

Luke 11:4b Prayer and Temptation

Jesus teaches us to pray about temptations in light of our weakness and God's sovereignty.

1) What is temptation?

- a) Greek word *peirosmos* has the common usage of "an attempt to learn the nature or character of something, a test, trial" (BDAG).
 - i) In this sense, we are to endure temptation/trial with joy, knowing that such proving of genuine faith is accompanied with blessing. "Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials (*peirosmos*, plural) of various kinds, for you know that the testing (*dokimion*) of your faith produces steadfastness" (**James 1:2-3**; cf. 1 Peter 1:6-7).
 - ii) In this sense, God is said to tempt/test His people to prove and purify their faith. "By faith Abraham, when he was tested (*peirazō*), offered up Isaac" (**Hebrews 11:17a**; cf. 1 Corinthians 10:13).
- b) It is often used in the NT in a more specific sense of "an attempt to make someone do something wrong, temptation, enticement to sin" (BDAG).
 - i) When used in this sense the Bible is clear that God does not "tempt": "Let no one say when he is tempted (*peirazō*), 'I am being tempted by God,' for God cannot be tempted with evil, and He Himself tempts no one" (**James 1:13**).
 - ii) In this sense, the devil is "the tempter": "For this reason, when I could bear it no longer, I sent to learn about your faith, for fear that somehow the tempter had tempted you and our labor would be in vain" (**1 Thessalonians 3:5**).

2) What are God's ways of tempting/trying people?

- a) God uses the devil as an instrument. The same "event" may be a "temptation" in both senses mentioned above, with God as the sovereign and the devil as the unwitting agent.
 - i) God used Satan to try David, inciting him to number the people against the commandment of the LORD.
 - (1) **2 Samuel 24:1** "Again the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and He incited David against them, saying, 'Go, number Israel and Judah.'"
 - (2) **1 Chronicles 21:1** "Then Satan stood against Israel and incited David to number Israel."
 - ii) God used Satan to try Job.
 - (1) Satan: **Job 1:12** "And the LORD said to Satan, 'Behold, all that he has is in your hand. Only against him do not stretch out your hand.' So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD."
 - (2) God: **Job 1:20-22** "Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head and fell on the ground and worshipped. And he said, 'Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.' In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrong."
 - (3) Satan: **Job 2:6** "And the LORD said to Satan, 'Behold, he is in your hand; only spare his life.'"
 - (4) God: **Job 2:9-10** "Then his wife said to him, 'Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die.' But he said to her, 'You speak as one of the foolish women would speak. Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil?' In all this Job did not sin with his lips."
 - iii) The Holy Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. "Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil" (**Matthew 4:1**; cf. Mark 1:12; Luke 4:1-2).
- b) God uses extraordinary duties to try our faith.
 - i) Abraham—moving to a foreign land; sacrificing Isaac
 - ii) Moses—commanding Pharaoh to release Israel

- iii) Joshua—the uncouth tactics for the siege of Jericho
- iv) Gideon—the uncouth tactics and small force for the battle with Midian
- c) God uses suffering to try our faith. “In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (**1 Peter 1:6-7**).
- d) God uses false prophets/teachers to try our faith. “If a prophet or a dreamer of dreams arises among you and gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or wonder that he tells you comes to pass, and if he says, ‘Let us go after other gods,’ which you have not known, ‘and let us serve them,’ you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams. For the LORD your God is testing you, to know whether you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul” (**Deuteronomy 13:1-3**).
- e) God uses persecution to try our faith. “Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life” (**Revelation 2:10**).

3) What are God’s goals for tempting/trying His people?

- a) God tries His people to show us ourselves.
 - i) To show His grace in us (1 Peter 1:7; 1 Thessalonians 1:6; 2 Thessalonians 1:3-12)
 - ii) To show our remaining corruptions (Luke 22:31-34, 54-62; Job 42:6)
 - iii) “We know not the power and strength that God puts forth in our behalf, nor what is the sufficiency of His grace, until, comparing the temptation with our own weakness, it appears unto us. The efficacy of an antidote is found when poison has been taken; and the preciousness of medicines is made known by diseases. We shall never know what strength there is in grace if we know not what strength there is in temptation. We must be tried, that we may be made sensible of being preserved. And many other good and gracious ends He has, which He accomplishes toward His saints by His trials and temptations.” (John Owen, *Of Temptation: The Nature and Power of It*, in *The Works of John Owen* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth), 94.
- b) God tries His people to show Himself to us.
 - i) To show His all sufficiency for us (2 Corinthians 12:9a)
 - ii) To show His power in our weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9b; Job 42:2)
 - iii) To show His wisdom over our ignorance and folly (Job 42:3-4)
 - iv) To show His righteousness and holiness (Job 42:5-6)
 - v) To show His mercy (Job 42:7-17)
- c) God tries His people to perfect our faith (James 1:2-4).
- d) God tries His people to show His loveliness (Job 1:9-11; 2:4-5).

4) Why does Jesus teach us to pray that God lead us *not* into temptation if temptations are a means to these good ends?

- a) This prayer checks our sinful confidence in our flesh, reminding us of our weakness and dependence upon the sovereign grace of God (Matthew 26:31-35, 40-41, 43-44; Proverbs 30:7-9).
- b) This prayer reminds us that God is sovereign, in control of all our circumstances, even our suffering (Exodus 17:1-7; Psalm 119:71; 1 Corinthians 10:13).
- c) Jesus is a sympathetic High Priest who understands our suffering.
 - i) **Matthew 26:36-39**: Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane, and He said to His disciples, ‘Sit here, while I go over there and pray.’ And taking with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, He began to be sorrowful and troubled. Then He said to them, ‘My

soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with Me.' And going a little farther He fell on His face and prayed, saying, 'My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.'"

- ii) **Luke 22:44:** "And being in an agony He prayed more earnestly; and His sweat became like great drops of blood falling to the ground."
- iii) **Hebrews 4:14-15:** Since then we have a Great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. 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. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

Doxology: "O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and how inscrutable His ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been His counselor? Or who has given a gift to Him that He might be repaid? For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be glory forever. Amen." (Romans 11:33-36)