

# "How Do We Find God's Arms Open Wide When We Face our Greatest Temptations?"

1 Cor. 10:13 & Matthew 6:13

As we open our copies of God's Holy and Inerrant Word to Matthew 6, we are opening to the best known passage in the Bible.

The Lord's Prayer is not only almost universally known, these verses also provide the complete guide to our spiritual health, given to us by Jesus Christ Himself.

Throughout all the ages of Christ's church, among every ethnic group, every demographic group, among every age group, and in every season of life and culture, this list remains the constant guide.

In these seven petitions we can simply run through in only a few moments to see if all of our spiritual systems are operating the way that they were designed by God to operate. For a moment look at 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.

Pray

## **WE NEED PROTECTION FROM TEMPTATIONS**

We need God's protection so much, that Jesus told us we need to ask for it every time we pray. Have you considered that lately? Note also that there are two elements of what Jesus left us in this sixth petition.

The first element is about temptation; and the second element is about the Devil.

Temptations are common to all of us humans, that is what God's Word says. But even though we all face temptations, we can't get comfortable with temptation, the price is too high.

A German pastor who was executed in 1945, in NAZI Germany, for his uncompromising testimony, wrote these words in his sermon on temptation.

Listen to these words so powerfully timely even after 70 years:

"In our members there is a slumbering inclination towards desire which is both sudden and fierce. With irresistible power desire seizes mastery over the flesh. All at once a secret, smoldering fire is kindled. The flesh burns and is in flames.

It makes no difference whether it is sexual desire, or ambition, or vanity, or desire for revenge, or love of fame and power, or greed for money, or, finally, that strange desire for the beauty of the world, of nature.

Joy in God is...extinguished in us and we seek all our joy in the creature. At this moment God is quite unreal to us, he loses all reality, and only desire for the creature is real; the only reality is the devil. Satan does not here fill us with hatred of God, but with

forgetfulness of God.... The lust thus aroused envelops the mind and will of man in deepest darkness. The powers of clear discrimination and of decision are taken from us.... It is here that everything within me rises up against the Word of God<sup>1</sup>.”

It is exactly that deadly distancing ourselves from the fear of God and response to His Presence that Jesus told us we need to seek constant protection from.

## **WE REALLY NEED PROTECTION FROM TEMPTATIONS**

As we saw last time, this first element is not saying that God leads us into temptations. There are trials and temptations presented in God's Word. Trials are positive, temptations are negative. The word Jesus used here is a neutral word. It is neither positive or negative. It just means a hard time that can be either good or bad for us.

Does God ever tempt anyone to evil? Never.

But, how do we know that God will never tempt us to sin? We know that and all other doctrines because they have been given to us in God's Word the Bible. Turn with me back to the very first New Testament Epistle.

The Book of James was written by Christ's own earthly brother. James was not an apostle, but actually became one of the most revered leaders of the early church known well by Paul and Peter. As the pastor of the first church in Jerusalem, we have a summary of his ministry in the Epistle by James. As we open to James 1:13-15 we can see the Bible clearly tells us:

## **GOD SENDS TRIALS NOT TEMPTATIONS**

**Trials** lead to tested faith, patience, approved living, and a crown of life.

**Temptations** are not from God, are fed by lusts, lead to sin, and bring forth death.

Trials are the way God reveals how much we love Him.

Trials show the depth and extent of God's hold on our lives.

Now, follow along in your Bibles as we go through James 1:13-15:

Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. 14 But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. 15 Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death. NKJV.

## **GOD'S FOUR LESSONS ABOUT TEMPTATION**

There are four powerful lessons from God tucked away in these verses:

1. **Temptation is Inevitable:** v. 13a "Let no one say when he is tempted. The first lesson is how inevitable to life is temptation. Note James does not say "if" but he says "when"! Just wait. Temptation is all around us and is just part of life in this fallen world.
2. **God is Immutable:** v. 13b "I am tempted by God; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone". Here is an element of the doctrine of God. God can't be tempted, nor does He

---

<sup>1</sup> Swindoll, Sensuality, p. 10.

tempt. Period. That is an absolute truth about God.

3. **Lust is Avoidable:** v. 14 “But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed.”

Here is the key. Temptations are spurred on by lusts. Lusts can be either fed or starved. Temptations can be either normal or extremely powerful, the difference is how healthy and fed we keep our lusts. Lust is avoidable.

4. **Sin is Horrible:** v. 15 Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.

As Bonhoeffer said, and we saw earlier: “Joy in God is...extinguished in us and we seek all our joy in the creature. At this moment God is quite unreal to us, he loses all reality, and only desire for the creature is real; the only reality is the devil. Satan does not here fill us with hatred of God, but with forgetfulness of God

James the powerful first century pastor was inspired by God to give the first New Testament church teaching on temptation: Temptation is inevitable, God is immutable, lust is avoidable; but the consequence of sin is horrible!

Which brings us to the sixth petition that is also:

## WE PRAY BECAUSE WE NEED HIS PROTECTION

Look back at the words of Matthew 6:13, “and lead us not into temptation”.

The Greek word is neutral. It is an event, and our response determines whether it will become a negative (temptation) or a positive (trial).

This is a prayer about all of our futures. Jesus is saying pray about where your life is headed. Ask God to keep you and all those you love from getting into anything that would potentially ruin their lives. Think for a moment.

“The petition is really, “Lord, protect us from running in the direction of sin in our trials.” Does that kind of convey the thought? Protect us from running in the direction of sin in the midst of our trial. Cause us not to enter. The original Aramaic would be, “Cause us not to enter,” kind of causative or with a permissive force”.<sup>2</sup>

What is the answer such prayers?

## WE ALL FACE THE SAME TEMPTATIONS

We can find that by turning to 1 Cor. 10:13. This verse shows how God answers the sixth petition of the Lord’s model prayer for us His disciples.

1 Corinthians 10:13a (NKJV) **No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man;** but God *is* faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear *it*.

Do you see what God is saying?

There are no super-human temptations.

Everything we face is what all humans face.

---

<sup>2</sup> Quoted from Lead Us Not into Temptation Luke 11:4, GTY Code: 42-156

Nothing we face is ever supernatural, it is common.

There is never anything we face that is impossible to bear.

We can't ever blame what we do on the devil.

We only face common, ordinary, normal human temptations.

We never will face anything that is more than we can bear.

No temptation will ever overtake us or spring upon us **except the ones that God has already prepared us for in His Word**. There are no new strains of sin viruses. But the question is—if the medicine or vaccines are in the medicine chest and we don't use them, what good are they when we need them?

Jesus said we need to live by “every Word...” (Matthew 4:4). Are you immersing yourself daily in God's Word? If not and you have kind of started to slip, why not pause right now and renew your vows to get in the Word until the Word gets in you DAILY!

## TRUST THE FAITHFULNESS GOD

Now the middle of the verse:

1 Corinthians 10:b (NKJV) No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; **but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able**, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear *it*.

1 Corinthians 10:13 is a call to all of us who know and love the Lord to **Look for God in times of temptation**, He's always faithful!

Which ever of the old temptation we get attacked by we can be sure that “God is faithful”. **God Himself has promised us that He will not allow us to be tempted beyond what you are able to take without falling into sin**. Our God knows our limits and always stands right by us protecting us and holding open the way of escape so that we do not succumb to the snare of the Devil.

God has made a promise.

God knows our load limit.

He has measured what we can bear.

In every trial/temptation we will ever face He is there.

He is making an exit for us before we get overwhelmed.

He is waiting to show us the way out.

We will never face a situation so bad we won't be able to handle it, God promises that.

God leads us into trials (peirasmos) but not into temptations to sin.

Every trial we face has a clearly marked exit, with God Himself standing ready to usher us out of danger.

Every trial we face is human, common, and overcome-able.

God wants to lead us through, and out of every trial in triumph. God's plan in His Word is for us to see and follow the way He has given us of escape. There are three keys to help us unlock the door every time we feel we are trapped in temptation.

## REMEMBER GOD IS ALWAYS THERE

Now the end of the verse:

1 Corinthians 10:13c (NKJV) No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God *is* faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, **but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.**

Thirdly, the huge truth we need to stop and really lay hold of this evening is that ***God is there all the time.***

The longer we meditate on this verse, the bigger the shadow looming over it becomes.

That shadow is none other than the shadow of the One who made us this promise.

In order to do everything this verse says, God has to actually manage this promise onsite. He is not distant; He is never closer than when we are tempted!

It is God who towers over this passage: *God is there all the time.*

## **WE ARE NEVER ALONE**

Have you allowed that truth to sink into your soul and become a part of your operating system? God has told us that He is faithful. Whenever we think we are alone, we are not alone. We never face the adversary, the prowling lion called the Devil—alone.

God has already measured and limited the attack upon us. He has already provided an escape route if we will only look for it and take it. If we were alone and facing temptation, we would be hopelessly defeated.

But God knows that already and so He is there. All the time. All the way. Every time. And He has the best way out marked for us. What a Mighty God we serve!

Warren Wiersbe tells the story of a father who once told of his son's first serious conflict at school. His boy was being picked on by two or three bullies. They punched the youngster a time or two, pushed him over when he was riding his bike home from school, and generally made life miserable for the lad. They told him they would meet him the next morning and beat him up.

That evening the dad really worked with the boy at home. He showed him how to defend himself, passed along a few helpful techniques, and even gave him some tips on how he might try to win them over as friends. The next morning the lad and dad prayed together knowing that the inevitable was sure to happen. With a reassuring embrace and a firm handshake, the father smiled confidently and said, "You can do it, Son. I know you'll make out all right."

Choking back the tears, the boy got on his bike and began the lonely, long ride to school.

What the boy did not know was that every block he rode he was under the watchful eye of his dad...who drove his car a safe distance from his son, out of sight but ever ready to speed up and assist if the scene became too threatening.

The boy thought he was alone, but he wasn't at all. The father was there all the time.

Now fast forward to the next instant that you and I face a surge of temptation to fear, to lust, to be embittered or to lie—at that instant ***in even greater measure,*** the God of the Universe is near.

He is with us though often unseen.

He has gone ahead. He has been tempted in every way like us and triumphed. He has joined us in every temptation and makes the way of victory marked and open for us.

Look for God! He is always faithful!

## **RESOLVE TO LOOK FOR GOD EACH TIME YOU ARE TEMPTED**

Pause and do something before you lose that truth.

Why not bow your head with me. Now say in your heart, “I believe You Lord that You never leave me”. Then tell Him thank you for being there with you right now.

Okay, here is the hard part. With your heart opened before Him, tell Him that the next time you are tempted (you may even want to whisper in your heart to Him the temptation you most fear and often get defeated by)—that you will look for Him.

Now, look up and say out loud with me—I Will Look For God When I Am Tempted!

When should we look for God? We look when we face all of the various temptations that are never new, but always so unexpected and powerful. Think of the blessing of the following testimonies God's Word has captured for us.

## **THE SCRIPTURES ARE FULL OF TESTIMONIES OF LOOKING FOR AND FINDING GOD**

**Abraham looked for God** standing on *the Mountain of Despair*.

Abraham saw all that ever mattered to him being lost, and though he could not understand—he trusted God. Abraham looked and found God Faithful.

When we do the same we also find like Abraham did *that God Supplies all my needs*. Genesis 22:1-14.

**Joseph looked for God** facing *the Den of Passion*.

Accosted, blatantly faced with strong physical temptation Joseph cried out to the God he could not see but knew was there!

When we do the same we also find like Joseph *that God Sees and rescues me*. Genesis 39:1-9

**David looked for God** struggling *in that lonely Cave of Fear*.

Surrounded by complainers, by rebels, by runaways with all their struggles and violent tempers David looked up and found that God is always faithful and was there all the time!

When we do the same we will find that God is always there making a way of escape for us. Psalm 142; 56

**Daniel looked for God** facing *the Spotlight of Pride*.

He was the man of the moment, all eyes were on him; he could have stolen the moment, taken the prize and walked away with the accolades of the world—but not God's!

When we look for God and give Him the glory for anything we ever accomplish then we will also find as Daniel did *that God sends us forth for times like that to put the*

***spotlight and the glory back upon Him*** who holds our lives in His Hand. Daniel 2:24-28

**Peter looked for God** sinking ***in the Fury of the Storm.***

When we do we find as Peter did ***that God hand is stretched out to save us*** at the very instant we cry to Him. Matthew 14:24-31

## **WE NEED TO CONSTANTLY ASK GOD TO PROTECT US**

As the New Testament scholar Leon Morris has written:

“The man who carries on an act of impurity is not simply breaking a human code, not even sinning against the God who at some time in the past gave him the gift of the Spirit. He is sinning against the God who is present at that moment, against One who continually gives the Spirit. The impure act is an act of despite against God’s good gift at the very moment it is being proffered.... This sin is seen in its true light only when it is seen as a preference for impurity rather than a Spirit who is holy.”

Jonathan Edwards, one of the great preachers of early American history, once made this resolution:

“*Resolved*, Never to do any thing, which I should be afraid to do if it were the last hour of my life.”

#428 "I Need Thee"

#430 "I Must Tell Jesus"

#330 “Come Every Soul By Sin Oppressed”