



Worship – Part 22
Acts of Worship – Part 10
Prayer: Lead Us Not Into Temptation
GCSP – 10/06/2007

I wouldn't have a problem with temptation if it wasn't so tempting.

The times in my life when I have been able to lose weight are the times when I have been able to ignore temptation. About a year and a half ago I lost twelve pounds over the course of about six months. During that time I did get a little more exercise but I also won the victory over temptation every time I was at the grocery store. I bypassed the bakery section and I simply said "No" to the candy bars at the checkout line. After a few months the temptation was almost non-existent because I was seeing the results of shedding the pounds. I had more energy, my clothes fit better, and I could see a difference around my gut.

More recently, I again have been trying to lose weight. After three months of eating better and exercising more, this time I wasn't losing any weight at all. Other than feeling slightly more energetic I saw absolutely no results – no weight loss, no difference in how my clothes fit, and no difference in the size of my gut.

The temptation of cakes and pies and cookies and candy bars was suddenly getting the better of me. Now the bakery section was a destination instead of an area to pass by. Candy bars I hadn't eaten in years were calling my name. Donuts and pastries were filling my mind when it came time for a meal. I wasn't real particular about the meal itself because it was only the formality to dispose of in order to get to dessert.

Lately, my body has started to rebel. My energy level has plummeted. I'm back to a pattern of not sleeping very well and I am somewhat disgusted with myself. And it all traces back to not handling temptation as I should.

Turn with me in your Bibles to **Matthew 6**.

The Lord willing, we will finish our rich study of this passage that is known as The Lord's Prayer. I had originally planned on spending one week discussing the act of worship we call prayer. Tonight marks week nine on the topic of prayer and I still feel like we have just begun to get a feel for what the Lord intends for us in this regard. But the Holy Spirit is prompting me that it is time to move on, so we will just have to trust that He will lead us back to this topic again one day.

Matthew 6:9-13

"Pray, then, in this way: 'Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen'" (NASB).

Let's pray.

We have seen the importance of praying with an attitude of humility and praying with the heart of a child who runs to his daddy simply for the joy of running to his daddy. We have seen that prayer must also be done with a reverence, or awe, or wonder because we are approaching the holy God of the universe. We saw how we are to first pray for the things of God; that His name would be glorified and magnified and honored, and that His will and not ours would be accomplished on this earth just as it is in heaven. After giving God the proper priority in our

prayers, we saw that then we are to present our own personal requests to Him, with an emphasis on the spiritual side of our lives above the physical. We should pray for our material needs, but more priority should be placed on the spiritual side, starting with forgiveness – and we spent the last two weeks dealing with that.

I think it is vitally important for us to note the exact spiritual issues we are to be requesting from the Lord and then what is implied by the things He does not tell us to ask for.

Jesus doesn't tell us to ask for peace in this model prayer. Why? – Because He is our peace. We already possess the peace of God in our souls. If you are lacking in peace it isn't because it is not available to you; it isn't even because you do not possess peace; it is simply because you have not rested in the knowledge of already having God's peace, and you have not trusted in that peace.

Jesus doesn't tell us to ask for spiritual knowledge in this model prayer. Why? – Because He has left us His Word; His Living Word. All the spiritual knowledge we will ever need is contained in His Word. You don't have to look for some supernatural experience, even though He may give you that. You don't have to attend Bible College or Seminary, even though He may allow you to do so. You don't even have to have a spiritual mentor, even though He may give you one. You have everything you need and more in this Book.

Jesus doesn't tell us to ask for spiritual guidance in this model prayer. Why? – Because we have the Holy Spirit living within us. All the guidance we need is already here. You don't have to ask for it you simply need to be still and allow the Spirit of God to confirm the Word of God in your heart. Once the Spirit and the Word are confirmed and settled in your heart, the path you are to take will be clear.

And there are obviously many other spiritual things Jesus does not tell us to ask for in this model prayer. And he is obviously not forbidding us to ask for these things, but if you have taken the time to saturate your mind and heart with the Word of God, you will be acutely aware of what you already possess and what you then need.

Jesus does tell us to ask for forgiveness. Make no mistake about it, forgiveness is ours for the taking at any time and for any transgression we commit, but it requires asking. You can't study forgiveness and gain it, and you can't memorize verses about forgiveness and thus have it – you have to ask for it. And as we studied last time, you must also forgive others if you expect to be forgiven. But we have to ask.

The other spiritual issue Jesus tells us to ask for is deliverance from evil temptation. Let's read **verse 13** again.

v. 13

"And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen."

There seems to be a problem with asking God to not lead us into temptation.

Turn with me to the Book of James.

James 1:13

"Let 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."

So if God does not tempt anyone, why ask Him to not lead us into temptation? Why ask God to not do something that His Word already says He cannot do?

While you are in the Book of James, go up to **verse 2**.

James 1:2

"Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials."

The word translated temptation in **Matthew 6:13** and the word translated trials in **James 1:2** are from the same Greek word. It is a different, although closely related, word used in **James 1:13**.

So if we take the request in our model prayer and change the words to, **"And lead us not into trials, but deliver us from evil"** does that help any? Well, it might, but then aren't we asking to avoid something that God says is beneficial for us? – **"Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing"** (**James 1:2-4**).

The result of trials in your life, if you approach them as God intends, is perfect and complete spiritual maturity. Jesus would not be teaching us to pray against becoming spiritually mature.

We have an interpretive challenge to say the least. So back to Bible Study 101; what's the first thing you must always do when studying a verse of Scripture and the verse itself is a little confusing? – You have to look at the immediate context. And the immediate context of this verse is found in the second half of the verse - **but deliver us from evil**.

Jesus is teaching to pray for deliverance. He is teaching us to pray for protection from the trials and temptations that will cause us to sin.

The Greek word we are talking about here, "*peirasmos*" is neither positive nor negative in scope. The word itself is neutral. You can say the same for our English words. Trails and temptations in and of themselves are not negative and they are not sinful, but how we react or respond to trials and temptations can be sinful; as too, they can be beneficial. To use my introductory illustration, the temptation of donuts and pastries and cakes is not negative or sinful, but how I react or respond to these terrible, horrible, luscious things can be.

And no, eating a piece of cake is not a sin, but knowing how my body reacts to the sugar, and knowing the health risks I face if I continue to carry more weight than I should, and knowing that I need all the energy I can get to do the work of the ministry, and still choosing to overindulge in sweets can definitely turn into a sin.

But let's take a more serious example, at least more serious in most people's eyes (sin is sin in the eyes of the Lord). Let's say you struggle with alcohol, or cigarettes, or an explosive temper, or wandering eyes and a lustful heart, or spending money you don't have to spend, or gossip and lying, or a prideful heart, or a judgmental spirit, or whatever it is that trips you up more often than not. Jesus is telling you to pray that you would be delivered from that sin.

Personally, I don't have to concern myself with being tempted by alcohol or cigarettes, so I don't have to ask for deliverance from those, but these other issues may at times pose a problem if I am not empowered by the Holy Spirit to escape or to go through unscathed. You may not have a problem with lust or pride, but alcohol, well that's another story.

Whatever it is that causes you to stumble is going to require divine deliverance, and that starts by asking the Lord to help you avoid even being in a situation that tempts you to begin with.

1 Chronicles 4:10 became an extremely popular verse of Scripture about six or seven years ago and it made one author a lot of money. It was made popular primarily for the wrong reasons but it fits perfectly and properly with our train of thought right now.

The King James Version records it this way: **“And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that thine hand might be with me, and that thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me! And God granted him that which he requested.”**

The prayer of Jabez, as it is so popularly known today, follows the pattern Jesus is teaching us in our verse tonight. Jabez prayed, **“keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me.”** In other words, “Lord, protect me from the temptations that lead me into sin.” And what was the result with Jabez? – **God granted him that which he requested.**

Turn with me to **Psalm 121**.

Psalm 121:1-8

When we lift our eyes to the Lord, He will protect you from all evil. He will guard your going out and your coming in.

In **John 17:15**, Jesus, in His high priestly prayer, prayed on our behalf that God would keep us from evil.

Galatians 1:4

Jesus came to this earth for the very purpose of rescuing or delivering us from the evil world we live in. He died a cruel death in order that you and I might be delivered from evil.

1 Thessalonians 1:10

Jesus not only rescues or delivers us from the present trial or temptation we face, He also rescues us from the wrath to come, literally meaning the seven year tribulation period, but also applicable to the trials and temptations that will come in the future.

2 Timothy 4:17-18

The Apostle Paul recites how the Lord has delivered him time and time again from all manner or trials, temptations, and impossible situations. And he goes on to say that the Lord will continue to deliver him from any form of evil he will face in the future.

Is anything impossible for God? **Jeremiah 32:27** says, **“Behold, I *am* the LORD, the God of all flesh: is there any thing too hard for Me?”**

The Lord has the power to do this in your life. This power lives within you. You simply have to ask for it and then walk in it.

And beloved, I don't want to hear about how hard it is – I know how hard it is. I have been overweight for the last twenty years! And you know why? – Because I never truly understood what Jesus was asking me to do; I never walked in this truth. I can't ask the Lord to deliver me from my temptation of sweets and then go out and buy a black forest cake like I did last week. You can't ask the Lord to deliver you from cigarettes and keep the stash you have in the house and car. You can't ask the Lord to deliver you from lust and pick up the Victoria's not-so Secret catalog. You can't ask the Lord to deliver you from gossip and then listen to it the next time someone calls.

We must walk in the truth. Just praying when your heart and soul are not committed will not get the job done. Asking the Lord for help and then putting yourself in a position to fall to the temptation again will not win the victory. We have to put feet to our commitment. We have to draw the line in the sand and vow to not cross over it with the Lord's help. We must saturate our lives with God's Word while we are praying, "Lord, lead me not into temptation, but deliver me from evil!"

We must admit that we cannot do this apart from His divine help. We must submit our lives to prayer and we will more often than not need to submit ourselves to fasting to conquer the issues that are buried deep within our hearts.

Will you pray with me and for me, as I pray with you and for you?

Let's pray.