

Lead Us Not into Temptation: the Lord's Prayer—part 6 of 6

Matthew 6:9-13 King James Version (KJV)

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.**

Introduction

Recap: **God is our Father, His name is holy, He is the Lord of the heavens and earth, He daily provides us with basic necessities, both physical and spiritual. Divine forgiveness hinges on human forgiveness.**

We have been doing a series on the Lord's Prayer where Jesus reminds us that God in Heaven is our Father who loves to hear and answer our prayers. We learned that if we follow other gods or take the name of the Lord in vain, our prayers will not be answered. The LORD God is in charge both in the heavens and on the earth. He commissioned us to advance His kingdom on earth until Christ returns. We can trust God for His faithfulness to supply our basic needs. Remember: we cannot live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. Last week, we learned that unless we forgive others' sins, our sins will remain unforgiven by God.

Content: definition, nature, ways to ward off temptations

This morning, we will think about temptation, in particular, about its three aspects: definition, nature, and ways to overcome temptations.

Definition of temptation: "a desire to do something, especially something **wrong or unwise**" (Oxford Dictionary).

How about a good old definition, yet closest to the biblical understanding? It's Webster's which says, temptation is "The act of tempting; **enticement to evil** by arguments, by flattery, or by the offer of some real or apparent good" (Webster's American Dictionary of the English Language, 1828. <http://av1611.com/kjbp/kjv-dictionary/temptation.html>).

Allow me to share my own understanding. *Temptation is anything in any form that causes us to do or say what is **evil** in the sight of the Lord* (Kyewoon Choi).

Nature / Reality of temptation:

1. *No one is exempt from temptation.* Temptation is common to all. It discriminates against no one. Everyone is tempted; from the first day to the last day on earth. Even Jesus was tempted. Although it is part of human life, we don't have to give in to temptations. In fact, God wants us to resist and overcome temptations.
2. *No one is strong enough to resist temptation by their own power.* Consider Samson the mighty warrior. Oscar Wilde once said: *I can resist everything except temptation.* Obviously, he didn't understand God's power and God's promise. With God's help, we can resist and overcome temptations.
3. *The good news is that Jesus our Lord can help us.* Jesus, just as human as we are, has been tempted in all things (Hebrews 4:15), so He sympathizes with our weaknesses. He also knows how to help us when we are tempted (Hebrews 2:18). We just need to ask for His help.

We can overcome temptations in three ways: know our enemy, walk in the ways of the LORD, and pray.

First, know your enemy and resist him. Sun Tzu--Chinese military strategist--once said, "If you know the enemy and know yourself, then in a hundred battles you are never in a vulnerable position. If you know yourself but not the enemy, you win one battle and lose the other. If you know neither the enemy nor yourself, in every battle you are in danger." '知彼知己, 百戰不殆, 不知彼而知己, 一勝一負, 不知彼不知己, 每戰必殆.'

Do you know your enemy well? Our enemy is the devil, and he is real. Some folks deny that the devil is real. It's just the personification of evil, they say. Things you don't see doesn't mean that they do not exist. Such people are ignorant of the invisible spiritual warfare. By denying that the enemy is out there, they make themselves vulnerable to enemy's attack. Jesus acknowledges the enemy in verse 13 of today's text "**deliver us from evil**" -- the original Greek is "deliver us from **the evil one** (referring to third person, male, singular)." Four out of seven translations I checked out (NIV, NRSV, New American Bible, and Amplified) rendered it as **the evil one**. The other three including KJV, NASB, and Rheims translated it as **evil**. Which translation is more faithful to the original Greek? The evil **one** (third person, male, singular). It's an entity. To know your enemy, the devil, is the first step to victory (Corrie Ten Boom). The devil, the evil one, is behind every temptation we encounter. He is the tempter.

Temptation is the enemy's #1 weapon against us. Listen to Pastor David Wilkerson: "*Satan's most powerful weapon against God's people is temptation and lust that leads to sin. His purpose is to engulf believers in guilt, fear, and condemnation--to make them discouraged and downcast. And the more they love Jesus, the hotter and heavier their temptation will be.*"

So, folks, if you are currently fighting the temptation, don't think that it is a sign of failure. Rather, it's evidence of success (Kohl). In other words, the devil thinks you are worth tempting for.

Sometimes we are tempted by our own lust and desires. James 1:13-14 says, ¹³Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. ¹⁴But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. In those moments, James urges, submit yourself to God, resist the devil and he will flee from you (James 4:7).

Note: **God never tempts us.** He leads us not into temptation but out of the temptation. Sure, He may test us occasionally as He did with Abraham. Genesis 22:1-2 says, *God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am."* ² Then He said, *"Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering..."* It is important to understand the difference between 'test' and 'temptation': God's test is always for our own good. His test never means to fail us. Instead, after the test, we always come out stronger for God's approval like refined gold (1 Thessalonians 2:4). The devil's temptation is to steal, destroy, and kill us (i.e., if we succumb to temptation, we come out with fear, guilt, and shame. And we suffer from the consequences thereafter). Here's the good news. God never allows us to be tempted beyond what we can bear. Listen to 1 Corinthians 10:13. *No temptation has overtaken you, but such as is common to man; and **God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.*** Know your enemy and resist him.

Another way to fight off temptations is to walk in the ways of the LORD, that is, to **set the divine boundaries and stay within.** Ravi Zacharias once said: *it is better to shun the bait than to struggle in the snare.* It is wise not to go near temptations in the first place (E.g., alcoholics stay away from bars and bottles). Consider Joseph in the Old Testament. Genesis 39:6-10 tells us: *Now Joseph was handsome in form and appearance.* ⁷ *It came about after these events that his master's wife looked with desire at Joseph, and she said, "Lie with me."* ⁸ *But he refused and said to his master's wife, "**Behold, with me here, my master does not concern himself with anything in the house, and he has put all that he owns in my charge.** ⁹**There is no one greater in this house than I, and he has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do this great evil and sin against God?**"* ¹⁰ *As she spoke to Joseph day after day, he did not listen to her to lie beside her or be with her. Joseph knew the divine boundaries on marriage relationship, so he stayed clear away from another man's wife. Walk in the ways of the LORD.*

Thirdly, to overcome temptation, there's no better way than **watch and pray**. Jesus commands, *Keep watching and praying, so that you do not come into temptation* (Matthew 26:41). To understand why prayer is the best way to ward off temptations, let's listen to C. S. Lewis. In his book "*The Screwtape Letters*," Lewis explains what makes us most vulnerable to temptations: **troughs**—the times when our “whole inner world is drab and cold and empty” (p. 48). That's when the power to resist the temptation is at the lowest level. *This is especially true for those folks*, Lewis asserts, *who are tempted for sensual and sexual temptations*. For instance, drugs, drinking, and promiscuity have a strong appeal to those whose lives are weary and dull (addiction results seldom from pain, but often, out of too much pleasure).

What's the point of praying, you may ask? It brings us out of troughs and puts us on the peak. Prayer is the real thing. It's the real stuff, not fake. It brings us real pleasure that lasts forever. It restores peace, joy, and love in our life. Prayer makes us more sensitive to God's presence, therefore, it makes us more alert to temptations. Prayer strengthens our inner being to resist temptations with no fear or regret. When we seek God in prayer, we will find Him. When we find Him, He will fill us up with great satisfaction, and we don't want to go back to the fake stuff. We won't be easily tempted with the same temptations that we used to crave for. As Paul Newman once said regarding his happy marriage, “*Why do you crave hamburgers when you have steak at home?*” Are you struggling with temptations? Then, pray. Desire God and Him alone. Seek real pleasure in Him. Persist in prayer, and you will come out of the snare of temptation in no time, and you will be strong in the Lord.

Conclusion

Temptations abound all around us: they invade our hearts through our eyes, ears, and appetites. It's time that we woke up from our spiritual sleep. It's time that we identified our enemy and said ‘enough’ to the tempter. It's time that we overcame our temptations. Submit to the Lord, and He will deliver you from the evil one. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Seek God in prayer and you will be satisfied and be able to overcome temptations.

Let us pray.