

## The Lord's Prayer

6. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil

One time a young man went to confession. And he began, "Bless me Father for I have sinned...Father, I've had bad thoughts..."

Well, the priest said, "Did you entertain them, son?"

And the young man said: "No, sir... but they sure entertained me!"

Temptation is something everybody wrestles with, and it's a subject Jesus includes in his model prayer. One theme running through Scripture is the fact that as humans we are prone to give in to temptation, and the lengths that God goes to save us from it's tragic consequences.

Temptation started a long time ago. It began with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. God said you can eat anything but, there's only one rule: don't eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

So, one day the snake approaches them and says,

1. "Are you sure that's what God meant?"
2. Did He really say you couldn't eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil?
3. Did He really mean that?
4. And you won't die if you eat at that fruit?
5. Look at how beautiful it is and think about how wonderful it must taste.

6. And you know, when you eat it, you'll be like God!"

So, they ate it and they fell from God's good graces. And we've been struggling with temptation ever since. Their story is our story too.

When Jesus taught this prayer to his disciples he used the common everyday language of the Jewish people – Aramaic. The word that is translated as "temptation" in most English Bibles actually means "wrong thinking or testing", according to Chaim Bentorah who is a lifelong Hebrew scholar.

So in essence, it means –

1. Father, don't let my own wrong or flawed thinking influence me to sin,  
or
2. don't let the trials and tests I am facing cause me to succumb to sin.

James teaches us, "Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him. When tempted, no one should say, 'God is tempting me.' For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death. Don't be deceived, my dear brothers and sisters. Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change

like shifting shadows. He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created,” (James 1:12-18).

So, God cannot tempt us – it would be against His nature. He will not, He cannot do anything that is not in keeping with His nature. But He does allow us to be tested. Jesus himself, “was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil,” (Matthew 4:1). The author of Hebrews says, “for we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are —yet he did not sin,” (Hebrew 4:15).

What is that source? Again, James is clear: “each person is tempted when he/she is lured and enticed by his/her own desire.” Here we get to the root. **Temptation draws its strength from desire.** This explains why not everyone is faced with the same temptations. The lure of internet pornography is a serious temptation for one person, while for another it is not. Both have the same access, only one is tempted. What is the difference? James would say that the difference is **desire**. The opportunity to gossip exists for all, yet some people gossip and some don’t. Why is this? Some want to, others do not.

Importantly, James does not say that desire is sin. Rather, he says that desire *when it has conceived* gives birth to sin.

The same is true for sexual sin.

1. What happens when a married man sees another woman and is attracted to her? How does he respond to the temptation? Does he take second look, or does he divert his eyes? **Desire is conceived in the second look. (David and Bathsheba)**
2. What of a married woman who is tempted to harbor disrespectful thoughts of her husband, or romanticized thoughts of another man? **Desire is conceived in the lingering.**

Herein lie the beginnings of sin. Of course, sin in its early stages is undetectable, and it is certainly hidden, perhaps even from the sinner himself.

But scripture reminds us that the wages of sin is death. And that is apparent.

1. Adultery destroys marriages.
2. Gluttony degrades one's health—mentally, spiritually, and physically.
3. Covetousness constricts the heart, making one increasingly unable to love.
4. Lying destroys trust, and therefore destroys relationships.

This much is plain. It is easy to see sin for what it is when we see its effects down the road, when the marriage is irrecoverable, the heart attack has occurred, or the job has been lost.

What is not so apparent is how we get to this point. When advanced, it is apparent that sin brings forth death. When in its embryonic stages, it is not so apparent. Sin begins gradually, growing until it can be seen for what it is. In other words, great sin doesn't just happen in a moment, but over time.

**When a young man takes a weapon and goes to a school and opens fire killing staff and students – that temptation didn't start that morning!**

We shouldn't trifle with temptation, or make allowances for it. The repercussions are serious.

**A Scholarly thought:**

Martin Luther offered a thought on this aspect of the Lord's Prayer. He writes, **"We pray in this petition that God would guard and keep us, so that the devil, the world, and our flesh may not deceive us nor seduce us into misbelief, despair, and other great shame and vice."**

Temptation and evil are parts of life. So we ask God to make us strong as Jesus was strong in the wilderness.

And we, like Jesus, have several weapons at our disposal that can enable us to resist temptation.

“ The most common tools are prayer and reading the Bible.

“ Worship and fellowship are also effective in our resistance.

“ Being accountable to a responsible individual or group

## **A LIFE WITH DANGEROUS ADVERSARIES**

Several years ago the comedian Flip Wilson coined the phrase, “The devil made me do it.” He was partially correct. In reality, the adversaries that tempt us on a daily basis are the devil, the world, and our flesh.

The devil’s desire is to draw us away from God with promises of security and comfort. The devil tells us:

1. We don’t need to rely on God for our well being;
2. We have our money so don’t need God.
3. I am spiritual and not religious
  - Nature is my God
  - My relationship with my family is all I need
  - I have a comfortable house or nice car

Martin Luther once wrote that anything in which we place our hope and trust becomes our God. When we replace the God of all creation with the god’s of fame, fortune, comfort, and security – we are in trouble.

And Satan plays with our mind.

1. Convincing us that being good is good enough.

2. During difficult times, Satan whispers in our ear that God does not love us and does not have the power to save us.
3. These whispers cause us to fear, despair and doubt God.

### **A LIFE DEPENDENT ON GRACE**

We not only ask God not to lead us into temptation, we also ask the Lord to deliver us from evil. In this prayer we are asking to experience God's love, grace-filled presence in our lives.

The God whom we worship is the creator of all. God's creative activity continues in our daily lives through God's provision of everything that we need for life, and through God's protection.

**1 Chronicles 4:10 - Jabez prayer - "Jabez called upon the God of Israel, saying, 'Oh that you would bless me and enlarge my border, and that your hand might be with me, and that you would keep me from harm so that it might not bring me pain!' And God granted what he asked"**

We pray this petition in the Lord's Prayer as we step into the challenges of life, asking God to go with us and to graciously protect us. We say this prayer realizing that if God were to separate himself from us, we would be defeated.