

Lead Us Not into Temptation

Matthew 6:13

Introduction

There have been people in my life who have had a significant influence upon me spiritually that are no longer walking with Jesus. I can still see their faces and when I think of some of these people, my heart still aches over the sense of loss I feel over their departure from the faith. My guess is that you may be able to think of those in your life who have walked away from the faith. Then there are also a number of well-known Christians who authored Christian books, preached to thousands of people from the Bible, wrote influential Christian songs, and are revered by countless Christians.

Then there is a name you may not have heard of before, but this person is responsible for writing or co-writing more than 70 songs with Hillsong. His name is Marty Sampson; one of his most notable songs he wrote was released in 2015 and is titled, "O Praise the Name." Consider the lyrics of his song:

I cast my mind to Calvary
Where Jesus bled and died for me
I see His wounds, His hands, His feet
My Saviour on that cursed tree

His body bound and drenched in tears
They laid Him down in Joseph's tomb
The entrance sealed by heavy stone
Messiah still and all alone

Then on the third at break of dawn
The Son of heaven rose again
O trampled death where is your sting?
The angels roar for Christ the King

He shall return in robes of white
The blazing sun shall pierce the night
And I will rise among the saints
My gaze transfixed on Jesus' face

O praise the Name of the Lord our God
O praise His Name forevermore
For endless days we will sing Your praise
Oh Lord, oh Lord our God

In 2019, Sampson stated on Instagram the following statement:

“Time for some real talk, I’m genuinely losing my faith, and it doesn’t bother me. Like, what bothers me now is nothing. I am so happy now, so at peace with the world. It’s crazy.”

“This is a soapbox moment so here I go ... How many preachers fall? Many, No one talks about it. How many miracles happen. Not many. No one talks about it. Why is the Bible full of contradictions? No one talks about it. How can God be love yet send four billion people to a place, all ‘coz they don’t believe? No one talks about it. Christians can be the most judgmental people on the planet—they can also be some of the most beautiful and loving people. But it’s not for me.”

So, what happened to Marty Sampson? I am honestly not sure what happened; only God knows what goes on in the mind and heart of a person. I do know that there are numerous warnings in the Bible about guarding yourself from the kind of falling away that Sampson experienced. The apostle Paul describes the kind of thing Sampson experienced as a “shipwrecking” of one’s faith (see 1 Tim. 1:18-20). The book of Hebrews is full of warnings concerning shipwrecking your faith, but of them all, Hebrews 3:7-14 also serves to help us understand the final petition in our Lord’s prayer: **“Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called ‘today,’ that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end”** (Hebrews 3:12–14).

The last petition in our Lord’s prayer is a prayer for protection from what some of you may be in very real danger of experiencing. I want to use the remaining time that we have to show you why I believe this and how it is helpful for you today. There are two parts to this final petition:

Lead Us Not into Temptation

The first question you should be asking right now is, what does Jesus mean by his carefully chosen words: **“Lead us not into temptation...”**? Does God really lead his children into temptation? The petition just before this one is, “forgive us our debts (sins).” Does God lead us into places where we are tempted to sin so that when we do sin, we can beg him for his forgiveness? For God to lead anyone to the place of temptation would make him the tempter, which would be a gross contradiction of other places in the Bible that state something very different. An example of one such passage from the Bible is found in James 1:13-14, which also serves to help us understand the final petition in our Lord’s prayer:

Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him. Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God,” for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. (James 1:12–14, ESV)

James’ answer is simple: **“God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one.”** The word used for temptation is the Greek word *peirasmōs*; it is used 23 times in the New Testament and nearly half the time is used, it is translated “trial.” One such place the word is

translated “trial” instead of “temptation” is found in Luke 8:13, which is Jesus’ explanation of his Parable of the Soils. First, as a refresher, consider Jesus’ parable:

And when a great crowd was gathering and people from town after town came to him, he said in a parable, “A sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell along the path and was trampled underfoot, and the birds of the air devoured it. And some fell on the rock, and as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up with it and choked it. And some fell into good soil and grew and yielded a hundredfold.” As he said these things, he called out, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.” (Luke 8:4–8)

This Parable has been called, “The Parable of the Seed”, “The Parable of the Sower”, and “The Parable of the Soils.” I think it should be known as “The Parable of the Soils” for it is a description of the four different types of people who hear the gospel, but only one person genuinely hears the gospel (the seed) and grows as a genuine Christian.

One person (seed) is described in the following way: **“And some fell on the rock, and as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture.”** Here is Jesus’ explanation of this person in verse 13, **“And the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy. But these have no root; they believe for a while, and in time of testing (*peirasmōs*) fall away.”**

What is it that we are to ask God for when we pray? I am fairly certain that it is not temptations that we ought to be asking God to not lead us into because he does not tempt people to sin. However, there are trials that could lead you to be tempted to sin. So, are we to avoid trials at all cost? Is it God’s will for your life to avoid the hard seasons of life?

In this very same sermon, Jesus said in the beatitudes, **“Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you”** (Matthew 5:11–12). This is not the only place in the Bible where we are warned that trials are inevitable for the Christian. Jesus said, **“In the world you will have tribulation [trouble]. But take heart; I have overcome the world”** (John 16:33). Permit me to share two other scripture passages with you so that you are able to grasp how we are to pray:

“Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.” (James 1:2–4)

“Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ’s sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.” (1 Peter 4:12–13)

So, how are we to pray? When we pray, are we to include in our prayer the request that God, **“lead us not into trials that may lead us to sin.”** What kind of trials exist that can lead us to be tempted to sin? What trials or troubles does Jesus have in mind that we ought to pray that God not lead us into?

This is why there are two parts to this petition, and it is to the second part we must briefly turn our attention if we are going to know how we ought to pray regarding future trials.

Deliver Us from Evil

The word used in the original language that the ESV translates “evil” can also be translated “evil one” in reference to the devil. I think that the Greek word used by Jesus is meant to be ambiguous to allow for someone reading Matthew 6:13 to understand that the “evil” we ought to seek God’s deliverance from can be a thing, a circumstance, an entity, or all three at the same time.

A number of the translations such as the NIV translate this in the following way: “...**lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one**” (Matthew 6:13, NIV). I think that this is a legitimate way to translate this verse, but I also think it is a mistake to assume every trial you face has been put there by the devil. The evil you face could be the fickleness of your own heart, or it may be something outside of yourself other than the devil. The reality is that the devil is only one person and can’t be everywhere at once. He does have legions of demons at his disposal, so it is possible the evil you face may be demonic. Here is what I do know, the devil is real, he vehemently hates you, and wants nothing more than to destroy you, to immobilize you from participating in God’s mission. Here are some of the warnings we are given from holy scripture concerning the devil:

“Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.” (1 Peter 5:8, ESV)

“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.” (Ephesians 6:12, ESV)

The devil and his demons are real and they pose a real and present danger to you. However, the more present and consistent danger you face is yourself. Consider the following scripture passages that warn us about the evil we face in ourselves:

“Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these the wrath of God is coming.” (Colossians 3:5–6, ESV)

“But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.” (James 1:14–15, ESV)

So, what does this all mean and how are we to understand Matthew 6:13? There are trials that can lead us into a temptation to sin against God that could ultimately result in the capsizing of our faith. There are several renderings of Matthew 6:13 you may find helpful. I cannot remember where I read it, but one rendition reads: “That we may not be led into temptation, deliver us from evil.” James Boice offered another option: “Keep us from wandering into paths where we will be tempted by the devil; but if he comes, keep us out of his clutches.”¹ Eugene

¹ Boice, J. M. (2002). [*The Sermon on the Mount: an expositional commentary*](#) (p. 205). Baker Books.

Peterson, in his paraphrase of the Bible helps us come closer to a proper understanding of Matthew 6:13 in just eight simple words: “**Keep us safe from ourselves and the Devil.**”²

Helmut Thielicke, a German theologian who spoke into the spiritual vacuum left in the wake of Hitler’s rise and fall, reflected on the problem of sin and the role Satan has in it. Here is what he said: “There is a dark, mysterious, spellbinding figure at work. Behind the temptations stand *the* tempter, behind the lie stands *the* liar, behind all the dead and bloodshed stands *the* “murderer from the beginning.”³

Conclusion

It is fitting that our Lord places this final petition at the end of his prayer. It begins in the lofty places of heaven with, “**Our Father...**” who is Elohim (Creator), Yahweh (Covenant Keeper), and Adonai (Sovereign One). And like the rungs of a ladder, each petition moves from heaven to earth. It is his name that is to be hallowed with the coming of his kingdom in our lives and in our world, and the accomplishing of his will in all things. We seek the hallowing of his name as the all-sufficient one who graciously and mercifully gives and sustains our lives, we seek the renown of his name through the pardoning of our sins as we forgive those who sin against us, and set our eyes on the One who sustains us.

It is Jesus who stood before the devil in the wilderness (Matt. 4:1-11), who lived the life we could never live, died upon a cross under the wrath of a holy God for our sin, and now intercedes on our behalf as we enter before the presence of our heavenly Father through prayer. Of this Jesus the author of Hebrews offered a safeguard against spiritual shipwreck:

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. (Hebrews 12:1–2, ESV)

When we pray, we pray recognizing a reality that Kent Hughes wisely observed: “The disciple is so weak that he is no match for the Devil. He needs a Savior, not an assistant, a Hero not a helper. He needs a Champion who will fight the evil one for him and who will snatch him from the clutches of the enemy who seeks to steal, kill, and destroy.”⁴ This is why we pray.

How do we endure under the pressure of the types of trials where the rottenness of the curse of sin seems overwhelming, or perhaps the stench of hell overwhelms our emotional and spiritual senses? The answer has already been given to us in the Lord’s Prayer:

Our Father: As we grow in our understanding of who God is, we will discover that he is perfect in all that he is. He is perfect in his love, grace, mercy, justice, holiness, and even in his goodness. He is Elohim, who creates out of nothing. He is Yahweh, who faithfully keeps his promises. He is Adonai, who never gets frustrated because all that he wills... he does.

² Peterson, E. H. (2005). *The Message: the Bible in contemporary language* (Mt 6:13). NavPress.

³ Hughes, R. K. (2001). *The sermon on the mount: the message of the kingdom* (p. 197). Crossway Books.

⁴ Daniel L. Akin, *Christ-Centered Exposition: The Sermon on the Mount* (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference; 2019), p. 100.

Hallowed be your name: Our heavenly Father is holy. He is the center of the universe, all that exists, exists for him. When it comes to worship, we must come to him on his terms, not ours. His name is to be honored, not ours. He is holiness to the third degree and as one puritan theologian said long ago, God’s holiness is the, “beauty of all God’s attributes, without which his wisdom would be subtlety, his justice cruelty, his sovereignty tyranny, his mercy foolish pity.”⁵

Your Kingdom come: The kingdom for which we exist, where the Christian’s citizenship belongs is the kingdom that is Christ’s. We do not exist for the kingdoms of this world or the small kingdoms of our aspirations. When we pray that his kingdom come down to earth, we seek that his kingdom first expands in our own hearts and lives as we anticipate its coming for the renown and hallowing of his name, for his kingdom is the only one that will endure forever.

Your will be done: Our heavenly Father is Adonai! He is the Sovereign One whose will for your life is shaped by his character, his goodness and love as your heavenly Father, his holiness, and the expanding of his kingdom in your life and on earth. It is for his glory and his mission that the trajectory of your life is aimed by his will.

Give us our bread for tomorrow: It is because of God’s sovereign and good will for your life that you got up this morning. It is also because of God’s sovereign and good will for your life you may not get up tomorrow. The greatest gift he has given you that will not disappoint, is Jesus. I can think of no better and appropriate scripture passage that captures the spirit of Christmas than the one found in Romans 8:28-32,

And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified. What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? (Romans 8:28–32)

Forgive us our debts as we have forgiven our debtors: God’s grace is greater than all of our sin! Christian, you have been forgiven much, and because of Jesus, you can enter into the throne room of a great and awesome God confident that we can rest in his love, not our performance.⁶

Lead us not into trials, but deliver us from all evil: When the worst enters our lives, whether it be persecution, betrayal, disease, or even death, as children of our heavenly Father, with our eyes fixated on him, we can know that he will not allow us to be

⁵ Stephen Charnock, *The Existence and Attributes of God*, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Crossway; 2022), p. 1039

⁶ Daniel M. Doriani, *Reformed Expository Commentary: Matthew vol. 1* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing; 2008), p. 228.

swallowed up by whatever trouble comes our way. We belong to him; you my dear Christian are a child of the living God.

Amen.