

Temptations: Trials And Tests

God Tests Without Enticing To Sin

Ted E. Bowling

Given 14-Jun-03; Sermon #617s

Turn to Matthew chapter 6. In the Sermon on the Mount, Christ gives us here an outline—a model, a guide—for our prayers, which we will find in verses 9 through 13. Many of us have learned this as the “Lord's Prayer,” but in fact, John 17 is the true Lord's Prayer. We understand that these verses are our instructions on how to pray, which is why we always call it the Model Prayer.

Now, Richard had given a sermon once, which broke this down into sections. He said that God teaches us to approach God in the first section; how to praise the Father; how to pray for His Kingdom; submission; our daily needs; forgiveness; and guidance. And I would like to look at the verse 13, the last subject there.

Matthew 6:13 “And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.”

Today I would like to focus on the word *temptation*. God does lead us into that—God does lead us into temptation, but God does not tempt us to sin. To clarify, the word temptation is from the Greek, *peirasmomos*, and that is *Strong's* 3986, which means a putting to proof, or test. This can also be referring to trials.

Webster's Collegiate Dictionary shows the meaning of this word in two definitions: (1) to put to trial, to test; to make trial of; (2) to entice to do wrong by promise, or gain.

The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia states about this word “tempt” or “temptation,” “The words have a sinister connotation in the

present-day usage, which has often been attached to them. Originally the words were of neutral content with a sense of putting on to the proof; the testing of character or quality.”

God is putting us to proof and testing and developing our character for good. His goal for each one of us is to become mature, full of wisdom, and that we will not sway to the left or the right, regardless of how things affect our lives. I think that *The Good News Bible* makes verse 13 simple, and easy to understand. That version states, “Do not bring us to hard testing, but keep us safe from the evil one.” It is clear by the instruction that we are not to desire difficult tests or trials because He is preparing us for the Kingdom. We are not to desire a rough road. It is our responsibility not to look for that route to go. Even in the prayer in the garden, Christ said, “May it pass from Me,” even though He had a difficult trial in front of Him. He still asks the prayer.

Now turn to James 1, verse 13:

James 1:13 Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil [He is untemptable], nor does He Himself tempt anyone.

Tempt, here, in *Strong's* is #3985, one number different than the other. There is only a slight difference in this one. It is also “test,” but it adds the word “entice” or “lure.” We just saw these two definitions in the *Webster's* definitions. And we do not see a contradiction here between James and Matthew. God does not tempt or entice any man, but every man is tempted and is drawn away by his own lust. Man's own desires tempt him. His lust conceives and brings us to sin. It is in our human nature that causes us to sin, not God. But God's desire is for us not to sin, but to overcome our human nature, and proclivities, which we will see in:

James 1:2-3 My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.

Now, why should we count our various trials with joy? Because it produces godly character. And in verse 3, we saw that it says it produces patience. Patience is one of the characteristics of God. When we have gone through

difficult trials and tests, and we can see God in our lives, we can see Him also working then to deliver us through those difficult times. And in that we can then see Christ working in each and every one of us. At that point, then, we have the opportunity to strengthen others. Through our service to each other, God is cultivating in each one of us His characteristics and character.

So in Matthew 6:13, the first half of the verse shows us that God is testing us to see us succeed. He wants us to prosper. He does not want to see us fail. But the second part of the verse says: "But deliver us from the evil one."

As much as God wants to see us succeed, Satan the Devil desires just the opposite. His goal is to see us fail. His only goal is to destroy us spiritually, and for us to lose our faith and hope in Christ.

We can see this again in the second definition of the word tempt, which is, "to entice to do wrong by promise or gain." Synonyms of the word *tempt* in this situation, in this context, is "baked, coax, draw out, entice, seduce, woo; to lure, to snare."

Every day in the news especially today, we hear more and more about child molesters. These criminals will drive around in their car and they will look for young people. They will try to entice them, they will try to trick them, and usually they will do something that is interesting to them. They may offer them candy, or maybe a toy. They will want to show them a puppy, something that causes them to forget all the warning signs that their parents have taught them about strangers. And these strangers become very good at what they do; they study their targets. And they do this so often by practice.

And that is what Satan is doing to each and every one of us. He has had the span of the lifetime of man to cultivate his craft. There are many attractions that draw us: some to money, some by food and drink, some by sex, alcohol, even drugs. For a great many, it is the entertainments of the world: books, movies, music, theater, and even sports.

In I Peter 5, verse 8, it says,

I Peter 5:8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

Satan is daily trying to entice God's people, to see whether that they will succumb to evil. His ultimate goal is to destroy us. If you have ever watched nature shows, you will watch a lion. He will hunt his prey; he will go after the weak ones; he will go after those that are easy targets.

And so in this small prayer, this is our daily prayer, that we must be seeking God daily. It is an exercise of humbling ourselves to God and acknowledging our humanity, our needs, and our shortcomings.

Prayer is an admission that we are not self-sufficient. Without God, we die—each one of us. As we examine ourselves, we know our weaknesses. If we are examining ourselves honestly, we know the parts of our character that need work. We need to honestly evaluate ourselves to stay on the right path.

David understood this principle in Psalm 141, verses 3-4:

Psalm 141:3-4 Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips. Do not incline my heart to any evil thing, to practice wicked works with men who work iniquity; and do not let me eat of their delicacies.

You see, David understood his weaknesses. In this prayer he is asking God not to permit him to be overcome by temptation. David describes exactly what his needs are to God.

So, when we pray, we should tell God our needs. It is good to be specific and ask Him in detail where we have work in our lives to be done. We realize that we are not informing Him of something that He does not know. He knows us better than we know ourselves. But we are confessing to Him our understanding of our own needs and weaknesses. As we fellowship with our brethren, we need to be encouraged in each other as well.

This is an opportunity, as in this prayer, to be strengthening our relationships with our brethren through supporting them in prayer, because each and every one of us—all of us—are going through difficult trials with snares, because

Satan is trying to trap each and every one of us. There is no better way to show our concern and love for one another than our individual daily petition to God before His throne.

When we pray for others, and everyone is praying for you, it is very pleasing to God, and a delight to Him. It is very nice that we have the church website where the postings of those that are sick: those that perhaps have been in accidents; those that have even had someone pass away. We have that information available to us so we can petition God. We can see who has the needs. And, we do need to make that known, so they will know what to pray about. We need to share with our brethren so we can support each other. We have seen this just in the last few weeks. Brian Nelson lost 80% of his cornea; and then it was taken to the church [in prayer] and God performed a miracle there. I can say that God performed a miracle in my life. It might have been because of my own faults and problems, but God did supply my need just these last few weeks, and I know that. The prayers of the church had gone up for that.

So to conclude this section of James 1, about 15 verses are on this subject of temptation. I would like to read verse 12:

James 1:12 Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

That word temptation, here, is the same word in *Strong's* as that in Matthew 6:13. So if we endure through faith and patience, these trials and tests, if we overcome the enticements and traps of Satan they place in our path every day, there will be a crown of life waiting for you.