

The Marks of a True Believer
Message Eight
“Lead Us Not Into Temptation”
Matt 6:5-15

- 5 And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.
- 6 But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.
- 7 But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.
- 8 Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.
- 9 After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.
- 10 Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.
- 11 Give us this day our daily bread.
- 12 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.
- 13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.
- 14 For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you:
- 15 But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Introduction:

We come today to look at the first part of v.13 which often sounds strange to our ears. It seems like an odd request to make of God, “please do not direct me into temptations to do evil.” And, there are some reasons why the prayer sounds strange to our ears.

- We know from James that He does not tempt us with evil.

James 1:13-14

13 Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man:

14 But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. KJV

- We know that the avoidance of temptation and the doing of evil is the Revealed Will of God for us.

1 Cor 6:18

18 Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. KJV

1 Cor 10:14

14 Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry. KJV

1 Tim 6:10-11

10 For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

11 But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. KJV

2 Tim 2:22

22 Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart. KJV

- Furthermore, we have a visceral reaction, something down deep inside of us that reacts to the notions of God tempting us to do evil or leading us into temptation that says, "God would never do that."

So, why would Jesus have us ask the Father "Lead us not into temptation...?"

We see the issue stated like this because there was in the Hebrew culture a greater tendency to speak indirectly than we experience in our world. We see this pattern often in other cultures as well, the English for example. In addition to them sounding odd because of their accent, we realize after we listening to them for a while that there is a different *pattern* to their speech, an indirectness, that often describes a thing or an idea by telling us what it is *not* rather than what is actually *is*.

The Hebrew mind tended toward the indirect as well and often prayers to God were offered by asking Him *not* to do something rather than directly asking Him *for* the thing desired. There are many examples of this in the book of Psalms.

Ps 6

1 O LORD, rebuke me not in thine anger, neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure. Positively stated, "Look on me with mercy - have compassion on me."

Ps 9

19 Arise, O LORD; let not man prevail...
"Show Your Self in strength - conquer your enemies."

Sometimes the negative would be followed immediately by a positive counterpart.

Ps 9

20 Put them in fear, O LORD: that the nations may know themselves to be but men.

Ps 10

12 Arise, O LORD; O God, lift up thine hand: forget not the humble.
"Don't forget the humble." But, of course, God has never 'forgotten' anything or anyone. The prayer is "Remember the humble" which, David knows, is the Revealed AND the Secret Will of God, an absolutely appropriate thing to ask.

Ps 16

10 For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.

This is a prophecy concerning Jesus. God preserved Him, spirit and body, through death to

resurrection. He did not remain in the grave and His body did not decay.

Ps 22

11 Be not far from me; for trouble is near; for there is none to help
“Be close to me, I am in trouble and there is no one to help but you.”

Ps 27

9 Hide not thy face far from me; put not thy servant away in anger: thou hast been
my help; leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation.
“Please stay with me, help me, hold me close.”

Ps 27

12 Deliver me not over unto the will of mine enemies: for false witnesses are risen
up against me, and such as breathe out cruelty.
“Protect me from my enemies.”

Ps 28

3 Draw me not away with the wicked, and with the workers of iniquity, which
speak peace to their neighbours, but mischief is in their hearts.
“Deal with me differently than You do the wicked because I am not one of them.”

And, there are many others that demonstrate this same kind of indirectness in appealing to God.

Ps 35

22 This thou hast seen, O LORD: keep not silence: O Lord, be not far from me.

Ps 38

21 Forsake me not, O LORD: O my God, be not far from me.

Ps 51

11 Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me.

God is being asked to do things He would never do as a way of appealing to Him for the positive of those desires.

I am being redundant here to demonstrate that this really was a Hebrew *pattern* of speech - to ask God *for* something by asking Him not to do the *opposite* of it.

The prayer actually is, “Please lead me in such a way that I do not fall victim to any temptation, that I not sin.” The reason that it does not sound like this to our ears is that we do not pray in that Hebrew pattern but rather in our own pattern of thought. It is a legitimate request to be preserved while tempted and to be enabled to resist all provocations to do evil.

This is a biblical acknowledgment that:

1. Those who regularly seek God are people who are tempted to do evil and their only hope of surviving temptation is the help of God,

2. God knows the serious-minded believers will be tempted and will fall unless He helps them,
3. This scenario, this manner of doing things, has been chosen by Him; proof that he is always and has always been willing to deal with less-than-perfect people,
4. His people can never expect to come to a place where they are not desperately dependent upon Him especially concerning temptations to sin.

We further see that the genuine and honest request to be led can only come from a heart that;

5. Wants, truly desires, to be taken down the path where the One to whom he is appealing will surely lead, (***and there are many things that are surely known about the path - it is narrow, difficult, unpopular, lonely...trod only by those who have a sincere desire for holiness***)
6. Knows with absolute certainty that he cannot find the way, nor remain in it, by himself... this prayer is a confession of weakness, ignorance, and humility,
7. Absolutely trusts the One he is asking.

So, what is this 'Temptation' about which we are praying when we recite these words?

The first two occurrences of the word in the book of Matthew deal with the tempting of Jesus in the wilderness at the beginning of His ministry, right after He had been baptized. ***Satan sought to entice the Lord to do things contrary to the Revealed Will of God.***

The third occurrence is our text.

The fourth is in one of the final public confrontations of Jesus with the Jews, the Herodians here, over the issue of paying taxes.

Matt 22:16-18

16 And they sent out unto him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man: for thou regardest not the person of men.

17 Tell us therefore, What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not?

18 But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites?

Jesus asked them why they were tempting Him, trying to induce Him to take sides in their political argument, to say something that one side or the other could use to blame Him of wrongdoing.

And the final occurrence we find in Matt. 26:41 where Jesus urged the disciples to pray so that temptation would not overcome them.

Matt 26:40-41

40 And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour?

41 Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but

the flesh is weak. KJV

Apparently circumstances can tempt us through the weakness of our “flesh,” our natural selves.

So we can be tempted to do evil by the devil, by other humans, and by the testing of our flesh by circumstances.

Temptation is the provocation to do something contrary to the Revealed Will of God, either something we do or fail to do by either an outside source or internally from our own inclinations to disobey God.

How does God deliver His people from temptation?

According to Paul, even though He allows us to be tempted, He always provides an avenue of escape from the temptation.

1 Cor 10:13

13 There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.
KJV

But what is that ‘way’?

- Sometimes He allows us to fail so badly in a particular sin that it becomes so loathsome to us that we rarely can be tempted to go back there. Peter, for example.
- Sometimes He grants the spiritual wisdom to see clearly what is at stake.

1 Cor 9:27

27 But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.
KJV

1 Cor 9:27

27 but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified. NASU

The idea of becoming disapproved, of having all that he had worked for and accomplished become nothing was, to Paul, so totally overwhelming that he labored diligently to avoid moral failure.

- Sometimes the Lord unfolds the doctrinal truths of our union with Christ so that we can, as Paul taught, reckon ourselves as dead to sin but alive unto God.
- Then, at other times, He simply arranges circumstances so that we do not have the opportunity to do what we are being tempted to do.
- In all cases, He prompts our consciences so that we remember that we must flee, that we can flee, and that provision is made for us to flee.

We should remember always that when we are tempted and when we fall under the temptation we are walking right through all of the marvelous provisions that He has made for us.

- He is in no way to blame,
- We cannot blame His Sovereign Will,
- It is all on us, our fault, and as we come back to Him in repentance, we must acknowledge that.

What are the dangers of falling into temptation? Why should Jesus teach us to pray concerning this?

They are many and they are huge.

- Our sins, the sins of His people, rob Him of Glory that is due Him.

His people, when they are tempted, are to lay hold of the *means* that He has provided, resist them temptation by those means, and give Him glory of providing our deliverance.

When we fall under temptation, He gets no such glory.

- If others see us sin, the name of Christ is shamed and degraded in the view of men.

If unbelievers see us, they are given further cause to continue in unbelief. And if believers see us they are hurt and discouraged because of us.

- The church is wounded.

We are members one of another. Like a chain, a church is weakened by weak links. It can only fully thrive when each of its members (links) is walking in full communion with God.

- And, of course, we ourselves are injured...sometimes very badly.

Our sense of communion with God is weakened. Sometimes the realities of our salvation can disappear for a while from our eyes. It certainly happens while we are in the sin. But then in the aftermath also the guilt and discouragement rob us of all the joy associated with being a believer. It is bad enough when our recovery is swift and definite, but we never know when one sin might undermine us for days, weeks, months or even years.

- And other people are hurt, sometimes badly, sometimes in ways that cannot be repaired.

Even in what we consider 'small' sins those around us who needed at that moment for us to be at our best are deprived of that. The scale of gradation only gets worse from there. Most of us can remember a time when, if things had been different, and if we had been at our best spiritually, someone else's life might have turned out very differently. Those are agonizing memories but even these are left to us, by God, as warnings to escape new temptations that come.

Sin is a hideous poison both to our lives and to the lives of those around us. Temptation is the

syringe that would inject that poison into our souls. It is so very dangerous that we should plead and agonize with God on a daily basis, "lead me not into temptation but deliver me from evil."

Temptation is constant.

The demons never sleep.

The need for those in our lives to have a constant, faithful Christian witness never lessens.

The Narrow Way through each day lies there demanding our constant faithfulness.

And then.... there are all of those witnesses.

Heb 12:1-2

- 1 Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,
- 2 Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. KJV

Pray the prayer with me once again.

- 9 ... Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.
- 10 Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.
- 11 Give us this day our daily bread.
- 12 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.
- 13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.