

Lead Us Not into Temptation

TABERNACLE BAPTIST CHURCH
*"And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from the evil one. "*
Matthew 6:13

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For the past month or so, we have been studying the Lord's Prayer, from Matthew, Chapter 6. Tonight, we're in the last petition of the Lord's Prayer, Verse 13, "And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the evil one." Or as I suggested a few weeks ago, "And lead **me** not into temptation but deliver **me** from the evil one."

Temptation is the world's oldest problem. It's been around since Adam. We all have weaknesses such as losing our temper, over eating, spending foolishly, excessive drinking or drug use, addiction to sports, chasing the almighty dollar and many, many more! We all have areas of our lives which are extremely difficult to control or are out of control. The good news is that God says, "I want to help you get control of life. I want to help you overcome temptation."

Let's pray!

This passage really deals with two ideas or thoughts. The first is asking God to "Lead us not into temptation." This means asking God to help keep us from thoughts, people, places and things where we are easily tempted. For example, if our problem is drinking, keep us away from the bars or parties where lots of drinking occurs.

If it is sexual addiction, keep us out of strip clubs or from undressing a woman with our eyes, if it is sports, keep us away from the TV. In other words, **if you don't want to fall, don't go where it is slippery.**

But there are times, however, when we cannot avoid being in tempting places. Then the second thought of this passage, "But deliver us from the evil one" comes into play. It says, God, I know that I am not where you want me to be, so please help me to not fall into sin from the temptation that surrounds me. Please protect me from Satan and his affect on me.

The good news is Paul's strong exhortation in **1 Cor 10:13**, which says, "No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, He will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it."

What a great promise! This says lot about temptation. Notice the word, "common". Temptation is common, normal. It happens to everybody. We are all in same boat.

Once in a while somebody says, "Thank God i haven't been tempted in twenty years." I have a theological term for those people. It's what you get when you cross a crocodile with an abalone — it's a crock—a—balone.

Every one of us faces temptation! After all, we are all human, with human weaknesses. And if there are common temptations, there must be common solutions. But God promises to help us out. He won't allow us to be tempted beyond our ability to withstand the test.

Does God expect us to be perfect here on earth? — Of course not! As long as we live here on earth, we will never be sinless (**1 John 1:8-10**). But God has made it possible for us to sin, less. We will never be sinless, but we can sin less.

There are four ways that God delivers us from evil!

1. First, God tells us to refuse to be **intimidated** (Eph. 6:10-11).

Paul writes in **Ephesians 6:10-11**, "Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so you can take your stand against the devil's schemes."

Satan's #1 strategy is to intimidate you. It is not a sin to be tempted. Let me repeat that! **It is not a sin to be tempted.** *It is, however, a sin to give-in to temptation.*

You cannot keep birds from flying over your head, but you can keep them from building a nest in your hair. You cannot keep all thoughts that the devil wants to put in your mind out of your mind but you can reject them.

Lots of people live under unnecessary condemnation, particularly Christians. They say, "How could I think such a thing? I thought I was beyond that!" No, you'll never outgrow temptation.

In reality, the closer you get to Lord, the more the devil is going to work on you. He wants you to fall and fail. He wants to steal your joy, your witness and your testimony!

Notice the war terminology in this passage. "Be strong — mighty power — put on the full armor — take your stand." Listen, a Christian life is a battle — it's tough. Some of the biblical words used to describe the Christian life are fight, conquer, strive, battle, overcome, and victory. Satan wants to intimidate you. He wants you to feel guilty, just for being tempted.

Have you ever been praying and, all of a sudden, the most off-the-wall idea comes into your mind? You say to yourself, "Where did I get an idea like that from?" It was from the devil and you don't have to feel guilty about it. It's what you do with it that makes a difference.

Sometimes the devil tries to make you feel guilty even before he tempts you. He says things like, "If you got into a situation like that, you'd fall" and that scares you to death. But don't be bullied by devil. Refuse to be intimidated by him. Listen, our best offensive weapon against his intimidation is to pray and walk in the spirit. When we are living in the spirit, we can stand strong against his utterances and avoid the temptation of fulfilling the lust of the flesh and the lust of the world.

Brothers and Sisters, being tempted simply means you're normal, not that you are evil. You're human and temptation is a part of life. Life is a test; don't be intimidated by the one who seeks to destroy you.

2. The second thing God does is to **respond** to our call for help (Ps. 50:15).

Speaking of God, **Psalm 50:15** says, "Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor me."

This is what I call an instant or microwave prayer. It's not a long conversation with God. It's an immediate request for "help!", a "may day", an S.O.S.". You don't need a long prayer; just raise your voice to God! The bible is full of examples of people who did this; David, Daniel, Peter and Paul. God provides assistance to all of his children who ask.

Okay then, when should we use this prayer of immediacy?

- 1) When tempted to say something sarcastic or hurtful to someone!

- 2) When tempted to not tell a cashier that they undercharged you or gave you more change than they should have!
- 3) When you are tempted to yell out to someone who has just cut you off in traffic!
- 4) When tempted to pass unrighteous judgment on someone!

The list of times for this type of prayer is endless!

You can all fill-in the rest of this sentence for yourselves — I need help before I or when I — yada, yada, yada!

But Roy, why does God want me to ask for help? Why, because He understands.

The writer of Hebrews explicitly understood this, saying in **Heb. 4:15-16**: “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have One who has been tempted in every way, just as we are--yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.”

In this passage, I submit to you that the word “tempted” is more accurately rendered as “tested”, because “God cannot be tempted by evil”, as James writes in chapter 1.

The Bible does not detail all of the ways that Jesus was tested, but we know he was. He had a free will but He never sinned. Even better, He overcame it. He can help us! So he says, come boldly, with no hesitation. Don't be intimidated. Lift your voice to God and cry out, "help me!"

And God also helps us to refocus our attention.

James 1:13-15 reminds us that “When tempted, no one should say, “God is tempting me.” For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.”

Please understand that the way we think, determines the way we feel. And the way we feel determines the way we act. Temptation always begins with a thought. The battle always begins in our mind.

Whatever gets our attention gets us. The key to overcoming our temptation is to refocus our attention.

Paul tells us to “Put on the helmet of salvation”. This is a great defensive weapon that “saves” our mind and thoughts from the influences of the world, the flesh and the devil. The other critical weapon for defense is the word of God — scripture. **Psalm 119:9** asks, “How can a young man keep his way pure?”

The answer is “By living according to Your Word.” In Verse 11, the Psalmist says, “I have hidden your Word in my heart that i might not sin against you.”

Scripture memory is not just for pastors, it's for all believers, for everybody. I challenge you to do it! If you are serious about resisting temptation, learning and reciting scripture will help you.

In reality, the process of temptation is three-fold:

First, Satan gets our attention.

Then we are aroused, our emotions and feelings kick in.

And then we take action.

3. The third key to overcoming temptation is: don't fixate on it! Just **refocus** your attention on something else (1 Pet. 5:8-9)

Change channels. You can't beat the devil, he's too strong, but you can ignore him. Don't fixate on temptation, refocus – or flee!¹ Shift your thoughts from ungodly things to the things of God.

Transform your mind. The more you try to fight a feeling, the more it controls you. But when you ignore the temptation, you weaken it.

Contrary to what most people believe, the Bible does not say to resist temptation or to fight temptation! It clearly tells us to resist the **tempter**, not the temptation. Listen; there is a big difference between the two. Peter writes in **1 Peter 5:8-9**: “Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.”

Notice that Peter tells us to “resist him”, not the temptation itself!

As I have said, the key is to refocus your attention because what gets your attention gets you. When Jesus was in the desert for 40 days, tired and hungry, the devil came to entice him to use his powers for selfish reasons. Satan said, “Why don't you turn these stones into bread?” Jesus did not resist the temptation. He did not say, “No, I can fight my hunger!” He blasted out, “away from me, Satan!” He resisted the tempter.

In this case, the best defense is a good offense. Don't fixate on the temptation; fight the tempter by changing your thoughts away from him and toward God. What I am saying to you is this — don't try to argue or debate with the devil. He is much better at that than we are and he will end up the winner!

After all, he has thousands of years of practice and lots of successes. When temptation calls you on the phone, hang up --- when Satan is trying to whisper in your ear, turn a deaf ear to him.

Proverbs 15:26 says that “The Lord detests the thoughts of the wicked, but those of the pure are pleasing to Him.” Since this is true, you should only think good thoughts. Remember, whatever you are thinking is what you're going to become. The devil puts all kinds of crazy thoughts in our minds, but we don't need to feel guilty about that. It's what we do with them that count. Refocus your thoughts, change channels mentally. I tell you the truth; we cannot always control the circumstances in our lives or our emotions — but we can control what we focus on.

Even in the most tempting situations, when we can't get out of the situation, we can always change our mental focus.

Refocusing often means leaving the situation — walk away from a group telling dirty jokes. Maybe you need to take some alone time to cool down when tempted to blow up and say something that you will later regret.

¹ Other principles to consider:

- **Put Off / Put On Principle**
Ephesians 4:22-25 (ESV) — “put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, [and] 24 ... put on the new self”
- **Flee temptation**
2 Timothy 2:22 (ESV) — “So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.”
1 Corinthians 10:14 (ESV) — , “flee from idolatry”
- **Put Sin to Death**
Romans 8:13 (ESV) — “For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.”
Colossians 3:5 (ESV) — “Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.”
1 Peter 2:11 (ESV) — “Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.”
- **Fight the Good Fight**
1 Timothy 6:12 (ESV) — “Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life...”

Remember, "If you don't want to fall, don't go where it is slippery." Said in another way, if you don't want to get stung, keep away from the bees. Sometimes you just need get up and physically move away from the situation.

4. The fourth way God protects us is to help us **resist** the tempter (Jms. 4:7).

Again I say, temptation is not the real problem, it is the source behind the temptation that is the trouble!

James 4:7 says, "Submit yourselves then to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."

This passage contains two distinctive thoughts: first, "submit to God" and then "resist the devil."

These are both positive actions that we must take if we are to succeed. The first positive action is to "submit to God."

We must recognize that we cannot handle the problem on our own. It is beyond our control. If it was in our control, we wouldn't be here struggling with our problems. Remember, Jesus was tested just like we are, yet, he did not sin. Why? Because He submitted to the will of the Father!

Let me ask you this most important question — "Is God's will, your will?" If it is not, I beg you to ask the Lord to reveal to you, just why it isn't.

The second action is to "resist the devil." It is vital to understand that we cannot effectively "resist the devil" until we have "surrendered ourselves to God."

But how do we do this? The answer is revealed in Ephesians 6:17-18a, "Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests."

The Apostle Paul tells us "To fight the good fight, put on the whole armor of God so we can stand against the devil."

People, let's face it! We're in a spiritual battle against evil and we must be prepared to fight. In Ephesians 6, Paul describes the full armor of God, which we must put-on before we go out to battle. To effectively fight the temptor, we need to get spiritually dressed.

It seems that the problem is that a lot of people are spiritual streakers! They get up morning and never put on the full armor of God. They go into battle and face the enemy, naked and unprotected! They don't spend time reading the bible, praying, or getting their life in order. The devil laughs at them because they are no threat to him at all! Oh, I pray that you are you not one of these people?

Some of you, before you walk out of this building, will be attacked by an ungodly thought. And you have a choice. You can accept it or you can reject it. How? Simply by refocusing.

You can say "God, help! I don't want this thought in my mind. I'm putting on my helmet of salvation. I'm going to think about something else."

The Bible says your life is shaped by the way you think, so think Godly thoughts. What goes on in your mind is what is going to come out as your behavior. You can be assured that you can resist the temptor by knowing the truth. And the truth will set you free! Amen!

And keep in mind that God "Has already provided a way out for us from temptation so we can stand up under it." He tells to:

1. Refuse to be intimidated by the evil one,
2. Cry out for his help when tempted,
3. Refocus our thoughts and attention and
4. Resist the tempter.

My friends, you, that have already invited Jesus into your heart and life, have the power, through the Holy Spirit, to turn back on Satan and say “away from me Satan!” I urge you to pray continuously and lift up your voice to our heavenly father, saying, “And lead me not into temptation, but deliver me from the evil one.” And all say — amen!