world where we face trials of our faith every day.
 - b. We live in a world that is literally FILLED with places we should NOT GO, things we should NOT DO, things we should NOT SEE, things about which we should NOT THINK, and people with whom we should NOT ASSOCIATE.
 - c. When you decide NOT to associate with certain people, or when you WALK AWAY FROM a certain magazine rack, or decide NOT to watch a particular movie, or decide NOT to watch a certain television program, or when you decide NOT to visit certain web sites on the Internet, your spiritual strength has just brought you safely through a test.
 - d. But, BETWEEN the time when you first encountered this TEST, and the time when you walked away, Satan was trying to turn the TEST into a TEMPTATION – he was working very hard to incite your lusts and desires, and was trying his best to draw you away into sin.
- B. During the darkest hours of Job's life, he longed for a way to simply plead his case before God as a lawyer might plead his case before a judge.

1. But God seemed so distant during that time in Job's life – everywhere he looked for God, he couldn't find Him.
 - a. However, Job never lost his faith.
 - b. He knew that when this trial was over, he would come through the whole ordeal as pure as gold.
2. Therefore he never forsook the Lord, nor departed from His commandments.
 - a. **Job 23:1-12** – *Then Job answered [Eliphaz who had just accused Job of hiding some wickedness in his heart] and said: "Even today my complaint is bitter; my hand is listless because of my groaning. Oh, that I knew where I might find Him, that I might come to His seat! I would present my case before Him, and fill my mouth with arguments. I would know the words which He would answer me, and understand what He would say to me. Would He contend with me in His great power? No! But He would take note of me. There the upright could reason with Him, and I would be delivered forever from my Judge. Look, I go forward, but He is not there, and backward, but I cannot perceive Him; when He works on the left hand, I cannot behold Him; when He turns to the right hand, I cannot see Him. But He knows the way*

that I take; when He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold. My foot has held fast to His steps; I have kept His way and not turned aside. I have not departed from the commandment of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food."

3. But even though Job's faith was still intact, he simply didn't understand why God was putting him through all this, except to say that God might simply be following some predetermined plan for Job's life.
 - a. And so he struggled to understand, and became fearful of God.
 - b. And most of all, Job couldn't understand why God would plunge him into such darkness, and yet NOT allow him to die to escape that darkness.
 - c. **Job 23:13-17** – *"But He is unique, and who can make Him change? And whatever His soul desires, that He does. For He performs what is appointed for me, and many such things are with Him. Therefore I am terrified at His presence; when I consider this, I am afraid of Him. For God made my heart weak, and the Almighty terrifies me; because I was not cut off*

from the presence of darkness, and He did not hide deep darkness from my face."

- C. Would anyone here want to go through the terrible things Job endured?
1. In the time span of only one day, Job lost his wealth (all of his earthly possessions), his sons and daughters in a terrible tragedy, and finally lost his health (when he was inflicted with what is commonly believed to be black leprosy).
 2. All he was left with was a wife who told him to "curse God and die," and so-called "friends" who were convinced Job was harboring some unconfessed sin in his heart, and therefore had incurred the wrath of God.
 3. This is all the more reason why we need to constantly pray:
 - a. *"Do not lead ME into temptation"* – Lord, do not lead me into THOSE KINDS of trials – trials where I might POSSIBLY deny You, or turn from You, or sin against You in a moment of weakness.
 - b. *"But deliver ME from evil (the evil one)"* – Keep me by Your might and power, and continue limiting the power of Satan so that he cannot tempt me with more than I'm capable of bearing, and provide for me that way of escape so that I may be able to endure whatever trial I MAY face.

4. I firmly believe the Lord will honor that prayer. Don't YOU?

CONCLUSION:

I. So, when we look back over all we've seen in this model prayer of Jesus, what have we actually learned?

A. First, we learn that the things we need – whether they are spiritual or material blessings – are abundantly available to us.

1. But to RECEIVE these blessings, there are TWO THINGS we need to do.

a. FIRST, we need to give God His rightful place. We need to recognize that God is our Father in heaven, and that God's name is HOLY – a one-word description of God's nature and character.

b. THEN, we can bring our needs to Him, and He will meet them through His limitless, eternal supply.

B. An unknown author summarized this pattern for prayer with these words (I have copies of this for those who want it):

I cannot say "our" if I live only for myself in a spiritual, watertight compartment.

I cannot say "Father" if I do not endeavor each day to act like His child.

I cannot say "who art in heaven" if I am laying up no treasure there.

I cannot say "hallowed be Thy name" if I am not striving for holiness.

I cannot say "Thy kingdom come" if I am not doing all in my power to hasten it's coming.

I cannot say "Thy will be done" if I am disobedient to His Word.

I cannot say "on earth as it is in heaven" if I will not serve Him here and now.

I cannot say "give us . . . our daily bread" if I am dishonest or an "under-the-counter" shopper.

I cannot say "forgive us our debts" if I harbor a grudge against anyone.

I cannot say "lead us not into temptation" if I deliberately place myself in its path.

I cannot say "deliver us from evil" if I do not put on the whole armor of God.

I cannot say "Thine is the kingdom" if I do not give to the King the loyalty due Him as a faithful subject.

I cannot attribute to Him "the power" if I fear what men may do.

I cannot ascribe to Him "the glory" if I am seeking honor only for myself.

I cannot say "forever" if the horizon of my life is bounded completely by the things of time.

- II. I can assure you that if you commit yourself to following THIS pattern for ALL your prayers, your entire life as a Christian will be impacted in very dramatic and positive ways – not just your prayer life, but your life as a Christian.
 - A. You will no longer lack for something to say in prayer.
 - 1. Being alone with God will never be the same because you will be:
 - a. Approaching the throne of God with the deepest reverence and respect.
 - b. Praising God for His holiness and goodness.
 - c. Praying for the kingdom of Christ – the Lord's church.
 - d. Seeking to do His will in every area of your life.
 - e. Learning to completely depend on Him for all your material blessings.
 - f. Seeking God's forgiveness out of a heart that has been softened with loving kindness, mercy and forgiveness toward others.
 - g. Asking God to keep you from trials that may be too difficult for you to handle, and to keep you from falling under the power of the evil one.
 - h. And finally, you will praising Him for everything He has done in allowing you to enter a relationship with Christ as King, and

you will praise His power and glory forever – until the day you pray your last prayer.

- B. Do you want to be able to pray this kind of prayer? If you do, then you need to do one of two things.
1. If you're NOT a child of God – have never been baptized into Christ for the remission of your sins – you need to do that this very moment.
 2. And if you're a child of God who has not remained faithful – one who, for one reason or another, has drifted away from the Lord – then you need to confess your sins to the Lord out of a repentant heart, and come back to Him this very moment as well.