

Keynotes from Pastor Tim's am Sermon on 3/1/2021

Mini Series – “Making Disciples -Learning to pray”

Part Eight - Matthew 6 v 13 “The leading we all need in 2021”

Ephesians 6:10 -20 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.

¹¹ Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. ¹² 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. ¹³ Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. ¹⁴ Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, ¹⁵ and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. ¹⁶ In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; ¹⁷ and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, ¹⁸ praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, ¹⁹ and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰ for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.

The Bible records the battle Jesus fought to deliver the world from slavery to sin, from Satan and from death. The fight involved him dying in our place to pay the price for our sin, and then, three days later, being raised to life, victorious over death. To prepare for this battle, Jesus wrestled in prayer for three hours with great intensity. He had encouraged his accompanying disciples to pray too as they would face a battle to stay true to Jesus. They needed to be on their guard, staying alert and watchful. Peter thought he was strong, and could withstand anything but he hadn't realised that the real battle wasn't 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.' (v12) Peter needed to heed Jesus' call to 'Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation' (Matt 26:41).

Instead, he slept and the result was devastating. Peter denied three times that he knew Jesus:

- Unprepared he went into the place where Jesus was being tried to see what would happen
- Unprepared he put himself into a place where he would be tempted to deny his Saviour
- In that unprepared condition, he swore blind that he didn't know Jesus

This coming year, we will be tempted in various ways, and we need to get hold of the essential truth that

we cannot afford to sleep when it comes to temptation

In all the decisions we have to make, we will look to the Lord for guidance, and Jesus teaches us that we are also to ask him to **'lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil'** (Matt 6:13).

The word used can mean either temptation to sin or a test, as in a test of faith. We find it in both ways in many places in scripture. In **James 1:2-3** we read: Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, ³ for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.

Clearly not every test or temptation is bad for us, since James tells us to rejoice. Then consider these two verses:

James 1:13 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. **1 Thess 4:3** For this is the will of God, your sanctification.

If God wills our sanctification and doesn't tempt us, and if tests or temptations can have a positive effect in our lives, then what did Jesus mean by this petition?

We are not asking to avoid all temptation, or tests of faith, but rather that we won't be tempted in a way that will cause us to fall into sin.

Of the possible explanations, this seems to fit the best. It makes sense of the next petition (but deliver us from evil)

and it also fits with **1 Cor 10:13** (see overleaf) where the same word is used. This request that Jesus gives reminds us that we live in a world where temptation will come to us in various forms:

- Some will be tests, designed by God to humble us and strengthen our faith

- Some will be temptations, designed by Satan to lead us into sin
- Some will be lusts of our flesh, that are excited by the world around us

In praying this request, we acknowledge:

- That this year we will face these things
- Our own weakness and dependence on God
- A healthy distrust in our own ability to stand firm without Christ's strength

In praying this request, we are asking God to keep his promise in **1Cor 10:13** to make a way of escape. **Effectively we are saying 'Lord don't ever lead us into a trial that will present such a temptation that we are unable to resist it'.**

We need to pray this:

1. Because Jesus commands it (Matt 6:9)

Jesus gave us this pattern prayer to shape our own prayers, commanding us to 'Pray then like this', including '**lead us not into temptation**'. Obedience to him means we will make this part of our daily prayers.

2. Because the spiritual battle is fierce (Ephesians 6:10-12 above)

There is a spiritual battle raging all around us, even now. It's a battle that has been won, through the life, death and resurrection and ascension of Jesus, but it is a battle that is still raging on and will until Jesus returns to put Satan into the Lake of Fire.

In the West, we are not so aware of the fierceness of the battle, unlike our persecuted brothers and sisters who are suffering physically in a visible expression of this unseen battle that is taking place in the heavenly realms. Despite our ease and comfort in this part of the world, we are still under attack from Satan and his forces (**v12** above), simply because we are followers of Christ. We will not be able to stand unless we pray this request. We will, like Peter, fall into denying Jesus. There are many ways we may do this, including:

- In front of our friends through embarrassment
- By living a lifestyle that is contrary to Jesus' commands
- By believing false teaching

The battle is fierce, so Jesus commands us: 'Pray then like this: Our Father in heaven....lead us not into temptation'

3. Because God promises deliverance (1Cor 10:13 see over)

Every temptation we will experience in 2021 is already known to God, and he has made provision for us to stand. Jesus tells us to take hold of this promise by praying this petition (**Matt 6:9,13**). There are many such promises in scripture. Consider **Psalm 23:3** (see over) where we read that our shepherd will lead us, as we place our trust in him. **Jesus says take hold of this promise to lead us in paths of righteousness by praying 'lead us not into temptation'.**

4. Because it is the cry of redeemed sinners

If you are a Christian, you will want to avoid sin, and the temptation to sin. When your soul has been redeemed, you have been given a new desire to be holy and to live in obedience to Christ who loves you and gave himself for you to redeem you from all lawlessness. That desire means that you will be constantly crying out to God for deliverance

from temptation. This is a natural prayer request for one who loves Christ and wants to obey him but is also painfully aware of sinful tendencies and of the fierce battle they are in.

We are glad that God forgives us, but we are so grieved when we sin that we don't want to fall into it and so damage our fellowship with the Lord.

So we cry out 'Our Father in heaven.... lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil'.

What does God do to answer this prayer request?

a) He brings scripture to mind

When Jesus was tempted by Satan, he fought back with the word of God. Every time Satan tempted him, he responded 'It is written...' It has been said that **Satan fears when he sees believers in prayer, and flees when scripture is quoted.** As an example of a temptation that we all face in the west, we struggle with materialism in two ways. John Calvin said this temptation can come from two sides:

- in the form of riches, power, and honour which draw us away from God and towards idols

- in the form of poverty, disgrace, contempt and afflictions which lead to disappointment with God

In the midst of either temptation, we pray this petition and God brings to mind scriptures that teach us:

- Not to set our hope on riches, because nothing we have in this life compares with Christ
- In Christ, we have greater riches than anything we might feel we are missing on earth

We pick up those scriptures like a sword, and fight with them. Then Satan will flee.

When we ask God to lead us not into temptation, he leads us into his word so that we have a sword to fight with.

b) He comes alongside to help (Hebrews 4:15-16 see over)

Every temptation we experience has been experienced by our Saviour, and when we pray, we receive grace to help us in our time of need. That grace is nothing less than Christ himself entering into the battle to fight through us and for us, to give us the victory. Because he's been in our shoes, he knows exactly what scripture will steady us in the test, and which verse from the Bible to wield against Satan.

What about the times when we pray this petition but still fall into temptation?

There are times when we find ourselves so overwhelmed by the temptation that we find ourselves sinning against God. Why does that happen and what does God do then? Next week, we will look at this as we consider the petition 'deliver us from evil', but to help us now and in preparation for this, consider the prayer as a whole.

It begins with worship and that is the key to victory over temptation.

None of us know what this year will hold. One thing we can be sure of, though, is that we will face temptations and be tested in the battle.

We cannot afford to sleep when it comes to temptation

We cannot afford to be like Peter, who prepared for the battle by sleeping and thus fell into temptation. Jesus died on the cross for Peter's sin of denial, and all his other sins. Through Jesus' death, Peter could be forgiven and brought back into fellowship with his Saviour, but how he must have wished he had heeded Jesus' advice to watch

and pray, so that he hadn't denied Jesus. He issued his own warning in **1 Peter 5:8** Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

We must pray daily or even hourly:

Our Father in heaven lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

1 Corinthians 10:13 ¹³ No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

Psalm 23:3 He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

Hebrews 4:15-16 ¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶ Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.