

Hard Sayings Of Jesus

Lesson 15

Why should we be thankful for being subjected to temptation?

I. This Week's Hard Saying

Matt 6:13 And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil: KJV

II. Why This Is Hard

a. This is difficult because of the way modern Christians understand the word "temptation". For most the idea of being tempted is connected with the **enticement to sin**. Many understand that the petition is asking God not to lead us into temptation to sin.

III. What This Does Not Mean

a. This can not mean that God is the active agent in leading us into the temptation **to sin** because Scripture clearly teaches that God does not do any such thing. James 1:13 *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: KJV*

b. **Tertullian**, commenting on the Lord's Prayer in about A.D. 192, wrote, "Far be the thought, that the Lord should seem to tempt, as if He were either ignorant of [the limits] of someone's faith, or else eager to overthrow [that faith]."

c. Nor can it mean "do not let our faith be **tested**" because another clear teaching of Scripture is that all true believers endure diverse testing of their faith. James 1:2; 12. *count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; James 1:12 Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him. KJV*

IV. Understanding The Meaning of The Phrase

- a. The word temptation in the Greek *peirasmon* means trial of **any kind**, without reference to its moral quality. It may mean affliction," or anything that "tests" our virtue.
- b. Temptations, tests or trials in the life of a believer usually involve, in some way, an enticement **to sin** as well.
 1. For example, the Christian who is tested by painful circumstances is tempted to sin by finding an easy but compromising way out, perhaps by doubting **God's goodness**, or by becoming fixated on his personal pain.
 2. The person who is tested by persecution, abuse, or misunderstanding from others is tempted to sin by growing bitter instead of **forgiving**.
 3. This potential sin connection accounts for the **double meaning** (trial / temptation) of the Greek word in the first place.
- c. Grammarians term the phrase "lead us" as a "**permissive imperative**", in which God is said to do a thing which he only permits or allows to be done.
- d. Another key to understanding the meaning of the statement is the preposition "**into**." In Greek the movement "into" denotes a change for the person approaching not merely of outward position, but of inward condition.
- e. To "enter into" temptation is very different from merely encountering temptation. To enter "into" is to **yield** to its charms, to be dominated by it, to take its law as the law of one's being; to yield to its demands, to be subjugated by it.
- f. Thomas Aquinas' in Summa Theologiae says that in this prayer "we do not ask not to be tempted, but not to be **conquered** by temptation, which is to be led **into temptation**".
- g. The petitions of the *Paternoster* are linked by the word "and." Here, in the last clause there is no "and" followed by another petition; "but deliver us from evil" merely **completes** and illuminates the prayer "bring us not into temptation."
- h. "Deliver us" means literally "draw us away **to Thyself**," so the petitioner is asking to be kept under the umbrella of protection of the Father. Luke 13:34 *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not! KJV James 4:7-8 7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.8 Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. KJV*
- i. The Greek words at the close of the phrase may mean either "from evil" or "from the evil one" and the preposition is "from," not "**out of**" evil.
- j. **To summarize**: In this petition, we ask that, when God brings us to temptation, we may not be brought **into it**, but may be saved from that entrance by the power of God, **drawing us back** from the evil to Himself.

V. The Role of Temptation in Our Growth

- a. **Overcoming** the temptations and trials of our lives is the proof of the true spiritual life of the believer. Rom 12:21 *Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good. KJV; 1 John 5:4 For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. KJV;*
- b. Though temptation to sin is of the devil, it is by the Spirit that we are led to meet temptation. If we were kept from meeting temptation, we would be kept also from the possibility of **spiritual growth**. Rom 12:1-2 *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. KJV*

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- c. God does in fact **bring us to** the place of temptation for His eternal purposes. Matthew tells us plainly how Jesus came to that place of temptation. Matt 4:1 *Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. KJV*
- d. Our tendency is to ignore the throne of grace till temptations **drive** us there. The trial of that grace we have received can only be proved in the experience of temptation rather than when we are out of it. Rom 5:1-5 *Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: 2 By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. 3 And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; 4 And patience, experience; and experience, hope: 5 And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. KJV*

VI. How God Uses Temptation

- a. God permits us to be tempted for His own glory that we may discover the freeness and riches of His grace, that we may be driven the more earnestly to **seek out** what it means to be in Jesus Christ. Deut 4:29-31 *But if from there you seek the LORD your God, you will find him if you look for him with all your heart and with all your soul. 30 When you are in distress and all these things have happened to you, then in later days you will return to the LORD your God and obey him. 31 For the LORD your God is a merciful God; he will not abandon or destroy you or forget the covenant with your forefathers, which he confirmed to them by oath. NIV*
- b. Temptation is used to **Humble us**, that we may never be proud of our spiritual achievement. Spiritual evils need a spiritual cure. Outward afflictions humble, but not so much as temptations do. Ps 51:17 *The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise. KJV*
- c. Temptation is used to **conform** us to Christ. We must drink of the cup that He Himself consumed in His own earthly temptation. Rom 8:28-30 *And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. 30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. KJV*
- d. Temptation is used to **mortify** sin in our mortal bodies. When we have been chastised by our heavenly Father the pain of the correction helps us grow more cautious when encountering future temptations. Heb 12:5-7 *And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: 6 For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. 7 If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? KJV*
- e. Temptation is used to fortify **our will**. Our commitment to God and our ability to resist evil is strengthened every time we say yes to God and no to the temptation of the devil or our own wrong desires. 1Tim 4:7-8 *rather, train yourself to be godly. 8 For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come. NIV*
- f. Finally, God allows temptation so that we can provide an example **for others** and a witness of God's grace before His enemies. Job 1:9-11, 22 *"Does Job fear God for nothing?" Satan replied. 10 "Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land. 11 But stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face." Job 1:22 In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.*

VII. Application

- a. In this brief but beautiful prayer, each petition offered to God and each statement made about God is also a declaration about ourselves. "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil" is another way of saying, "Father, **we're weak**."
- b. Jesus was also making a point about the focus of our prayer. Whether confessing our sins or asking for provisions, we tend to make ourselves **the subject** of most our sentences: "I failed. I need help. I want to grow. I . . . I . . . I."
- c. But the great beauty of the Lord's Prayer is that it maintains a **focus on God**. We may be the grammatical *object* of some sentences there, but we are never the *subject*; God alone holds that position.
- d. Even in confession, we turn our eyes **to Him** and say, "You give us bread . . . You forgive us . . . You lead us . . . You deliver us."
- e. That kind of prayer provides us with an oft-needed corrective. For perhaps the most **subtle** temptation, the most persistent evil of all is to place ourselves in God's rightful place at the center of our own hearts.
- f. Write out your own prayer of thanksgiving to God for bringing you to the place of temptation.

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2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. KJV

- c. God does in fact _____ the place of temptation for His eternal purposes. Matthew tells us plainly how Jesus came to that place of temptation. Matt 4:1 *Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. KJV*
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